

PEER BENCHMARKING: 2010 PUBLIC LIBRARY DATA SERVICE (PLDS)

Introduction

This report benchmarks performance indicators from San Antonio Public Library against comparative library data reported by the Public Library Data Service (PLDS). The PLDS Online Database includes responses from the Public Library Data Service surveys administered by the Center for Informatics Research on Science and Scholarship, University of Illinois, on behalf of the Public Library Association. The available information overlaps data offered by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), but also includes survey questions unique to PLDS. PLDS changes some questions from year to year, which prevents analysis over time for some data.

Methodology

Data marked “2010” in PLDS represents activity from the 2009 fiscal year, and is called 2010 data in this report to match the PLDS label. This is the most current data available at the time of compiling this report. In March, 2011, libraries began to enter performance measures from FY 2010 to be made available later in 2011.

San Antonio’s rank, mean, and median were determined within its established peer group. In addition, some comparisons were made against the group of 29 PLDS libraries that have service areas of one million or greater population since PLDS offers charts and reports based on population groupings. This report presents San Antonio’s comparative numbers as a way to derive by inference the library’s strengths and challenges.

NOTES: The peer group in this report consists of 13 peers, including San Antonio. Orange County Library System in CA, identified as a peer using IMLS data, did not participate in PLDS. Blank spaces in charts and graphs indicate that no data was submitted by the corresponding library.



Personnel

Finding: San Antonio had appropriate staffing and personnel expenditures relative to peers and given its level of outputs.

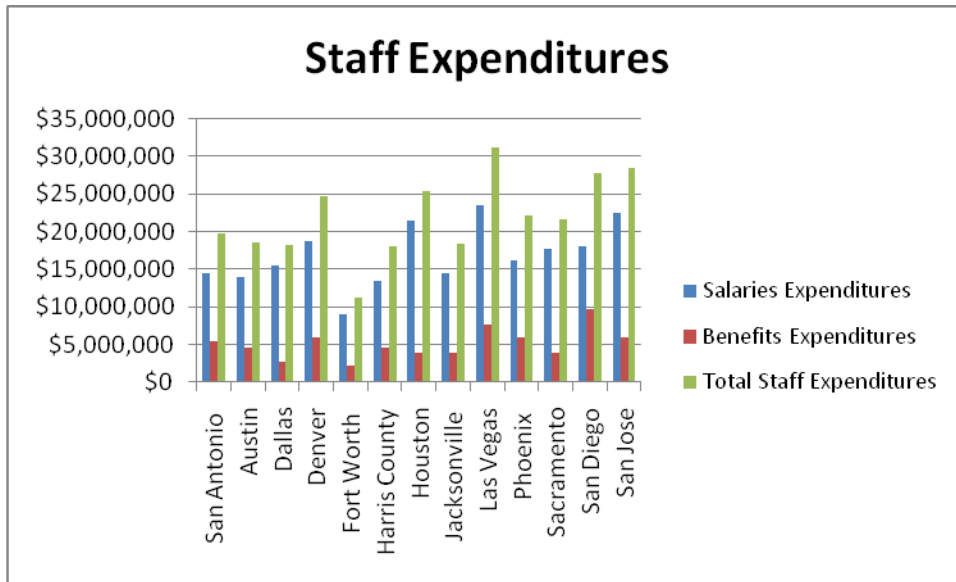
Staff levels: San Antonio is above-average in the number of staff relative to peers.

Library Name	MLS Librarians	Total Librarian FTE	Other Paid Staff FTE	Total Paid Staff FTE
SAPL Rank	3	3	6	6
San Antonio	120	120	273	393
Austin	84	85	266	350
Dallas	107	111	325	436
Denver	70	70	377	447
Fort Worth	67	67	141	208
Harris County	115	120	255	374
Houston	127	129	445	574
Jacksonville	139	139	320	459
Las Vegas	109	109	409	518
Phoenix	84	86	263	349
Sacramento	81	94	220	314
San Diego	101	106	269	375
San Jose	104	105	267	372
Mean	100	103	295	398
Median	104	106	269	375

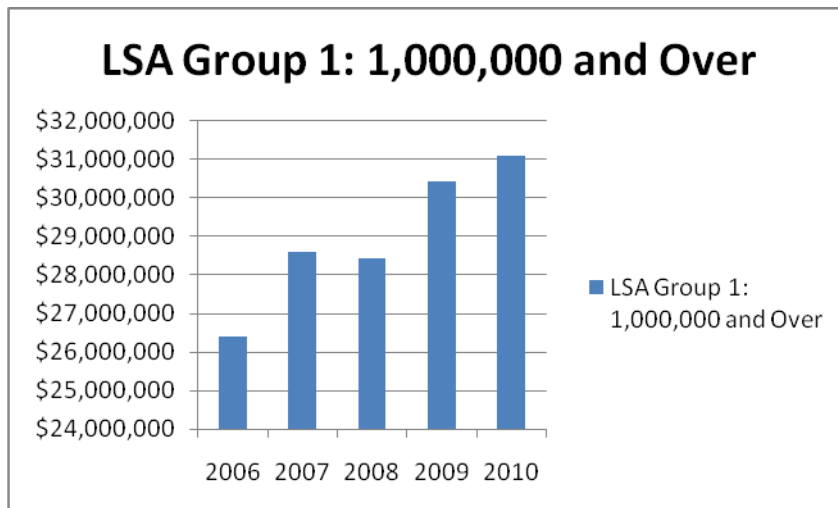
Aspirational Group	MLS Librarians	Total Librarian FTE	Other Paid Staff FTE	Total Paid Staff FTE
Chicago	440	440	778	1,218
Denver	70	70	377	447
Multnomah	90	90	393	482
Queens	403	403	992	1,395
San Francisco	196	196	449	645
Seattle	150	150	378	528
Mean	225	225	561	786
Median	173	173	421	586



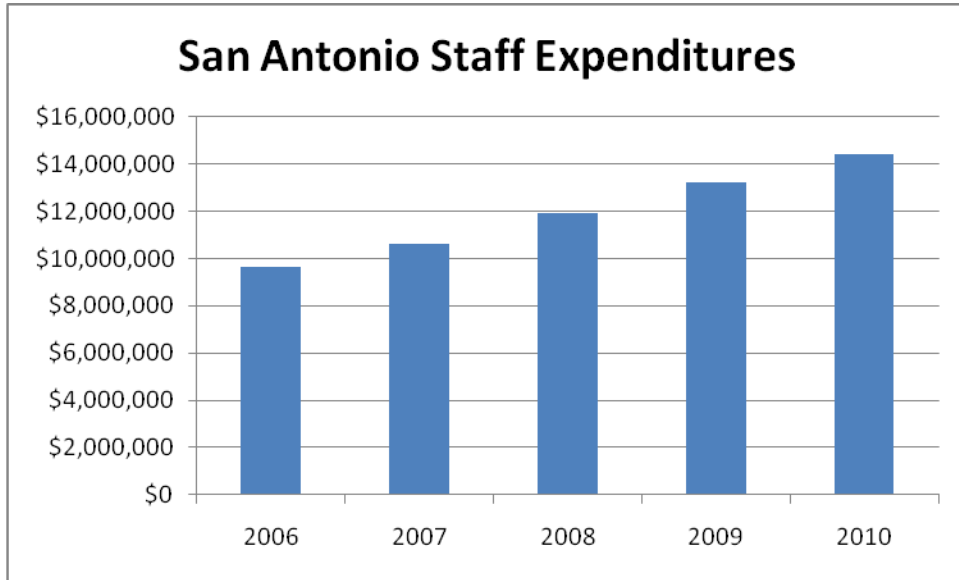
Staff compensation and expenditures: San Antonio spent \$19,819,242 on staff expenditures, ranking 8th of the 13 libraries and below the average of \$21,967,906. The library ranked 6th in benefits and 10th in salaries. Rank improved from the 2008 IMLS data report and can be considered an indicator of staffing efficiencies as salaries continue to lag behind peers.



