



4. Library Services

WHAT IS THE SERVICE?

Public libraries are an important resource to meet the changing needs of individuals and communities. They foster literacy, life-long learning and support a love of reading in people of all ages. Libraries also provide support for newcomers and job seekers, and build diverse communities. They address the digital divide and help individuals and communities transition to a global, knowledge-based economy.

Public libraries meet these objectives through:

- ▶ Collections;
- ▶ Reference and referral services to provide information and readers advisory;
- ▶ Access to technology and digital content;
- ▶ Programs;
- ▶ Study space;
- ▶ Community meeting rooms; and
- ▶ Outreach and partnerships.

These services are delivered within the library and beyond through the virtual library and collaborative resource sharing networks.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES?

Libraries continue to face a number of challenges, including:

- ▶ The need to tailor library services and offer collections in many languages due to the increasing social, economic and cultural diversity of the population;
- ▶ The renewal of older library branches that are not configured for current service needs;
- ▶ The continual need to update and improve the technology infrastructure to keep electronic library services current and relevant; and
- ▶ Community demand for expanded hours of operation to provide physical access to computers that may not be present in homes.

HOW ARE WE COLLABORATING?

OMBI Library Services work in a highly collaborative environment at the provincial and national level. Examples of this collaboration are joint training and a purchasing consortia for library materials. It has also included the exchange and sharing of performance measures and technical definitions with organizations such as the Canadian Urban Libraries Council (CULC).

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

It should be noted that data provided in figures 4.1 through 4.5 for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, only relates to library services it provides to its four rural townships.

How many hours are all library branches open?

FIG. 4.1 Annual Number of Library Service Hours per Capita

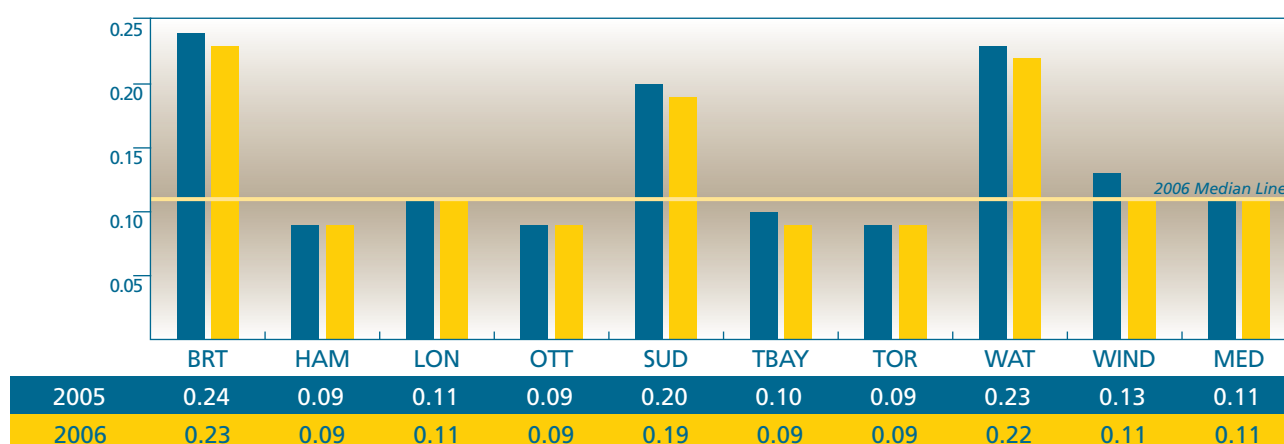


Figure 4.1 compares the number of hours per capita/person that all library branches were open in 2005 and 2006, regardless of the size of those branches. The higher the bar, the greater the number of hours library branches were open. This measurement excludes the numerous electronic services provided on a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week basis, through library web sites, as well as through outreach services such as bookmobiles.

A municipality's results can be influenced by the density of its population. Municipalities with lower population densities may require more library branches and more service hours to provide services within a reasonable distance from residents. It does not reflect the average number of weekly hours that each library branch is open, which can vary significantly among municipalities.

