

8. 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 the provision of:

- ▶ Collections of books, periodicals, magazines and articles
- ▶ Reference and referral services to provide information and readers advisory
- ▶ Access to technology and digital content
- ▶ Individual study space as well as community meeting rooms
- ▶ Outreach and partnerships initiatives

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?

Issues facing the delivery of Library Services are:

- ▶ Diversity - the need to tailor library services and offer collections in many languages due to the increasing social, economic and cultural diversity of the population
- ▶ Renovation - older library branches need to be reconfigured for current service needs
- ▶ Technology - the continual need to update and improve the technology infrastructure to keep electronic library services current and relevant
- ▶ Demand - libraries experience increased demand for expanded hours of operation to provide physical access to computers that may not be present in homes



WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

It should be noted that data provided in figures 8.1 through 8.3 for the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, are only for the library service it provides to its four rural townships and does not include results for the three cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

How many times were libraries used?

FIG. 8.1 Electronic and Non-Electronic Library Uses per Capita

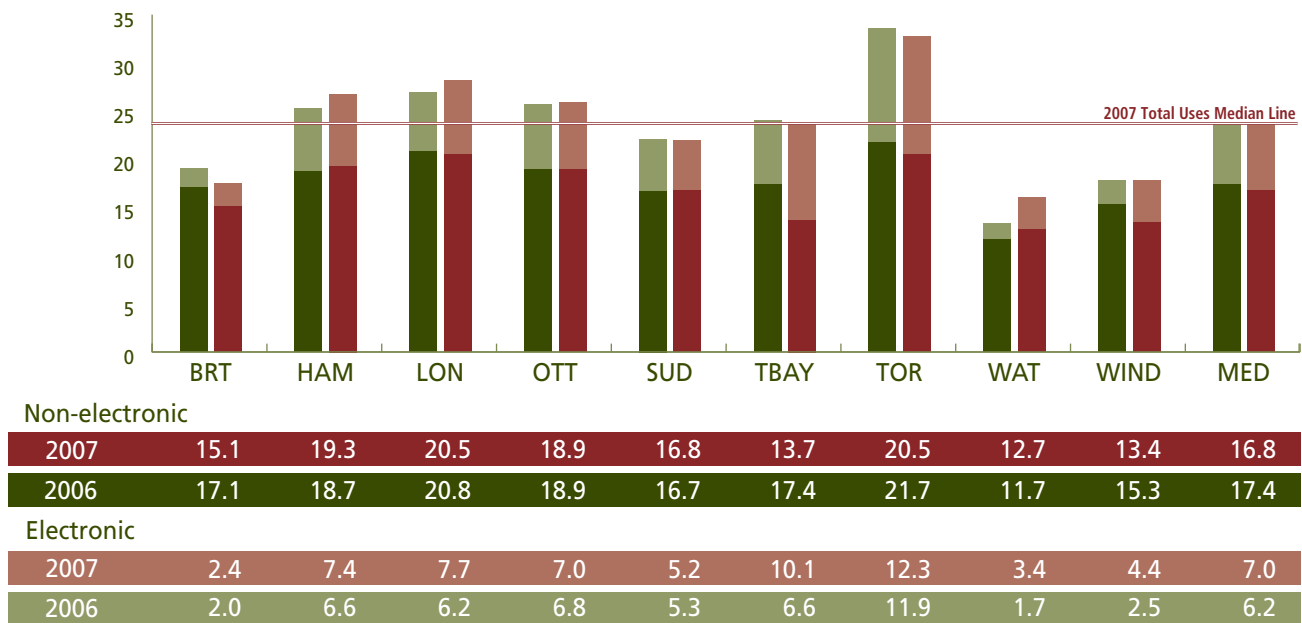


Figure 8.1 illustrates the total of electronic and non-electronic library uses on a per capita basis, as well as separate results for the two categories of uses. The primary goal of a municipal library system is to have residents maximize their use of library resources and programming.

Non-electronic library uses include:

- ▶ A visit to a library branch
- ▶ Borrowing materials
- ▶ Reference questions
- ▶ Use of materials within the branch
- ▶ 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
- ▶ 24-hour access to library web services and collections from home, work or school

How many times is each item borrowed from a library?

