# Libraries Connect Communities:
KEY FINDINGS
2011 – 2012

Public Libraries Serve as Lifeline to Technology Resources and Training

More Americans than ever are turning to their libraries for a diverse range of technology resources and training essential to full participation in the nation's economy.

- 62% of libraries report that they are the only source of free public access to computers and the Internet in their communities.
- 74% of libraries report public use of library Wi-Fi increased in 2011.
- 90% of libraries offer formal or informal technology assistance to library users, and 35% offer one-on-one technology training by appointment.
- 36% of libraries report increased use of library technology training over the previous year.

Libraries That Report They Are Only Provider of Free Public Internet Access in Their Community

Urban **41%**
Suburban **60%**
Rural **70%**
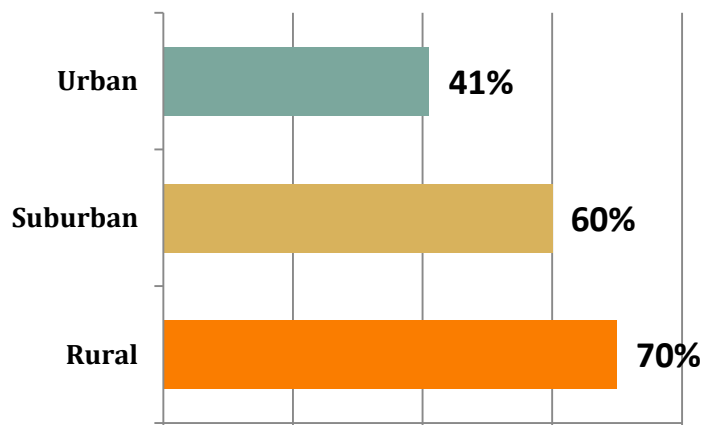
Budget Cuts Limit Ability to Meet Demand for Services

While some library budgets have improved, others have been reduced further. The extraordinary public demand for services continues to outpace available funding needed to respond to these demands.

Percentage of Public Libraries Reporting Flat or Decreased Operating Budgets

FY09 40%
FY10 56%
FY11 60%
FY12 57%
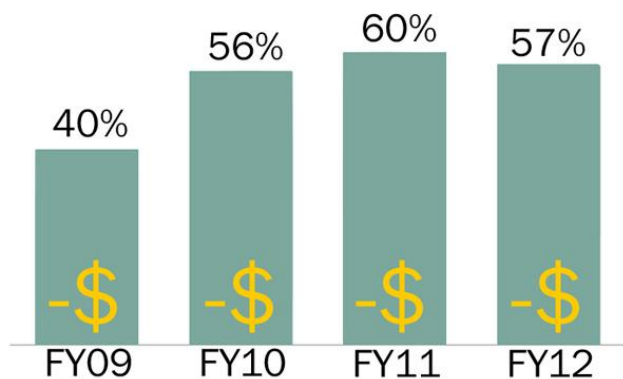
Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study, 2011-2012

- 57% of libraries report flat or decreased operating budgets in FY2012, up from 40% in FY2009.
- For the third year in a row, 40% of state libraries report decreased state funding for public libraries.
- 65% of libraries report having insufficient public computers to meet demand, this increases to 87% in urban libraries.
- 50% of libraries report insufficient staff to meet patron job-seeking needs.

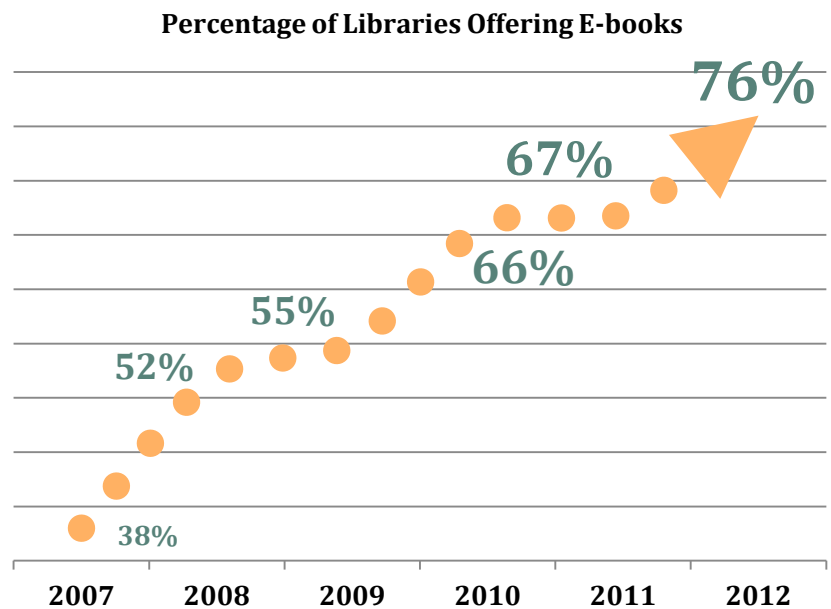## Digital Divide Emerges Between Rural and Urban Libraries

Rural libraries (which account for nearly 50% of all public library outlets in the U.S.), can neither provide adequate Internet access for the public nor keep pace with new technologies.

- 57% of urban libraries offer broadband speeds greater than 10 Mbps, as compared to 17% of rural libraries.
- Technology training classes are provided by 63% of urban libraries, compared to 32% of rural libraries.
- 36% of urban libraries have websites optimized for mobile devices, compared to 9% of rural libraries.
- E-books are available from 92% of urban libraries, compared to 65% of rural libraries.

Libraries Provide Innovative Services and Expand Access to Online Resources

Libraries provide a wide range of popular Internet resources that enhance access to library services and improve channels for information dissemination.

- 76% of libraries offer access to e-books, an increase of 9% from last year.
- 39% of libraries offer e-readers for check-out to patrons.
- 70% of libraries use social networking tools such as Facebook.
- A small- *but growing* – number of libraries are adopting mobile technology applications: 15% of library websites are optimized for mobile devices; 12% of libraries use scanned codes (e.g. QR codes); 7% of libraries have developed smartphone apps for access to library services.

Percentage of Libraries Offering E-books

| 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |

38% — 52% — 55% — 66% — 67% — 76%

Methodology: The study's public library survey was completed between September 2011 and November 2011. The survey was completed by 7,252 U.S. public libraries of all sizes, which provided a response rate of 82.5 percent. Questionnaires also were sent to the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and anecdotal responses were collected from interviews with library staff in Georgia and Idaho.

June 2012