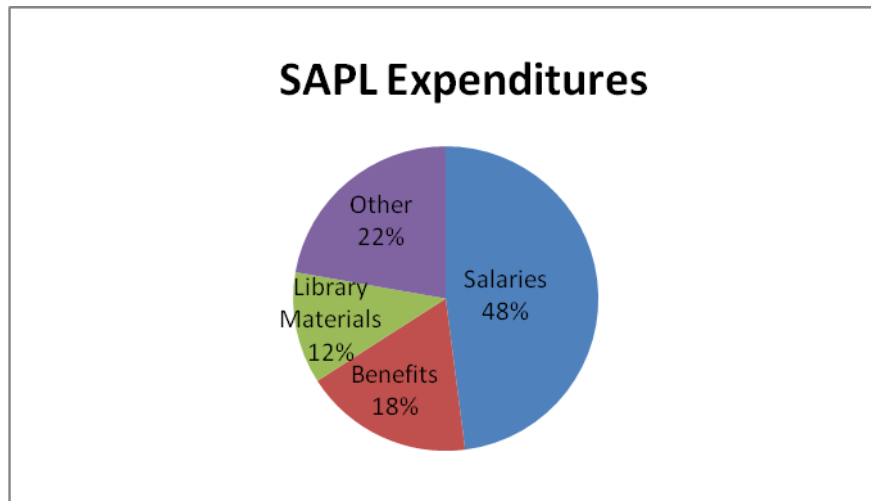
From 2007 to 2008, the group of 29 reporting libraries serving areas with a legal service area over one million in population had a collective decrease in staff expenditures.



Meanwhile, San Antonio has had steady growth in personnel dollars despite a challenging economy that has stressed libraries nationally. This has helped maintain or increase many of the library's service outputs.



Total personnel costs were 65.9% of the San Antonio expenditure budget, just over the 65.8% group average.



Staff productivity: A library's overall activity level is generally estimated by looking at its four main outputs.

San Antonio ranked

- 8th for circulation,
- 3rd in reference,
- 6th in visits and
- 4th in program attendance.

SAPL had an average ranking of 6th when totaling those activities.

San Antonio

- was the 6th "busiest" of the 13 libraries,
- ranked 6th in total staff FTEs, and
- ranked 7th in compensation dollars.

SAPL had personnel inputs appropriate for the Library's service outputs.



Collections

Finding: San Antonio's collection expenditures were below the average of its peers and correlated to collection size, square footage of buildings and circulation.

Expenditures and circulation: Generally speaking, the more a library spends on materials, the higher its circulation. This tends to hold true for the libraries in this peer group, with a few exceptions that reflect unusual, recession-related budget challenges.

Two-thirds of the top six libraries in circulation were also in the top six for materials expenditures. San Antonio remained below average in materials and circulation markers in 2009. The library is likely to increase circulation with additional materials expenditures, which would also move its 13th ranked holdings *per capita* closer to the peer average.

Library Name	Total Materials Exp	Holdings	Holdings per Cap	Total Circulation	Turnover
SAPL Rank	9	7	13	10	8
San Antonio	\$3,554,228	2,209,478	1.4	6,947,830	3.2
Austin	\$2,224,250	1,455,793	1.9	4,197,963	2.9
Dallas	\$2,162,383	4,511,524	3.5	8,887,605	2.0
Denver	\$4,201,916	2,165,258	3.6	9,681,013	4.5
Fort Worth	\$2,443,210	1,090,581	1.5	4,190,958	3.8
Harris County	\$3,645,404	2,077,356	1.4	11,485,172	5.5
Houston	\$7,432,075	3,809,224	1.7	6,885,709	1.8
Jacksonville	\$3,975,012	3,147,971	3.5	9,156,597	2.9
Las Vegas	\$11,254,231	2,923,365	2.1	12,645,103	4.3
Phoenix	\$4,706,502	2,201,930	1.4	14,152,268	6.4
Sacramento	\$3,108,681	1,987,201	1.5	7,385,554	3.7
San Diego	\$4,288,384	3,956,526	2.9	7,651,619	1.9
San Jose	\$3,639,504	2,296,658	2.3	15,320,909	6.7
Mean	\$4,356,598	2,602,528	2.2	9,122,177	3.8
Median	\$3,645,404	2,209,478	1.9	8,887,605	3.7

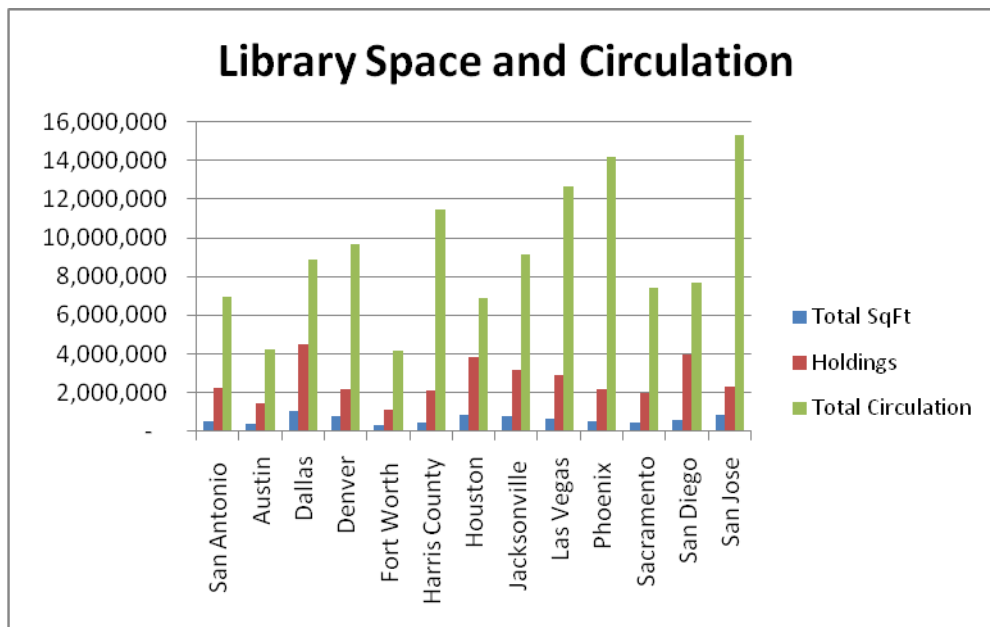
Aspirational Group	Total Materials Exp	Holdings	Holdings per Cap	Total Circulation	Turnover
Chicago	\$17,800,000	5,743,002	1.98	9,983,590	1.74
Denver	\$4,201,916	2,165,258	3.62	9,681,013	4.47
Multnomah	\$6,640,792	1,955,041	2.72	21,513,255	11
Queens	\$9,989,930	7,384,276	3.22	23,492,195	3.18
San Francisco	\$9,753,308	2,464,665	2.92	9,638,160	3.91
Seattle	\$5,960,001	2,294,601	3.81	11,914,050	5.19
Mean	\$9,057,658	3,667,807	3.05	14,370,377	4.92
Median	\$8,197,050	2,379,633	3.07	10,948,820	4.19

Square footage and holdings: Are San Antonio's collection size and circulation limited by space? Four of the top six circulating libraries in its peer group are also in the top six for square footage, suggesting that greater square footage leads to more holdings and circulation.

Library Name	Total SqFt	Holdings	Total Circulation
SAPL Rank	8	7	10
San Antonio	504,821	2,209,478	6,947,830
Austin	389,233	1,455,793	4,197,963
Dallas	1,022,045	4,511,524	8,887,605
Denver	775,739	2,165,258	9,681,013
Fort Worth	312,495	1,090,581	4,190,958
Harris County	463,938	2,077,356	11,485,172
Houston	813,068	3,809,224	6,885,709
Jacksonville	785,046	3,147,971	9,156,597
Las Vegas	631,156	2,923,365	12,645,103
Phoenix	501,732	2,201,930	14,152,268
Sacramento	432,485	1,987,201	7,385,554
San Diego	552,949	3,956,526	7,651,619
San Jose	838,760	2,296,658	15,320,909
Mean	603,977	2,602,528	9,122,177
Median	528,885	2,209,478	8,887,605

