



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 – Central Library Lecture Room
3:30 p.m.**

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Library Board of Trustees of the Bellingham Public Library as authorized by RCW 27.12.210 and SEC. 7.02 Charter of the City of Bellingham.

Board Members Present: Jim McCabe, Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness and Melissa Morin

Board Members Absent: Rick Osen

Library Staff: Rebecca Judd, Bethany Hoglund, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Wendy Jenkins

Others Present: Kristina Michele Martens, City Council Liaison; Leigh Ann Giles and Jennie Tuckerman, Friends of BPL Co-Presidents; Carol Comeau, Friends volunteer

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Vice Chair, Jim McCabe. Carol Comeau was introduced. She will be serving as the Friends' representative for BPL board meetings, starting with the May board meeting.

Approve/modify agenda: Rebecca Judd mentioned that representatives from the Sister Cities Association will be meeting in the Lecture Room after the board meeting and may arrive early to speak with Board members informally about upcoming plans in the Friendship Garden. Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the agenda. Rebecca Craven seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: no comments.

Consent agenda: Jim observed that 2023 youth circulation is close to what it was in 2019; adult print circulation is still lagging behind; and computer usage is down significantly. Jon mentioned that he would share statistics and information about this later in the meeting. Bethany mentioned that online circulation for adults has increased significantly. Melissa Morin moved to approve the February 21, 2023 Regular meeting minutes and the February 2023 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Rebecca Craven seconded. Motion carried.

Board Vice Chair report:

- Jim reported that Rebecca Judd provided a well-received presentation to the Cordata Neighborhood Association on March 14.
- Jim visited the Spokane downtown library. He said it was a big building, but the square footage is not as usable as it is here. Their hold shelf contained only 30-40 holds – Jim verified with a librarian that this was the actual full count of their current holds at the downtown library.

Board member reports:

- No reports.

City Council liaison report:

- Kristina reported on the ordinance banning open drug use that did not pass at the March 13 Council meeting. She suggested the Library has experience with this issue and could provide feedback to help develop solutions.
- As community news, Kristina shared that Whatcom Intergenerational High School has organized a rally, *No More Stolen Sisters*, at Maritime Heritage Park on March 25 at noon.

Friends of BPL report:

- Co-Presidents Jennie and Leigh Ann introduced Carol Comeau as a long time Friends' member who has stepped up to serve as an At-large board member and board meeting representative.
- The Library Giving Day pop-up sale will be held on Wednesday, April 5, 2023 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Proceeds from this sale will go directly to the Bellingham Library Board of Trustees to purchase interactive educational panels for the Bellis Fair Branch Children's area.
- The Friends' Annual Membership meeting is on Saturday, April 22, starting at 10 a.m. in the Lecture Room. Rebecca Judd, Rick, and Katie Bray will all be speaking. Monica Koller, from Connecting Community, will also be presenting.

Library Director report:

- Rebecca provided an update on the Safety, Security and Ease item from last month's meeting:
 - a budget amendment is going forward for a 1.5 FTE increase in Security Attendants. This will allow for a security presence on both floors during all Central open hours.
 - Jen is working on procedures for staff-volunteer Narcan administration.
 - Human Resources has contracted with Labor & Industries to look into the impacts of controlled substances in library/parks public restrooms to make sure we are appropriately and safely handling the situation.
- The Central Library freight elevator is scheduled for modernization starting in early April. The elevator will be out of commission for approximately 6 weeks.
- A new position, Library Staff Development Coordinator, will post this Friday and run for 4 weeks. Rebecca encouraged Board members to share the posting with their networks.
- The Director's Report is in the newly adopted Ebrima font.

Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2022:

- Jon McConnel provided a reprise presentation of last February's Statistical Trends with updated 2022 data (*see Attachment #1 for Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2022, including slides and notes. All Attachments are at the end of the minutes*).

Facilities Committee update:

- Bellis Fair Branch pilot update: Rebecca Judd reported that with contracting pieces in place, on-site work is now beginning. In addition, Library staff are busy ordering materials for the opening day collection and training new Library clerks. A ribbon cutting ceremony with the Mayor and long-time northside Library advocate Julianna Guy is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Wednesday, April 26. Invitations will be sent soon. A small open house for mall neighbors will be held from 10-10:45 a.m. on the same day.
- RFQ update for Central Library remodel: Rebecca Judd reported the process is moving ahead, and the first round of architect interviews are finished. There is a good slate of candidates.

Fundraising update:

- Planned Giving: Kristy reported a contract has been signed with Rachel Meyer's company, RM+Co. Members of the Fundraising committee will be meeting with Rachel this week to discuss next steps. She will be invited to present at a board meeting later this spring, and hopefully the Friends as well.
- Library Giving Day, April 4, 2023: Rebecca Judd shared the image that will be used for advertising (*See Attachment #2 for Library Giving Day, April 4, 2023 image*). As soon as the Whatcom Community Foundation link is activated, Annette will send out information for the Board, Friends, and Kristina to share with contacts.

Policy update:

- Rescind Additional Temporary Rules of Conduct during COVID-19 Pandemic: Jen Vander Ploeg explained that this policy was written for the pandemic and no longer applies. Rebecca Craven moved that the Additional Temporary Rules of Conduct during COVID-19 Pandemic be rescinded. Kristy Van Ness seconded. Motion carried.

New Business:

- No new business

Action items for next meeting:

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 18, 2023 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

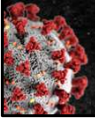
Attachments:

- Attachment #1: Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2022 (slides & notes)
- Attachment #2: Library Giving Day, April 4, 2023 image



Statistical Trends

Inputs and Outputs through 2022



It is statistics time! The Washington State Library has opened up the annual stats survey for 2022 metrics, and we thought it would be helpful to provide an update to the run-down shared the past two years of some of the statistics we report. Last year we reported through 2020 plus some 2021 measures for BPL & WCLS. This year it'll be the statewide stats for 2021 plus some 2022 data for us locals. The 2022 data comes from the Jan. 2023 Board Reports of BPL and Whatcom County Library System, and also from some reports I've run.

This year I want to change the focus of the report somewhat. Previous years have focused on how BPL is exceptional relative to other Washington libraries. This year I want to highlight ways in which we are more alike than different, especially in how we're impacted by external forces and societal trends. I'll be looking at two themes: First -- COVID impacts + recovery; and second, long-term trends impacting libraries, esp. the shift from physical to digital, and changes in computer & internet use.

RCW 27.12.260: Annual Report of Trustees

- At the close of each year the board of trustees of every library shall make a report to the legislative body of the governmental unit wherein the board serves, showing the condition of their trust during the year, the sums of money received for the library fund from taxes and other sources, the sums of money expended and the purposes of the expenditures, the number of books and periodicals on hand, the number added during the year, the number retired, the number loaned out, and such other statistics and information and such suggestions as they deem of public interest. A copy of this report shall be filed with the state librarian.
- [[1935 c 119 § 12](#); RRS § 8226-12. Prior: [1909 c 116 § 8](#); [1901 c 166 § 8](#).]

Quick reminder -- Libraries in Washington State are required to submit metrics to their sponsoring jurisdictions, and to the State Librarian. Nowadays there's an online tool to submit stats. Used to be a paper form....

Washington Public Library Statistics

sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/libDev/publications.aspx?WAStats

COB.ORG Staff Central Library Staff Home... Imported Thycotic Secret Ser... Outlook Online Secret Server Web... OverDrive API Stat... Dashboard - OCLC... IT Service Desk IT Service Des

SOS ABOUT THE LIBRARY RESEARCH & COLLECTIONS SERVICES FOR LIBRARIES MY ACCOUNT FIND A LIBRARY ASK A LIBRARIAN DONATE

Washington Public Library Statistics

Public library statistics including budget, collections, and usage data, are collected and compiled on an annual basis by Library Development staff. More statistics are available from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

[Washington 2020 Map of Public Library Service](#)

[2021 CSV file of Library Administrative Data and 2021 CSV file of Branch Library Data](#)

Note: the two csv (comma separated values) files contain the same data as presented in the Excel Spreadsheet below, but in a more open, non-proprietary format.

[2021 Excel Spreadsheet](#) - Note: there are multiple tabs

[2021 Full Report \(1.7 MB\)](#)

[2021 Report Categories](#)

COVID-19 Impacted Library Services	Library Programs
Top Ten Lists	Annual Library Service Measures
Summary of Service	Computers
Revenue and Expenditures Summary	Automated Systems, E-Rate and Filters
Total Revenue Sources	Electronic Service Measures
Operating Revenue Sources	Internet Presence
Local, Federal and Capital Revenue Detail	Branch Data
Local, State and Federal Revenue Per Capita Detail	Salaries
Total Expenditures	Benefits
Total Operating Expenditures Detail	Public Library Service by County
Personnel, Collection, Other & Capital Expenditures	Glossary
Outlets, Registered Users and Staff	Notes
Collection/Holdings	Credits
Circulation and Collection Use	Table of Contents
Resource Sharing: ILL and Cooperatives	

[Previous Statistics \(1999 - 2020\)](#)

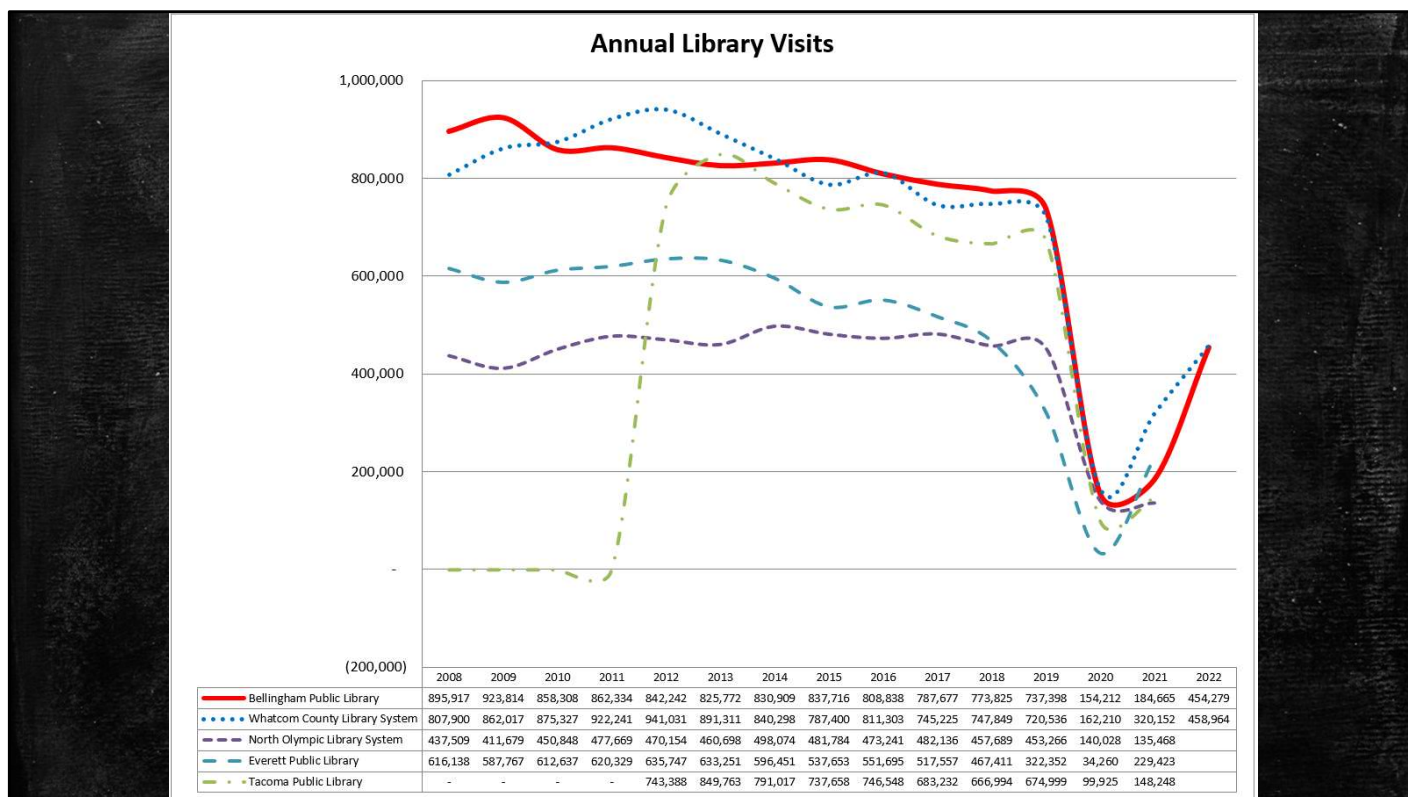
The Washington State Library collects the submitted data, cleans it up, does some analysis, and publishes each year's data online. They also pass the data along to the federal Institute for Museum and Library Services for their Public Libraries Survey.

[illegible][illegible]

In 2013 the Board of the Whatcom County Library System asked for a report on 10-year data trends in comparison to other comparable libraries. I pulled together 10 years of the Washington data and prepared a tool that would allow for comparisons, as well as making it fairly easy to change which libraries are being compared. I've been adding new data ever since. You can download the Excel file from the BPL website.

COVID-Related Trends

So let's get going!



