PRESS RELEASE

LISU Annual Library Statistics 2003

The latest edition of LISU’s annual compilation of statistics relating to libraries has now been published. The 17th in the series, LISU Annual Library Statistics 2003 covers public and academic libraries, the national libraries, some sectors of special libraries and statistics of general interest to librarians and the book trade. The information on public and academic libraries is particularly extensive, and reveals some encouraging trends this year.

Public libraries

The encouraging news is that there has been an increase in real expenditure on libraries for the fourth consecutive year. Total library expenditure in 2001-02 was £930 million, equivalent to £15.82 per person. Recent increases above inflation mean that spending per capita has returned to levels equivalent to those in 1991-92. The balance of that expenditure is shifting, however, with more than half now paying for staff, 11% for premises costs, 13% for purchase of materials for public use, and 21% going on other costs, including transport, administrative computing costs and central establishment charges. These latter continue to increase, and now take 8.8% of the total.

Less encouraging is the continued fall in spending on the traditional public library activity of book lending. Overall, book spending has fallen by 2% this year, to £89 million, its lowest level for ten years. Only 9.6% of total library expenditure was on books in 2001-02. On the other hand, and partly fuelled by the income generation possibilities, total expenditure on audio-visual materials increased by 7.5% to £17 million in the last year. Expenditure on electronic resources is now being measured fairly consistently, and was £3.8 million in 2001-02. It is also increasing steadily, up by 14% in the last year, but is still a relatively small part of the total at just 2p per capita.

With the continued pressure on book budgets, it is not surprising that stock levels are falling, especially for adults, with provision in England poorer than the rest of the UK on average. Current stock stands at a total of 116 million in the UK, two books per person. Eleven million books were added to stock in 2001-02, 9.5% of the total, or 187 per 1,000 population. The introduction of the public library standards seems to be having an effect in England at least, where 46% of authorities met the target for acquisitions of 216 per 1,000 population.

Traditional library use continues to decline. 377 million books were issued last year, compared to 576 million ten years ago – a drop of 35%. Adult fiction has suffered the most, but adult non-fiction and children’s issues have also fallen in recent years, the latter by 4% in the last year alone. Issues of audio-visual materials are holding up, but the volume is tiny compared to books, and does not make up for the drop in book issues. There was an increase of 3.5% this year, to a total of 40.3 million, of which 61% were talking books and recorded music, 34% video/DVD and 5% CD-ROM. The number of visits to public libraries has fallen in all sectors except Scotland. There were a total of 318 million visits to public libraries last year, 5.43 per capita. Only 21 of the 171 public library authorities in England and Wales (12%) met the relevant public library standards for visits in 2001-02. However, the number of enquiries made has increased slightly in the last year, to just under 58.5 million. London libraries are asked the most questions, with 1.37 per capita, while the Welsh appear least inquisitive, recording only 0.77 enquiries per person.
Public library standards are in evidence again in the increase recorded in service availability. The number of service points open for 60 hours per week or longer has increased for the third consecutive year, to 37 in the UK as a whole. There have also been increases this year in the number of service points open for 45-59 hours per week, and in the number of mobile libraries. This has resulted in an increase of 1.3% in service point hours open per week.

**Academic libraries**

Libraries in higher education institutions have suffered less financial stringency than public libraries in recent years. Over the sector as a whole, library expenditure has kept pace with both general inflation and the increases in student numbers over the last five years. Academic libraries spent an estimated £447 million in 2001-02, £282 per FTE student. Expenditure on information provision rose by 3.6% to £160 million, but by less than 1% per FTE student, to £101. Both increases are below the rates of price increases for academic books (4.8%) and periodicals (7.1%). Most of the increase has been spent on serials, now accounting for 51% of total information provision expenditure. Book expenditure fell, to £48 million, while expenditure on electronic resources rose by an impressive 14%, to £19 million. Expenditure on inter-library lending and binding showed little change on the previous year.

Academic libraries stock over 109 million books, little changed from last year. Acquisition rates per FTE student are slightly up on last year, particularly in the old universities. Just over 3.1 million books were acquired in 2001-02, the highest figure reported to date. Issues have increased dramatically over the last ten years in the university sectors, with a 25% increase in issues per student in the new universities. There has also been an increase per student in the old universities but this is much less, at 5% over the ten year period. The number of serial subscriptions continues to increase, by 18% this year. For the first time it has been possible to estimate that 57% of serial titles are available electronically. This proportion varies from 67% in the new universities to 52% in the old, with HE colleges reporting 60% of titles available electronically.

Academic library staff numbers continue to increase, and the sector now employs some 10,000 FTE. Just over one third are professional librarians. The number of students per staff member has remained steady in the most recent years, at a little below 160. Library staff expenditure rose in line with the index of average earnings last year, to just over £203 million. The average cost per staff member (including on-costs) is now £20,300, an increase of 14% over five years (compared to an increase of 25% in the index of average earnings over the same period).

Opening hours are on average similar across all three sectors, and are continuing to increase, albeit slowly in the old universities and HE colleges. Service availability measured as the number of seat hours per week has also increased steadily, and has generally kept pace with student numbers. On average, there is a library seat available for each FTE student for 8.6 hours per week. The proportion of seats with workstations continues to increase, with an average of 41 students per library workstation compared to 82 in 1994-95. Provision is below average in the old universities, where a total of around 16,600 workstations allows one per 47 students, compared to 17,000 in new universities, and 5,200 in the HE colleges, equating to one per 36 FTE in each.

Visits to academic libraries fell again this year, by 1.7% in total, and by 4.3% per FTE student. This is in contrast to the pattern of lending, and as a consequence issues per visit rose substantially in both university sectors. Use in the HE colleges runs against this trend however, with a small increase (0.8%) in the number of visits per student, and a decline in issues per visit. The reasons for such patterns are likely to be complex, and associated with proliferation of electronic resources both purchased by libraries and more generally available, and the increasing ease with which they can be accessed from workstations outside the library building.
**LISU annual library statistics 2003: Featuring trend analysis of UK public and academic libraries 1992-2002**, Creaser C *et al.*, ISBN 1901786684, ISSN 0967 487X, price: £35.00, is available from LISU Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics LE11 3TU, Tel: 01509 223071, Fax: 01509 223072, Email: lisu@lboro.ac.uk and through TeleOrdering.

ENDS

**Note to Editors**

**For further information contact**
Claire Creaser, Deputy Director and Senior Statistician, LISU, Brockington Building, Loughborough University, Loughborough, Leics LE11 3TU. Tel: 01509 222803, email: c.creaser@lboro.ac.uk

**LISU – The Library and Information Statistics Unit**
LISU – The Library and Information Statistics Unit – is a national research and information centre based at the Department of Information Science at Loughborough University and partially supported by Resource: The Council for Archives, Museums and Libraries. LISU seeks to contribute, in appropriate ways, to good management practice in the various public and private sector agencies that make up the strands of the information economy and cultural services. Its ‘mainstream’ work covers public, academic and special libraries and the information publishing and distribution field.