



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, March 19, 2024 – 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:	Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness, Kendra Bradford and Deborra Garrett
Board Members Absent:	Rick Osen
City Council Library Liaison:	Hannah Stone
Library Staff:	Rebecca Judd, Annette Bagley, Katrina Buckman, Jon McConnel, Jennifer Vander Ploeg and Wendy Jenkins
FOBPL Representative:	Carol Comeau, Friends of BPL Board Liaison; Scout Mitchell Friends of BPL President

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Vice-Chair, Rebecca Craven. Deborra Garrett was introduced.

Approve/modify agenda: Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the agenda. Kendra Bradford seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: No comments.

Consent agenda: Hannah Stone clarified that the photo mentioned in the City Council Liaison report in the February 20 meeting minutes was a promotion photo with City Council for the Whatcom READS 2024 selection *Red Paint: The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk*. Wendy will update the minutes to reflect this clarification. Kendra Bradford moved to approve the February 20, 2024 Regular meeting minutes as amended and the February 2024 performance and activity measures and financial reports. Kristy Van Ness seconded. Deborra Garrett abstained. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- No report.

Board member reports:

- Kristy Van Ness reported that she attended a yoga class with her mom, and prior to the class the group was discussing how much they loved the library and all that it offers. Several noted that they especially enjoyed the salmon in the children's section. She was thrilled to see the intergenerational connection and sharing that happened within the group.

City Council liaison report:

- Hannah mentioned that the City is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. As part of the community outreach necessary to inform the Plan, she has been attending Open House events arranged by the Planning department. She asked if there has been any outreach to the Library from the planning team about possibly hosting one of these events. Rebecca Judd responded that there are no Comprehensive Plan events planned at the library, but that it would be easy for us to host one.

Friends of BPL report:

- Scout Mitchell reported that the Friends are busy preparing for the upcoming Ski-to-Sea book sale scheduled for May 22-25, 2024.
- Scout has been meeting with Rebecca Judd regularly about the planned Library renovation and has shared the plans with members to gather feedback.

Library Director report:

- At Rick's request, Rebecca shared that he is disappointed to miss today's meeting and he extends a warm welcome to Deborra.
- Rebecca thanked the Whatcom READS committee for all their hard work, especially on last Friday's Mount Baker Theatre event, *An Evening with Sasha taqⁿⁱšəblu LaPointe*. It was a special event for the community.
- Rebecca announced a Community Salmon Release Party will be held on Saturday, March 30 at 1:00 p.m. The program will begin at the library followed by a walk to Whatcom Creek.
- Rebecca reached out to Bellis Fair Mall about the vacant Champ store site next to Bellis Fair branch. No updates to report.

Facilities Committee update:

- Renovation update: Rebecca Judd provided a rough timeline for the project:
 - The schematic design phase will end today, March 19.
 - The next phase will be detailed design and will run through the first part of June.
 - Cost estimates will be delivered around March 21. Rick will inform the Board about the estimates and next steps. Rebecca pointed out this is a big piece – we will be able to determine if the budget and goals are in alignment.

Rebecca reported we will be applying for a \$2,000,000 Library Capital Improvement Program (LCIP) grant offered through the State Library. The deadline for submissions is April 4. We applied for this same grant 2 years ago, unsuccessfully. This time we are much further along in the design work and can provide more detail in the application. The LCIP grant selection

committee will recommend projects in early fall to the Governor's office. Grant funds will be available July 1, 2025, if approved as part of the state's Capital budget.

Asbestos update: We have asbestos in the floor tiles in closed stacks. Jen is gathering proposals for encapsulation or removal of hazardous materials. Ideally, this project would be complete prior to renovation construction.

1% for the Arts: Jen gave an update on the 1% for the Arts piece of the renovation project. Our first proposal was an interactive installation from the Burgeon Group (the company that produced the panels at Bellis Fair and Fairhaven). The Arts Commission has requested we reach out to local artists as part of a competitive process instead.

Jen screenshared and explained the latest schematic design drafts for each floor (*see Attachment #1: Library Renovation Draft Schematic Designs*). Rebecca Judd added that the feedback process has been collaborative.

- Funding request: Rebecca Judd explained that we have talked about interior renovations, HVAC upgrades, and closure of the Central Library during renovations. Another element is updating the exterior of the building, including the plaza and the hillside area around the proposed new Lecture Room entrance. If we explore design and cost estimates now, there could be an opportunity to fund and complete the exterior work at the same time as the interior renovation and minimize future disruption. Following discussion there was consensus to explore this option further. Rebecca said she would bring a design cost proposal to the Board as soon as possible.

Fundraising update:

- Planned Giving update: Kristy reported she and Rachel Myers have been working to close out the contract we have with RM+Co. They are outlining what the Board set out to do, what has been accomplished and what work remains. Kristy will bring more information to the Board next month.
- 2024 Library Giving Day: Annette Bagley noted that the Trustees decided to fundraise this year for unrestricted funds rather than a particular project, as in past years. In the document included in the packet, Annette aimed for language to get people excited about donating to the Library. Once the language is fine-tuned, she will provide Trustees with a template to share with their contacts. She also reached out to Whatcom Community Foundation to activate the Library Giving Day website link.

Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2023:

- Jon McConnel screenshared a PowerPoint presentation (*see Attachment #2: Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2023*). Board Q&A followed the presentation.

Level of Service standards:

- Materials: To be rescheduled for April Board meeting

- Hours: To be rescheduled for April Board meeting

New Business:

- No new business.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Level of Service standards
- Facilities update
- Fundraising update

Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting – April 16, 2024 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.

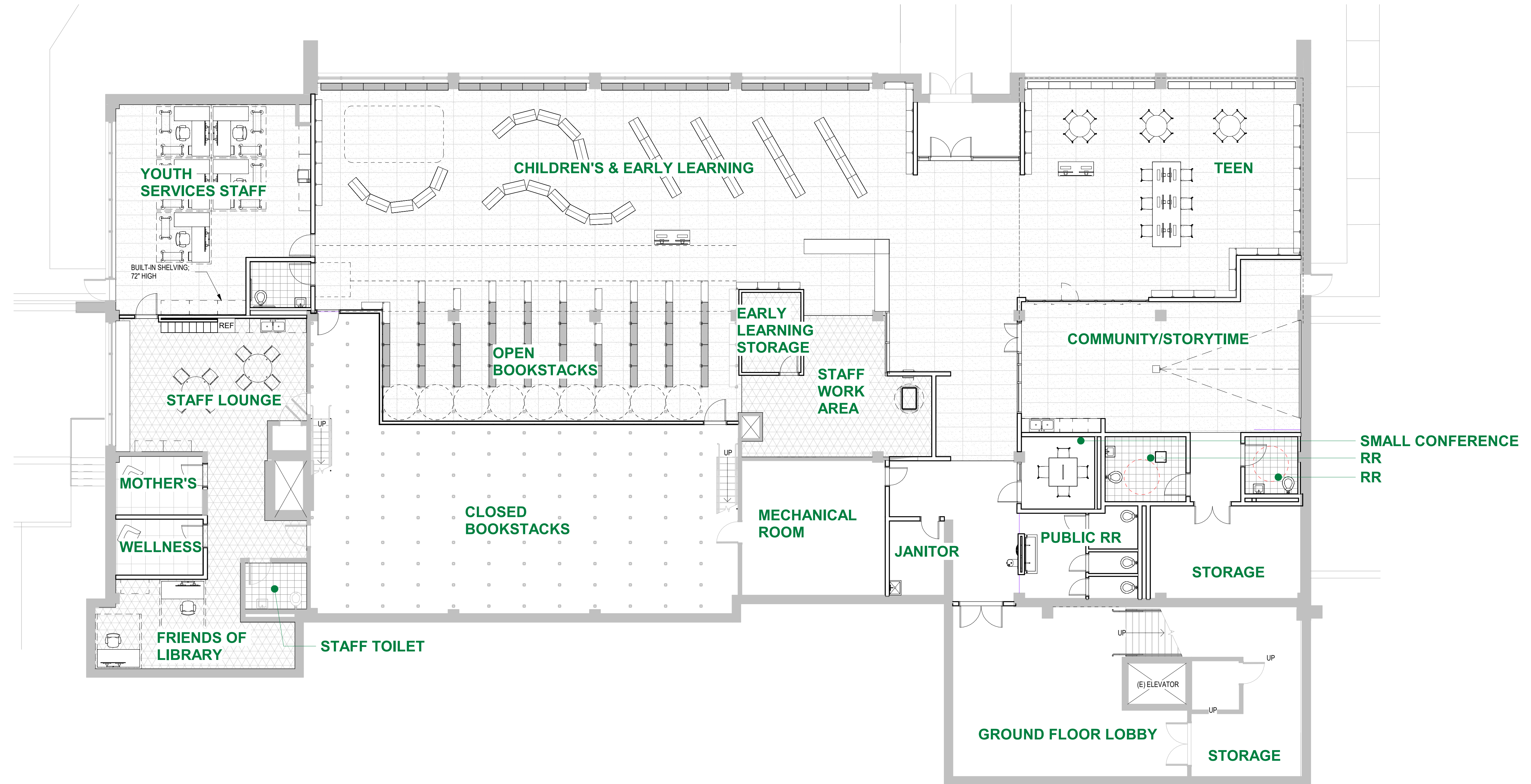
Chair, Library Board of Trustees

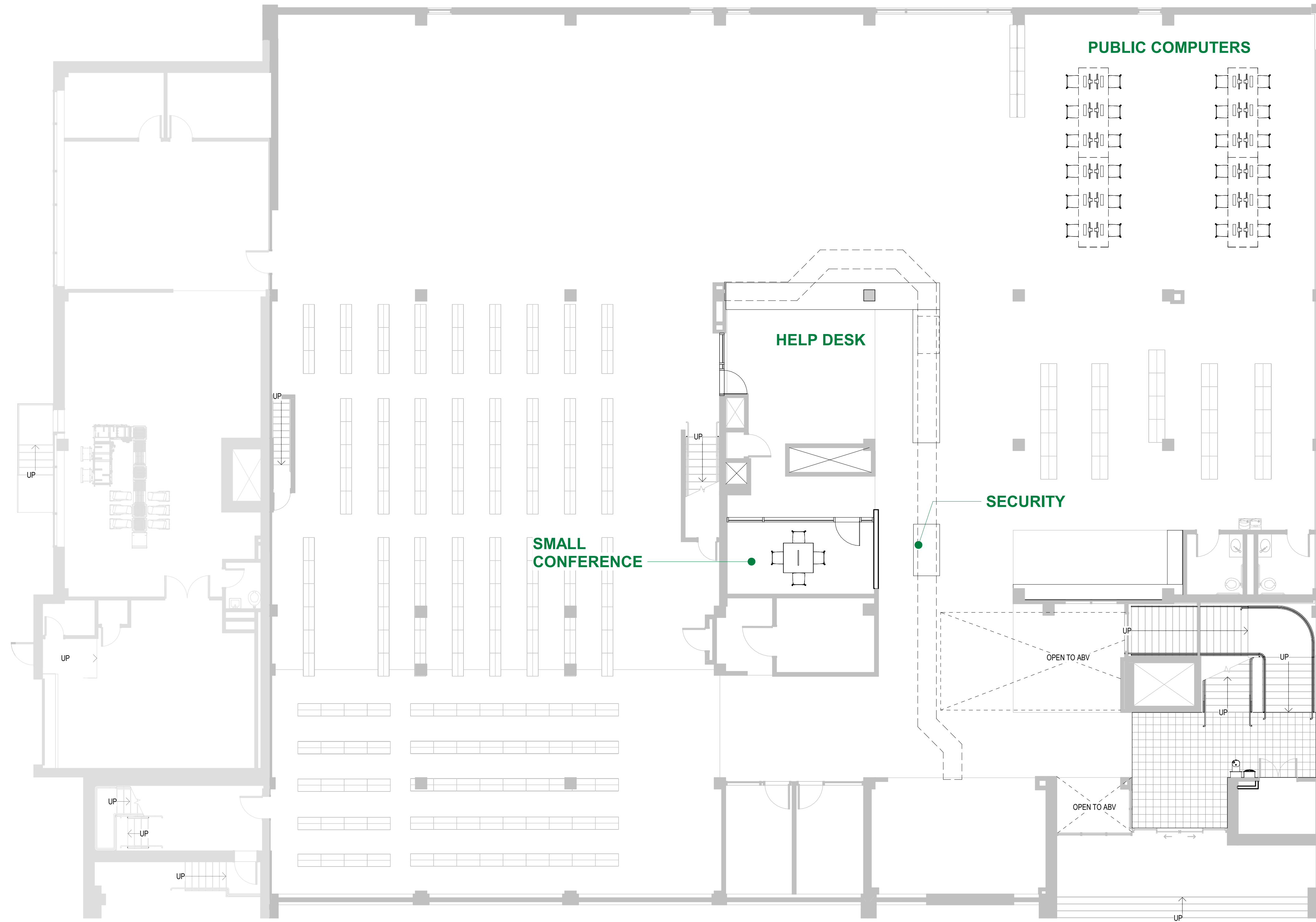
ATTEST

Secretary, Library Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- Attachment #1 Library Renovation Draft Schematic Designs
- Attachment #2: Statistical Trends: Inputs and Outputs through 2023)



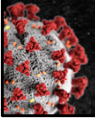






Statistical Trends

Inputs and Outputs through 2023



It is statistics time! The Washington State Library has opened up the annual stats survey for 2023 metrics, and we thought it would be helpful to provide an update to the run-down shared the past few years of some of the statistics we report. Last year we reported through 2021 plus some 2022 measures for BPL & WCLS. This year it'll be the statewide stats for 2022 plus some 2023 data for us locals. The 2023 data comes from the Jan. 2024 Board Reports of BPL and Whatcom County Library System, and also from some reports I've run.