FIG. 8.2 Average Number of Times in Year Circulating Items are Borrowed (Turnover)

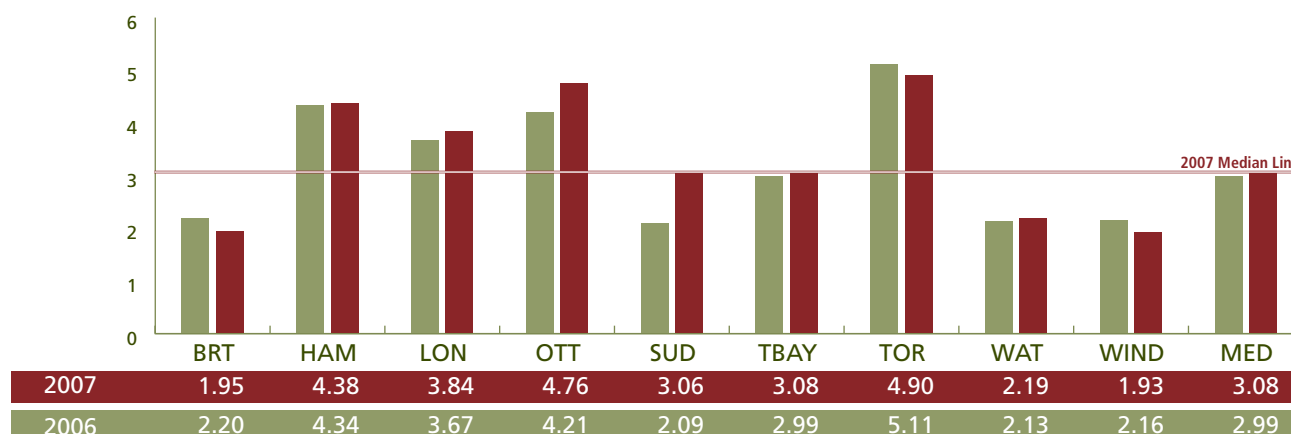


Figure 8.2 shows the number of times items are borrowed in a year. This is one way the quality of a library's collection can be evaluated. Generally, if an item has been borrowed many times in a year, it is an indication of how popular and relevant the item is to users.

How much does it cost for each library use?

FIG. 8.3 Library Cost per Use

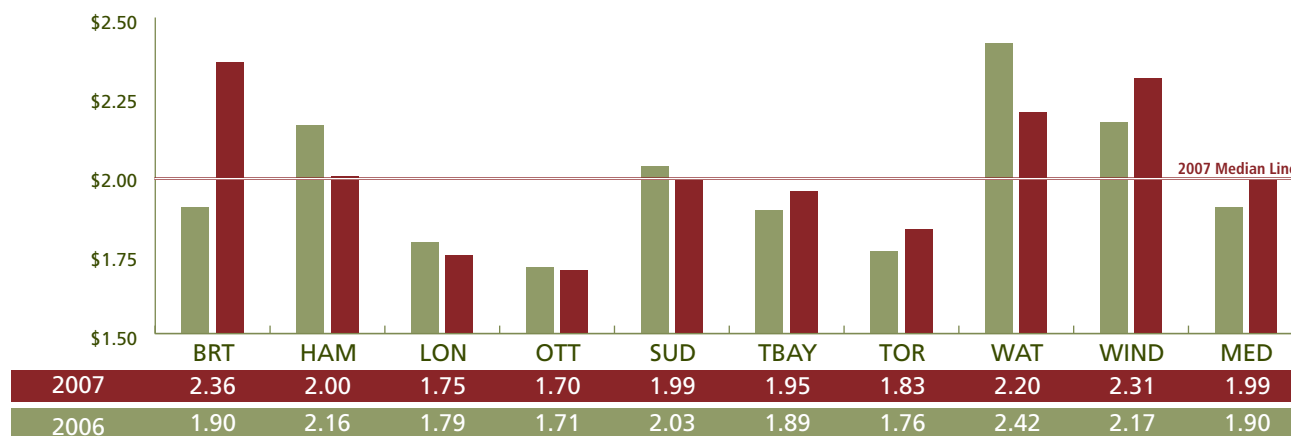


Figure 8.3 reflects the cost per library use, which includes all the different types of electronic and non-electronic library uses described earlier. Varying amounts of staff resources are required to support those different types of uses.

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WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER WHEN REVIEWING THESE RESULTS?

Each municipality's results are influenced to varying degrees by a number of factors, including:

- ▶ Access - number and size of branches and their hours of operation
- ▶ Collections - size and mix, as well as number of languages supported in those collections
- ▶ Programs - range of program offerings to the public
- ▶ Library use - mix, variety and depth of library uses and the varying amount of staff resources required to support those different uses
- ▶ Web services - availability and degree of investment in web services
- ▶ Demographics - socio-economic and cultural make-up of the population served

For more information about the results, contact the Municipality's representative listed in Appendix F, page 94.