



Memorandum

Memo Date: February 7, 2025
From: Joanna Bertucci, Library Director
Meeting Type: Library Board of Trustee
Meeting Date: February 18, 2025
Action Requested: For discussion
Subject: Annual Statistical Review

Background:

The start of the new fiscal year is a good opportunity to look back at our previous year’s statistics and evaluate our library’s strengths and weaknesses relative to other comparable libraries. This year’s statistical review considers key trends and shifts in collection usage and purchasing patterns over the past several years. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, eContent was in its nascent stages, with a more traditional reliance on print materials. However, during the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, access to print materials was significantly limited, leading to a heavy reliance on eContent to meet patron demand. As library operations normalized in 2022, print buying levels remained consistent, but there was a strategic reduction in audiovisual (AV) materials and an increase in eContent investment. This trend continued through 2023 and 2024, with print purchasing stabilizing, AV reductions persisting, and eContent remaining a priority. These patterns provide context for evaluating circulation data and collection performance in the current review.

Data Analysis as part of the Strategic Planning process

As part of our Strategic Planning process, we will be working with RTL to prepare turnover reports and conduct a nationwide comparative analysis to further benchmark our collection performance against libraries across the country. Turnover measures how often the "average" item in a particular collection circulates over a 12-month period. While circulation statistics show us demand, turnover rate will demonstrate how effectively a collection is circulating relative to its size.

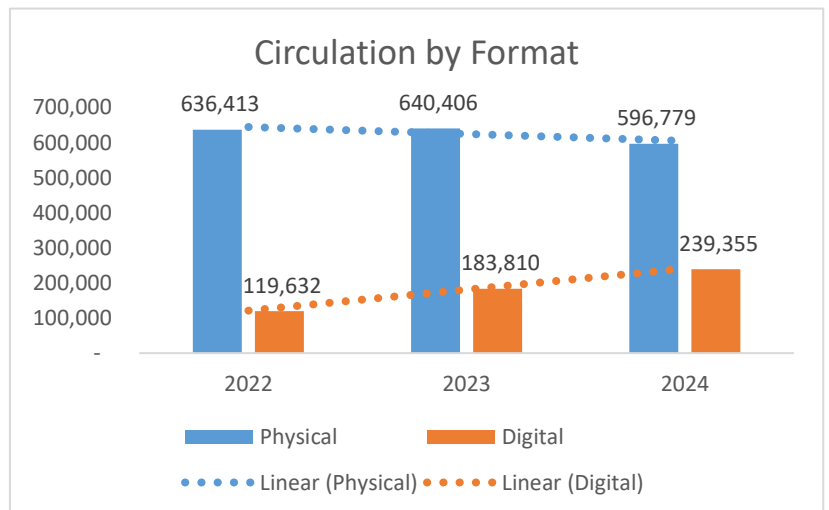
Circulation

In 2024, the Library circulated 836,134 physical and digital items, up 1% over the prior year. The data reveals notable shifts in library circulation patterns over the past three years, with a clear increase in digital checkouts and a recent decline in physical circulation.

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
861,329	525,826	691,313	756,045	824,216	836,134
7%	-39%	31%	9%	9%	1%

Physical circulation trends

- In 2022, physical checkouts totaled 636,413 and saw a slight increase in 2023 to 640,406 (+0.6%), suggesting a relatively stable demand for print materials during this period.
- However, in 2024, physical circulation dropped to 596,779, a 6.8% decrease compared to 2023.





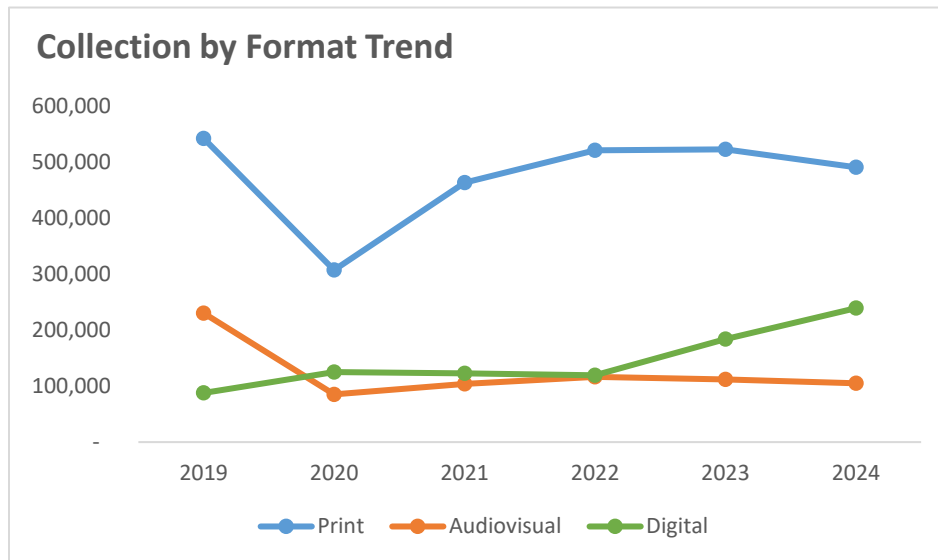
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Digital circulation trends

- Digital checkouts have experienced significant growth each year.
- From 2022 to 2023, digital circulation surged from 146,811 to 183,967, a 25.3% increase. This growth was driven by a new feature allowing patrons to subscribe to their favorite titles, ensuring that the latest editions are automatically delivered to their accounts. This enhancement mirrors the consumer model, provides a seamless user experience, and has significantly boosted circulation.