This year's report will update last year's, highlighting ways in which we are more alike other libraries than different, especially in how we're impacted by external forces and societal trends. I'll be looking at two themes: First – continued 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

apps.sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/libdev/publications.aspx

6:41 (Library) - Home Mail - MacComel... PSD - Blue Turnip

SAS 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

2022 CSV file of Library Administrative Data
2022 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.

2022 Excel Spreadsheet - Note: there are multiple tabs

2022 Full Report (1.5 MB)

2022 Report Categories

COVID-19 Impacted Library Services	Resource Sharing: ILL and Cooperatives
Top Ten Lists	Library Programs
Summary of Service	Annual Library Service Measures
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

Previous Statistics (1999 - 2021)

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.

Merged!

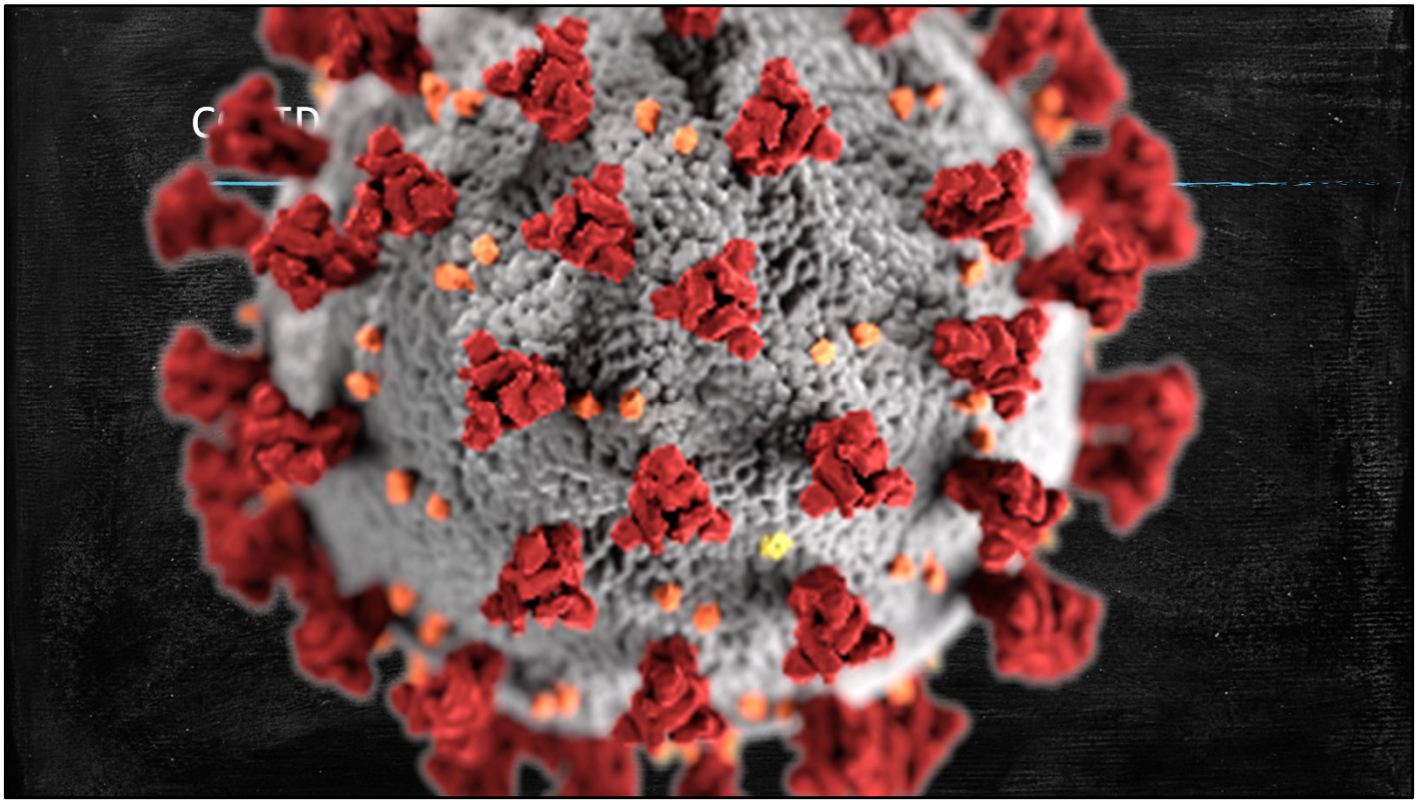
Home » Washington Public Library Statistics Data Merged

Washington Public Library Statistics Data Merged

The Washington State Library's Washington Public Library Statistical Report is published yearly, along with the data behind it.

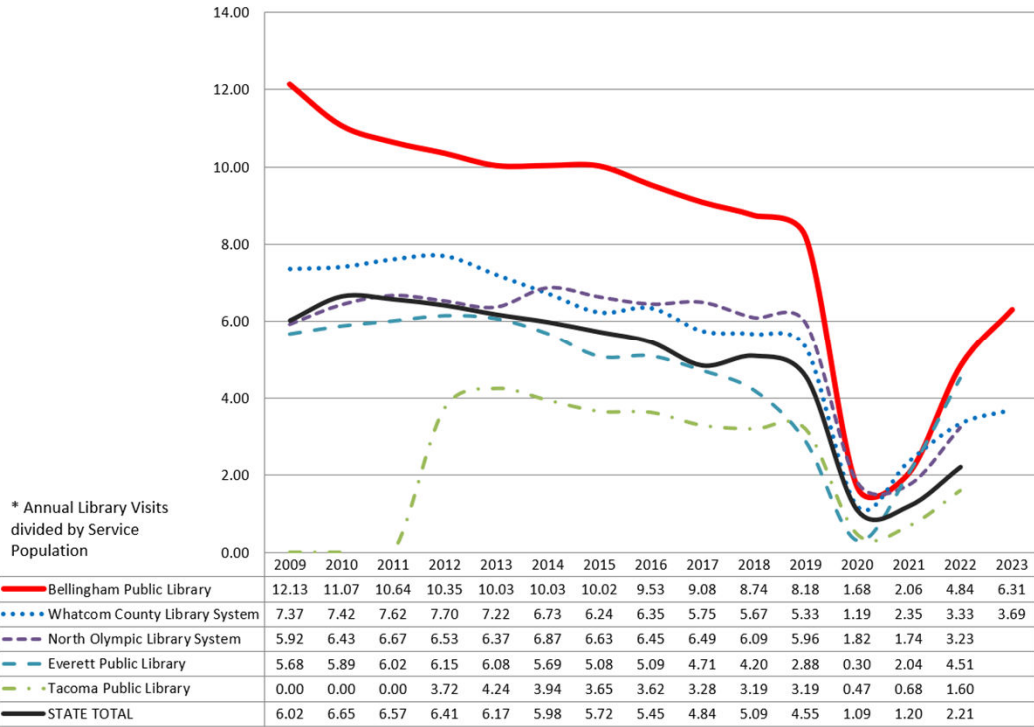
Search for 'public library statistics' on BPL's website.

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.



So let's get going!

Visits per Capita



Visits normalized by Population:

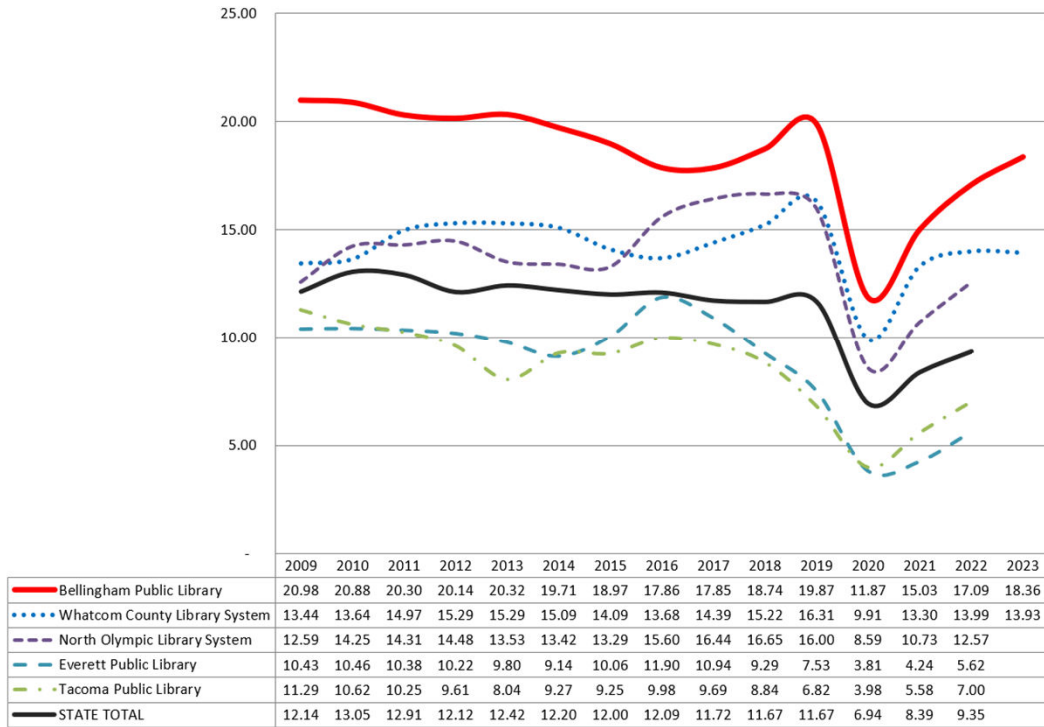
For 2020 and '21 we dropped an enormous amount, even when curbside visits were counted.

In 2023 BPL recovered almost all the way to where the previous trends would likely have us.

Note that our new, more accurate people counter system is returning values a bit lower than the previous system, so expect a decrease in 2024 as we make the transition to what's essentially a brand-new baseline.

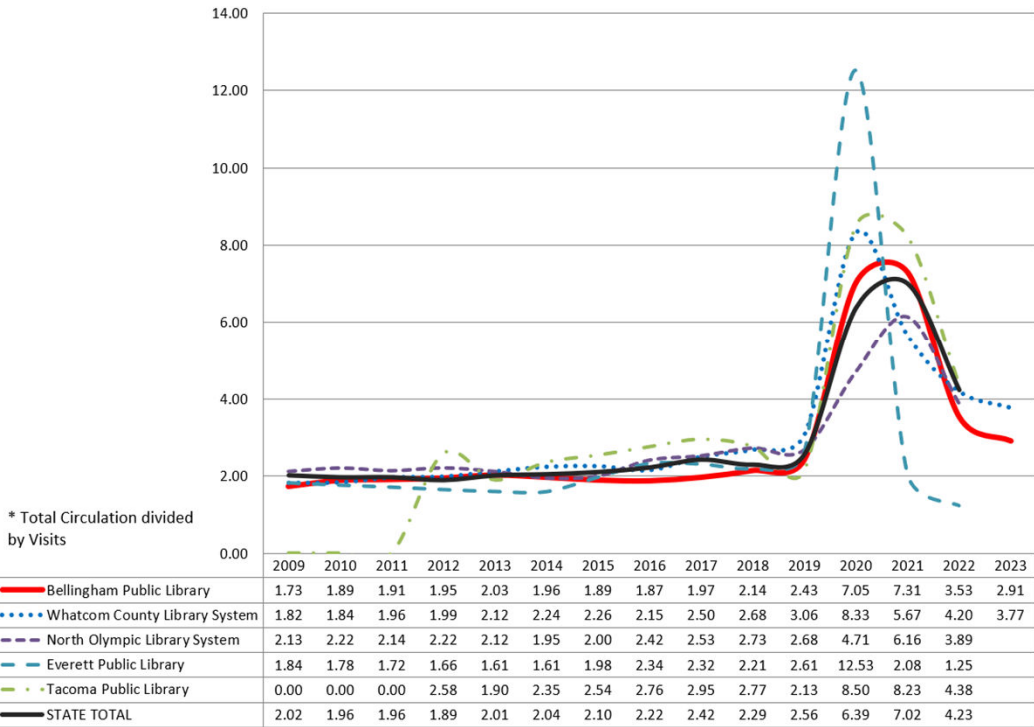
Next up: circulation!