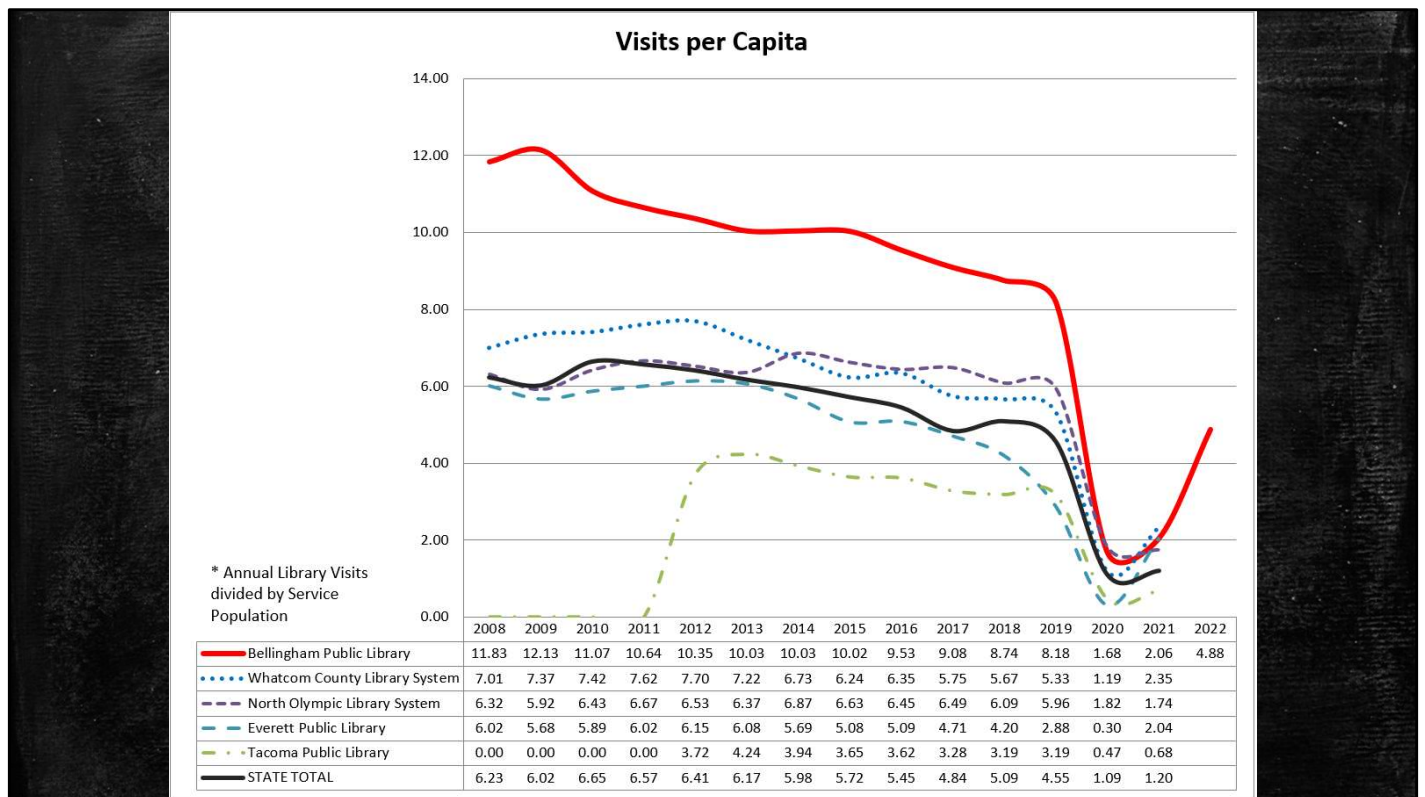
One thing we normally track is bodies in and out of our locations, divided by two to represent a 'Visit'.

BPL's visits have been trending down since 2009.

2020 was a real dive with COVID 19, but we started to climb out of the hole in 2021, though not as rapidly as WCLS.

In 2022 we very nearly caught up with WCLS!

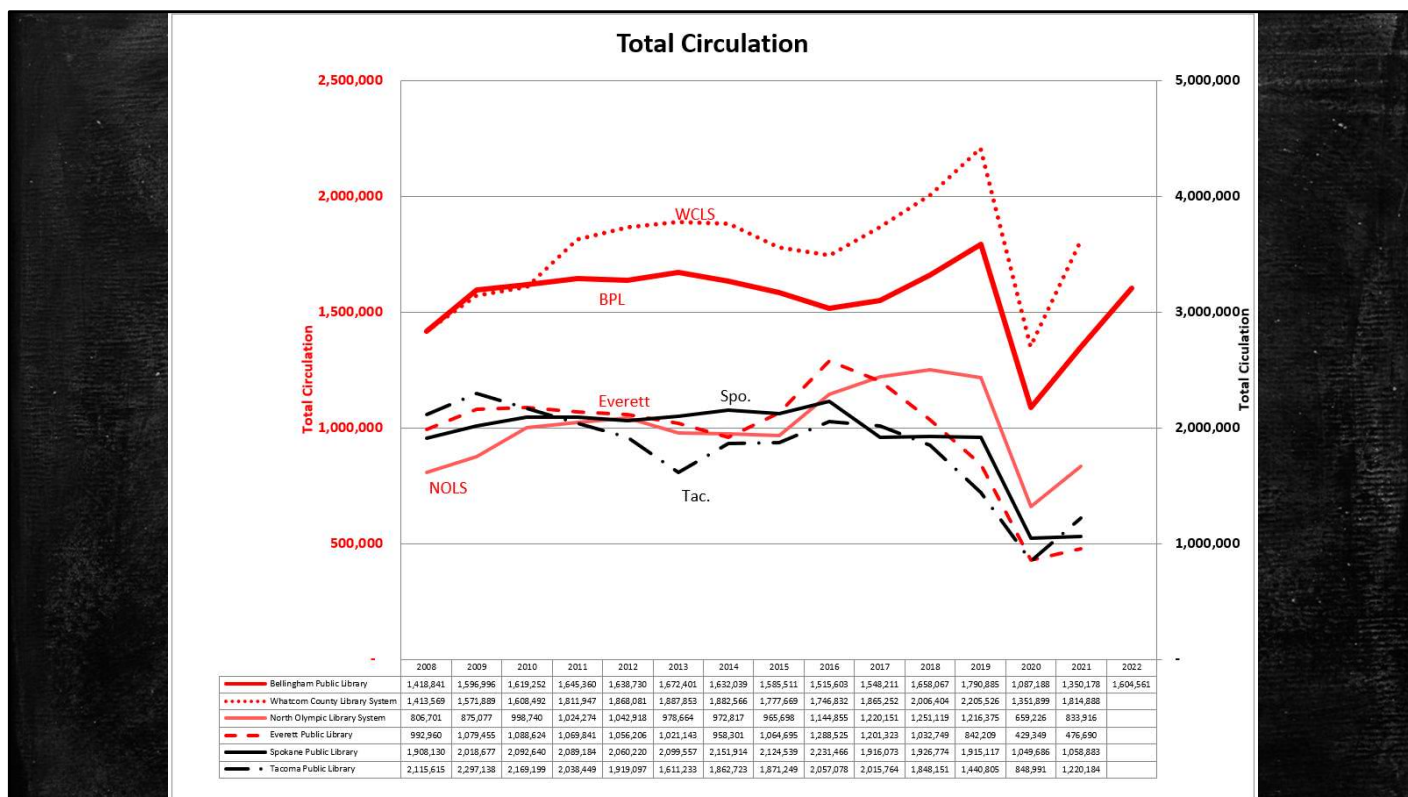
Neither of us are back to where we were pre-pandemic, but then the pandemic wasn't over in 2022 (and still isn't fully).



Visits normalized by Population:

For 2020 and '21 we dropped an enormous amount, even when curbside visits are counted. In 2022 BPL recovered about halfway to where the previous trends would likely have us. It'll be interesting to see if we climb all the way back up to that trendline, or not.

Next up: circulation!

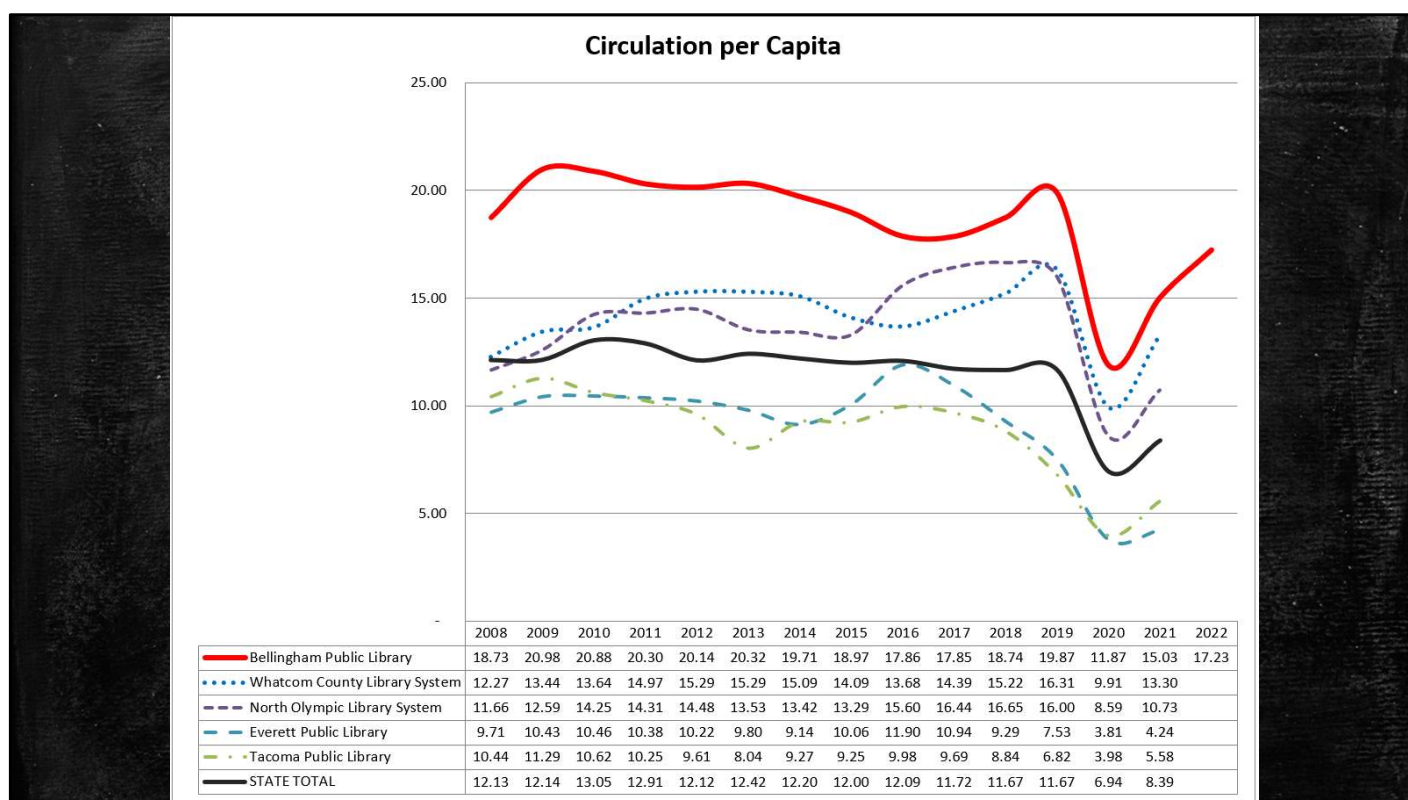


This compares BPL's total circulation to 3 libraries with similar-sized circulation, and 2 libraries, Spokane and Tacoma, with larger circulation, shown on a 2nd Y-Axis. BPL had a few years of declining circulation in the middle 20-teens, but the 3 years to 2019 saw increases when ebooks are included.