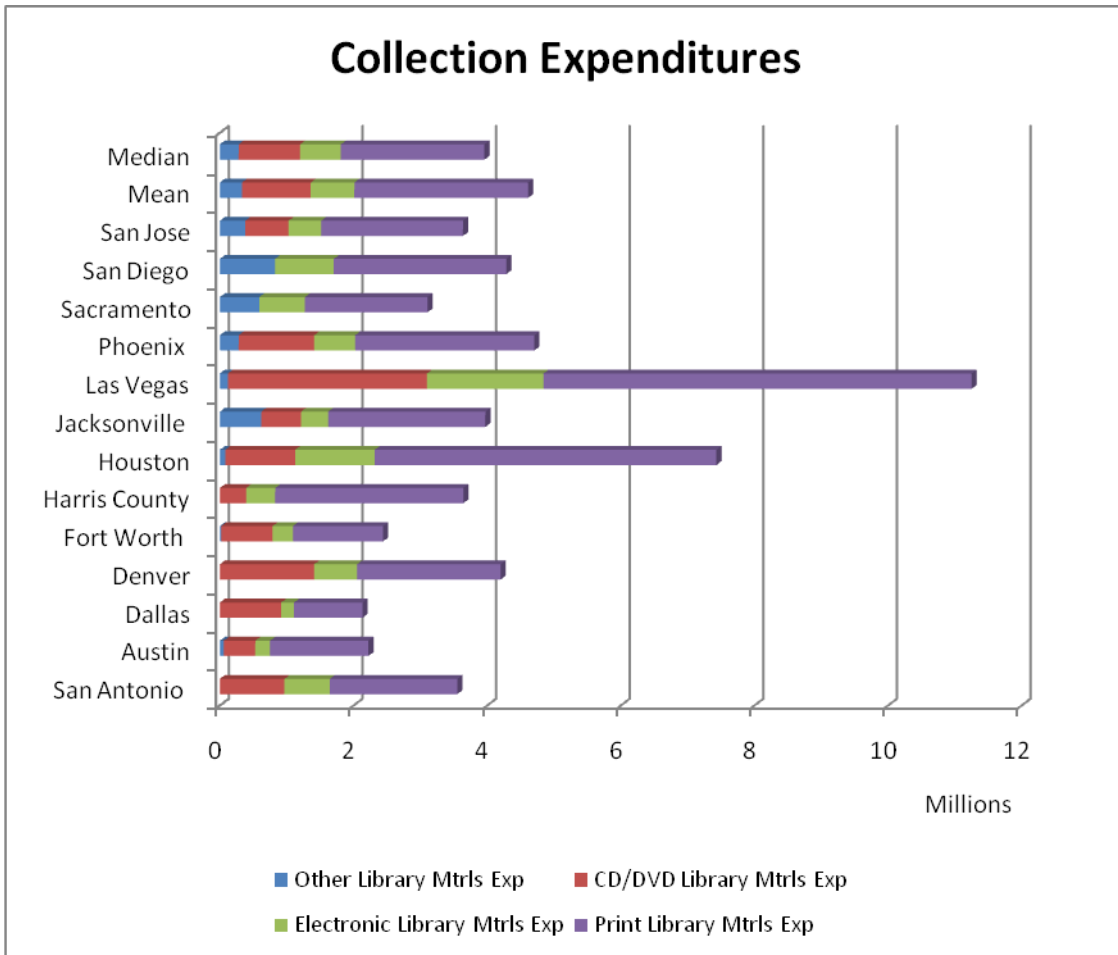
Aspirational Group	Total SqFt	Holdings	Total Circulation
Chicago	1,755,467	5,743,002	9,983,590
Denver	775,739	2,165,258	9,681,013
Multnomah	265,762	1,955,041	21,513,255
Queens	860,710	7,384,276	23,492,195
San Francisco	580,229	2,464,665	9,638,160
Seattle	605,287	2,294,601	11,914,050
Mean	807,199	3,667,807	14,370,377
Median	690,513	2,379,633	10,948,820

Nevertheless, as the chart below demonstrates, the relationship of space, holdings, and circulation is more dynamic: given its ranking of 8th in total square footage and 7th in holdings, SAPL has the potential, without more space, to improve its ranking of 10th in circulation.

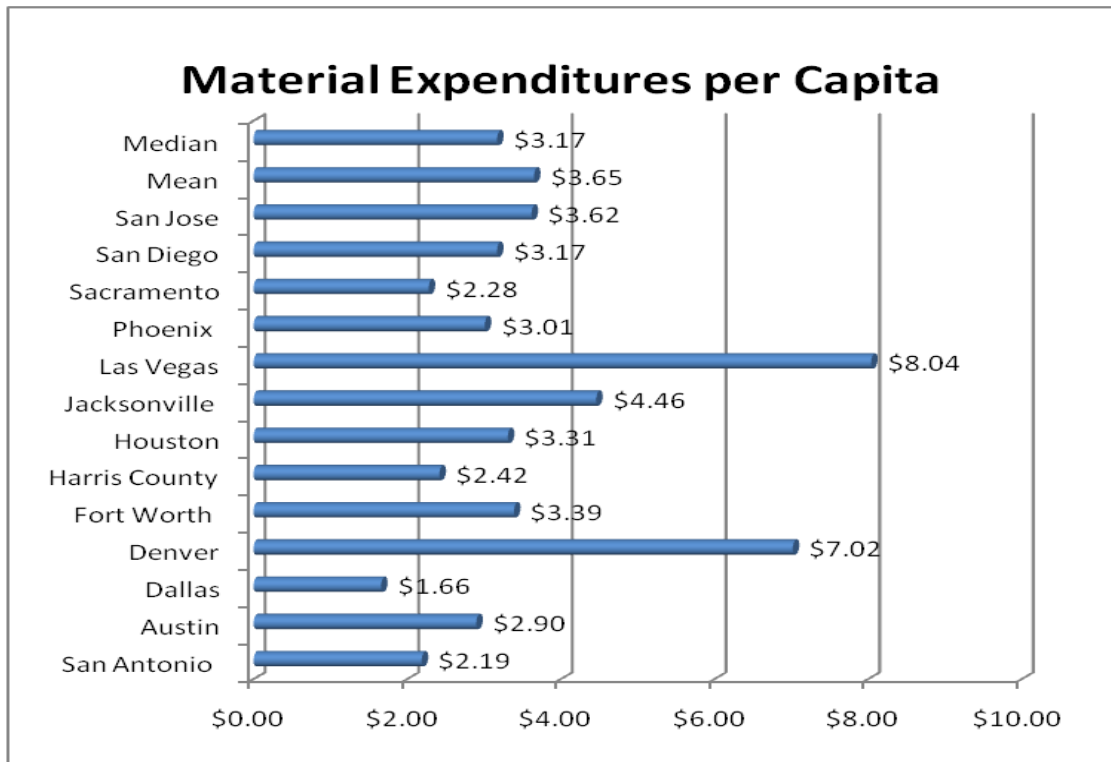


Collection expenditure balance and percentage: Collection expenditures were 11.83% of budget, which rounds off to the 12% library standard (See *SAPL Expenditures*, p. 3).

SAPL was 9th in print expenditures, but above average in media and e-resources expenditures, ranking 5th in the peer group for CD/DVD and 5th in electronic materials expenditures. Given the public’s increasing demands for movies and downloadables, the graphic chart indicates the upside of a more aggressive collection strategy compared to peers who continue to emphasize print.



On a *per capita* basis, San Antonio's material expenditures (\$2.19) were below the average of \$3.65, ranking 12th of the 13 libraries.



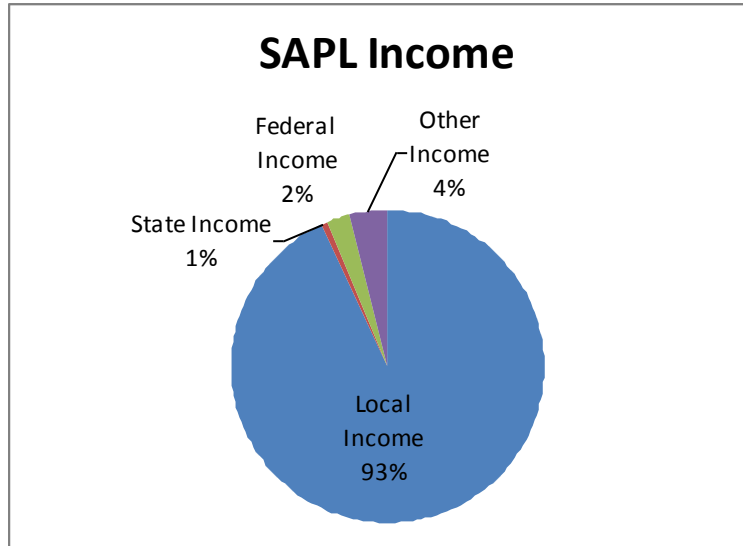
Finances

Finding: SAPL was below-average (9th) in income and expenditures, but ranked second highest for federal income. Its low cost per hour reflects operational efficiencies due to the high number of hours the facilities are open.

Income: San Antonio was 2nd in federal income but below average in other categories. It was 5th of the six Texas libraries in state income. Local income is the largest revenue source.