Circulation per Capita



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 pandemic, and in 2022 all recovered a little more. BPL really looks to be recovering well, back above where we were in the mid 'teens, but still not fully back to where we were in 2019.

Circulation per Visit*

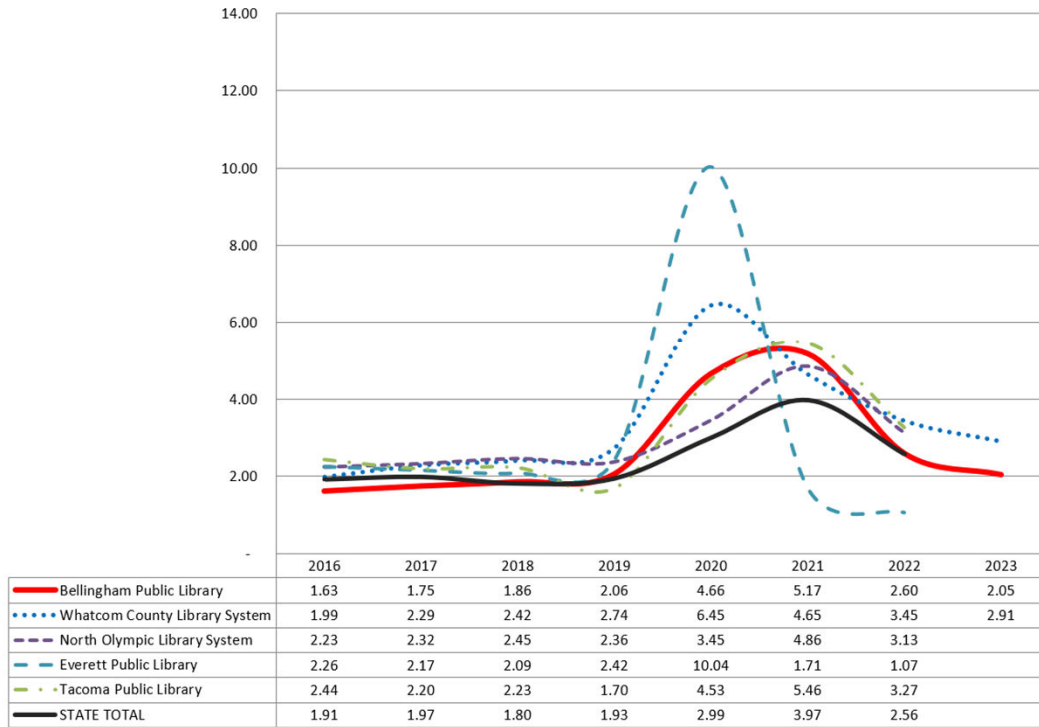


One metric that had a huge impact from the pandemic was Circulation per visit. The metric changed from about 2 items per visit for all the libraries we’re comparing here, to between 5 & 12 items per visit. The State average leapt up to 7 from 2; both BPL and WCLS saw large increases in 2020. Both during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

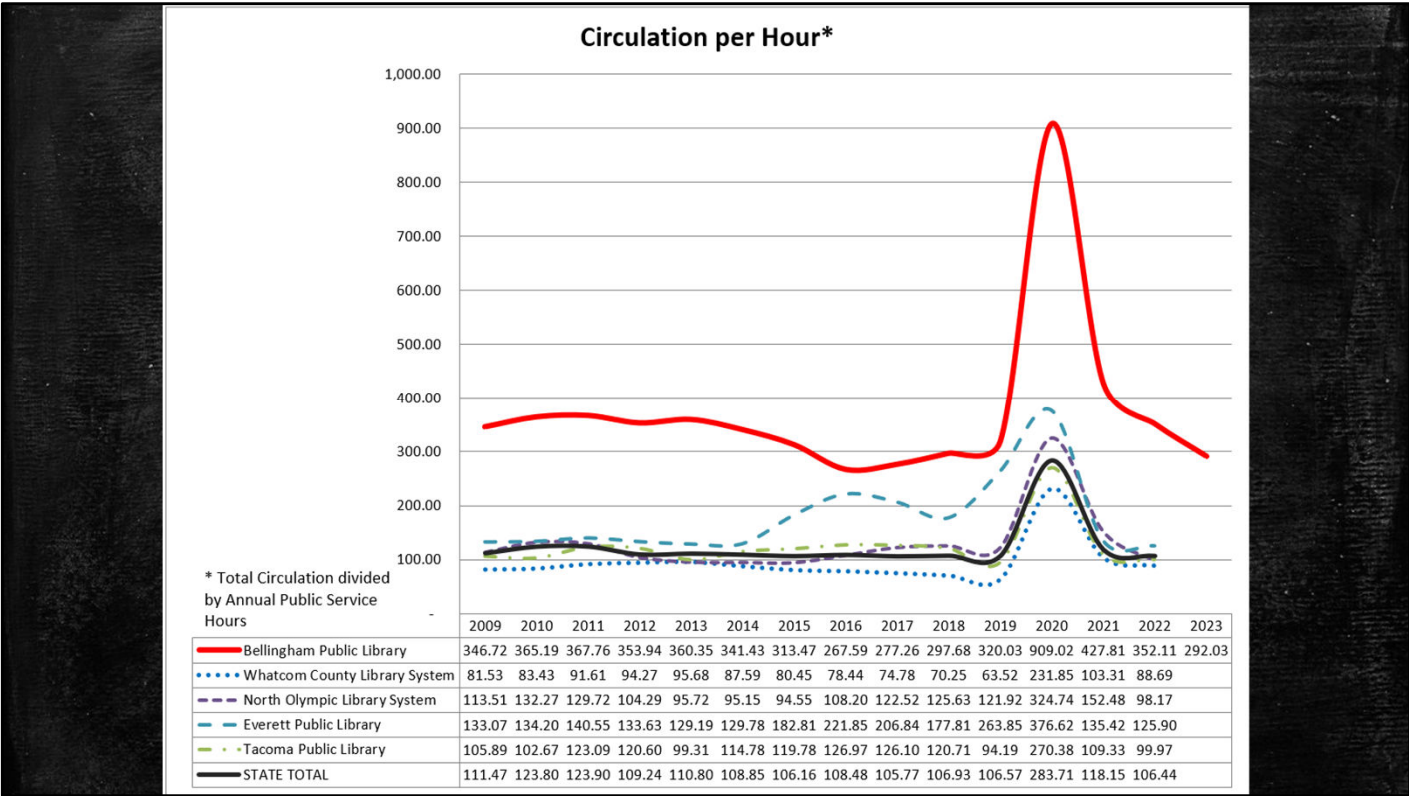
For 2022 & 2023 BPL saw this return to much closer to a normal value as we opened back up and did much less curbside circulation.

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

Physical Circulation per Visit

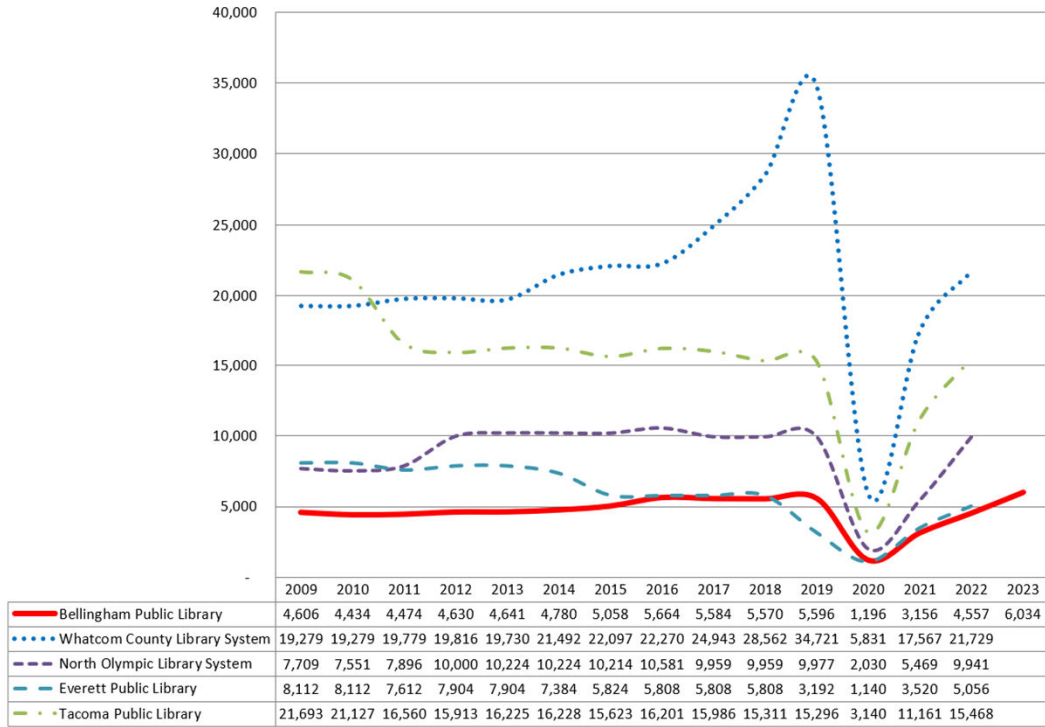


And in fact we do see a difference when we pull out electronic circs from the measure, though not an enormous one. BPL's peak in 2021 goes down 2.14 from 7.31 to 5.17 items borrowed per visit. 2020 had a larger impact, 7.05 to 4.66, a difference of 2.39. In 2023 we're right back to where we were in 2019. It really looks like this behavior has returned to where it was before the pandemic.

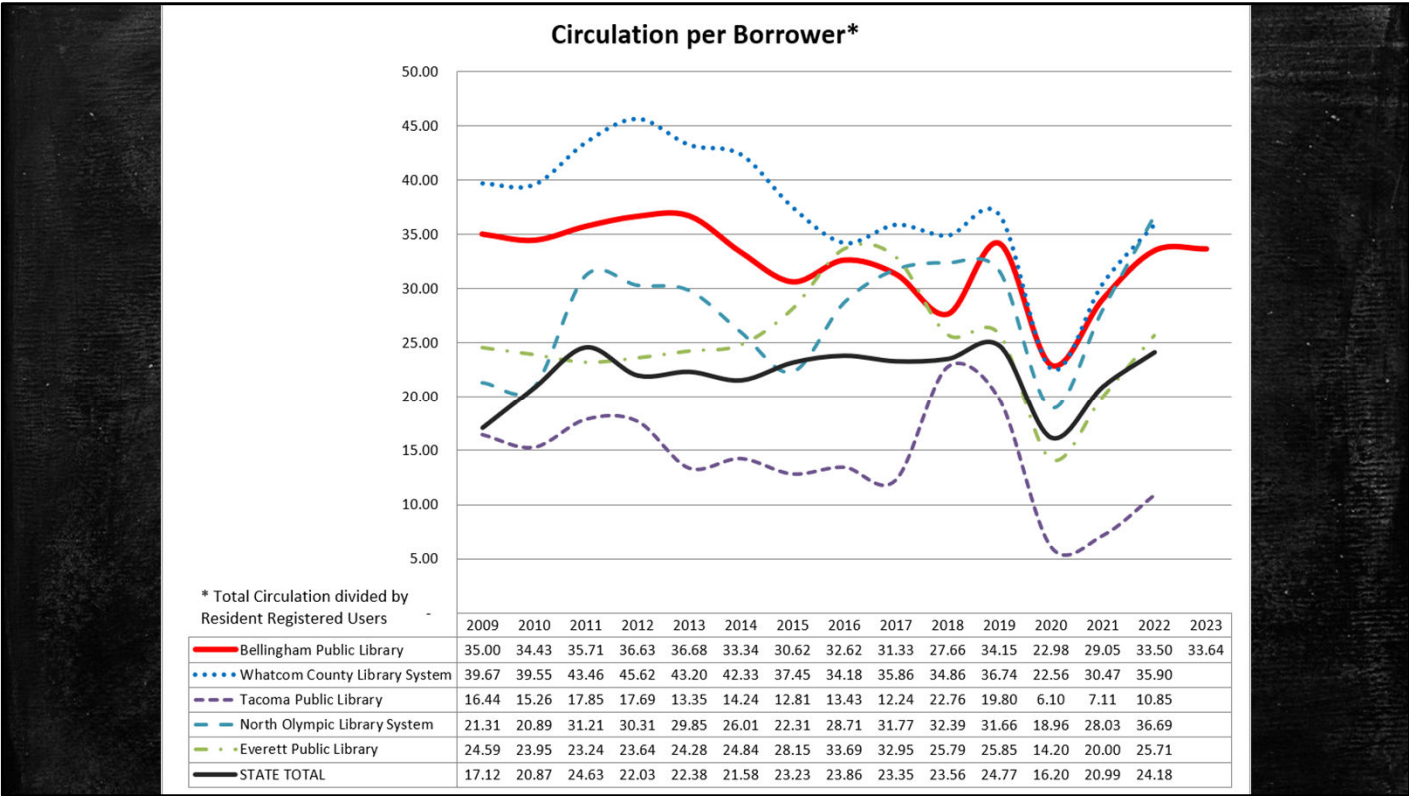


Another metric where the pandemic had a big impact was Circulation per Hour (Total Circulation divided by Annual Public Service Hours). 2020 was extraordinary, while 2021 returned to a point more in the realm of sustainable workload. For 2023 we're back to pre-pandemic numbers, between where we were in 2017 & 2018. For 2022 we're #1 in the State by far with 352. 2nd is King County with 193, 3rd is Camas with 184.