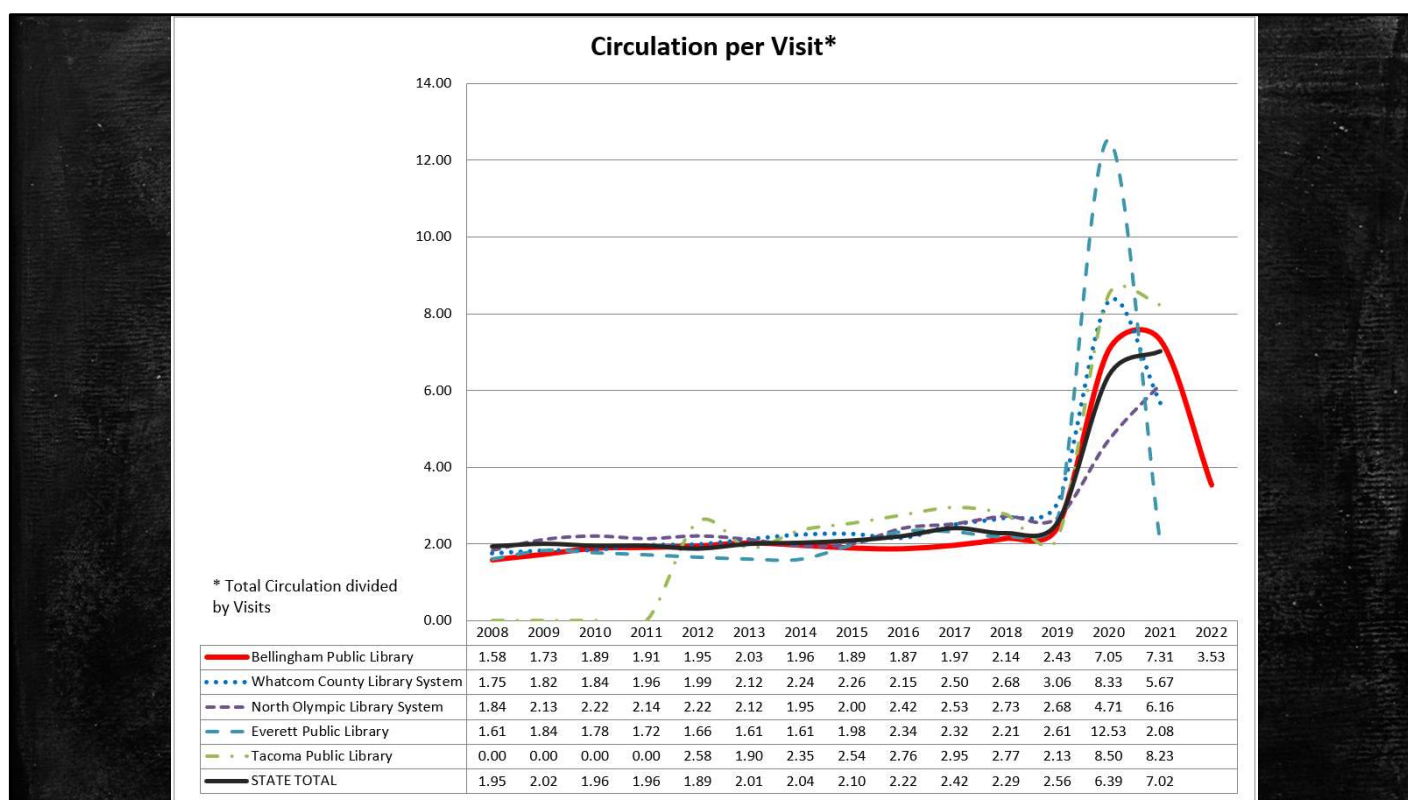
For 2022 we're pretty much back up to where we had been in the middle of the last decade.

There's a difference though – the split of what makes up the final number is shifting, but we'll get to that later.

This again doesn't really show the intensity of circulation at BPL, though. Again it helps to use per Capita-type comparisons....



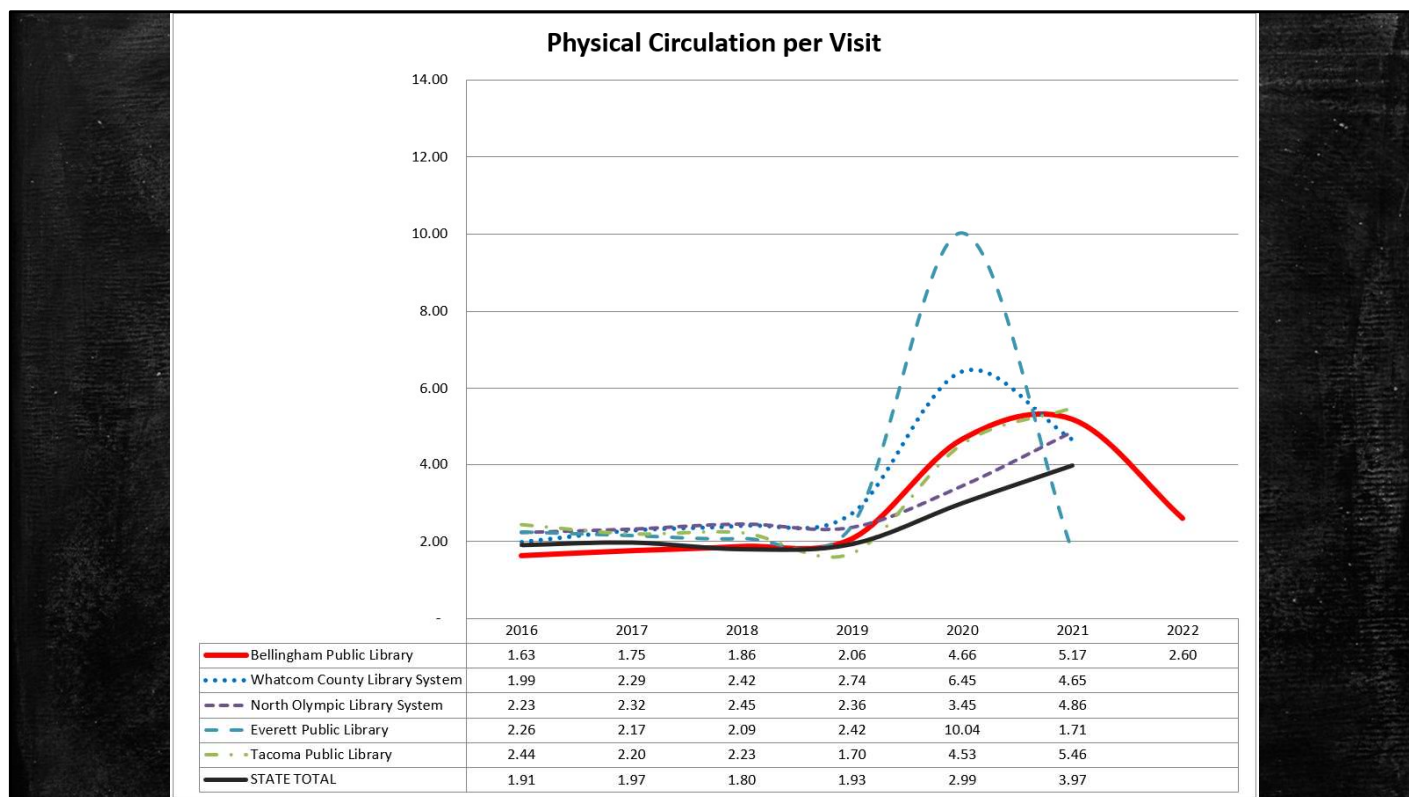
Circulation per Capita is a common metric, which shows us well above the State average. These libraries mostly kept their same order on this measure during the 2020 & 2021. BPL really looks to be recovering well.



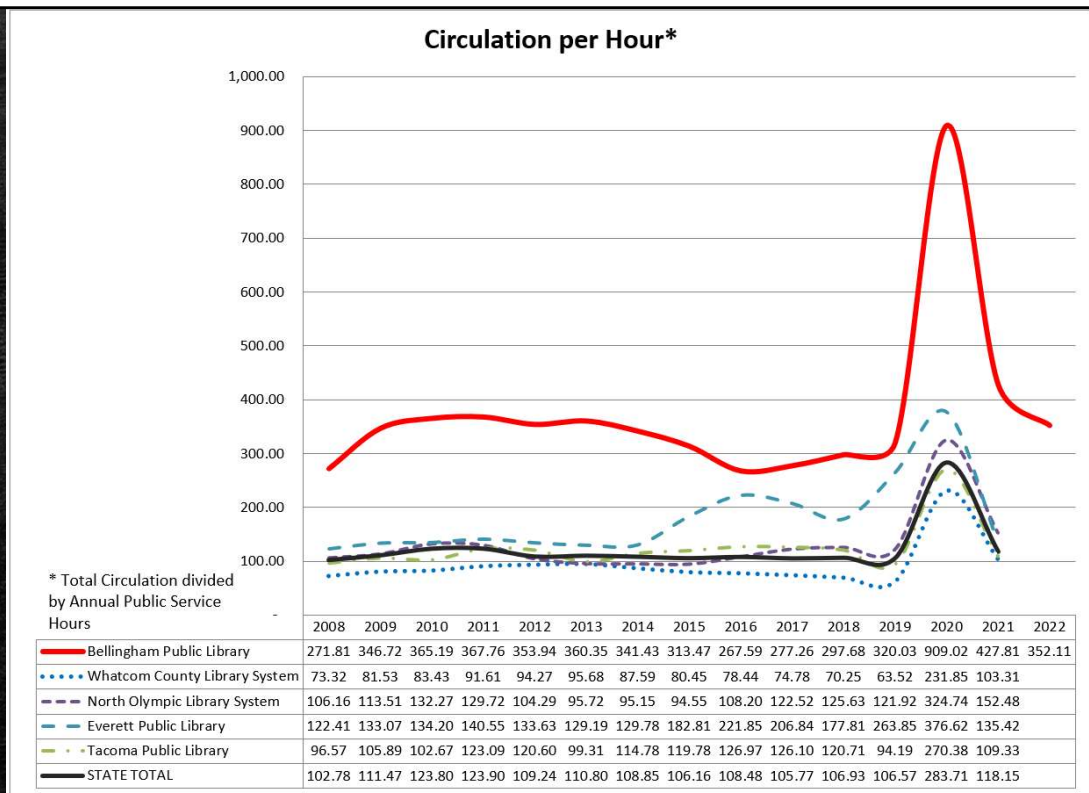
One metric that had a huge impact from the pandemic was Circulation per visit. The metric change from about 2 items per visit for all the libraries we're comparing here, to between 5 & 12 items per visit. The State average leapt up to 7 from 2; both BPL and WCLS saw large increases in 2020. WCLS decreased in 2021, while BPL actually increased a little bit more. Both during curbside and after, with in-person visits we see people borrowing more items at once, and visiting less frequently.

For 2022 BPL saw this return to much closer to a normal value as we opened back up and did much less curbside circulation.

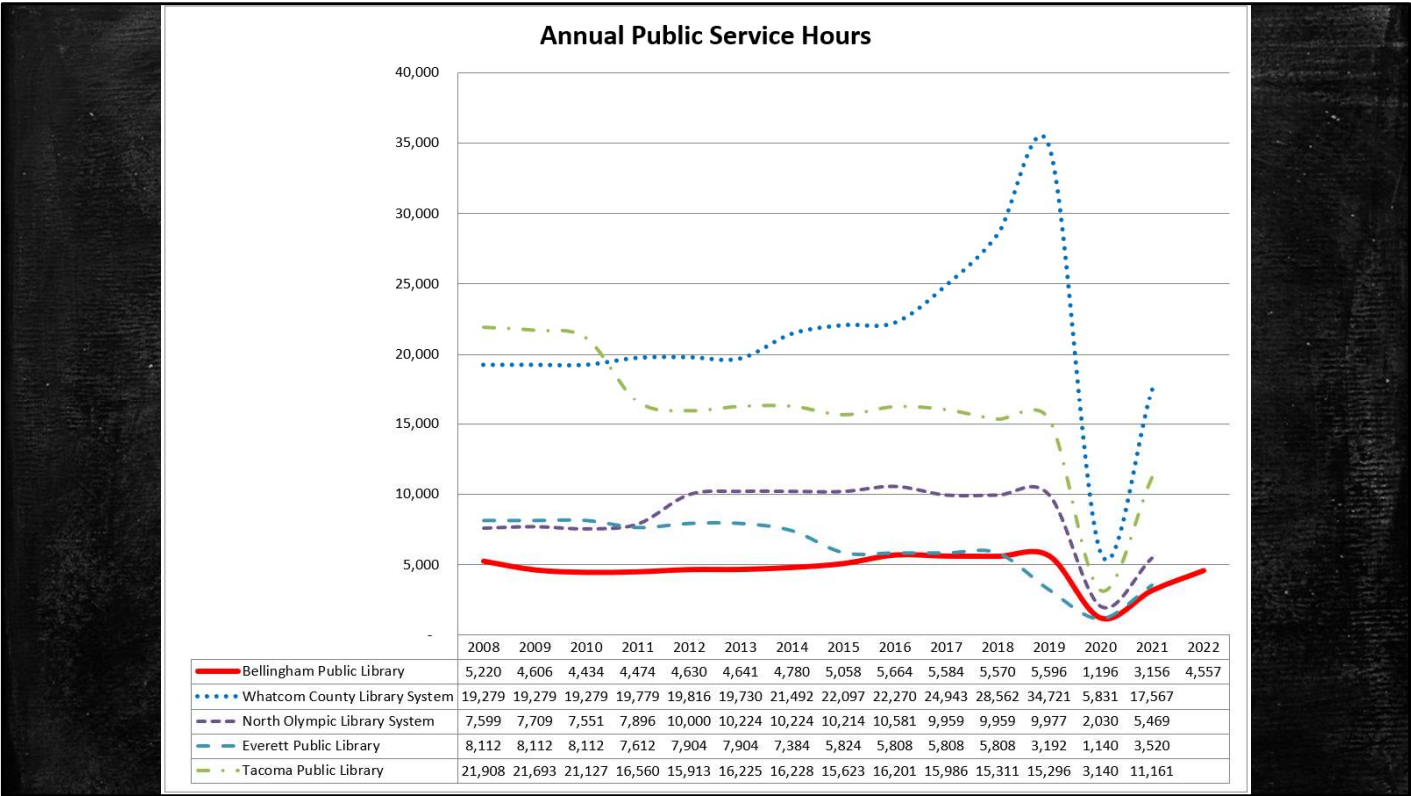
Note that 'Total Circulation' includes e-materials. A comparison based on physical materials would be a little bit different, but not hugely.