Library Name	Local Income	State Income	Federal Income	Other Income	Total Income
SAPL Rank	9	10	2	7	9
San Antonio	\$29,045,517	\$182,970	\$774,532	\$1,181,872	\$31,184,891
Austin	\$24,907,897	\$242,788	\$414,752	\$970,902	\$26,536,339
Dallas	\$28,125,672	\$241,604	\$526,159	\$2,120,768	\$31,014,203
Denver	\$32,134,124	\$0	\$982,900	\$2,404,397	\$35,521,421
Fort Worth	\$17,017,003	\$144,376		\$110,193	\$17,271,572
Harris County	\$25,301,914	\$265,914		\$216,021	\$25,783,849
Houston	\$37,189,302	\$1,437,543	\$17,474	\$708,000	\$39,352,319
Jacksonville	\$38,686,994	\$970,607	\$64,672	\$237,882	\$39,960,155
Las Vegas	\$46,707,621	\$16,731,429		\$2,784,062	\$66,223,112
Phoenix	\$37,729,189	\$75,149	\$15,839	\$1,344,826	\$39,165,003
Sacramento	\$33,825,000	\$630,300	\$15,677	\$2,006,487	\$36,477,464
San Diego	\$37,323,389	\$548,506	\$216,530	\$2,994,312	\$41,082,737
San Jose	\$39,059,892	\$433,712	\$435,562	\$1,136,691	\$41,065,857
Mean	\$32,850,270	\$1,684,992	\$346,410	\$1,401,263	\$36,202,994
Median	\$33,825,000	\$265,914	\$315,641	\$1,181,872	\$36,477,464

Aspirational Group	Local Income	State Income	Federal Income	Other Income	Total Income
Chicago	\$96,268,220	\$8,403,198	\$0	\$7,141	\$104,678,559
Denver	\$32,134,124	\$0	\$982,900	\$2,404,397	\$35,521,421
Multnomah	\$55,076,935	\$114,356	\$385,528	\$3,870,335	\$59,447,154
Queens	\$90,900,734	\$12,244,606	\$2,948,701	\$5,192,649	\$111,286,690
San Francisco	\$77,834,526	\$477,031	\$12,951	\$2,558,265	\$80,882,773
Seattle	\$48,314,128	\$0	\$0	\$1,660,293	\$49,974,421
Mean	\$66,754,778	\$3,539,865	\$721,680	\$2,615,513	\$73,631,836
Median	\$66,455,731	\$295,694	\$199,240	\$2,481,331	\$70,164,964



Expenditures: SAPL was 9th in total operating expenditures and 11th in expenditures *per capita*, which was \$10.98 below the average of the group. Cost per circulation (total operating expenditures divided by circulation) was above average, but the relatively low cost per hour (total operating expenditures divided by yearly service hours) is noteworthy and demonstrates operational efficiencies.

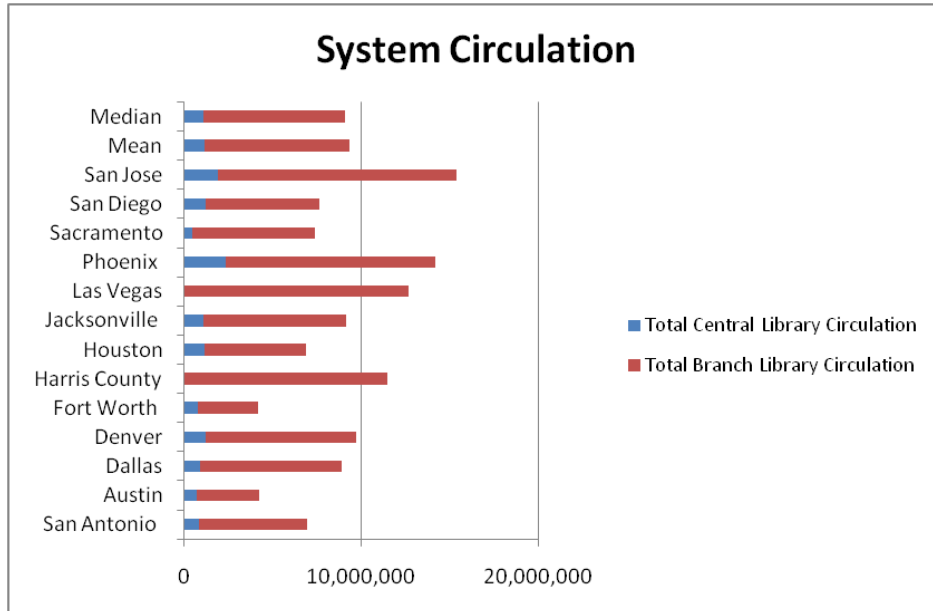
Library Name	Total Op Expend	Expend per Capita	Cost per Hour	Cost per Circ
SAPL Rank	9	11	11	5
San Antonio	\$30,055,432	\$18.52	\$369.32	\$4.33
Austin	\$24,266,971	\$31.68	\$460.90	\$5.78
Dallas	\$28,125,672	\$21.53	\$415.38	\$3.16
Denver	\$35,521,421	\$59.33	\$697.05	\$3.67
Fort Worth	\$16,959,362	\$23.55	\$537.98	\$4.05
Harris County	\$25,693,064	\$17.03		\$2.24
Houston	\$37,579,178	\$16.74	\$378.72	\$5.46
Jacksonville	\$38,315,333	\$42.99	\$658.11	\$4.18
Las Vegas	\$52,948,067	\$37.82	\$829.85	\$4.19
Phoenix	\$34,860,974	\$22.30	\$713.47	\$2.46
Sacramento	\$34,149,267	\$25.07	\$644.62	\$4.62
San Diego	\$39,440,320	\$29.13	\$517.62	\$5.15
San Jose	\$38,088,740	\$37.83	\$834.69	\$2.49
Mean	\$33,538,754	\$29.50	\$578.24	\$4.01
Median	\$34,860,974	\$25.07	\$537.98	\$4.19

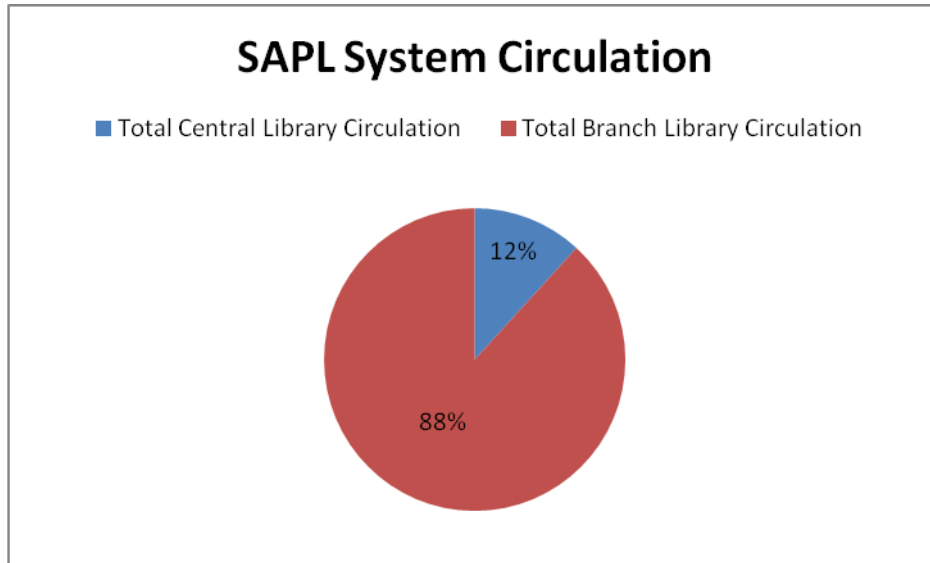
Aspirational Group	Total Op Expend	Expend per Capita	Cost per Hour	Cost per Circ
Chicago	\$104,671,418	\$36.14	\$430.29	\$10.48
Denver	\$35,521,421	\$59.33	\$697.05	\$3.67
Multnomah	\$56,361,756	\$78.51	\$1,213.12	\$2.62
Queens	\$110,933,173	\$48.38	\$814.62	\$4.72
San Francisco	\$81,932,394	\$96.90	\$1,401.46	\$8.50
Seattle	\$50,469,268	\$83.84	\$688.65	\$4.24
Mean	\$73,314,905	\$67.18	\$874.20	\$5.71
Median	\$69,147,075	\$68.92	\$755.83	\$4.48

Services

Finding: Below-average circulation could be improved given hours open; visiting traffic is near center of the peer group; programming and reference are above-average successes; children’s services are strong given the relatively high circulation of juvenile materials and children’s program attendance.