Annual Public Service Hours

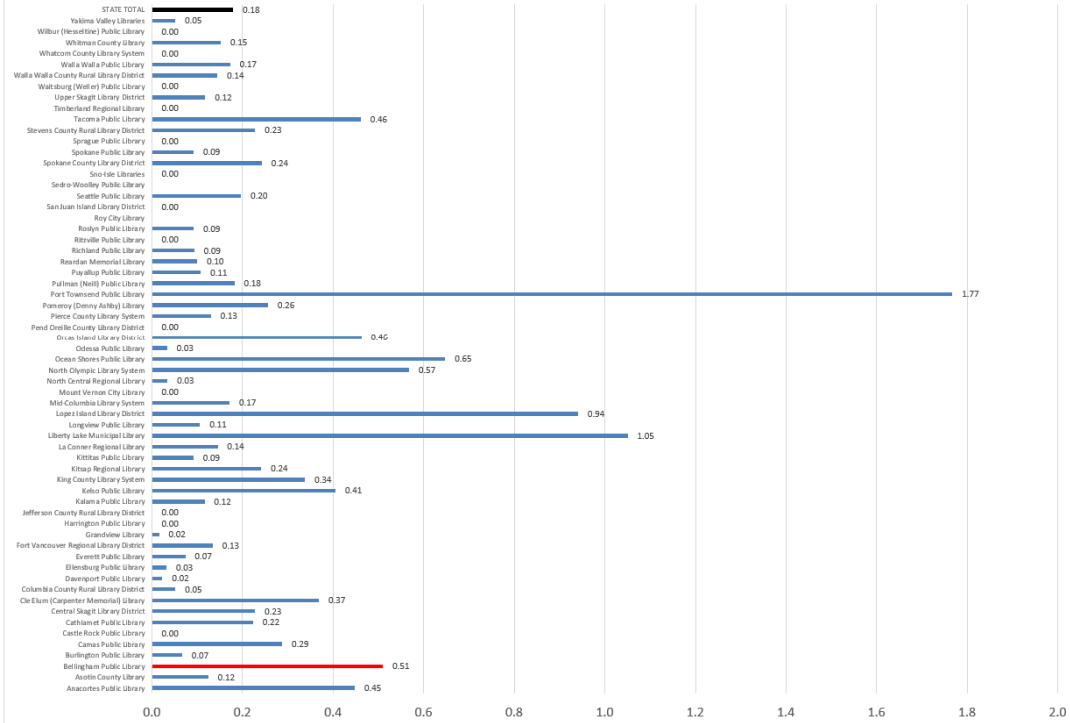


Our public service hours have not only recovered from the pandemic, but are now the highest we've ever recorded (at least going back to 2002). This is due to the opening of the Bellis Fair Branch Library in April 2023.



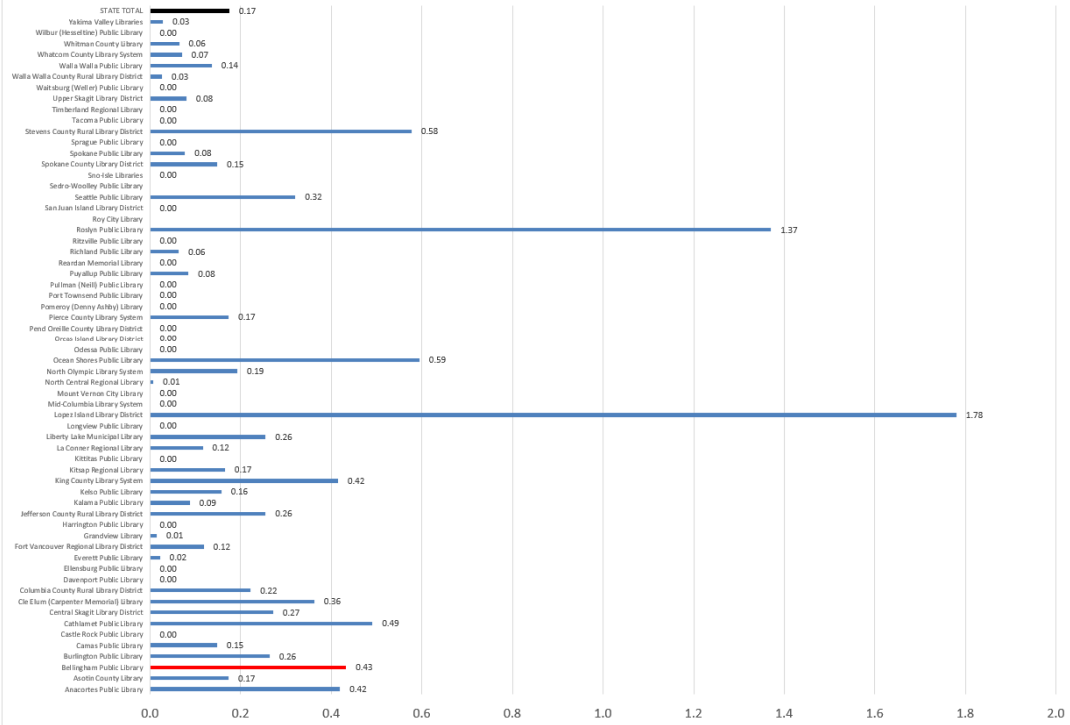
Circulation per Borrower is a less-common comparison. WCLS’s cardholders had been borrowing at a higher rate than BPL’s cardholders, both well above the State average, but the pandemic pretty much evened us up for 2020 & ‘21. In 2022 WCLS’s borrowers increased their borrowing at a faster clip than BPL’s, and we’ve pretty much levelled off back where we historically have been at around 33 items. It’s still well above the State average, though.

Curbside Visits per Capita (LSA), 2020



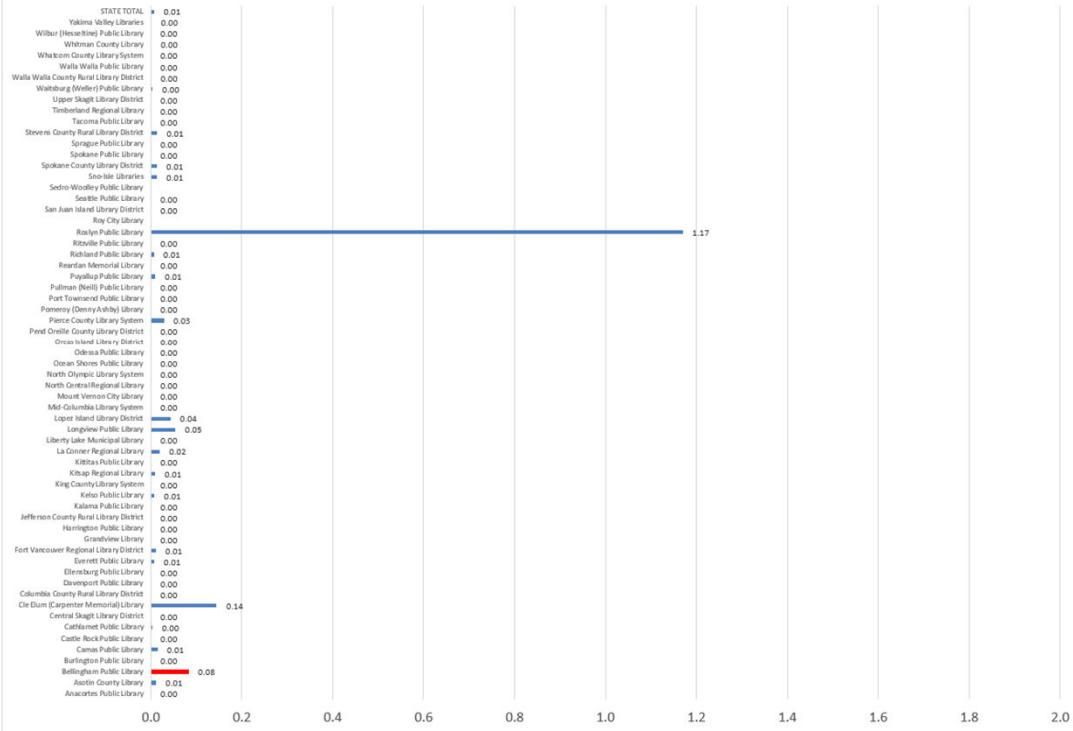
The pandemic has led to changes in what data the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the State Libraries are asking libraries to report. Added for 2020 were over a dozen new questions specifically related to service during the pandemic. Offering 'curbside' service was a common option 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.

Curbside Visits per Capita (LSA), 2021

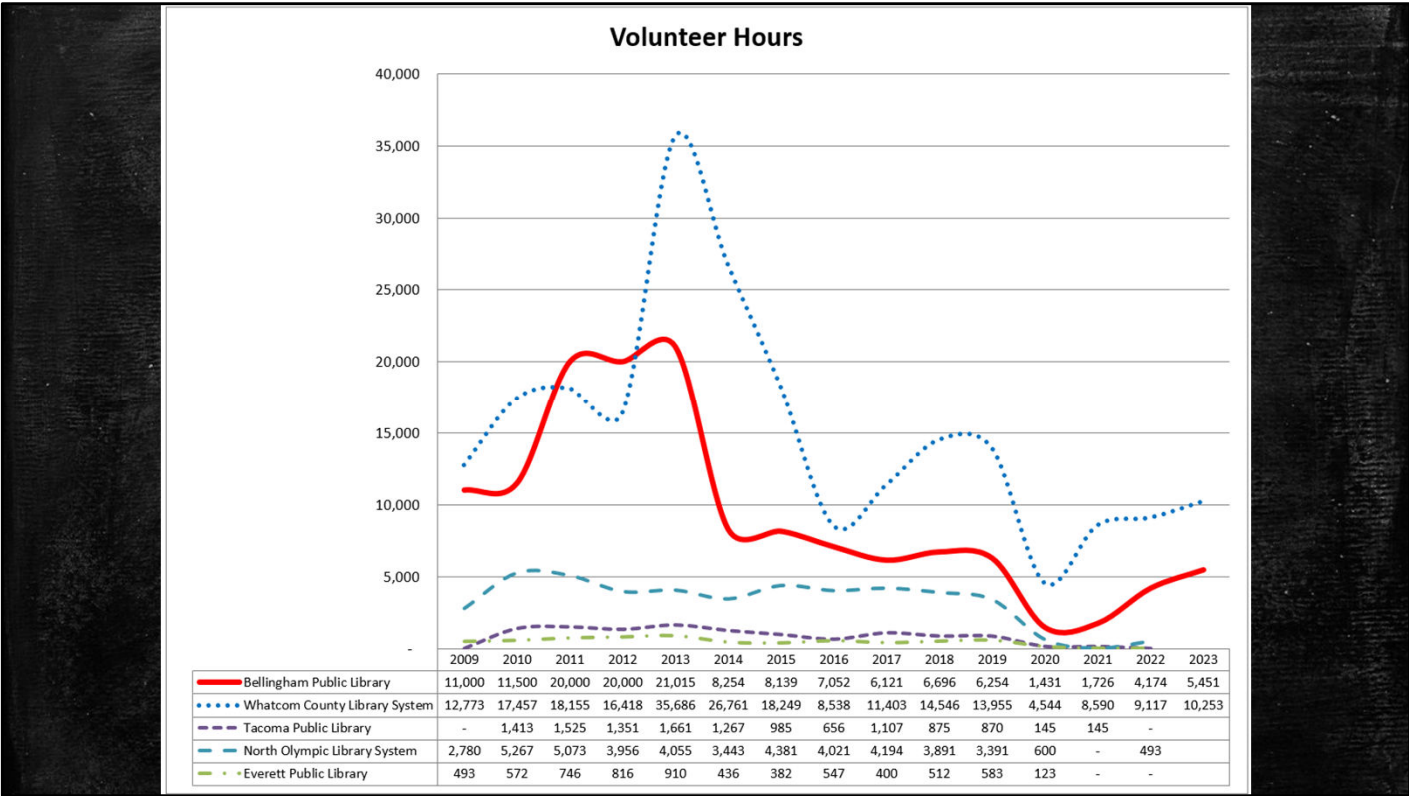


In 2021 BPL was 6th again, but out of 37 instead of 47, as some libraries apparently dropped curbside in 2021, or at least stopped reporting it.