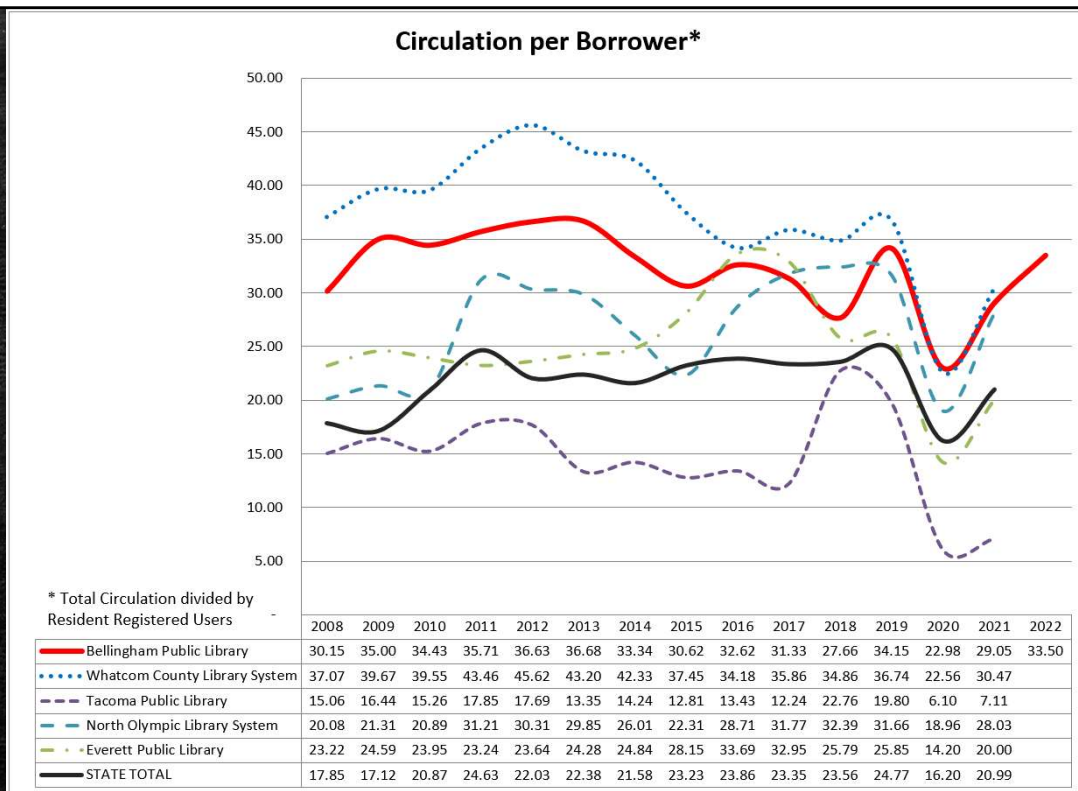
And in fact we do see a difference when we pull out electronic circs from the measure, though not an enormous one. BPL's peak in 2021 goes down 2.14 from 7.31 to 5.17 items borrowed per visit. 2020 had a larger impact, 7.05 to 4.66, a difference of 2.39. In 2022 we're still elevated a bit above pre-pandemic numbers.



Another metric where the pandemic had a big impact was Circulation per Hour (Total Circulation divided by Annual Public Service Hours). 2020 was extraordinary, while 2021 returned to a point more in the realm of sustainable workload. For 2022 we're pretty much back to pre-pandemic numbers. The spike was so high because, while circ. dropped by 40%, hours dropped by 78%.

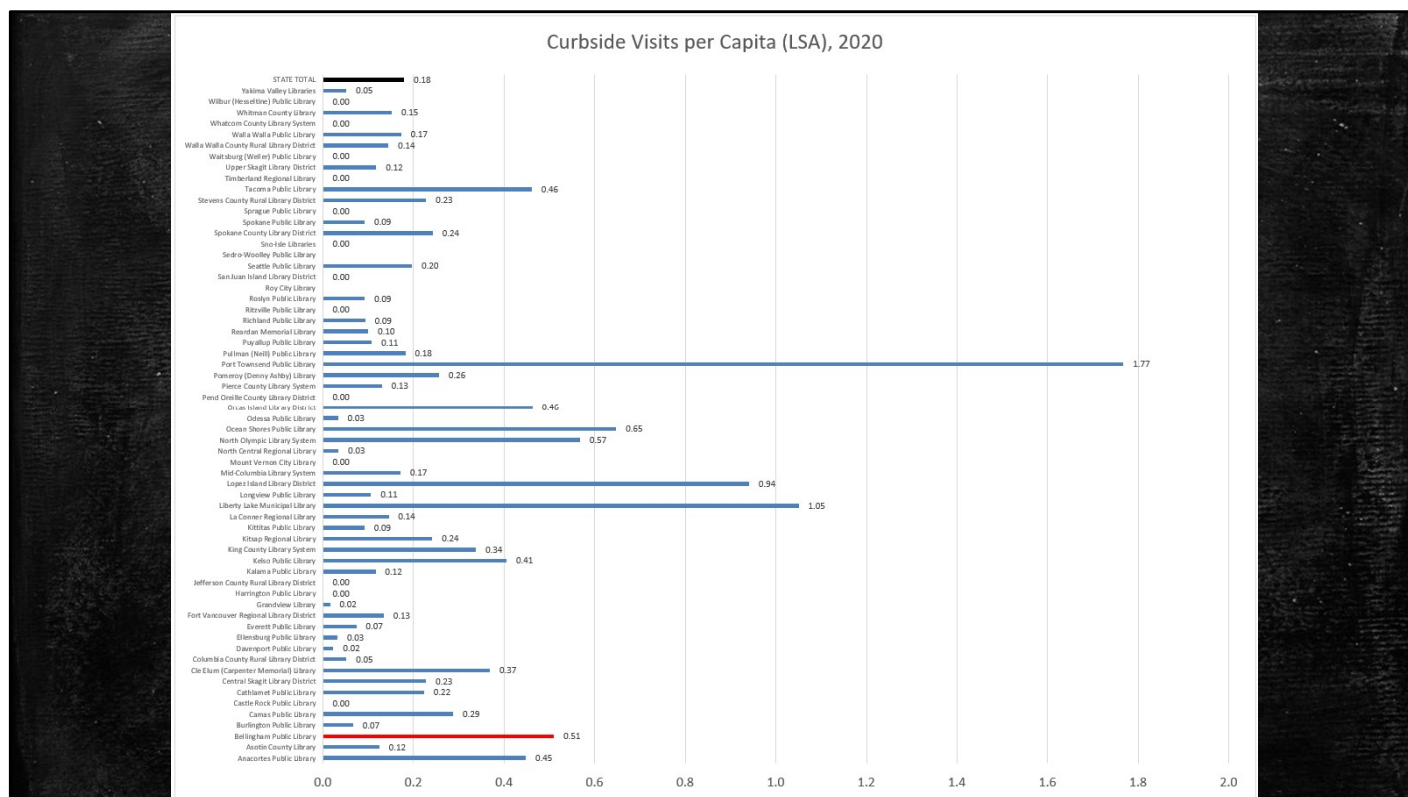


There has been a slight increase in the number of hours we're open to the public. This dropped dramatically for BPL, by 78% in 2020, but is recovering.



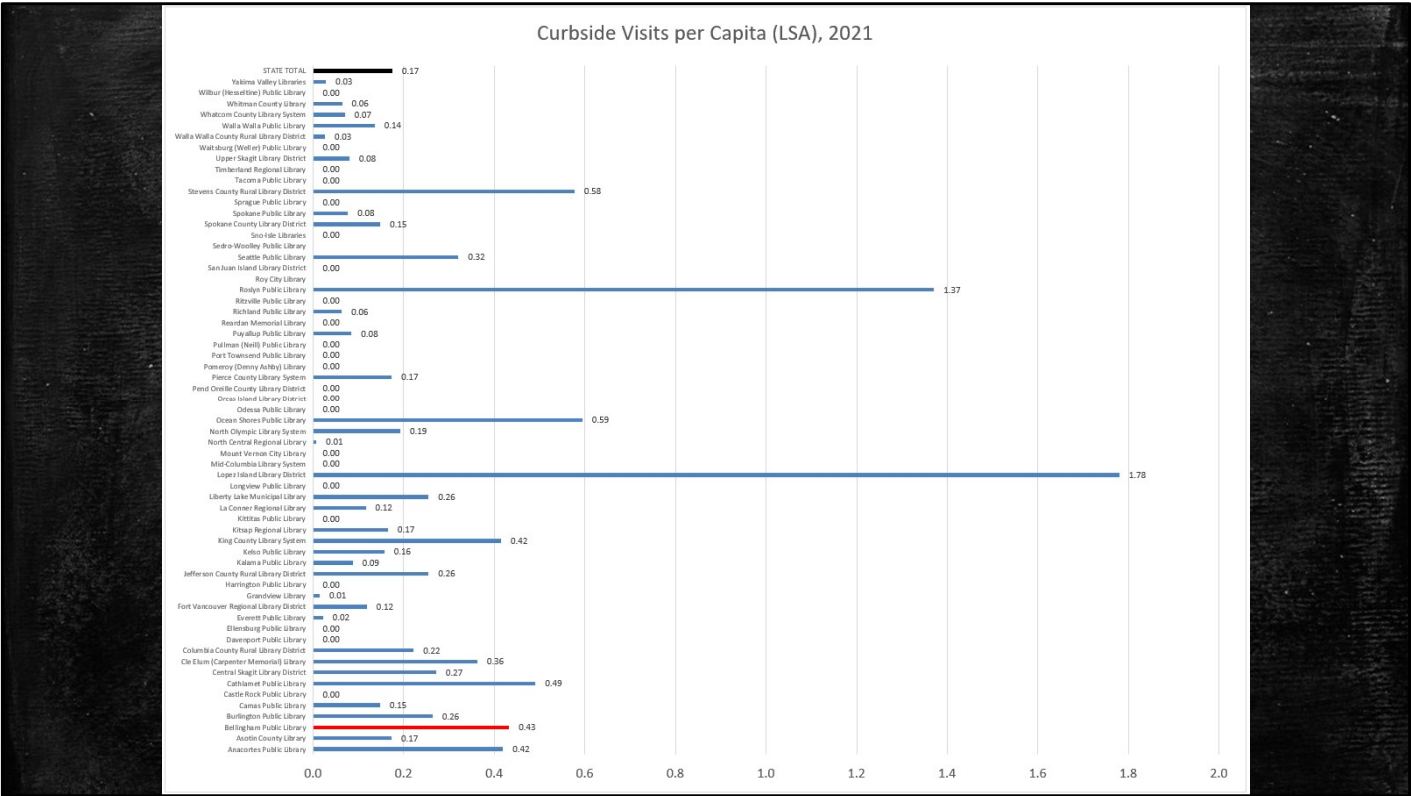
Circulation per Borrower is a less-common comparison. WCLS's cardholders had been borrowing at a higher rate than BPL's cardholders, both well above the State average, but the pandemic pretty much evened us up for 2020 & '21. BPL's recovery continued in 2022, nearly back on-trend pre-pandemic.

The pandemic had little to no immediate impact on our number of cardholders, hence the drop in this metric as circulation took a hit.