How many holdings do libraries have?

FIG. 4.2 Number of Library Holdings per Capita

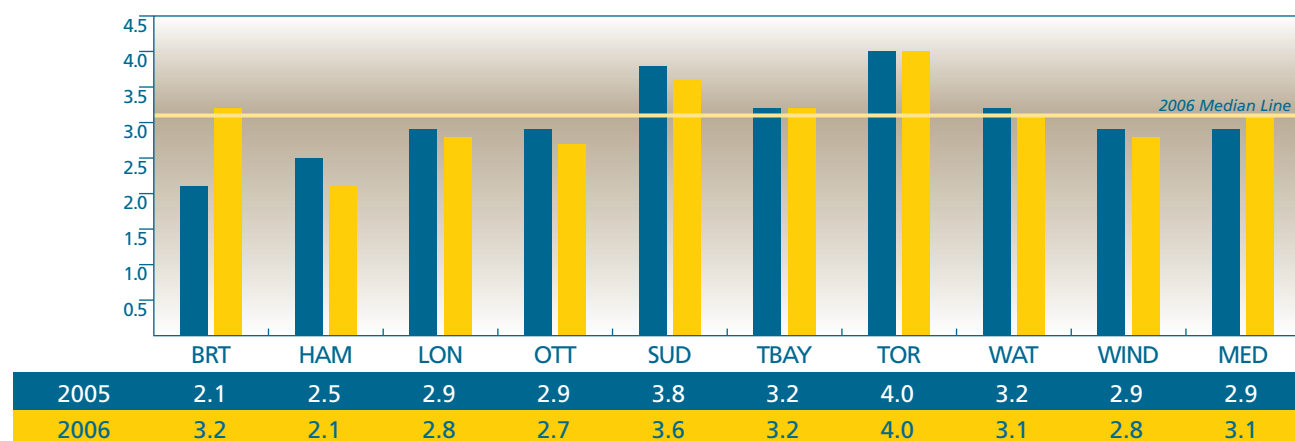


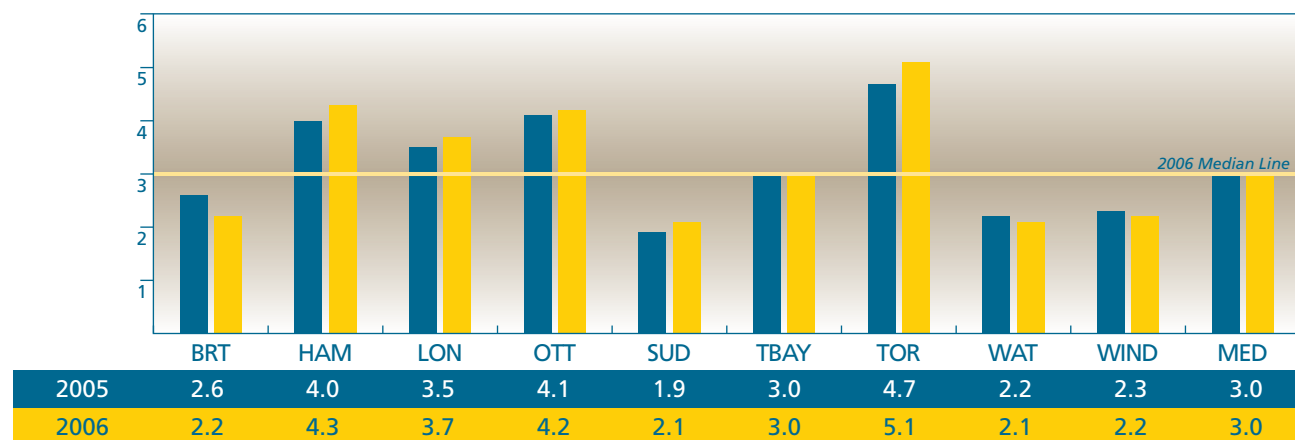
Figure 4.2 shows the number of library holdings in the municipal library system on a per capita/person basis for 2005 and 2006. Library holdings consist of both print and electronic media, and this measure provides an indication of the size of library holdings (the higher the bar, the higher the number of print and electronic media available). However, this measure is not an indication of how current or up to date a collection is.