Curbside Visits per Capita (LSA), 2022



In 2022 BPL was third of 23 libraries that reported curbside visits.



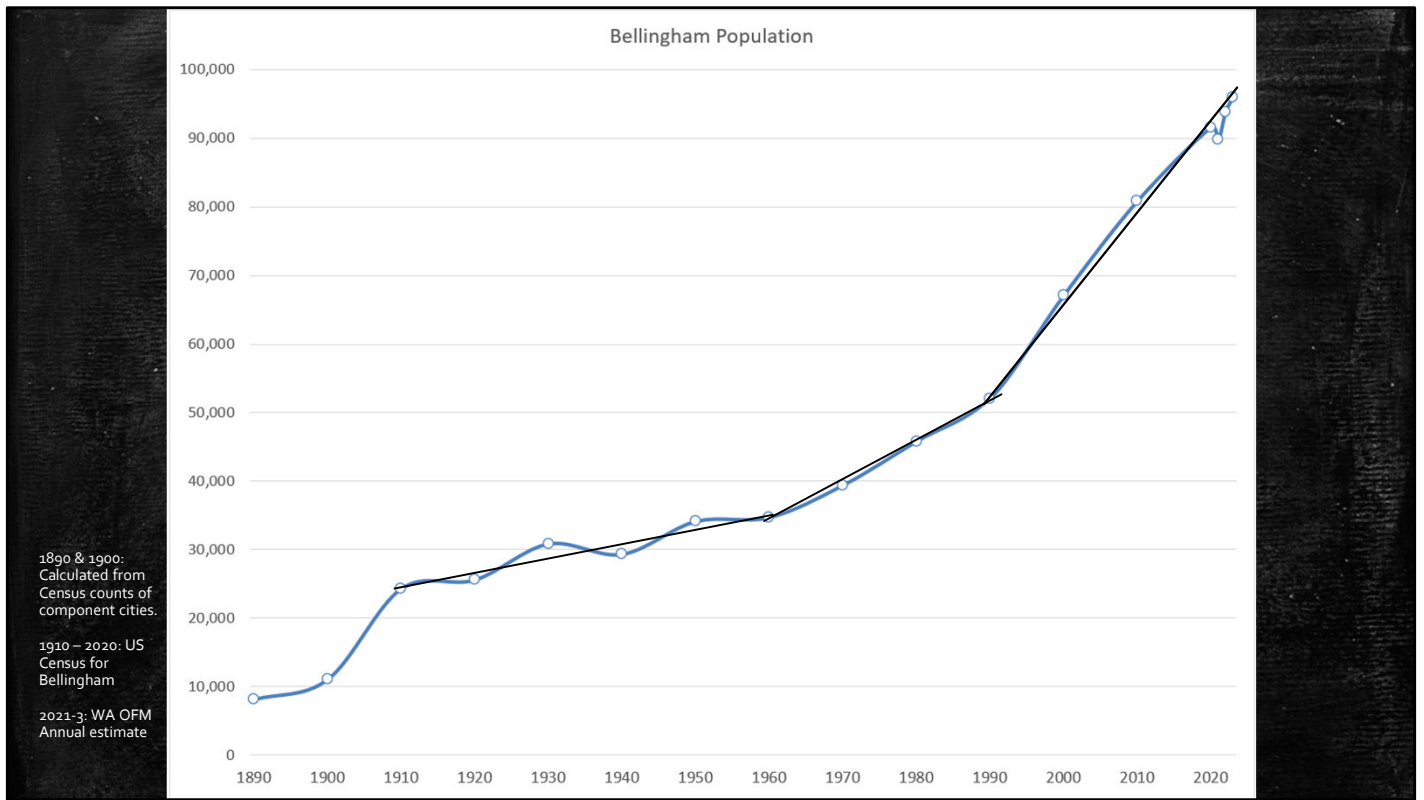
One more metric that had a substantial impact from the pandemic was reported Volunteer Hours. Our building was closed for a long time, and there were hurdles to getting volunteers back in the building. Some libraries have rebounded more strongly than we have, while some others were less.

For 2023 we continued our recovery but we're still not quite back to where we had been.

Moving on from COVID impacts ...

Long-Term Trends

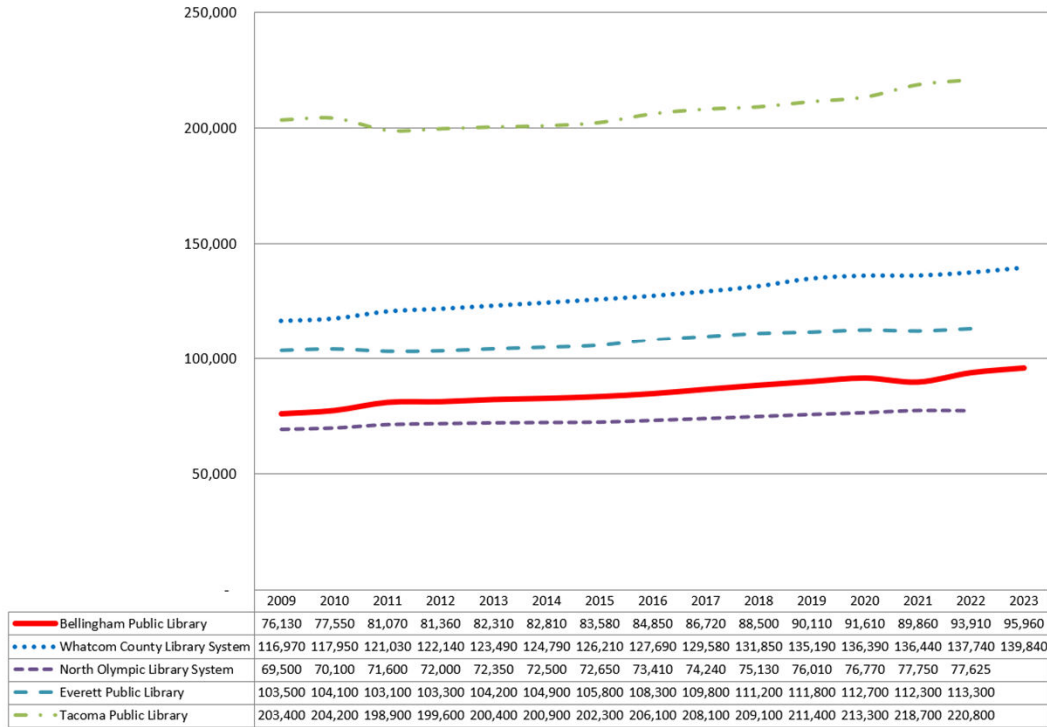
- Population growth
- Library programming growth
- Shift from physical to digital
- Changes in computer & internet use



One long-term trend is continued population increase.

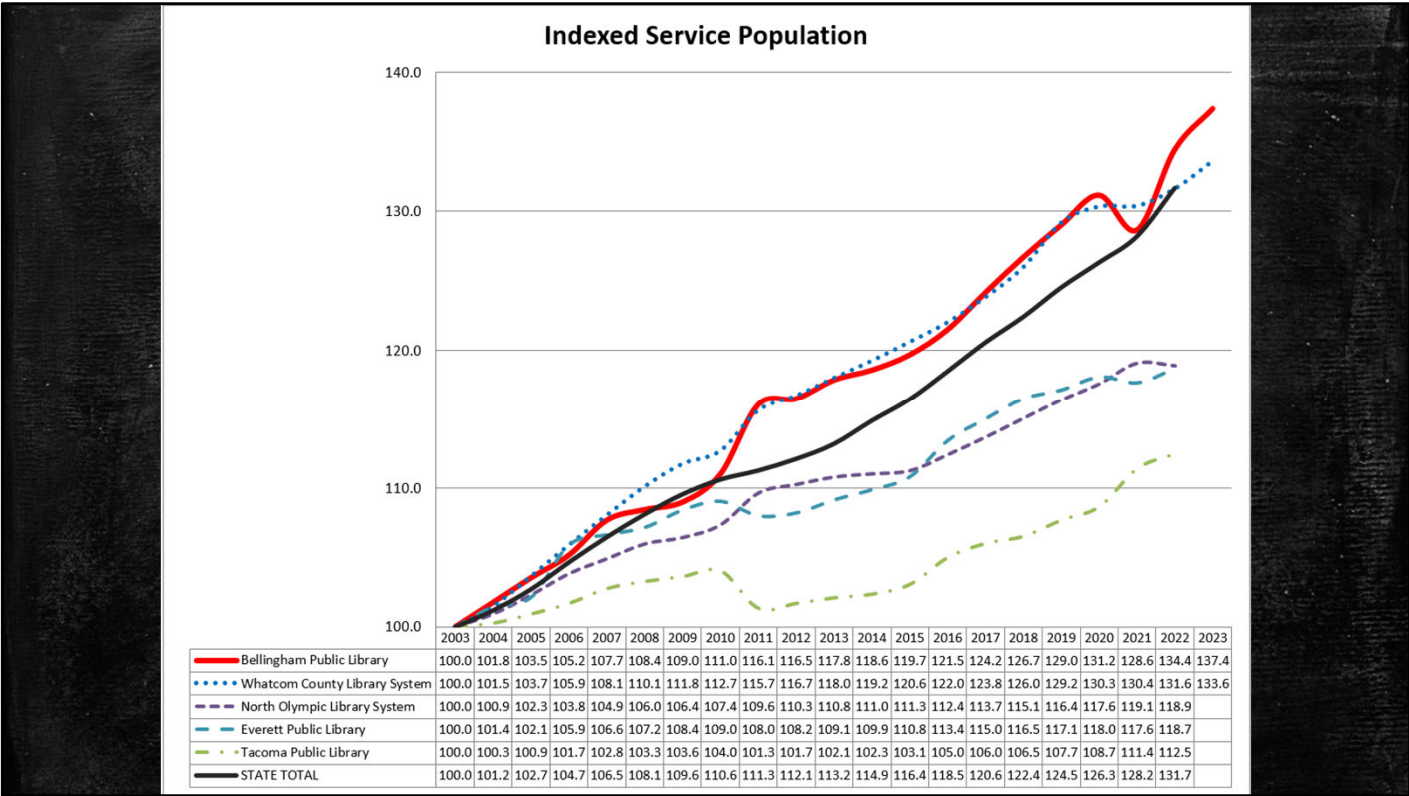
First, some data that doesn't come from the State Library. This chart shows the Legal Service Population for Bellingham (starting in 1903...). This shows that over the past 110 years Bellingham has had three phases of growth: (first line) 1910 – 1960 was slow. (second line) 1960 to 1990 sped up a bit. (third line) 1990 to 2020 growth really took off. The 2021-23 numbers are OFM estimates, which had an odd downturn in 2021 before resuming the previous trajectory.