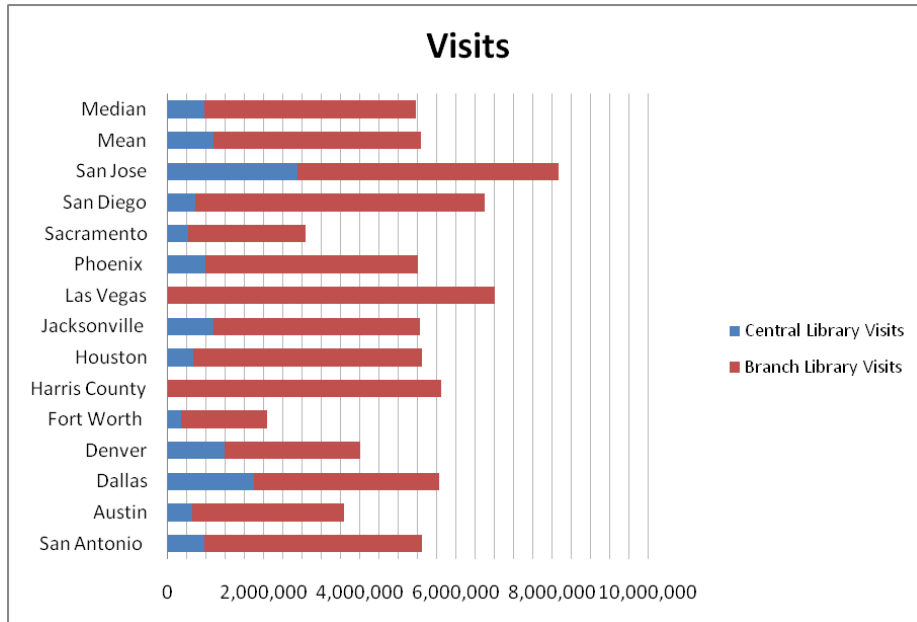
Circulation: All peer libraries get the majority of circulation from branch checkouts. San Antonio had 88% of checkouts through the branches. Circulation for print, CD/DVDs, and “other” was below the peer average in all categories, except for children’s circulation, where SAPL ranked 4th.





San Antonio Circulation	Amount	Rank
Central Library Print Circulation	564,570	6
Branch Library Print Circulation	4,260,510	7
Total Print Circulation	4,825,080	7
Central Library CD/DVD Circulation	250,217	7
Branch Library CD/DVD Circulation	1,846,454	6
Total CD/DVD Circulation	2,096,671	6
Central Library Other Circulation	2,301	6
Branch Library Other Circulation	23,778	8
Total Other Circulation	26,079	8
Child materials circulation	2,703,615	4
Total Central Library Circulation	817,088	7
Total Branch Library Circulation	6,130,742	9
Total Circulation	6,947,830	9

Visits: SAPL ranked 6th in central library visits, 6th in branch visits, and 7th in total visits, placing the system just above average for the branch and total visits.



Programs: SAPL ranked above peer library averages in branch and total programs; above-average for attendance at children’s and total attendance. Attendance per program averaged 24.93, a good return for this labor-intensive service.

Library Name	Branch Programs	Central Programs	Total Programs
SAPL Rank	5	5	5
San Antonio	8,667	1,200	9,867
Austin	4,721	397	5,118
Dallas	7,078	1,336	8,414
Denver	7,494	541	8,035
Fort Worth	2,928	823	3,751
Harris County	17,696		17,696
Houston	3,025	1,577	4,602
Jacksonville	8,370	4,247	12,617
Las Vegas	13,760		13,760
Phoenix	3,770	850	4,620
Sacramento	3,416	356	3,772
San Diego	9,513	342	9,855
San Jose	10,575	1,344	11,919
Mean	7,770	1,183	8,771
Median	7,494	850	8,414

Aspirational Group	Branch Programs	Central Programs	Total Programs
Chicago			
Denver	7,494	541	8,035
Multnomah	18,975	1,387	20,362
Queens	26,720	1,098	27,818
San Francisco	6,972	1,819	8,791
Seattle	4,741	1,748	6,489
Mean	12,980	1,319	14,299
Median	7494	1387	8791

Library Name	Central Attend	Branch Attend	Child Attend	Total Attend
SAPL Rank	4	5	4	4
San Antonio	29,526	216,531	184,870	246,057
Austin	4,367	119,103	90,577	123,470
Dallas	62,242	173,229	144,968	235,471
Denver	34,912	161,435	147,026	196,347
Fort Worth	15,558	46,939	42,012	62,497
Harris County		417,816	207,842	417,816
Houston	26,610	183,879	80,721	210,489
Jacksonville	72,995	151,472	178,857	224,467
Las Vegas		553,960	243,888	553,960
Phoenix	23,693	110,001	103,370	133,694
Sacramento	10,503	100,223	92,241	110,726
San Diego	15,702	222,642	169,186	238,344
San Jose	29,484	312,892	227,090	342,376
Mean	29,599	213,086	147,127	238,132
Median	26,610	173,229	147,026	224,467

Aspirational Group	Central Attend	Branch Attend	Child Attend	Total Attend
Chicago			262,000	
Denver	34,912	161,435	147,026	196,347
Multnomah	27,426	309,031	284,902	336,457
Queens	34,144	549,947	340,156	584,091
San Francisco	65,625	269,125	269,543	334,750
Seattle	50,480	135,256	91,321	185,736
Mean	42,517	284,959	232,491	327,476
Median	34912	269125	265771.5	334750

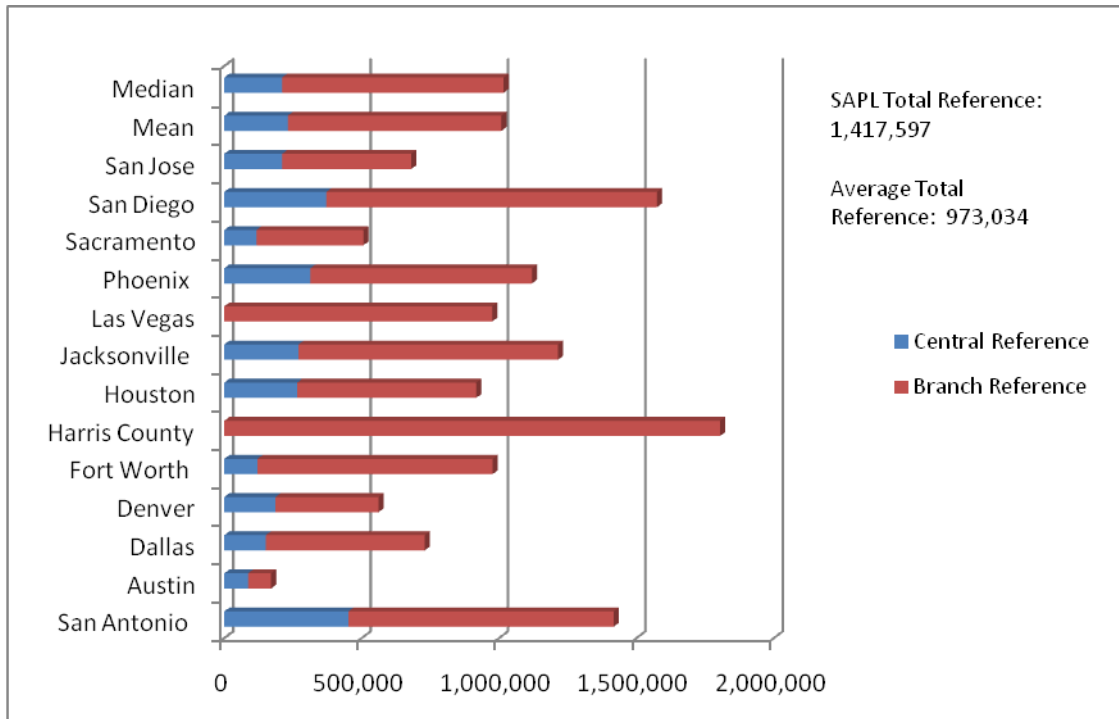
Computing: 2010 PLDS data did not include the number of computers and computer users, but offered webpage and children’s computing data. Because there is no assurance that libraries are reporting uniform data –“web visits” may mean overall hits, unique hits, overall visits, unique visits, etc., comparative data on web activity is not yet reliable. SAPL’s report of 7,592,859 web visits represents, in fact, total hits. For this reason, while “website visits” appear far above the peer average, this peer comparison is not reliably meaningful. It can, however, be concluded reliably that SAPL’s 11th ranking in Child Internet PCs and 9th ranking in Child PCs places them low among their peer group.