Print media include reference collections, circulating/borrowing collections and periodicals. Electronic media include CDs/DVDs, MP3 materials and audio books.

Results can be influenced by differing needs for multilingual collections, the size of a library's electronic collection and the significance of specialized and reference collections.

How many times is each item borrowed from a library?

FIG. 4.3 Average Number of Times in Year Circulating Items are Borrowed (Turnover)



One way the quality of a library's collection can be evaluated is by examining the average number of times each item in a library's circulating collection is borrowed, which for 2005 and 2006 is illustrated in Figure 4.3. The higher the bar, the more times an item was borrowed from the circulating collection.

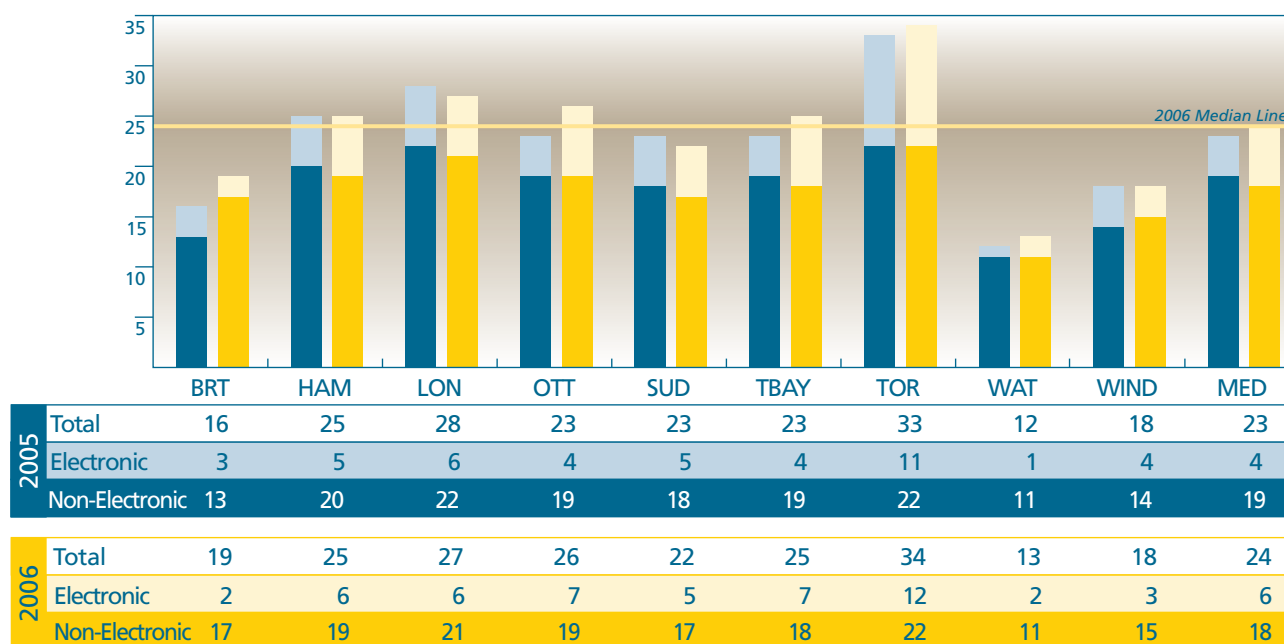
Generally, if an item has been borrowed many times in a year, it is an indication of how popular and relevant the item is to users.

Each municipality's results can be influenced by:

- ▶ The size, variety, and how current the circulating collection is;
- ▶ The extent of library web services that are available;
- ▶ Each library system's borrowing policy;
- ▶ The socio-demographics of the population served; and
- ▶ The degree of research done to assess community information needs and the communication of available library materials and services to citizens.