Service Population

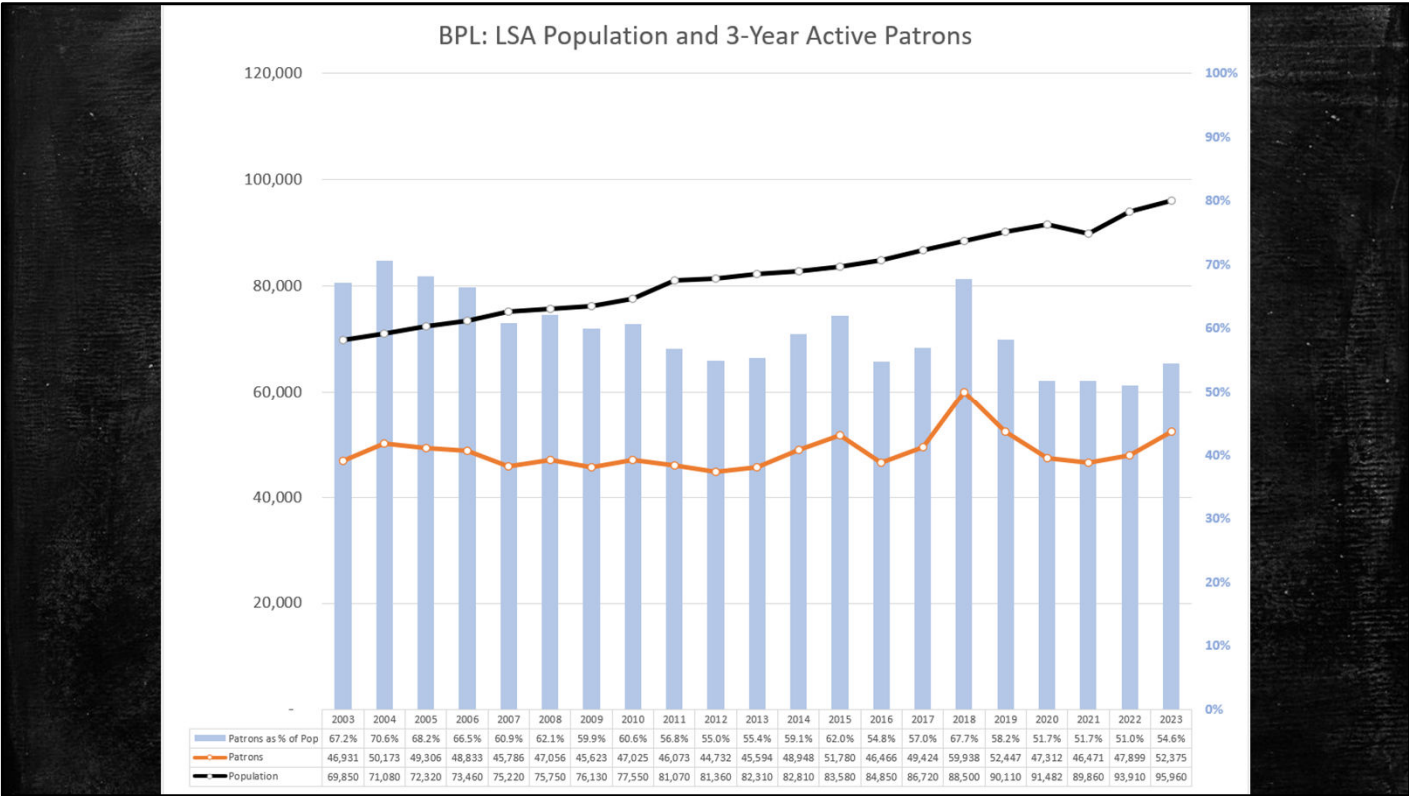


Here we are zoomed in to just the latest 15 years.

A new estimate of population is generated yearly by the Washington Office of Financial Management. OFM's 2023 April 1 estimate has us on nearly the same growth rate as before the 2020 Census data came out.



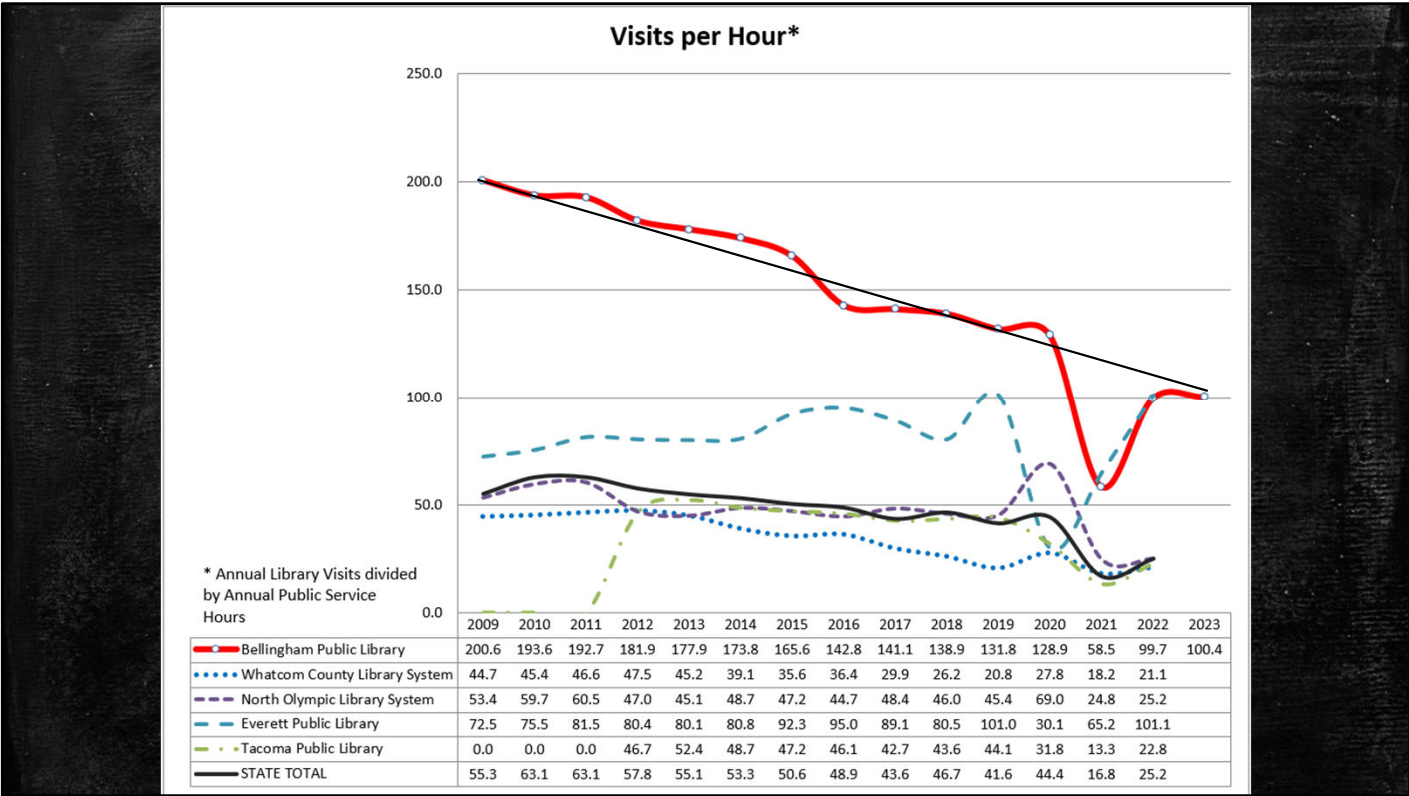
This is easier to see when looking at the rate of change. A different way to look at the LSA Population numbers is to show the rate of change relative to a start point – here we have 21 years of data with 2003 as the starting point. The WA OFM had an estimated rate of growth for Bellingham during the 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, and the rate was largely maintained for 2023.



This is a bit of an aside, and the chart isn't in the merged workbook. It shows the OFM pop. estimates with our reported 3-Year Active Patrons, and the annual rate of cardholdership. Ideally every eligible person would have and use library card, so our rate of cardholdership would be 100%. We used to report as much as 70%; more recently we've been in the low 50's.

2018 was an anomaly caused by not de-duplicating students with both a personal card and a ConnectED card.

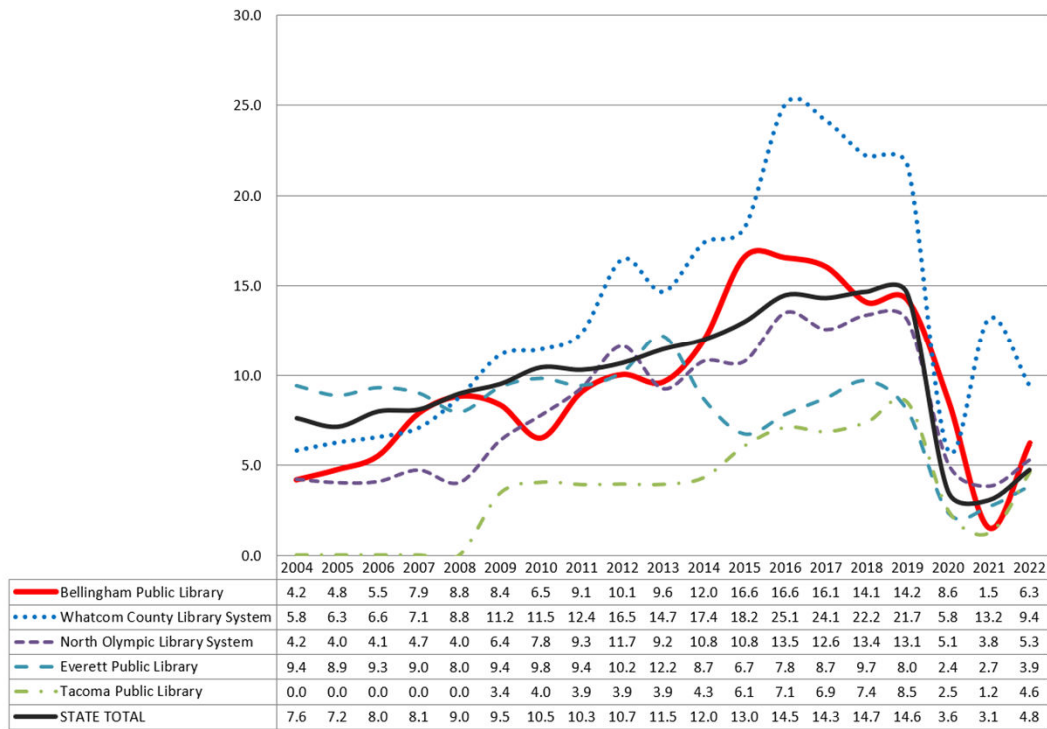
In 2023 we had a nice little post-pandemic up-tick in patron registrations, which helped boost our count of active cardholders enough to gain ground against population growth. We're back up to nearly 55% of the population having used a BPL card in the past 3 years!



Visits per Hour are also dropping (as are Visits per Capita, as we saw previously). In 2023 our visits were essentially flat compared to the previous year. Which puts us almost exactly back to our previous trend. [line]

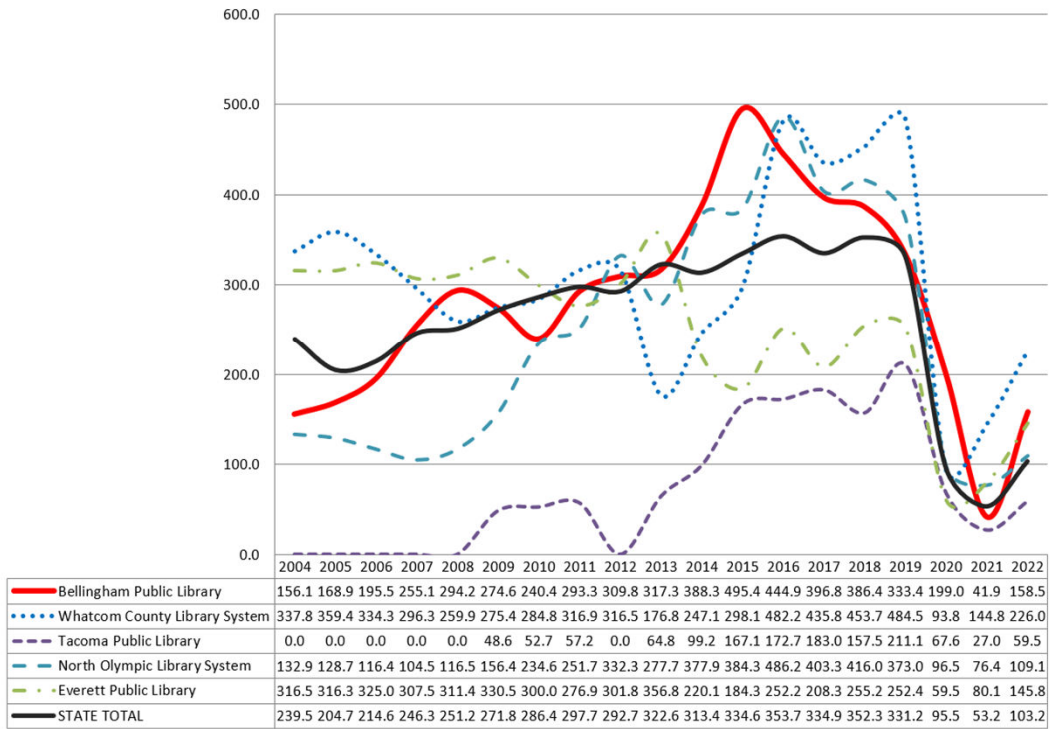
Why are we seeing fewer visits per open hour? Is it a trend we need to reverse? If so, how?