Library Name	Web Visits	Child Internet PCs	Child PCs
SAPL Rank	4	11	9
San Antonio	7,592,859	25	57
Austin	5,044,418	131	131
Dallas	1,499,408	48	54
Denver	8,014,458	73	73
Fort Worth	1,409,381	34	34
Harris County	3,352,755		
Houston	8,050,350		
Jacksonville	5,124,703	243	243
Las Vegas	4,255,496	85	85
Phoenix	25,332,576	71	93
Sacramento	3,074,124	64	64
San Diego	5,034,782	184	241
San Jose	6,803,138	136	172
Mean	6,506,804	99	113
Median	5,044,418	73	85

Aspirational Group	Web Visits	Child Internet PCs	Child PCs
Chicago	1,515,732,790	511	511
Denver	8,014,458	73	73
Multnomah	6,810,872	32	111
Queens	4,345,760	258	258
San Francisco	17,037,021	21	21
Seattle	6,725,126	78	86
Mean	259,777,671	162	177
Median	7,412,665	76	99



Reference: SAPL ranked 1st in reference at the Central Library, 4th for branch reference and 3rd in total transactions—impressive numbers that are similar to larger urban systems with larger central libraries with established resource centers. This statistic remained high in times when reference numbers are declining in many libraries.



Summary Findings

Personnel: San Antonio has appropriate staffing and personnel expenditures relative to peers and given its level of outputs.

Collections: San Antonio’s collection expenditures are below the average of its peers and correlate to collection size, square footage of buildings, and circulation, but they could be improved without the addition of square footage.

Finances: SAPL was below-average (9th) in income and expenditures, but the second highest for federal income. Its low cost per hour reflects operational efficiencies due to the high number of hours the facilities are open.

Services: Below-average circulation could be improved given hours open; visiting traffic is near center of the peer group; programming and reference are above-average successes; children’s services are strong given the relatively high circulation of juvenile materials and children’s program attendance.

PEER BENCHMARKING: INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES (IMLS), HENNEN PUBLIC LIBRARY RANKINGS, LIBRARY JOURNAL INDEX (LJINDEX)

Introduction

This benchmarking report compares San Antonio Public Library's 2008¹ core financial and service activity with data from peer public libraries. The comparison provides simple "benchmarks"—mean, median, and ranking figures—that can be used to measure performance relative to similar institutions.

Benchmarking is one of several tools, including customer feedback and outcomes measurement, to be used in a full library measurement process. Management guru Peter Drucker calls benchmarking "critical" to good government and nonprofit management, as it requires an agency to "define its performance objective, its quality objective, and its cost objective."²

Regarding public libraries specifically, it is important to note:

- There are few established quantitative standards defining success for libraries, and those that exist must be viewed in the context of a library's community, finances, and management. One example among the few generally accepted benchmarks is a standard that library materials expenditures should be 12% or more of the total budget.
- Popular numerical measures (circulation, reference questions) are incomplete indicators of library performance. A complete evaluation only emerges when quantitative data is merged with qualitative measures and customer feedback.
- While library numbers tend to focus on transactions and outputs, patron outcomes (or actual changes in user behavior) are the most convincing measure of library success. Outcome assessments are more difficult to complete and are typically undertaken for specific projects or services as opposed to overall library operations.
- When a library diverges excessively from means and medians, other factors should also be considered. For example, a library with smaller collections may be concerned about its statistics—until learning that it has less total square footage and shelving capacity than peers, which limits purchases. Program attendance and visits are also facility-dependent activities.

Benchmarking begins by identifying peer libraries with similar characteristics. Two (still controversial) library rating tools use straightforward groupings: *Hennen*



Public Library Rankings clusters libraries by population served, while *LJ Index* groups by total operating expenditures.

More meaningful comparisons can be made by finding peers similar in a combination of attributes. This is possible on a national level through the Institute of Museum and Libraries Services (IMLS) “Compare Public Libraries” webpage¹. This report presents a judicious selection and comparison of San Antonio’s IMLS, *Hennen*, and *LJ Index* score data.

It should be noted, however, that the relevance and accuracy of *Hennen* and *Library Journal’s LJ Index* continue to be debated in the library press, and are, like college rankings, a constricted and incomplete view of performance. Despite their shortcomings, it is worthwhile to include the ratings in a comprehensive assessment of library performance and to use the scores for public relations or advocacy when warranted.

In general, it can be said that benchmarking and national rankings irrefutably show, year after year, that high-performance libraries have excellent funding, highly educated and affluent population demographics, large collections, and multiple attractive outlets.

Nevertheless, the nation’s public libraries continue to be stressed in the aftermath of the 2009 recession. Peer data for 2009 and 2010 may show extreme departures from past data and will reflect the unique circumstances of each library’s economic challenges.

Methodology

IMLS public library data is based on 2008 reports that San Antonio and participating libraries sent to their state libraries in 2009.

The IMLS “Compare Public Libraries” program was used to identify peer libraries around the United States with three characteristics similar to San Antonio:

1. A 30% range of San Antonio’s service area population,
2. Parallels in operating expenditures or operating revenues, and
3. Comparative number of outlets.

SAPL staff identified additional peer libraries in Texas, for a total peer group of 13, and an “aspirational” list of five large library systems, known for best practices and/or used in City of San Antonio benchmarking studies, was also included.

Texas and national peer libraries are grouped together, but aspirational peers are not included in mean and median calculations, as key marker characteristics, such as revenue and outlets (in some cases, double San Antonio’s) differ significantly enough to skew results and render comparative analysis less meaningful.



San Antonio's rank within the peer group is at the top of each column of data, and mean and median figures for each group are at the bottom of each column. Qualities with meaningful deviations from the peer group mean or median are highlighted in yellow.

As noted below, some data is derived from *Hennen* figures, which demonstrate slight discrepancies from IMLS data.

HENNEN AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY RATINGS and LJ INDEX

*Hennen's American Public Library Ratings*³ scores libraries against peers grouped by population size and uses a specialized, weighted formula.

The data available from *Hennen* appears to be from 2007 and may account for differences between *Hennen's* figures for San Antonio and those pulled from IMLS.

*LJ Index*⁴, another benchmarking tool, groups libraries by their total operating expenditures. The *Index* scores are based on four weighed and averaged *per capita* service outputs:

1. Library visits,
2. Circulation,
3. Program attendance, and
4. Public Internet computer use.

The authors state that the "four measures are closely related to one another statistically" but "don't measure quality, value, excellence, or relevance of services to the community." Interestingly, some libraries don't measure up equally in both ratings, as with peer Phoenix, with a 554 *Hennen* and 295 *LJ Index* score.

Per capita use is indeed an important benchmark, as it shows use related to the population served. However, as with *Hennen*, the national peer group is problematic, with San Antonio being compared to libraries with vast differences in the number of facilities, population, and other critical factors. *Per capita* measures can also be affected by factors unknown here, such as high use by commuting populations, status of libraries in adjacent communities, and other differentiating factors.



Analysis: Personnel

Finding: San Antonio had appropriate staffing and personnel expenditures, but should examine internal efficiencies as expressed in FTEs per circulation, reference, program attendance, and other activities.

Personnel Expenditures:

San Antonio ranked 2nd in the number of total librarians and 5th in “other” and “total” staff, indicating a higher use of professionals than peers. Staffing expenditures were 10th and 63.7% of budget was spent on personnel, indicating human resources budgeting effectiveness (and/or less competitive salary levels).

There is no definitive benchmark for personnel costs that can be applied to every nonprofit or library. Administrative expenditures vary depending on the scope and structure of operations. A generally-held rule of thumb has been that multi-facility public libraries typically spend at least 60% of their budget for personnel. In 2008, U.S. public libraries spent an average of 62.5% on personnel costs, while librarian salaries went up 15% between 2003 and 2008⁵. San Antonio’s peers ranged from 51.2% to 79.6% for staffing, but San Antonio’s 63.7% was under the 65.9% mean and very close to the national norm.



Library Name	Total Librarians	Other Staff	Total Staff	Circ per FTE Staff Hour	FTE per 1000 Pop.
Peer Group					
SAPL RANK	2	5	5	12	10
San Antonio	134	332	466	6.63	0.28
Dallas	124	383	507	9.24	0.42
Denver	86	326	412	10.45	0.75
Houston	132	381	513	5.04	0.25
Ft. Worth	85	224	309	7.02	0.4
Austin	84	262	346	5.42	0.44
Harris	113	257	369	14.33	0.24
Phoenix	95	348	443	16.51	0.29
San Jose	102	264	366	18.47	0.38
Orange	115	273	387	8.61	0.25
Jacksonville	142	327	469	8.37	0.54
San Diego	107	282	388	8.09	0.32
Sacramento	92	217	309	10.06	0.22
Las Vegas	112	443	555	7.2	0.48
PEER MEAN	109	309	417	9.67	0.38
PEER MEDIAN	110	304	400	8.49	0.35
Aspirational Group					
Denver	86	326	412	10.45	0.75
Queens	390	1002	1392	7.46	0.62
Multnomah	92	377	470	20.84	0.65
Seattle	153	380	533	8.48	0.9
San Francisco	205	432	638	5.89	0.78
Chicago	94	768	862	n/a	n/a
ASP. MEAN	170	548	718	10.62	0.74
ASP. MEDIAN	124	406	586	8.48	0.75

Circulation Rates:

Finding: SAPL relatively low circulation combined correlates with relative low FTE staffing. High reference counts suggest staff efficiencies in this labor-intensive service.