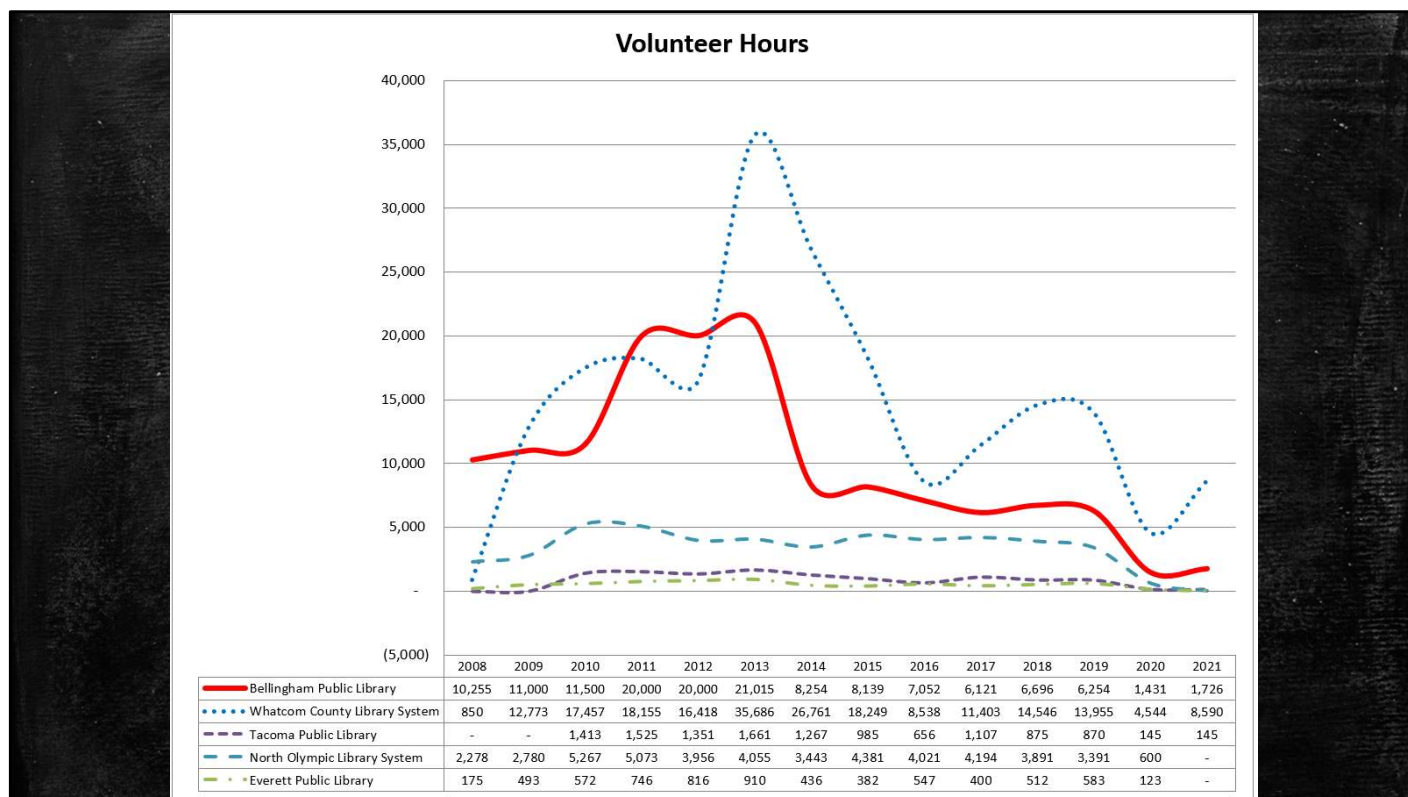


The pandemic has led to changes in what data the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the State Libraries are asking libraries to report. Added for 2020 were over a dozen new questions specifically related to service during the pandemic. Offering 'curbside' service was a common option for libraries, and we were asked to report on whether or not we offered curbside service, and if so, how many hours of curbside services were offered, and how many patron visits we had.

So here we have all 60 WA public libraries and a calculation of how many Curbside Visits per Capita each offered. BPL was in the top 10% (6th). WCLS did not report a count of curbside visits.



In 2021 BPL was 6th again, but out of 37 instead of 47, as some libraries apparently dropped curbside in 2021, or at least stopped reporting it.

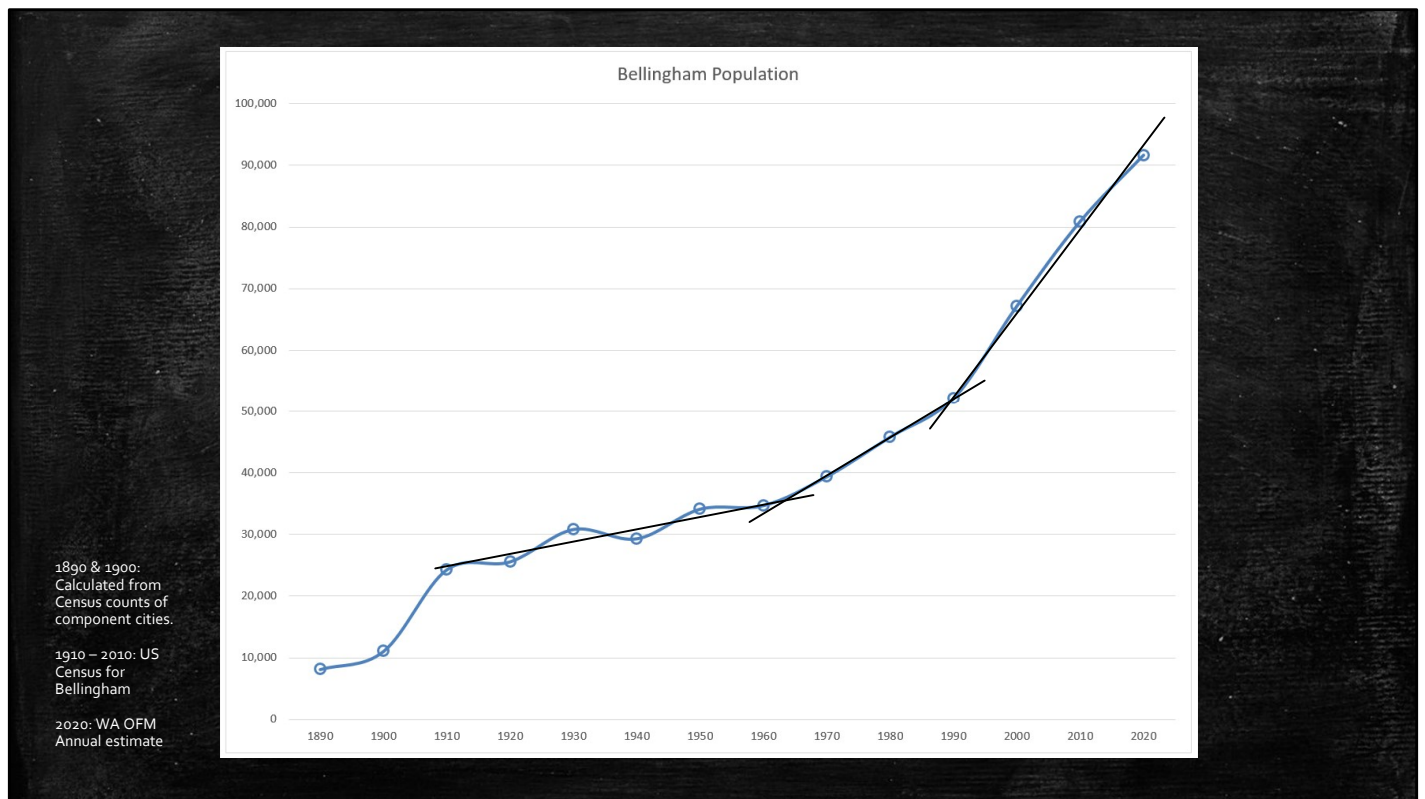


One more metric that had a substantial impact from the pandemic was reported Volunteer Hours. Our building was closed for a long time, and there were hurdles to getting volunteers back in the building. Some libraries have rebounded more strongly than we have, while some others were less.

Moving on from COVID impacts ...

Long-Term Trends

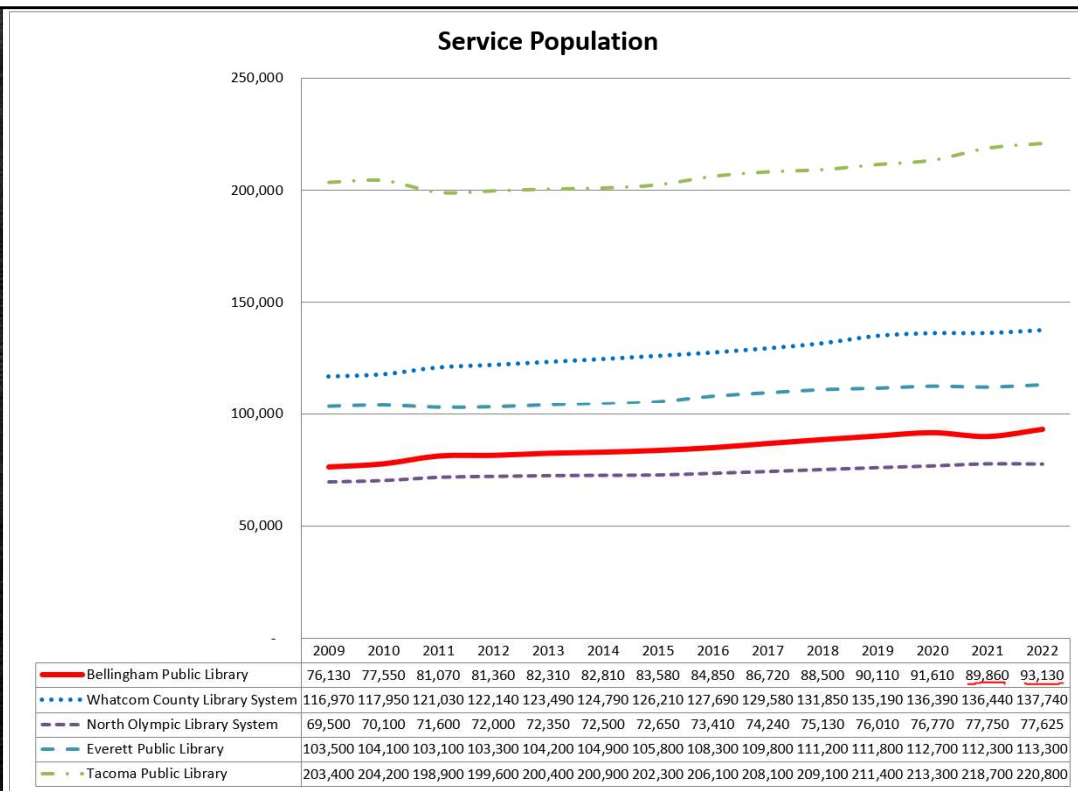
- Population growth
- Library programming growth
- Shift from physical to digital
- Changes in computer & internet use



One long-term trend is continued population increase.

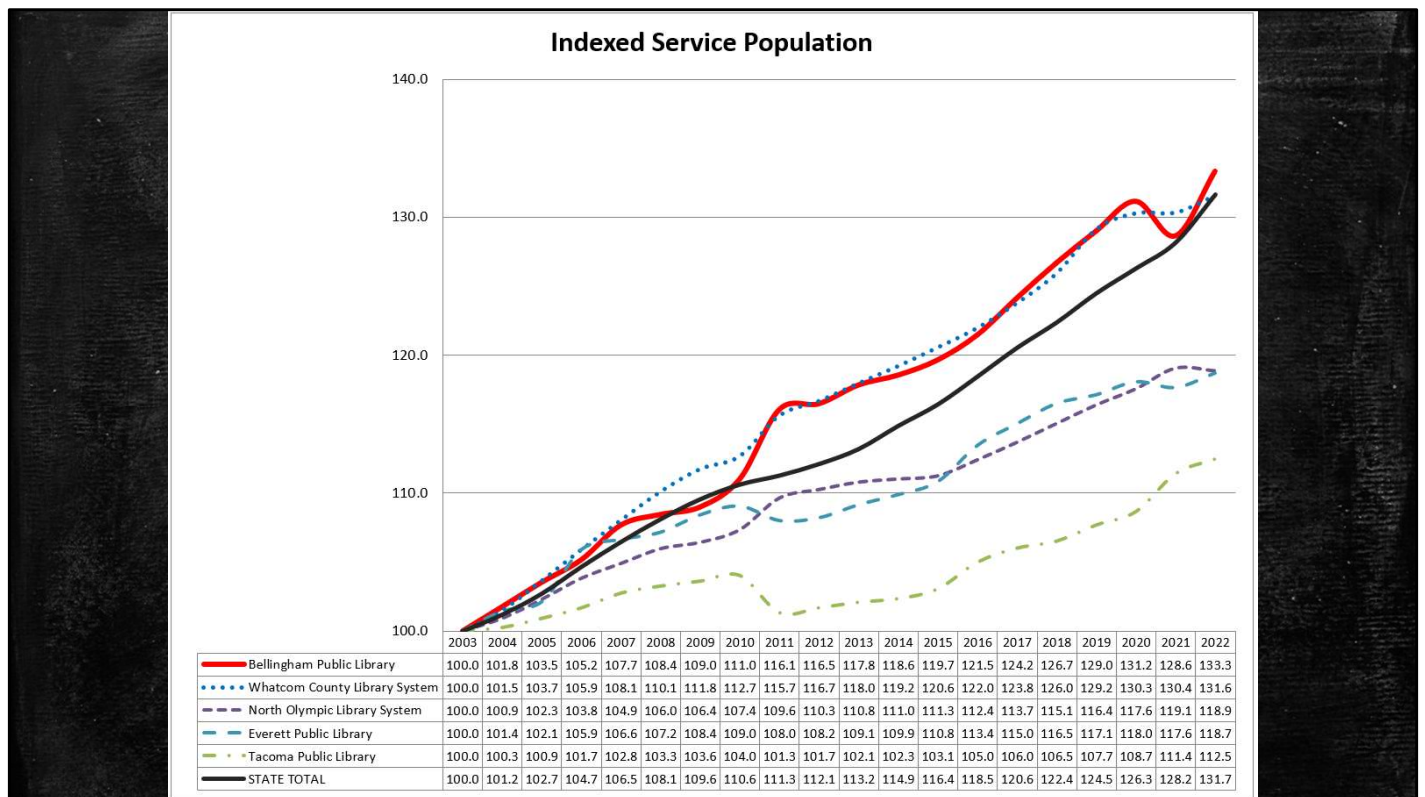
I used this chart last year and haven't updated it.

First, some data that doesn't come from the State Library. This chart shows the Legal Service Population for Bellingham (starting in 1903...). This shows that over the past 110 years Bellingham has had three phases of growth: (first line) 1910 – 1960 was slow. (second line) 1960 to 1990 sped up a bit. (third line) 1990 to 2010 growth really took off. The 2020 value is the OFM estimate, which turns out to have been a little high.



