

From: [Larra Clark](#)
To: [Sandra Webb](#)
Cc: [Alan Inouye](#)
Subject: Notice of Proposed Information Collection Request: Public Libraries Survey FY 2019-FY 2021
Date: Friday, August 2, 2019 1:45:49 PM
Attachments: [IMLS FR notice ALA-PLA response 8.2.19.pdf](#)

Dear Dr. Webb,

The American Library Association (ALA) and its Public Library Association (PLA) division appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Notice of Proposed Information Collection Request: Public Libraries Survey FY 2019-FY 2021. Together ALA and PLA are significant users of the Public Libraries Survey (PLS), as well as contributors to its ongoing relevance and use as part of the Library Statistics Working Group and the Measures that Matter initiative.

We believe this annual survey is vitally necessary to national library organizations to inform library advocacy, assessment, and continuous improvement. It is a foundational dataset for other national, state and local library data and research efforts, including PLA's Project Outcome and other library data projects. Its results also are used by individual public libraries to understand service trends across the industry and to compare themselves against their peers.

ALA and PLA also use the data to respond to contextualize and inform responses to media inquiries related to library funding and library use, for instance. We have used the data in collaboration with national partners, such as the National Association of Counties, to identify and aggregate information about county-based library systems. And we have recommended the data to other researchers like those at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, which incorporated the data into an overlay for its seminal [hard to count map](#) and its analysis that found that 99 percent of hard-to-count census tracts have a public library located within five miles. And these are just a few examples from the last 18 months of ways the survey data have informed policymaking, communications and collaboration.

The ALA is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, the ALA has been the trusted voice for academic, public, school, government and special libraries, advocating for the profession and the library's role in enhancing learning and ensuring access to information for all.

The PLA is a division of the ALA and the largest association dedicated to supporting the unique and evolving needs of public library professionals. PLA serves nearly 9,000 members in public libraries large and small in communities across the United States and Canada, with a growing presence around the world. PLA strives to help its members shape the essential institution of public libraries by serving as an indispensable ally for public libraries.

We look forward to continuing our work with IMLS and other library stakeholders to support and enhance the PLS and to maximize its use for policymaking, benchmarking and local library decision making. (A copy of these comments also is attached.)

Warm regards,

/s/ Alan S. Inouye, Ph.D.

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