



Libraries and the 2020 Census

Vital Partners for a Complete Count

The 2020 Census will have far-reaching impacts on political representation and government funding: ensuring a complete and accurate count is crucial. But the Census faces significant challenges. The 2020 Census will take place primarily online, even as many residents lack home internet access. Many people also are not aware of the importance of the Census and how it will affect their lives or may have online privacy or security concerns.

America's libraries are ideal partners to help address these challenges. Libraries are trusted institutions and experienced collaborators—providing information, technology, and training resources to enable Americans to connect with government for many purposes. With a convenient presence in communities across the country, from inner-city neighborhoods to remote tribal lands, libraries can help Census stakeholders reach the full range of audiences. **State and local policymakers, the Census Bureau, Congress, foundations, and other stakeholders should partner with libraries as they work to ensure a successful 2020 Census.**

Libraries are essential, trusted partners in achieving a complete count in the 2020 Census. Libraries:

Deliver information about the Census and host community outreach activities.

Provide internet access and enable respondents to complete the Census form online.

Serve as trusted messengers, including in hard-to-count communities.

Train data users and provide access to Census statistics for businesses and community members.

Partners for Civic Success

Libraries often work with public agencies to achieve community priorities. Library staff connect people with the information they need to access government services and benefits, complete online forms, and engage with civic issues. For instance, library ►



New York Public Library's Chatham Square branch during the 2010 Census
 PHOTO CREDIT: RONG XIAOQING VIA FEET IN 2 WORLDS

partnerships help people apply for veterans' benefits, complete tax forms, understand health insurance options, and prepare to become U.S. citizens. By partnering with libraries, agencies can extend their reach for only modest incremental costs.

Libraries have similarly served as partners for the Census in previous counts. In the 2010 Census, libraries hosted more than 6,000 official Census Bureau outreach sites. Additionally, many libraries hosted community activities, such as an event organized by Asian-American community groups in the New York Public Library's Chatham Square branch, located in Chinatown.

With nearly 17,000 physical locations, public libraries can facilitate the work of Census stakeholders. For instance, the Grand Island (NE) Public Library hosted a 2020 Census planning meeting for local government leaders with the Census Bureau and the Nebraska State Data Center. In Rhode Island,

“At the heart of every community that seeks to achieve a complete count, there is a trusted and valuable resource: the library. The Census Bureau should fully utilize libraries to fulfill its constitutional obligation of counting everyone.”

—SENATOR JACK REED (RI)

the Pawtucket Public Library and several others hosted Census Bureau recruitment events for workers in the 2018 Census test. As the Census Bureau expects to hire and train more than 500,000 temporary workers for the 2020 Census, libraries will provide flexible workspaces and connect workers with online job applications and training.

Connecting America to the First Online Census

More than 24 million Americans do not have high-speed internet at home, according to the Federal Communications Commission. Older adults, rural residents, racial minorities, and

those with lower levels of education and income are less likely to have home broadband. America's libraries are the leading source of no-fee public access to the internet, Wi-Fi, computers and other devices, and technology training.

With the response to the 2020 Census designed to take place primarily online, libraries can bridge the digital divide and support a more complete count. For instance, during the Census test in Rhode Island, Providence Community Library branches raised awareness

of the survey and provided computers for Census respondents to use.

Reaching Hard-to-Count Communities

Providing accurate information that is relevant to different users' needs is a central mission of libraries. Every day, libraries provide information to diverse groups of people, including geographic and demographic communities that are considered hard to count in the Census. Libraries can leverage this experience and wide community engagement to serve as trusted messengers of information about participating in the 2020 Census.

Libraries have an extensive geographic presence in the communities that are at greatest risk of being undercounted in 2020. According to a recent analysis from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a public library is located within five miles

6,000+ LIBRARIES
 HOSTED CENSUS BUREAU
 OUTREACH SITES IN 2010.

99% OF HARD-TO-COUNT CENSUS TRACTS HAVE A PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCATED WITHIN FIVE MILES.

of 99% of the hard-to-count Census tracts identified with the lowest response rates in 2010—and 79% of the time, a library is within a single mile.

Libraries serve people of all ages and backgrounds and are well-positioned to reach some demographic groups that are at heightened risk of being undercounted in the Census. Children younger than 5 years old, for instance, are the most undercounted age group. The Annie E. Casey Foundation recommends libraries as a trusted messenger of information about Census participation to parents and guardians.

American Indians and Alaska Natives also are historically undercounted. Tribal leaders consulted by the Census Bureau recommended libraries as a communication channel to provide information about the Census to tribal citizens.

Through partnerships with Complete Count Committees and other community efforts, libraries can deliver accurate information about the importance of Census participation, options for responding, confidentiality and data security, and other topics critical to enabling a fair and inclusive count.

Using Census Data to Inform Communities

Libraries' involvement with the Census and its data will continue well after 2020. As information experts, library staff provide access to statistical information compiled by the Census Bureau. Libraries work with businesses, government agencies, community organizations, and students in using Census data to better understand their communities. For example:

The Chelsea (MI) District Library offered courses for local businesses on using Census data to research markets and locate workers.



Librarians from **Rutgers University in Newark (NJ)** teach entrepreneurs how to use Census data for business planning through workshops for the Small Business Development Center.

The Hannibal (MO) Free Public Library partnered with the city finance department to utilize Census data in the city's efforts to encourage investment on the South Side of Hannibal.



The University of California, Berkeley Libraries provided a workshop and online guide to enable Contra Costa County's Children & Families Commission to use Census data when updating its strategic plan.



The Palm Beach County (FL) Library System provided Census statistics about grandparents raising grandchildren that a local non-profit organization, Families First of Palm Beach County, used in a successful grant application.

The Drexel University Libraries in Philadelphia (PA) partner with the Dornsife School of Public Health to train graduate students on using Census data in community health assessments. ■



TAKEAWAYS FOR DECISION MAKERS

America's libraries are well-positioned to support a complete and accurate count in the 2020 Census. Decision makers should:

- Invite local libraries to participate on Complete Count Committees and related activities
- Partner with libraries to assist local residents in applying and training for Census jobs
- Host community meetings and outreach activities in libraries
- Provide resources so libraries can meet technology needs for online Census response
- Promote library services that provide access to Census data and training for data users

ABOUT AMERICA'S LIBRARIES



The 120,000 libraries across the United States are a powerful force in addressing public policy priorities. Libraries advance Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, and Engagement for Everyone, Everywhere—The E's of Libraries®.

Libraries serve America's cities, towns, counties, and states; on school and college campuses; on military bases; in hospitals, government agencies, corporations, and other institutions. Library professionals provide diverse programs, services and resources tailored to community needs.

The American Library Association (ALA) is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services, with more than 57,000 members. The ALA Annual Conference, held in June, typically attracts over 20,000 participants. ALA maintains a Washington Office to engage federal and national decision makers and influencers.

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