Here we are zoomed in to just the latest 14 years.

A new estimate of population is generated yearly by the Washington Office of Financial Management. Last year we noted how the 2021 value for Bellingham was down due to taking the 2020 Census into account. Well, in 2022 we're back up! OFM's 2022 April 1 estimate has us back on nearly the same growth rate as before the 2020 Census data came out.

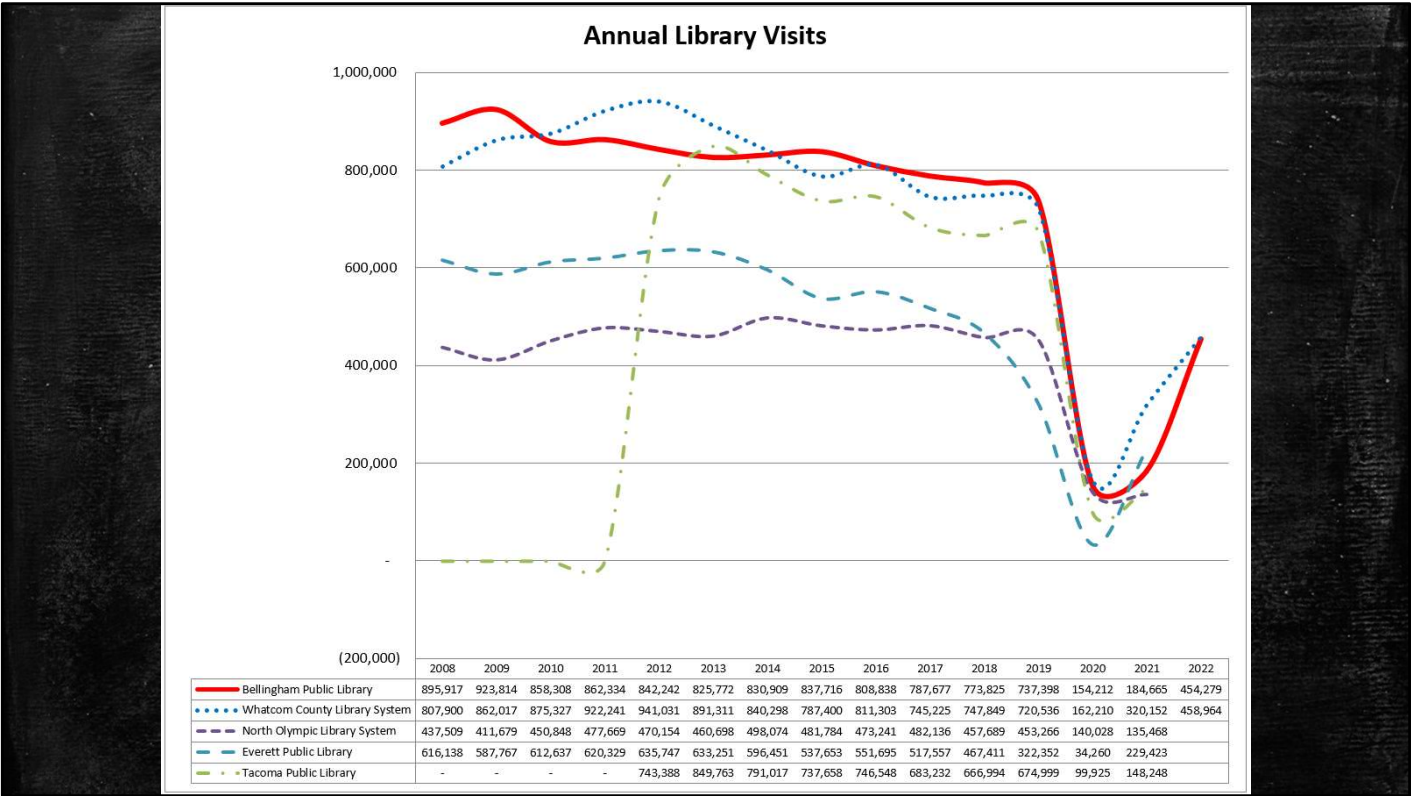


This is easier to see when looking at the rate of change.

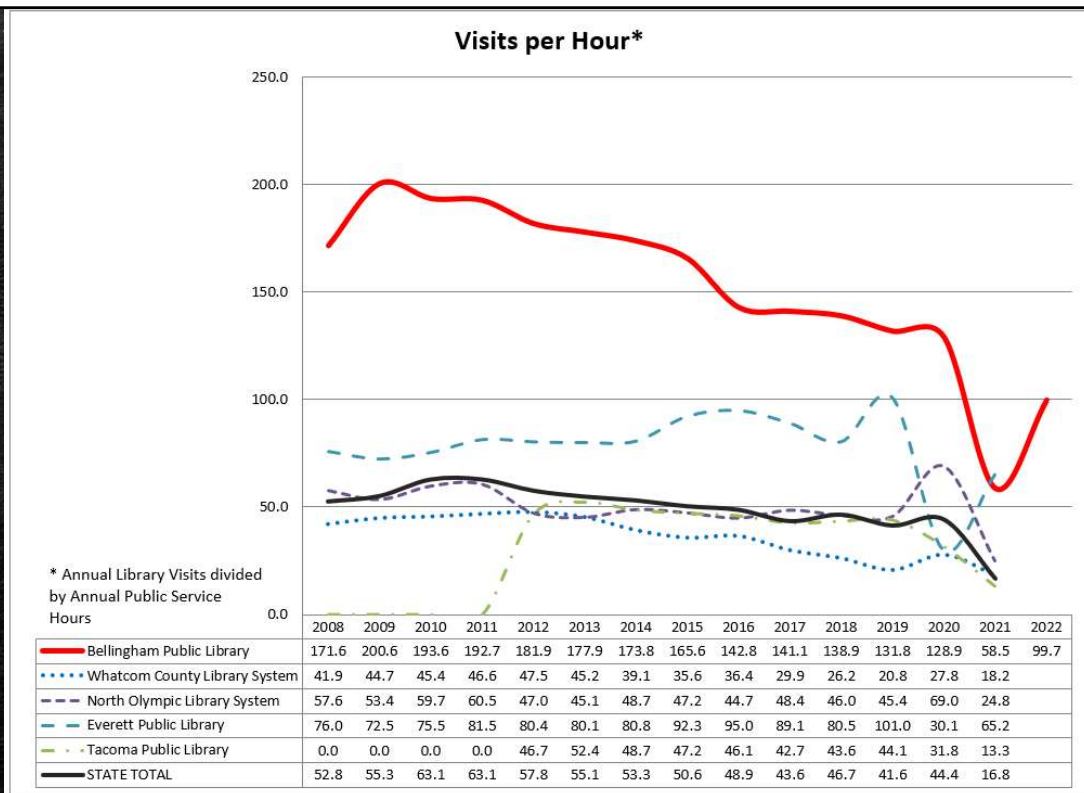
A different way to look at the LSA Population numbers is to show the rate of change relative to a start point – here we have 20 years of data with 2003 as the starting point.

The WA OFM had an estimated rate of growth for Bellingham during the oughts that was proven by the 2010 Census to be too low – hence the bump up for 2011. At that point our growth diverged from the State overall growth rate estimate. Everett and Tacoma's both went down. In 2021 we dropped from 2020, meaning that OFM's growth estimate was too high during the 'teens. But for 2022, OFM has pushed us back up!

What kinds of impacts do we need to plan for when we see continued population growth?

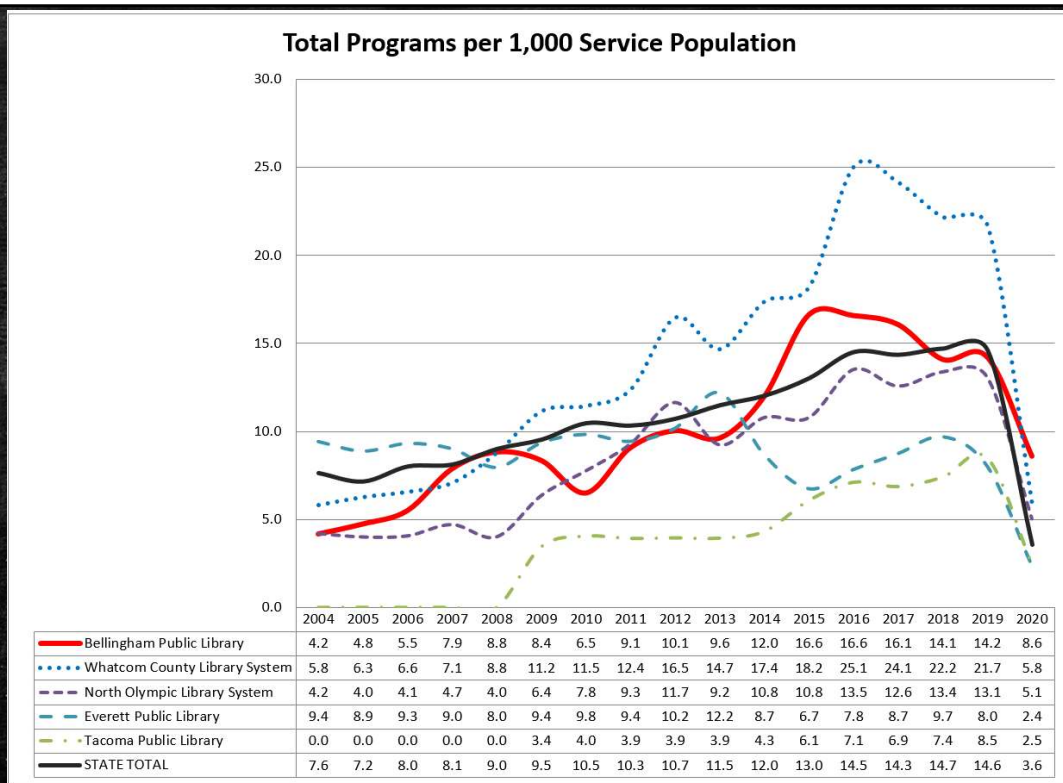


Coming back to Annual Visits, our long-term trend is down – we’re seeing fewer people come in the doors despite having more people in the community. But we’re not alone – all of these peer libraries are seeing the same trend.



Visits per Hour are also dropping (as are Visits per Capita, as we saw previously). In 2022 we recovered a substantial part of the way back to our previous trend. But the trend is still down.

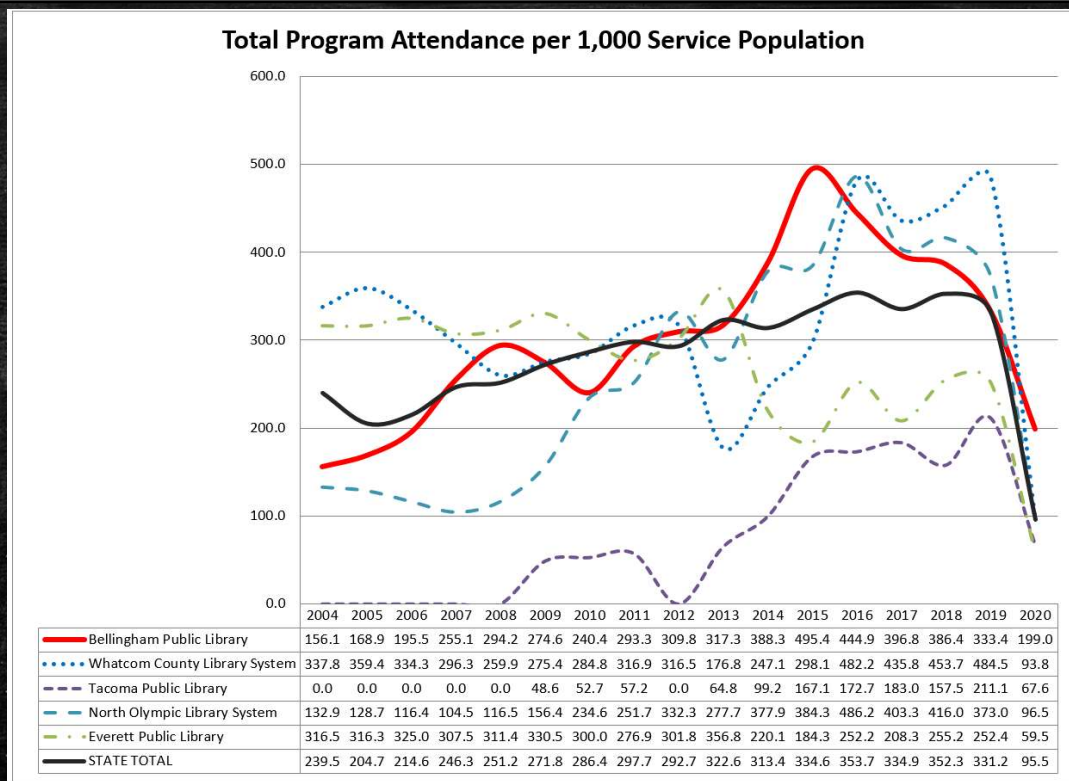
Why are we seeing fewer visits per open hour? Is it a trend we need to reverse? If so, how?