Total Programs per 1,000 Service Population



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. It's possible this change will result in a new baseline.

Total Program Attendance per 1,000 Service Population



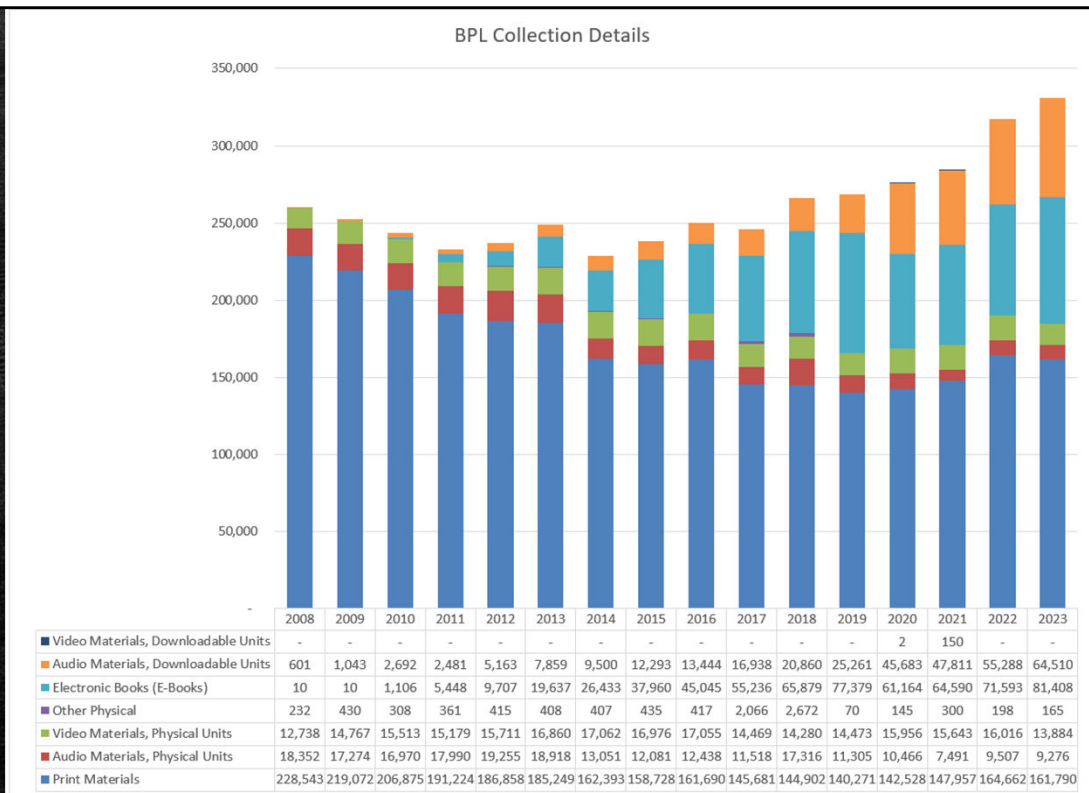
Part of the same trend, attendance at programs generally increased over the past 15+ years.

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.

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

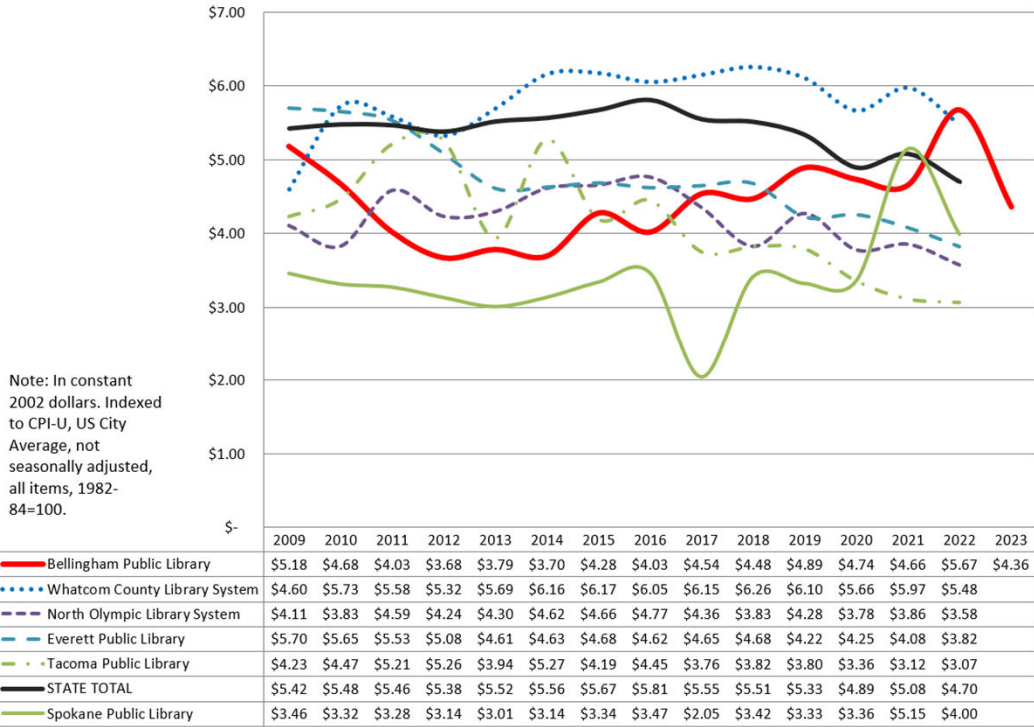


One long-term trend in libraries and in society in general is a shift toward digital media containers from analog media containers. From print books to ebooks; from audio recordings on records/cassettes/CDs to downloadable or streaming audio (both music and spoken word and books); from video on film,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

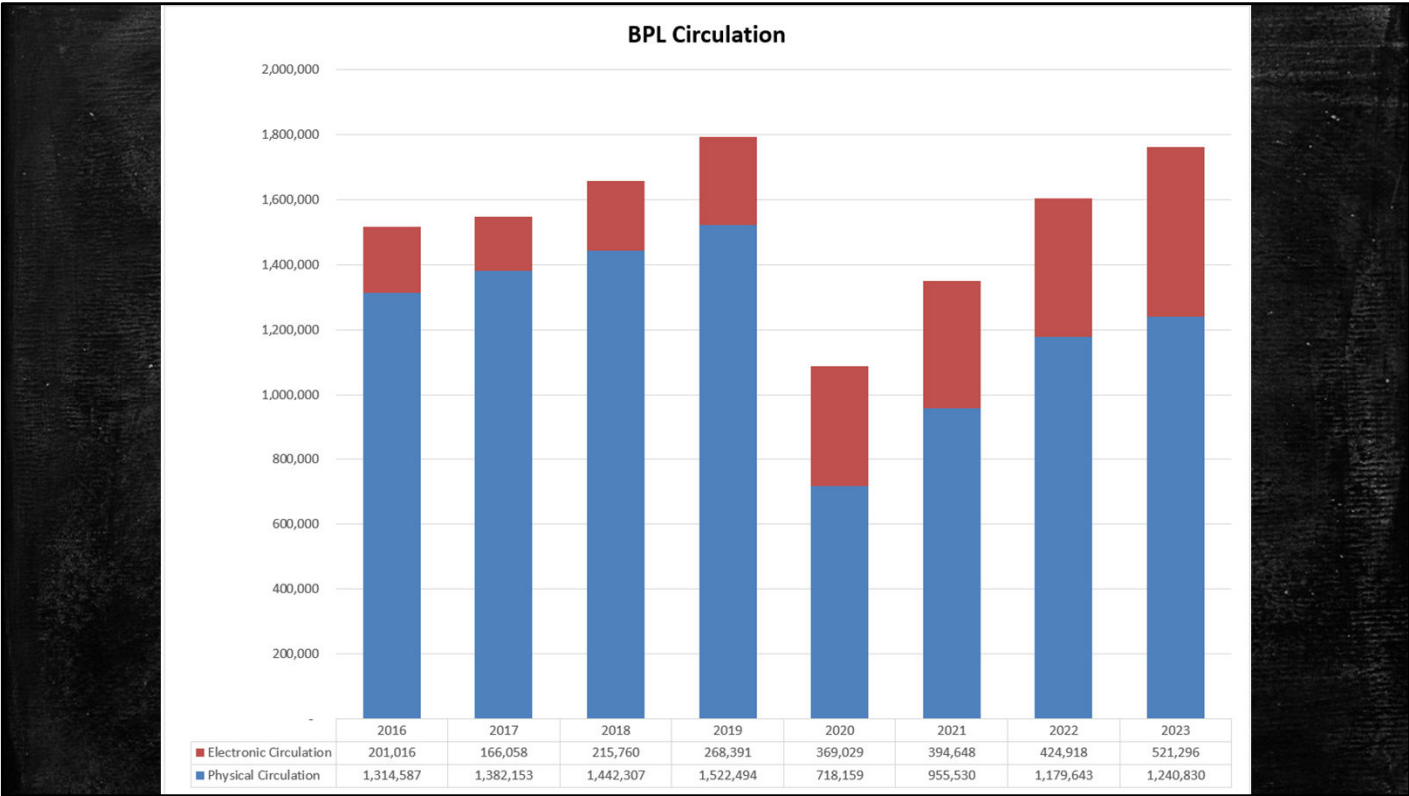
BPL has been taking part in this transition, too. Our collection has been decreasing the number of physical items we own, and increasing the number of licensed or cloud-based digital titles we make available to patrons. In the long-run this gives us the potential to increase our collection size past 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 30,000+ titles available in the Kanopy streaming video platform. Similarly, Audio Materials, Downloadable Units does not include the millions of songs available to stream via Freegal. 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 they are packages of titles rather than individual purchase decisions, we don't get to count them as part of our collection. Patron use of Kanopy does, however, count as an Electronic circulation. But streaming a song via Freegal doesn't.

Per Capita Expenditure on Materials, adjusted for inflation



Long-term there isn't a discernable trend in expenditure per capita for materials when viewed in inflation-adjusted dollars, though most of these libraries have had decreases since 2019, and the state average has been trending down since a high in 2016. BPL's big increase in 2022 apparently stems from a windfall due to salary savings. It's not currently budgeted to continue, as demonstrated with the 2023 reversion.

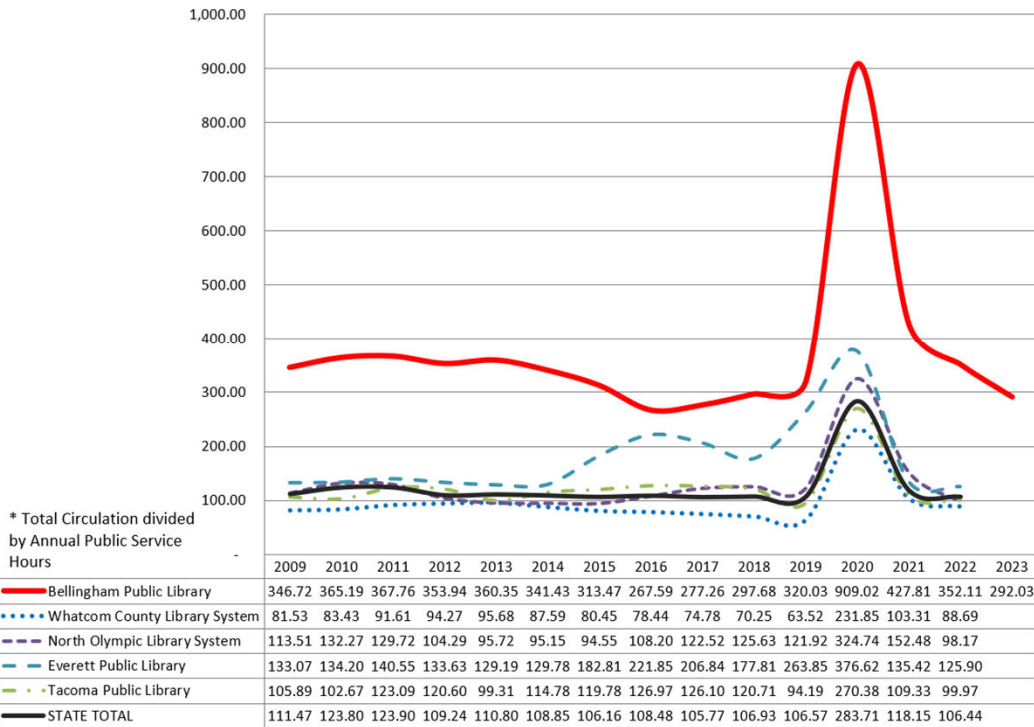


Our circulation split between physical and digital is changing, though, with the COVID pandemic giving a big boost to Electronic Circulation.