How many times were libraries used?

FIG. 4.4 Number of Library Uses per Capita - Electronic and Non-Electronic



One of the primary goals of a municipal library system is to maximize the use of library resources and programming by residents. Figure 4.4 shows how many times a library system was used in 2005 and 2006 on a per capita/person basis. The higher the bar, the greater the use of the library system.

4. Library Services

Library uses are grouped into non-electronic and electronic categories. Non-electronic library uses include:

- ▶ A visit to a library branch;
- ▶ Borrowing materials;
- ▶ Reference questions;
- ▶ Use of materials within the branch; and
- ▶ Attendance at programs.

Electronic library use is a growing service channel of many library systems. It includes:

- ▶ The use of computers in libraries;
- ▶ On-line collections available in branches; and
- ▶ 24-hour access to library web services and collections from home, work or school.

A number of variables can influence how much and how often a library is used, including:

- ▶ The number and size of branches;
- ▶ Hours of operation;
- ▶ The size and mix of collections;
- ▶ The number of languages supported in library collections;
- ▶ The range of program offerings;
- ▶ The availability and degree of investment in web services; and
- ▶ The socio-demographics of the population served.

It is important to note that library systems can also provide services to residents beyond their municipal borders. For example, reference or research libraries may have significant collections and other specialized services that are used by the business community, post-secondary students and residents from other municipalities. These groups of users are not captured in this per person/capita measure.

How much does it cost for each library use?

FIG. 4.5 Library Cost per Use

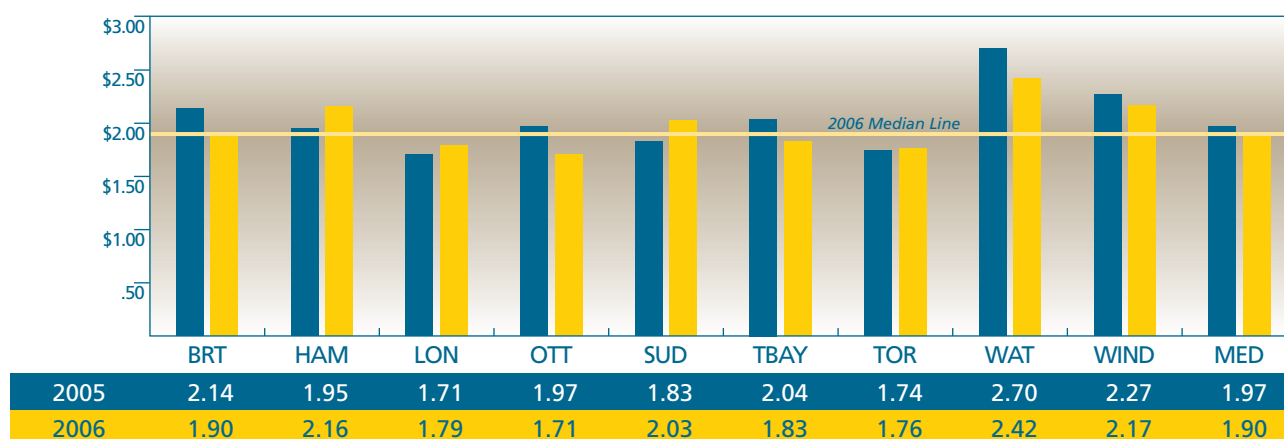


Figure 4.5 illustrates how much it cost in 2005 and 2006 to operate a library system on a per library use basis. The lower the bar, the less it costs per library use.

A number of variables influence results, including:

- ▶ The mix, variety and depth of library uses and the varying amount of staff resources required to support those different uses; and
- ▶ Differences in areas of focused expenditures among municipalities to meet local community needs.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The OMBI Library Expert Panel will examine the incorporation of more quantitative and outcome measures in the future.