Another trend seen in the data is that the number of programs offered by public libraries are increasing relative to our population.

During the first year of the pandemic BPL's number of programs dropped off substantially less than some other libraries and the State average.

2021 saw a major change in reporting about programs, and I haven't figured out how to compare the old metrics to the new ones, so this slide is not updated with the 2021 data.



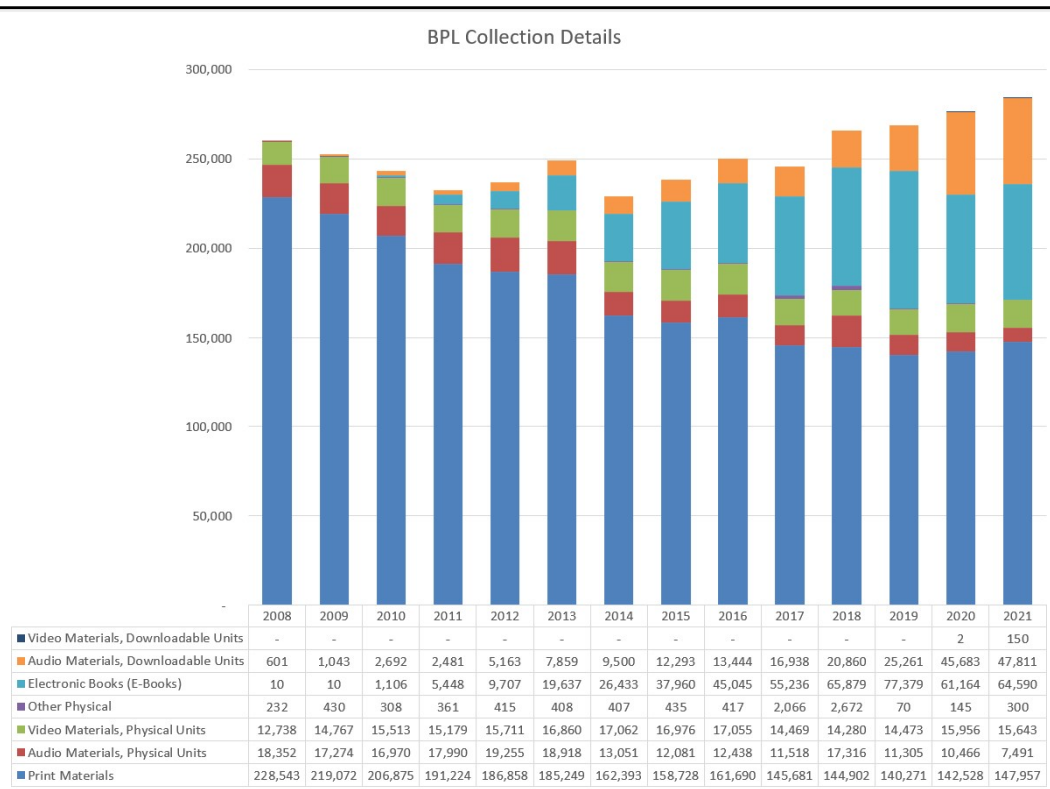
Part of the same trend, attendance at programs generally increased over the past 15+ years.

BPL did report a decline from 2015 to 2019, but that just put us back in alignment with the state average.

We're generally right around the State average, per capita, but dropped off less than others during the first year of the pandemic.

There has clearly been a shift in the library world to having more programs, and that has driven an increase in attendance despite the countervailing trend of fewer visits to library buildings. In part this is driven by library staff getting out in the community to hold programs outside of library spaces. Remote programs are now a thing, too (though, again, I haven't worked that data into this analysis).

Moving along, the next trend is the shift from analog to digital.



One long-term trend in libraries and in society in general is a shift toward digital media containers from analog media containers. From print books to ebooks; from audio recordings on records/cassettes/CDs to downloadable or streaming audio (both music and spoken word and books); from video on film, VHS tapes, DVDs, & Blu-Ray discs to streaming video.

BPL has been taking part in this transition, too. Our collection has been decreasing the number of physical items we own, and increasing the number of licensed or cloud-based digital titles we make available to patrons. In the long-run this gives us the potential to increase our collection size past what could have ever been housed in our physical spaces. It also changes the ownership model from purchasing to licensing (against our will).

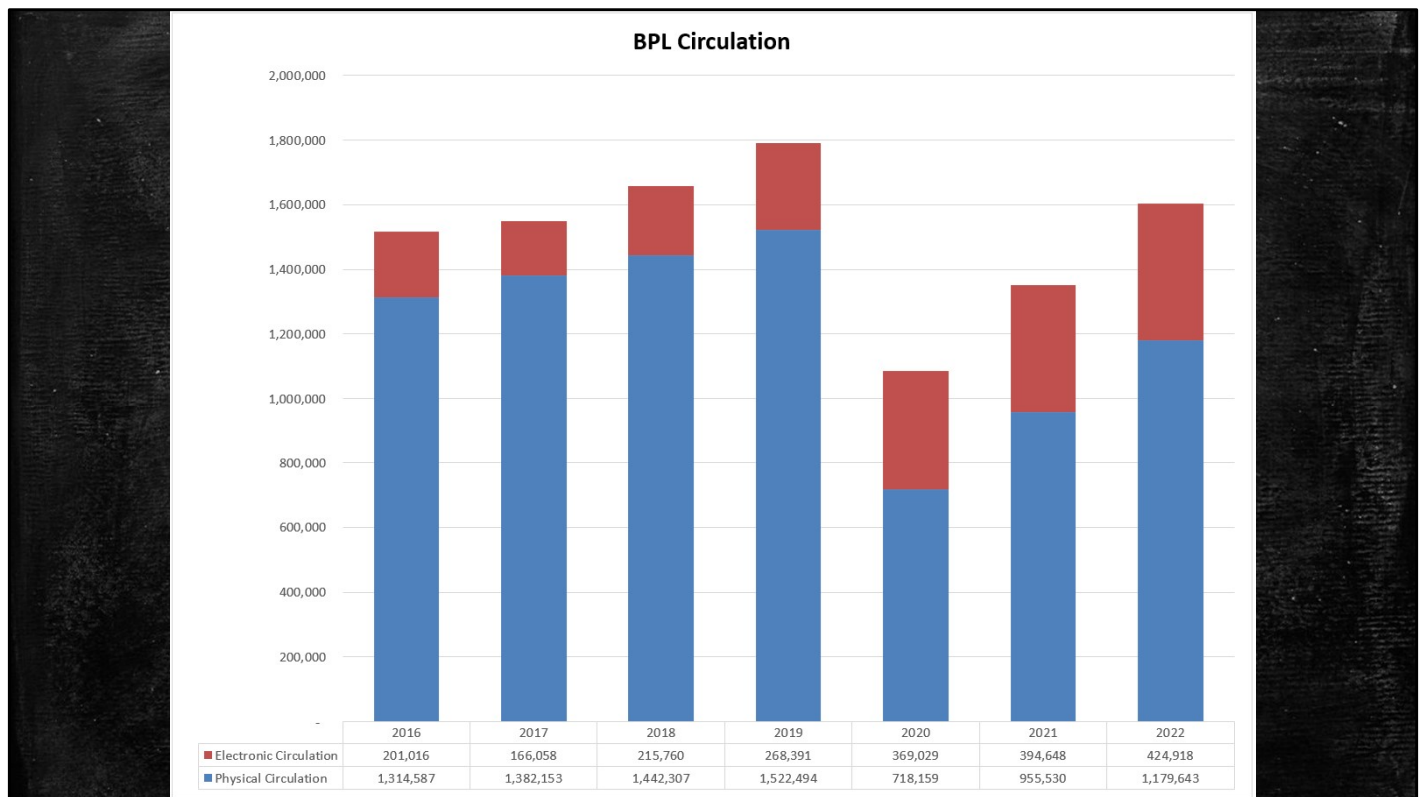
The Video Materials, Downloadable Units metric does NOT include the 30,500 titles available in the Kanopy streaming video platform. There are pain points in this transition to digital as the stats-holders try to come up with cleanly-comparable stats for different types of media. Because it is a package of titles rather than individual purchase decisions, we don't get to count them as part of our collection. Patron use of them does, however, count as an Electronic circulation.

Per Capita Expenditure on Materials, adjusted for inflation

Note: In constant 2002 dollars. Indexed to CPI-U, US City Average, not seasonally adjusted, all items, 1982-84=100.



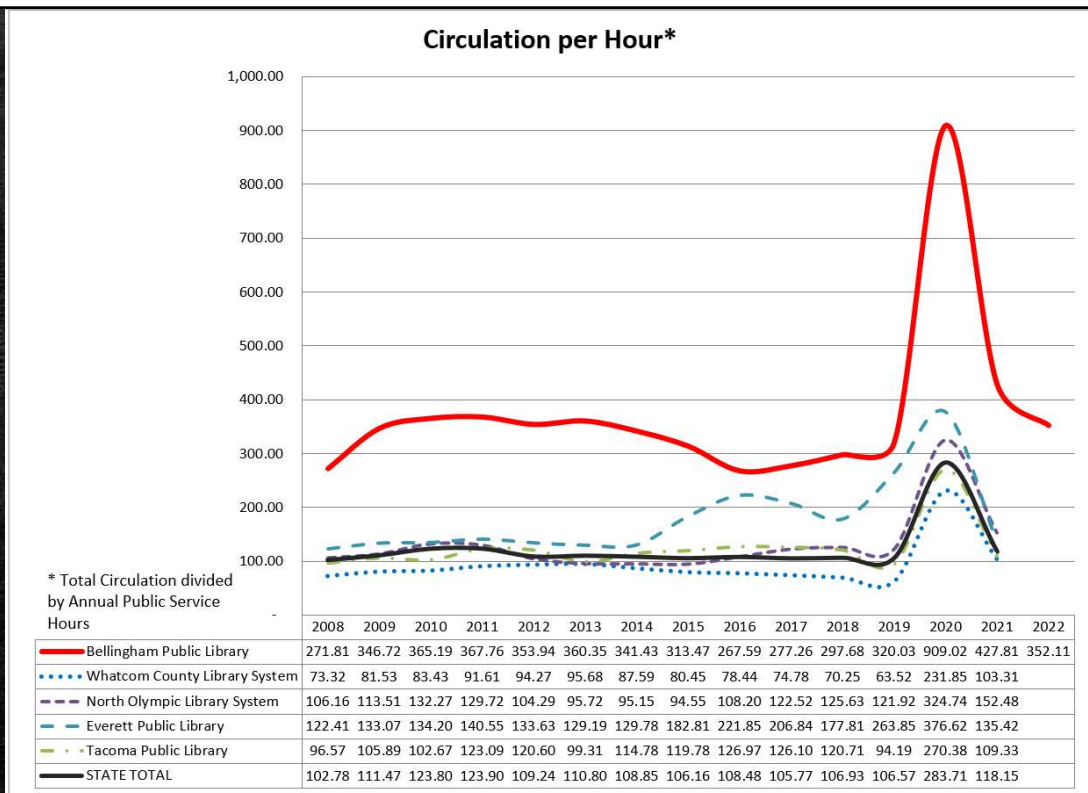
Long-term there isn't a discernable trend in expenditure per capita for materials when viewed in inflation-adjusted dollars. Good to see something that's fairly stable!