In *Hennen's* calculation of "Circulation per FTE Staff Hour", San Antonio came in 12th, at 6.63, compared to the average of 9.67 and median 8.49. All but one aspirational peer had higher circulation per FTE staff hour rates.

This statistic is often viewed as a rough marker of staff productivity, but only takes into account one library activity. It is notable that San Antonio was one of only 4 peers with a reference count of more than one million, a labor-intensive activity which improves the staff efficiency view assessment. Meanwhile, FTEs per 1,000 population was .28 compared to the .38 peer mean and was considerably less than aspirational libraries. This statistic could be interpreted as understaffing relative to community size.

Analysis: Collections

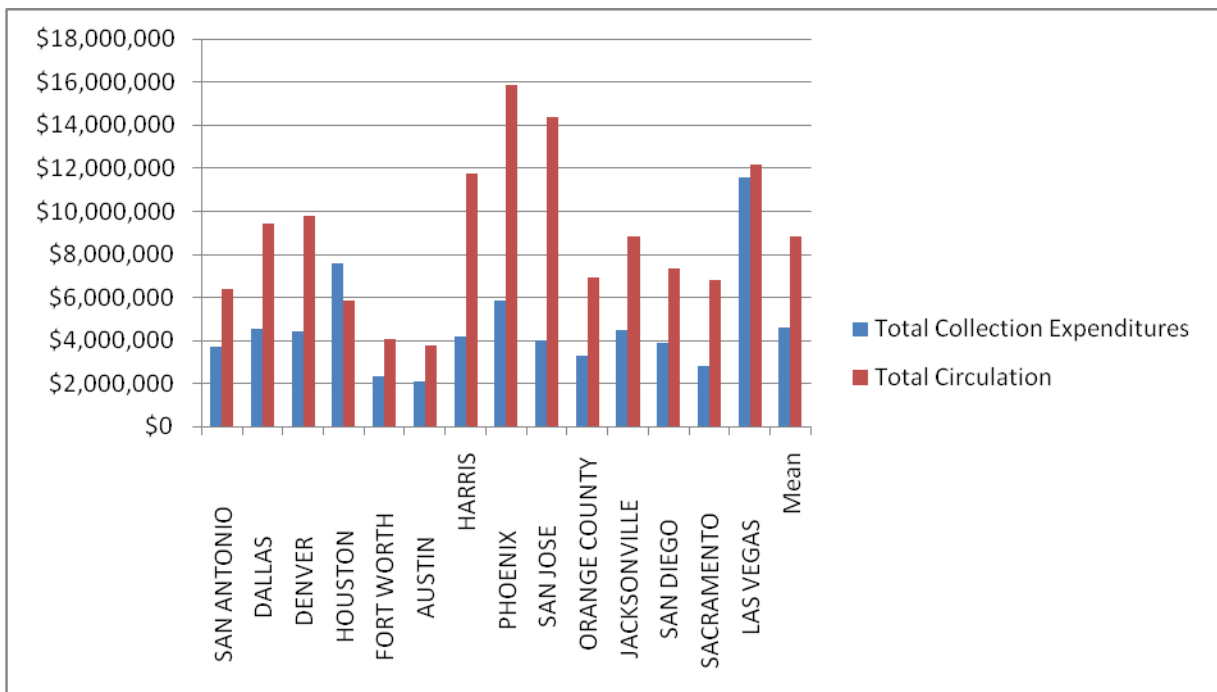
Finding: San Antonio's relatively small collection purchasing, correlating with its collection size and circulation, is below the average of its peers and aspirational libraries. Increased outputs are likely to occur if San Antonio can increase its collection expenditures.

Key observations:

- San Antonio ranked relatively low in print materials: 11th in print expenditures and print materials owned and 13th in print expenditures *per capita* and print materials owned *per capita*.
- SAPL was also relatively low in electronic materials expenditures (8th) and holdings (11th e-books and 9th databases).
- The Library fared better with media: it was above average in "other" materials expenditures. However, it ranked 7th in video holdings, which was below average.
- SAPL's total collection expenditures ranking was 10th among peers and was \$940,341 off the average collection budget of the group.
- Ranked 12th in *per capita* collection expenditures, San Antonio spent \$1.46 less than the average spent by the other libraries.



- SAPL was ranked 8th in its 12.8% expenditures on collection as percentage of budget—a figure .74% less than the average.
- Four peers spent a single-digit percentage on collections, and Houston spent a high of 20.8%. All but one aspirational peer was below the 12% threshold, and they have many more branches that increase personnel and other costs.
- The relatively low collection expenditures and collection sizes are probable contributors to San Antonio’s 11th place ranking in circulation and 13th place ranking in circulation *per capita*. That said, the chart below shows that peer libraries get more circulation for the dollars spent.
- Except for Chicago, aspirational libraries have double-digit circulation *per capita*. It is not unreasonable to suggest that additional collection expenditures and growth could boost checkouts and overall library use, especially in a slow-growth economy where people are still restricted in discretionary spending for books and media.



Library Name	Total Collection Expenditures	Total Collection Exp Per Capita	Collection % of Budget	Circulation	Circulation Per Capita
Peer Group					
SAPL RANK	10	12	8	11	13
San Antonio	\$3,686,724	\$2.38	12.80%	6,374,109	4.12
Dallas	\$4,544,810	\$3.66	13.80%	9,455,396	7.62
Denver	\$4,439,413	\$7.44	14.20%	9,776,905	16.39
Houston	\$7,559,304	\$3.42	20.80%	5,838,587	2.64
Ft. Worth	\$2,338,381	\$3.43	13.30%	4,053,211	5.94
Austin	\$2,128,586	\$2.86	9.10%	3,791,515	5.1
Harris	\$4,182,099	\$2.80	16.70%	11,773,024	7.88
Phoenix	\$5,831,423	\$3.79	15.70%	15,835,086	10.29
San Jose	\$4,033,405	\$4.08	10.90%	14,399,685	14.55
Orange	\$3,319,405	\$2.14	8.50%	6,908,477	4.45
Jacksonville	\$4,476,685	\$4.95	12.60%	8,824,972	9.75
San Diego	\$3,873,748	\$2.90	9.70%	7,374,378	5.52
Sacramento	\$2,817,331	\$2.08	8.90%	6,806,754	5.04
Las Vegas	\$11,547,594	\$7.79	22.60%	12,170,182	8.21
PEER MEAN	\$4,627,065	\$3.84	13.54%	8,813,020	7.68
PEER MEDIAN	\$4,107,752	\$3.43	13.05%	8,099,675	6.78
Aspirational Group					
Denver	\$4,439,413	\$7.44	14.20%	9,776,905	16.39
Queens	\$10,994,034	\$4.93	10.50%	23,239,871	10.42
Multnomah	\$5,932,473	\$8.36	11.30%	20,394,496	28.72
Seattle	\$5,675,023	\$9.57	11.30%	11,196,338	18.89
San Francisco	\$8,474,170	\$10.28	11.60%	8,334,391	10.11
Chicago	\$10,718,400	\$3.70	11.40%	7,771,541	2.68
ASP. MEAN	\$7,705,586	\$7.38	11.72%	13,452,257	14.54
ASP. MEDIAN	\$7,203,322	\$7.90	11.35%	10,486,622	13.41

Analysis: Finances

Finding: San Antonio ranks low among peers for operating revenues and expenditures but cost-effective for expenditure per circulation. Aspirational libraries had considerably higher revenues *per capita*. SAPL's 11th place rank in circulation is correlated to its revenues and expenditures rankings.

Key Observations:

- IMLS shows San Antonio Public Library reported \$0 state or federal revenue in 2008, which skews numbers. It is unknown if this is actual income or reporting error.
- The library is ranked low and below average in local, other, and total revenues, and 12th in total revenues *per capita* among peers. The aspirational libraries have much higher revenues *per capita*.
- SAPL is 11th and below average in total operating expenditures and 12th in the *per capita* marker.
- SAPL ranks 3rd in capital revenues and 7th in capital expenditures—figures which vary widely among the studied libraries and are highly variable over time.
- San Antonio is a cost-effective operation, below average for expenditure per circulation at \$4.17, ranking 9th highest of the group range of \$2.21 to \$5.87. Three aspirational libraries have higher expenditures per circulation.