Note that our physical circulation benefits from automatic renewals, while digital things don't. However, 2023 was the year that digital circ. (521k) passed renewals (508k).

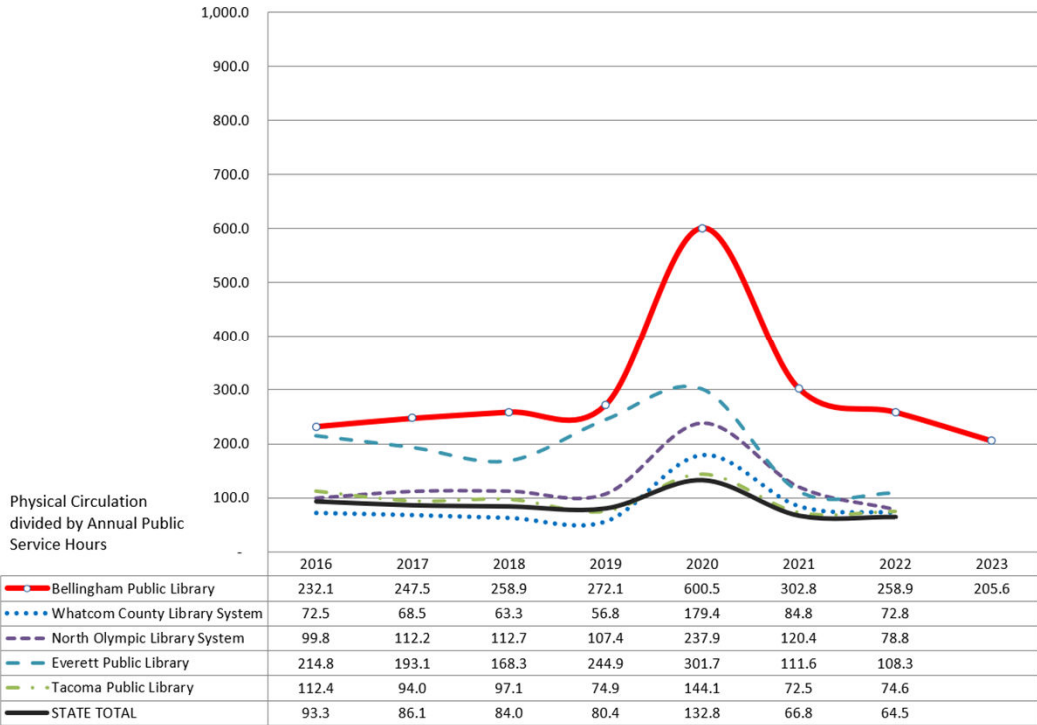
2016 is the first year the stats included this split between physical and electronic circulation, so we don't have comparable numbers any further back.

Circulation per Hour*



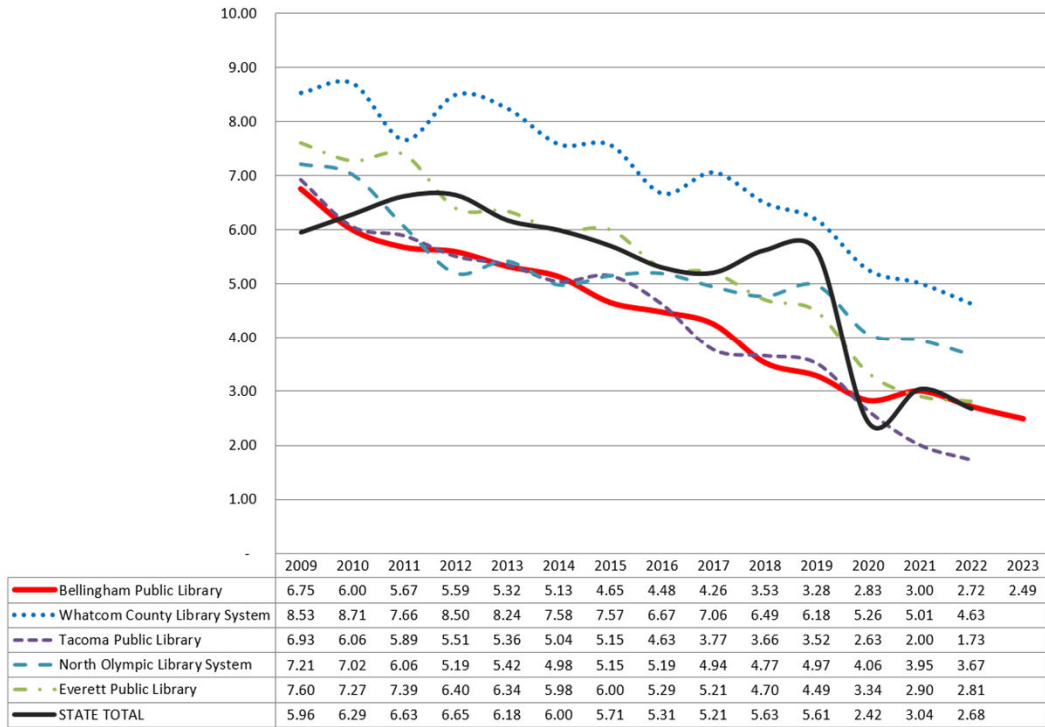
But remember this slide? How does the shift in circulation from physical to digital impact how we understand this? Patrons can access digital materials 24/7 so open hours have less and less importance to this metric as the Electronic Circulation makes up a more substantial percentage of overall circulation.

Physical Circulation per Hour

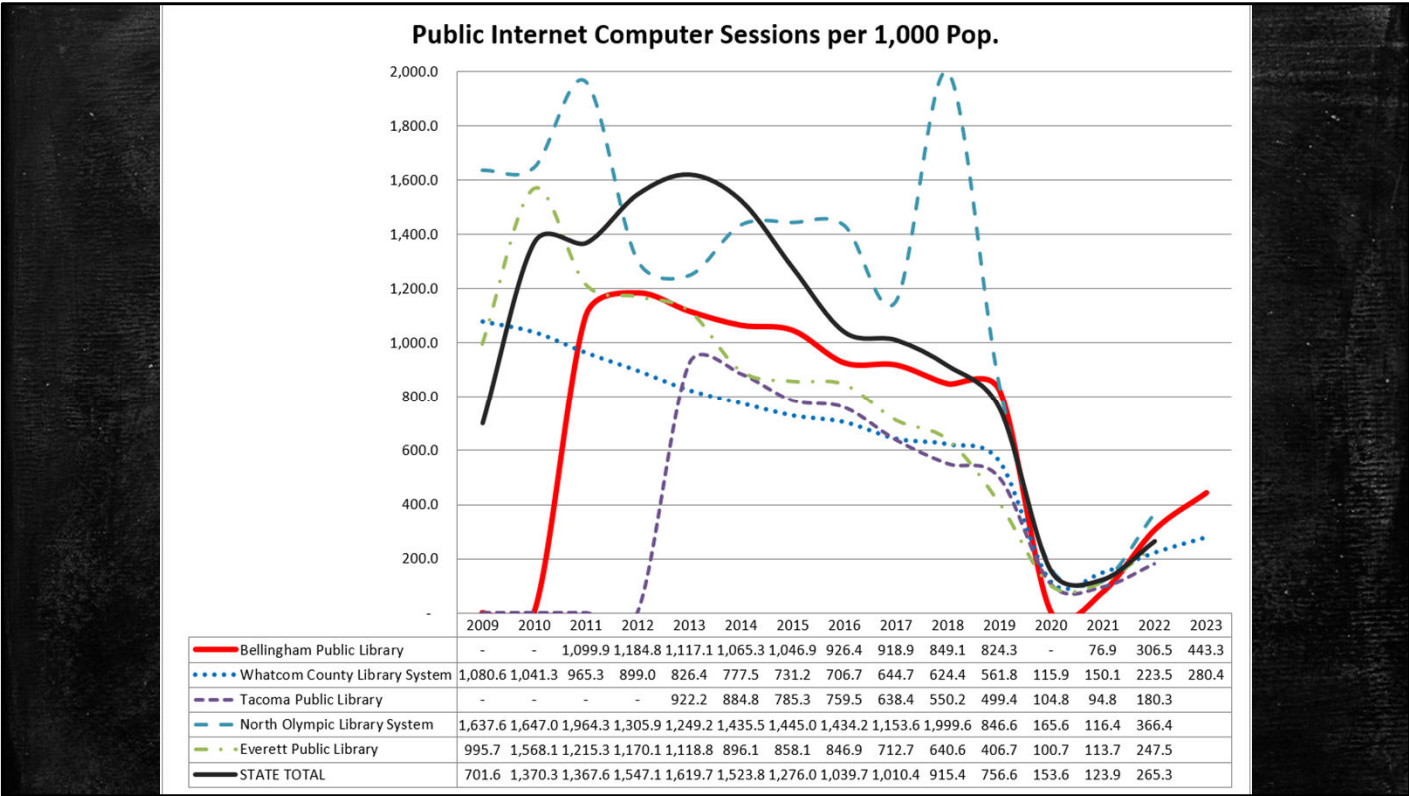


So let's look at only physical circulation against open hours. 2016 was when we hit bottom for Total Circ. per open hour; now 2023 is our low-point for Physical Circ per open hour. We expanded our hours in 2023 with the opening of Bellis Fair more than we recovered our physical circulation, so this isn't really all bad news. Being closer to the State average on this metric would be more sustainable for our staff.

Print Serial Subscriptions per 1,000 Population



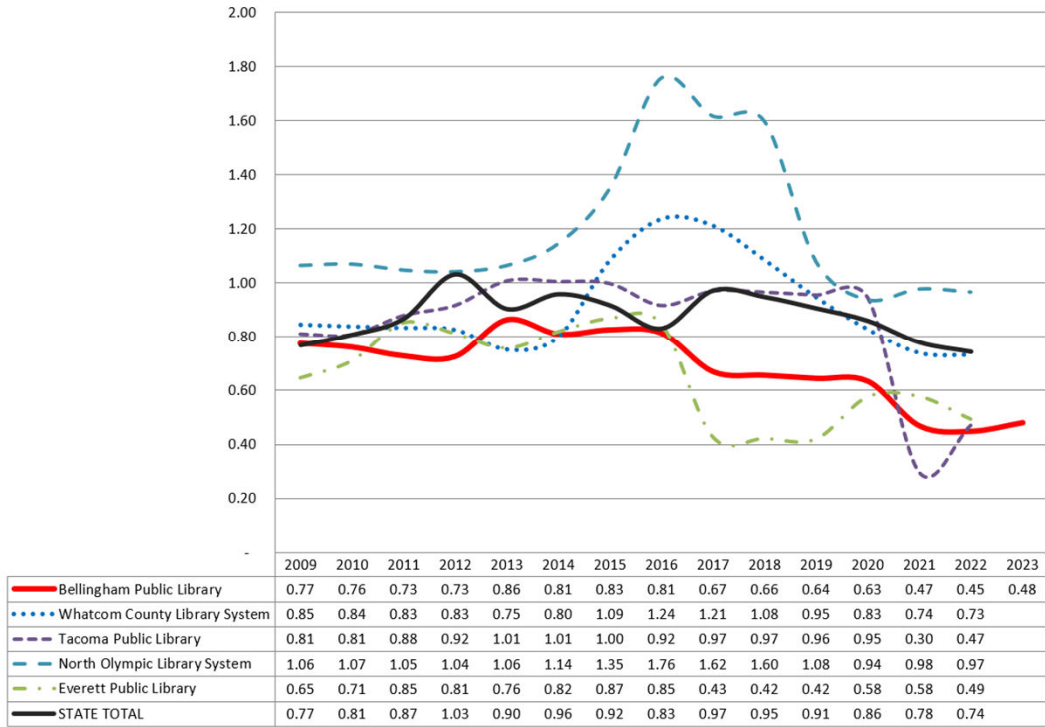
One component of the shift from analog to digital is major upheaval in the print serials market, both newspapers and magazines. We are having more and more trouble finding print magazines to subscribe to, and those that we do are nearly all in a process of decreasing their page-counts, their publication frequency, or either going digital-only or just ceasing publication entirely. While BPL had a slight uptick in 2021 due to the population estimate decreasing, the subsequent increase in population for 2022 has cancelled that out and put us back on the same downward trajectory, which is continuing into 2023.



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. Use did increase again in 2023, but still at a rate barely half what it was in 2018. 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 Internet Computers per 1,000 Population



It's not that most libraries were reducing the number of computers available to the public throughout this time. Availability was basically flat over much of the teens. It has started to decline over the past few years since 2017, though – a downward trend is starting to emerge.

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?