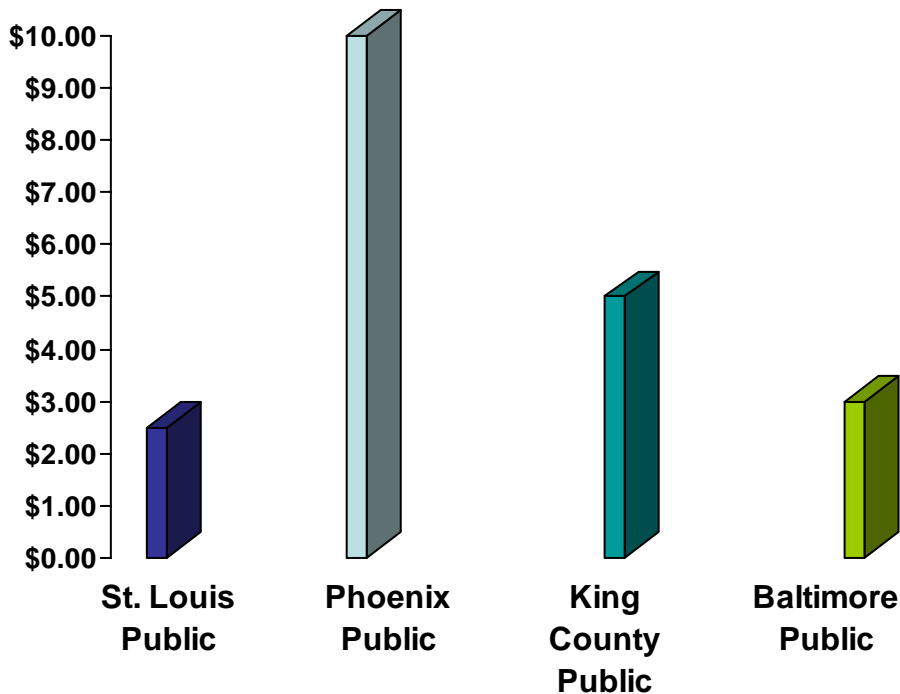


What does a library card buy these days?

Folks often ask, “What does a library card buy these days?” Well, according to a study by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), it is apparent that a library card buys more than it did 100 years ago; and to no surprise, libraries have remarkably advanced to become one of our nations’ most “valued destinations,” yielding tremendous buying power. In 2003, it was estimated that five times more people visited U.S. public libraries annually, than attend U.S. professional and college football, basketball, baseball and hockey games combined. If library patrons paid an average of \$34 dollars per visit, libraries would generate more than \$39 billion in annual revenues. Library expenditures for U.S. libraries equal some \$14 billion annually. This exceeds U.S. spending on both videos and athletic footwear combined. A further look at return on investment per tax dollars spent in public libraries (dollar for dollar) in five of our nation’s top libraries identifies benefits as follows:

Library Tax Dollars Returned 2006



Courtesy of Online Computer Library Center, Inc. 2007

Small world lives: implications for the public library, an article examining perspectives on the role of libraries notes, “not much has been discussed about the public library’s role in the larger society” and, if libraries are to remain the “common man’s university” providing benefits such as library card services, then a closer look is needed as to where the common man resides in the information landscape. Of course, this begins with an examination of both sectors of our user and non-user library communities. In line with Chatman’s report, seeking to help tax payers get the greatest benefits from tax dollars spent requires greater introspection of every facet of the library community’s lives and lifestyles. Moreover, administrators of libraries are best served to equip their tax payers with as much knowledge and understanding in how the public library works to earn them more.

In placing a dollar value on the average library card and library visit, there is much that can be gleaned from this exercise. A family of five, based upon *Sulphur Springs Public Library’s Rules for Checkout*, could easily acquire the following on a first time visit to the library:

At least 15 books = \$ 225

Up to 5 VHS movies = \$60

Up to 5 DVD movies = \$ 125

Up to 25 audio books = \$210

Total value to patrons* \$620 (Based upon initial checkout rule)

This is an excellent example of how your tax dollars are working to provide you more, particularly considering the cost of living these days. Let’s take another look at how your tax dollars are being put to go use through the use of a library card and the services the public library has to offer. How many times have you needed to acquire an item not owned by your public library but may be readily available at another? Sometimes, even with the most generous collection development budget, a library finds that it has to put funds elsewhere. Rather than being able to simply buy books, there usually remains an extended need to acquire newer, more popular media like DVDs, audio CDs, etc. In this case, Interlibrary Loan Services provide an ample opportunity for patrons to acquire the item or items for free or depending

upon whether it will need to be shipped through the mail, the additional cost of shipping.

For those who may be traveling during the summer months, TexShare Library Cards offer a splendid opportunity to partake in the services of public libraries throughout the state, merely by applying for a card at your home library ahead of time. Upon receipt of a TexShare Library Card, patrons are subject to rules and regulations of member libraries within the state, which means big savings through the checkout of any number of items, depending upon each participating library.

Sulphur Springs Public Library also provides several other services of significant benefit to tax payers such as access to the Internet (Ethernet or wireless); material reserves, reference and database research and access to public programming like book talks, summer reading club, and workshops. Overall, public library card services are an excellent example of tax dollars being put to good use. Be sure you check with your local public library to see what services are offered in your area. Should there be a service offering you'd like to see be made available, please share it with us as we look to broaden our service offerings. More than likely, someone else will be interested, too! When it comes to looking at how families in our community can enhance their lifestyles by taking advantage of the services public libraries provide at virtually pennies on the tax dollar, Sulphur Springs Public Library looks to go the distance in meeting your expectations.

Online Computer Library Center statistics retrieved on July 10, 2007 at [http:// www.oll.org](http://www.oll.org)

Pendleton, V. E., Chatman, E. A. (1998), Small World Lives: Implications for the Public Library, *Library Trends*, v46 n4 p.732-51 Spr 1998.