Library Name	Total Revenue	Total Revenue Per Capita	Total Operating Expenditure	Total Op. Expend. Per Capita	Expenditure Per Circulation
Peer Group					
SAPL RANK	11	12	11	12	9
San Antonio	\$29,105,990	\$18.80	\$28,837,166	\$18.63	\$4.17
Dallas	\$32,895,470	\$26.52	\$32,887,554	\$26.51	\$2.89
Denver	\$33,646,281	\$56.40	\$31,213,951	\$52.32	\$3.42
Houston	\$37,992,509	\$17.21	\$36,438,366	\$16.50	\$5.74
Ft. Worth	\$17,850,319	\$26.18	\$17,573,029	\$25.77	\$4.48
Austin	\$24,766,956	\$33.33	\$23,448,906	\$31.56	\$5.87
Harris	\$25,397,907	\$17.00	\$25,075,447	\$16.78	\$2.21
Phoenix	\$37,903,174	\$24.64	\$37,077,604	\$24.10	\$2.41
San Jose	\$39,018,217	\$39.43	\$36,877,517	\$37.27	\$2.45
Orange	\$42,112,694	\$27.14	\$39,096,303	\$25.20	\$5.48
Jacksonville	\$39,844,928	\$44.03	\$35,583,653	\$39.32	\$4.21
San Diego	\$41,443,616	\$31.00	\$40,091,916	\$29.99	\$5.67
Sacramento	\$36,828,608	\$43.07	\$31,830,164	\$23.55	\$5.03
Las Vegas	\$63,859,011	\$28.89	\$51,192,599	\$34.52	\$4.48
PEER MEAN	\$35,904,691	\$30.97	\$33,373,155	\$28.72	\$4.18
PEER MEDIAN	\$37,365,891	\$28.02	\$34,235,604	\$26.14	\$4.35
Aspirational Group					
Denver	\$33,646,281	\$56.40	\$31,213,951	\$52.32	\$3.42
Queens	\$91,228,606	\$40.92	\$104,501,900	\$46.87	\$4.32
Multnomah	\$57,993,467	\$81.68	\$52,503,945	\$73.95	\$2.47
Seattle	\$50,822,909	\$85.73	\$50,357,368	\$84.95	\$5.40
San Francisco	\$78,699,777	\$95.45	\$72,794,183	\$88.29	\$8.74
Chicago	\$99,548,289	\$34.37	\$94,475,301	\$32.62	n/a
ASP. MEAN	\$68,656,555	\$65.76	\$67,641,108	\$63.17	\$4.87
ASP. MEDIAN	\$68,346,622	\$69.04	\$62,649,064	\$63.14	\$4.32

Analysis: Services

1. Circulation

Finding: The circulation ranking of 11th correlates with similarly-ranked expenditures and collection figures, and reflects the general principle that larger expenditures and collections generate higher circulation.

One notable figure was San Antonio's 2nd place ranking for children's materials circulation as a portion of total circulation, which implies heavy use by families and juveniles. Collection turnover (collection size divided by circulation) is below average and a generally desired standard of 4.

Library Name	Circulation	Circ Per Capita	Circ Per Visit	Circ Per Hour	Circ of Children's Materials	Children's Circ % of Total Circ	Collection Turnover
SAPL RANK	11	13	9	9	9	2	8
San Antonio	6,374,109	4.12	1.46	107.68	2,616,360	41.40%	3.13
MEAN	8,813,020	7.68	1.78	152.616	2,982,099	35.48%	4.10
MEDIAN	8,099,675	6.78	1.75	133.37	2,735,741	37.40%	3.19
ASPIRE MEAN	13,452,257	14.54	2.22	207.88	3,966,208	28.47%	6.03

2. Visits

Finding: SAPL was ranked 2nd in hours per outlet. While below average for visits and visits *per capita*, SAPL ranked higher (8th) in visits per hour.

The number of outlets and hours open have a great impact on visits. San Antonio's peers have a range of 38 to 15 outlets, with San Antonio right at the median. The contrast between SAPL's relatively high number of hours and low visits may suggest a lower-than-desired traffic flow.

Library Name	Number of Outlets	Avg. Public Service Hours per Outlet	Visits	Visits per Capita	Visits per Hour
SAPL RANK	7	2	11	12.0	8.0
San Antonio	26	58	4,267,488	2.8	74.0
MEAN	26	49	5,075,415	4.4	83.7
MEDIAN	25	48	4,998,925	4.3	82.8
ASPIRE MEAN	41	47	7,444,622	8.0	92.3

3. Programs

Finding: San Antonio's programs were a success story. SAPL ranked 6th in program attendance and 4th in children's program attendance.

SAPL ranked above peer and aspirational library means in attendance per program; this underutilized statistic demonstrates the return on staff time and library resources for labor-intensive programming.

Library Name	Total Library Programs	Total Program Attendance	Children's Program Attendance	Attendance per Program	Program Attendance per Capita
SAPL RANK	9	6	4	n/a	7
San Antonio	7,805	220,401	170,318	28.2	0.14
MEAN	8,985	237,174	154,862	26.4	0.21
MEDIAN	7,888	211,411	155,427	26.8	0.15
ASPIRE MEAN	13,526	295,200	242,466	21.8	0.40

4. PUBLIC COMPUTING

Finding: San Antonio is relatively lower than peers in public computing, with fewer terminals (last in average terminals per outlet). Nevertheless, SAPL ranks higher (8th) in number of computer users and use *per capita*, indicating both need and potential for growth.

Library Name	Users of Public Internet Computers	Number of Public Internet Terminals	Avg Internet Terminals Per Outlet	Public Computer Use Per Capita
SAPL RANK	9	13	14	8
San Antonio	1157290	352	15	0.75
MEAN	1308588	652	27	1.20
MEDIAN	1205163	560	23	1.02
ASPIRE MEAN	1,883,555	809	21	1.64

5. REFERENCE

Finding: San Antonio is above-average among peers in reference transactions. Its numbers come close to aspirational peers, some (i.e. Chicago) offering large central libraries with research-level resources and reference services.

This statistic is particularly impressive in a time when users are turning to non-library online resources for answers, and libraries are seeing reference numbers plummet.

Library Name	Reference Transactions	Reference Transactions per Capita
SAPL RANK	4	6
San Antonio	1,247,934	0.81
MEAN	959,701	0.82
MEDIAN	891,419	0.67
ASPIRE MEAN	1,515,706	1.45

Conclusions

In general, San Antonio's rankings were below-average IMLS benchmark numbers when compared to national and state peers.

Similarly, the *Hennen* (290 vs. group average of 414) and *LJ* (215 vs. group average of 358) scores, which both ranked SAPL 9th of 13 peers, were below the mean. Many SAPL IMLS rankings were 11th or lower in finances, collections, and services. There is a close relationship between the numbers that suggests additional funding can support greater collection expenditures and increased use of materials.

San Antonio successes:

- *Staffing levels, productivity, and costs:* San Antonio had more staff, especially professionals, than peers but had lower numbers for FTEs per 1,000 population. Although the productivity measure of circulation per FTE hour was low, when San Antonio's high reference and program numbers are considered, there appear to be positive levels of public contact across all services. Overall, it does not appear that staffing numbers are inappropriate. Personnel costs are low compared to peers, indicating the possibility of low compensation that has a negative impact on retention and recruitment while paradoxically pleasing elected officials demanding budget efficiencies.
- *Children's use:* Children's circulation percentages and program attendance were high compared to peers and indicate a family-friendly service mix.
- *Reference:* Transactions were above peers and close to aspiration libraries, including some who have considerably more research capability.
- *Hours:* San Antonio was 2nd in average number of hours per outlet. This is a strong foundation for improving service measures, because circulation and other service counts typically dive when hours are reduced.
- *Collections:* Expenditures for "other" materials (media) were above average, reflecting the trend for libraries to address increasing public demand for movies and music.
- *Interlibrary loan:* Although not addressed in detail, there was above-average ILL activity.



Areas for work group study:

- *Financials*: San Antonio tended to rank 10-13th out of 13 peers in revenues and expenditures, invaluable data for advocacy in regards to local government funding.
- *Collections*: Expenditures and size are relatively low, and collection growth would likely propel circulation.
- *Circulation*: Many factors affect circulation, including weather, building renovations, and local economic conditions, and the numbers do not reveal any abnormalities which could have affected checkouts. San Antonio has the potential for higher circulation given its hours open to the public. Additional collection expenditures and marketing of library resources are critical to spurring circulation growth.

Sources

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