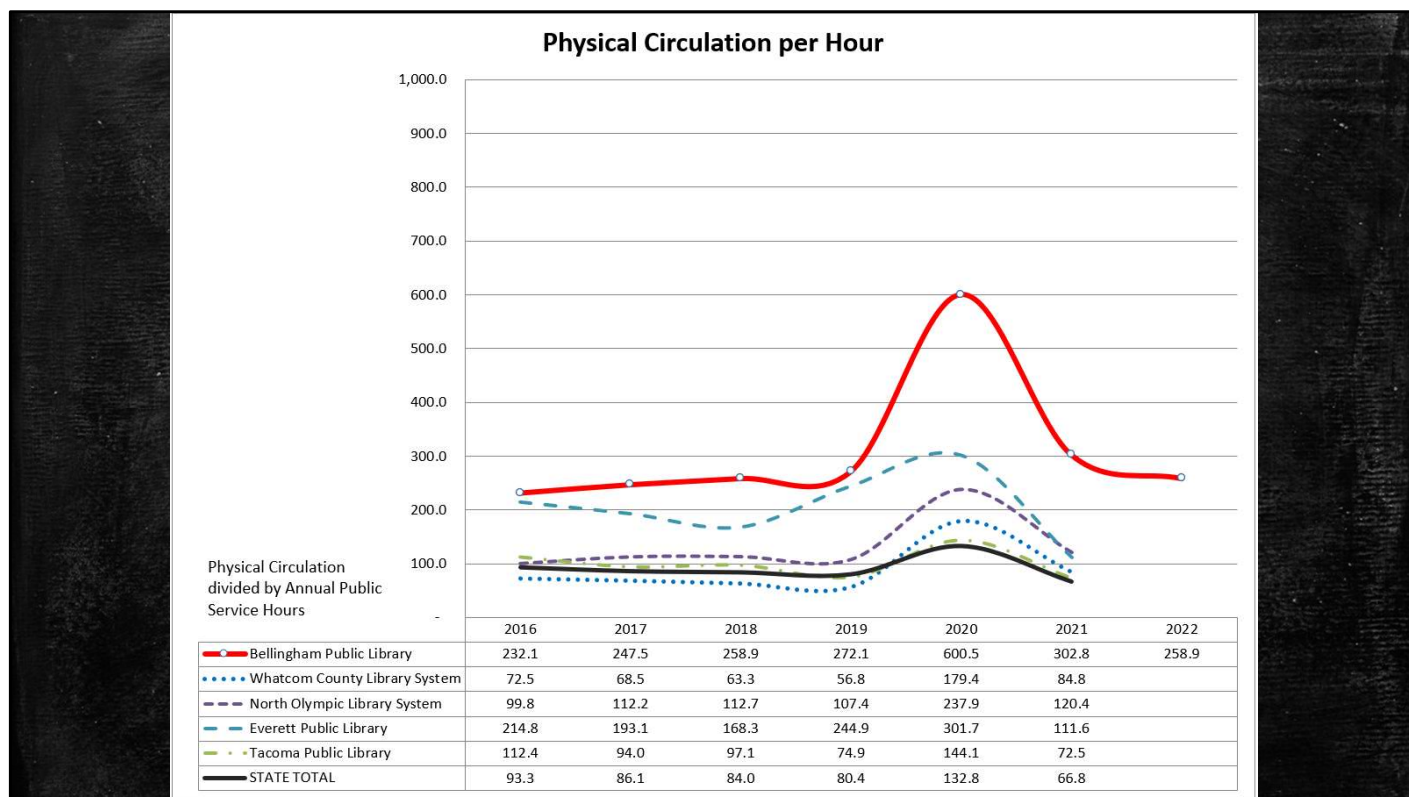
Our circulation split between physical and digital is changing, though, with the COVID pandemic giving a big boost to Electronic Circulation.

Note that our physical circulation benefits from automatic renewals, while digital things don't. There were more renewals of physical circs. than there were digital circs (nearly 500,000). But we don't know how many digital circs were from patrons checking out the same item to finish it.

2016 is the first year the stats included this split between physical and electronic circulation, so we don't have comparable numbers any further back.

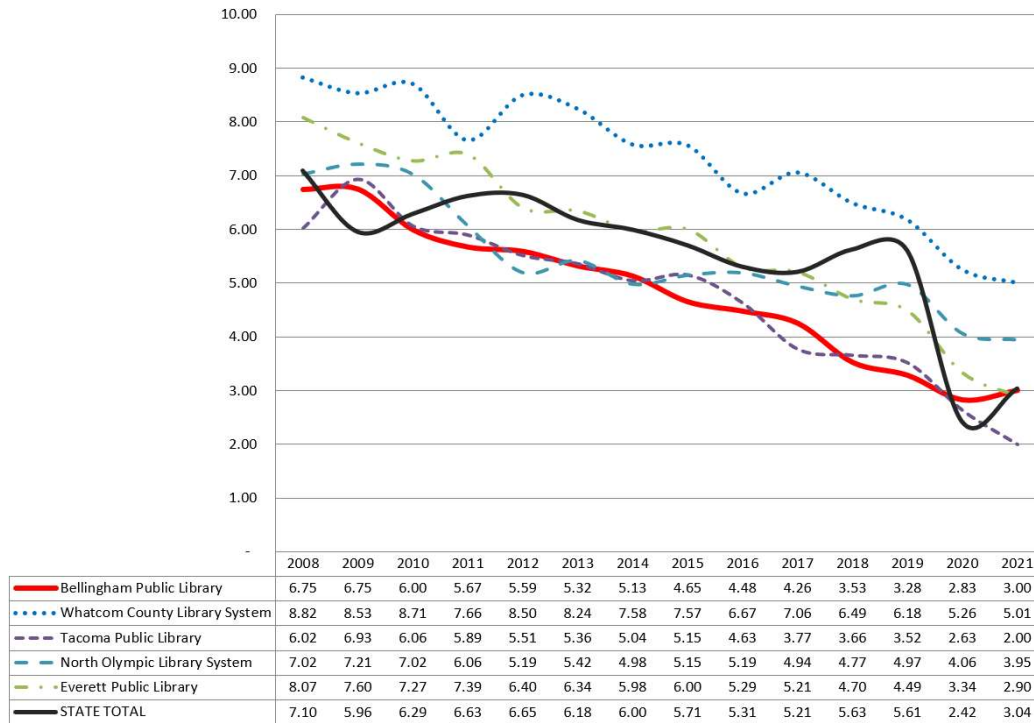


But remember this slide? How does the shift in circulation from physical to digital impact how we understand this? Patrons can access digital materials 24/7 so open hours have less and less importance to this metric as the Electronic Circulation makes up a more substantial percentage of overall circulation.

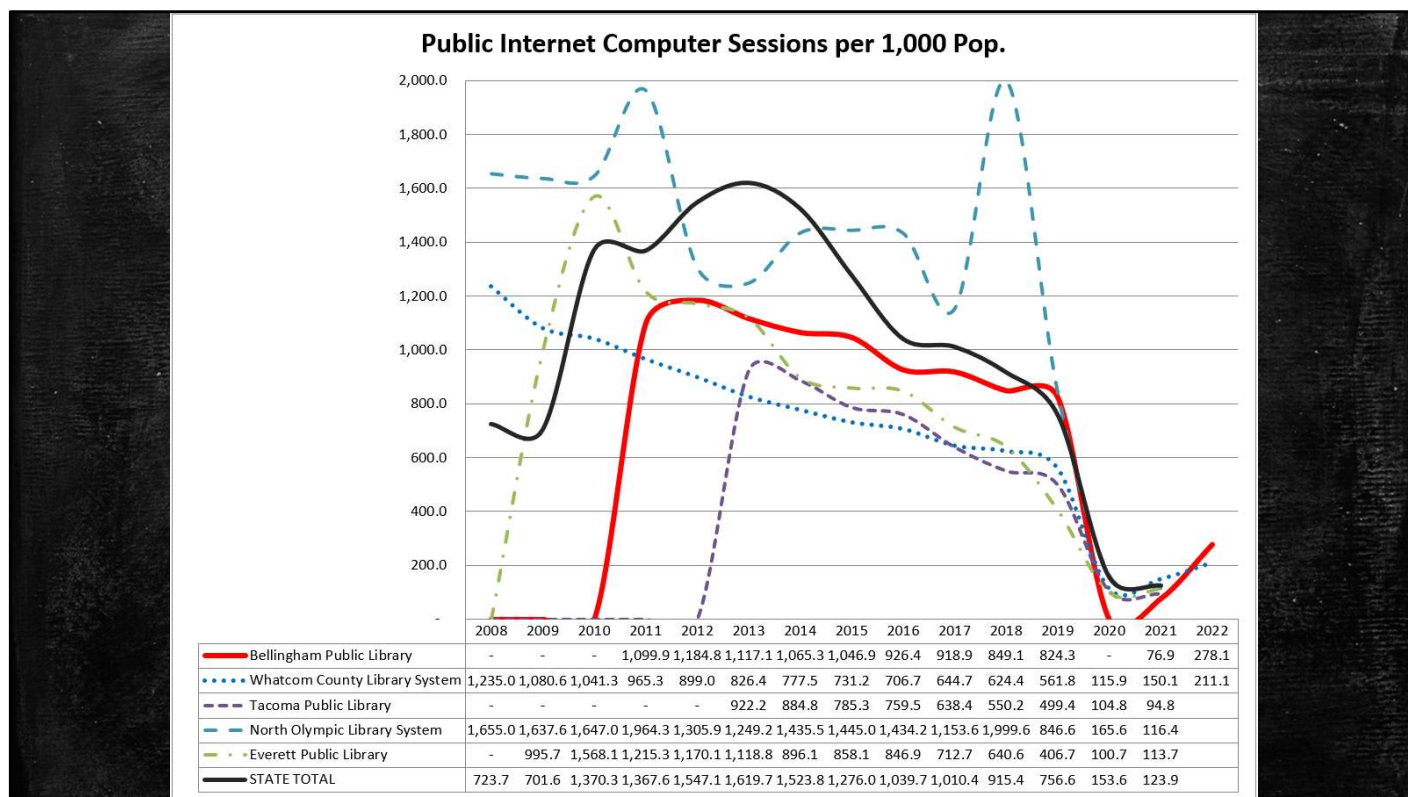


So let's look at only physical circulation against open hours. 2016 was when we hit bottom for circ. per hour; it's also the low-point for Physical Circ per open hour. The pandemic dropped our hours way more than it dropped physical circ., so this metric soared. With 2022 we're back on-trend with the same value as 2018.

Print Serial Subscriptions per 1,000 Population



One component of the shift from analog to digital is major upheaval in the print serials market, both newspapers and magazines. We are having more and more trouble finding print magazines to subscribe to, and those that we do are nearly all in a process of decreasing their page-counts, their publication frequency, or either going digital-only or just ceasing publication entirely.

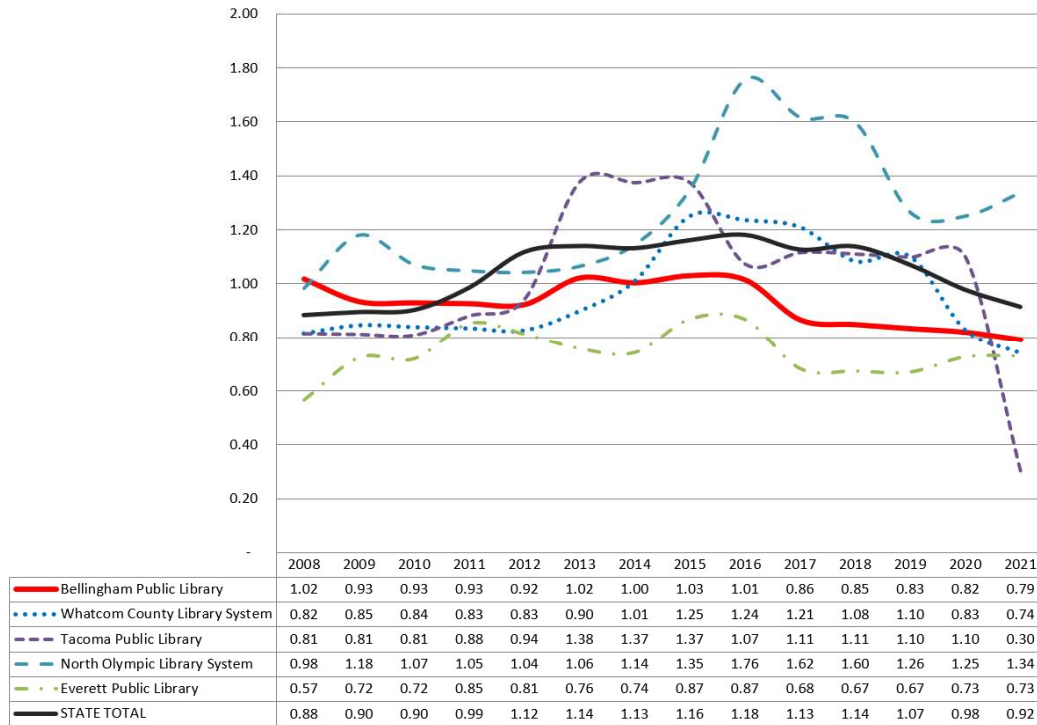


Finally, I want to touch on one last trend – the increasing ubiquity of computing devices & internet access in everyone’s lives.

Inexpensive smartphones and laptops have brought personal computing device ownership to more and more of the population, which is reducing the need for third parties like libraries to be the primary source of computing access. According to the metric of Public Internet Computer Sessions per 1,000 Population, BPL has been steadily declining in importance as a computing place since 2012. This is generally on-trend with other libraries in the state. The pandemic shut the public out from our computers, and numbers so far don’t look like use is going to come back to anywhere near where the trend was pre-pandemic.

There are geopolitical risks that could negatively impact the affordability of personal computing devices, so we can’t be certain that the downward trend will continue. But we should plan on it doing so all the same.

Total Public Computers per 1,000 Population

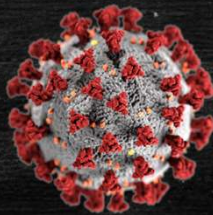


It's not that libraries were reducing the number of computers available to the public throughout this time. Availability was basically flat over much of the teens.

What Else...?

400+ columns of data to play with!

<https://www.bellinghampubliclibrary.org/wplsr-merged>



So, there are some things to think about, like:

How far will we bounce-back from the COVID disruptions? What is 'normal' now?

What do we need to change if the population keeps increasing? Or, what if it stops increasing, or starts to decline?

How far will the shift from print to digital collections and circulation go, and what does that mean for our operations?

Where will print serials bottom out? Seems unlikely they'll disappear completely, but there isn't an obvious stopping point.

What if the geopolitical conditions leading to cheaper computing devices changes, and instead they get more expensive?

Engage Young Minds!

Library Giving Day
Tuesday, April 4th

Help the Library Board of Trustees raise
funds to create a hands-on early learning
center for young children at the new
Bellis Fair Branch

DONATE