Digital Format	2022	2023	2024	% Change over prior year
Audiobooks	45,780	56,665	68,232	20%
Books	62,727	69,823	75,714	8%
Magazines	30,646	50,991	88,138	73%
Movies/TV	6,936	5,821	6,697	15%
Music	722	667	574	-14%
	146,811	183,967	239,355	30%

- The upward trajectory continued in 2024, reaching 239,355, reflecting a 30.2% increase from 2023. This consistent growth suggests an ongoing shift toward digital resources, likely driven by convenience, expanded eContent offerings, and changing patron behavior. We increased our investment in digital resources to serve Park Ridge cardholders. In OverDrive, we purchased more Advantage copies of popular titles, ensuring priority access for our patrons. Additionally, after analyzing peak borrowing times, we increased funding for Hoopla to meet demand. Meanwhile, Kanopy (Movies & TV) was absorbed by OverDrive, which enhanced its visibility by promoting Kanopy titles within the Libby app through more robust marketing efforts.

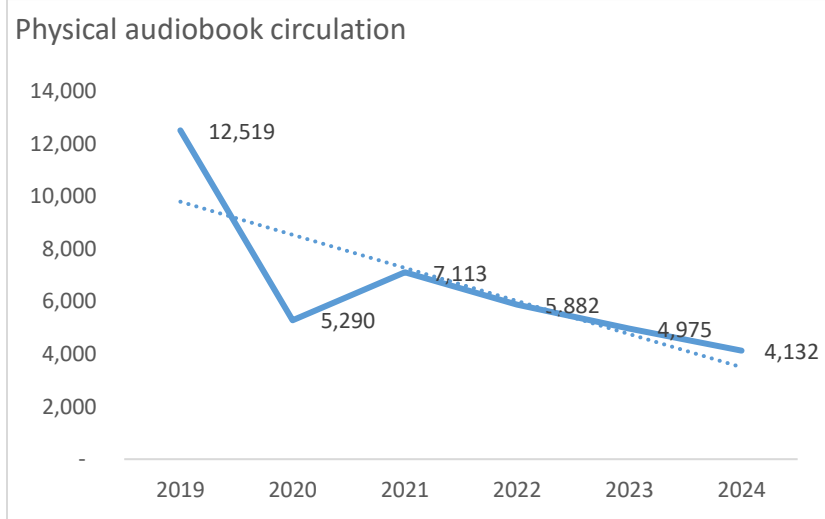




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Audiovisual circulation trends relative to their digital counterparts

This year, digital audiobook circulation increased by 20%, while physical audiobook circulation declined across both adult and youth collections. One key factor is that newer automobiles no longer include CD players, which has traditionally been a popular way for patrons to listen to physical audiobooks. In contrast, streaming audiobooks from a mobile device offer greater convenience. Additionally, digital audiobook subscription services (e.g., Audible) can be costly, making library-provided digital options more appealing. The turnover analysis with RTL will provide further insights into these shifting trends and help determine the future of these collections. Music circulation is declining across both physical CDs and digital music platforms, likely due to the affordability and widespread availability of subscription streaming services.

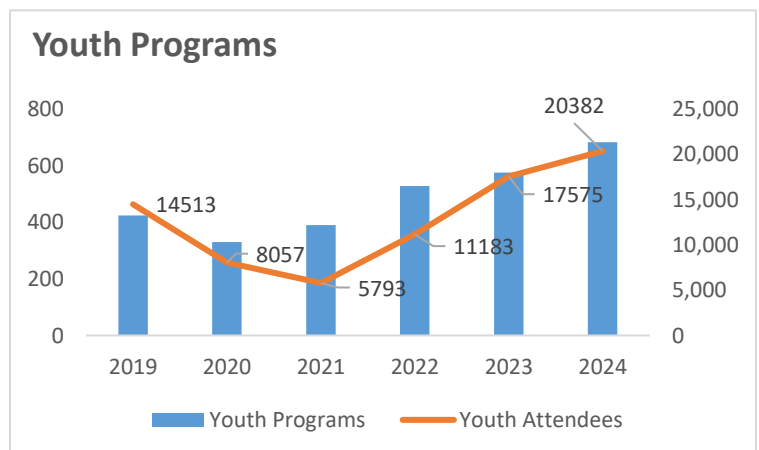
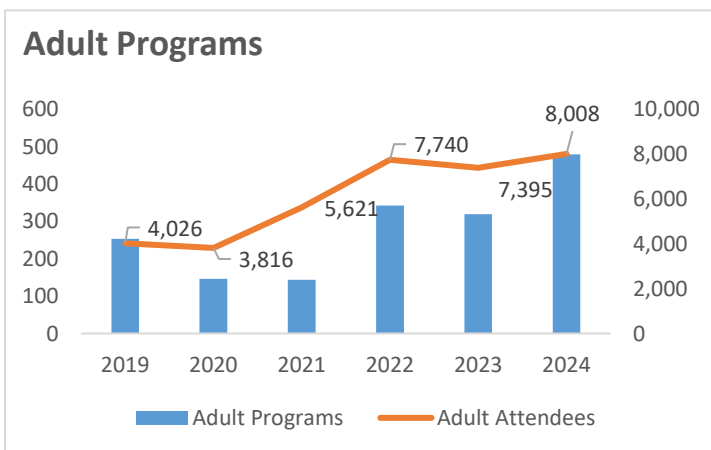


Programs

2024 was a very busy year at the Park Ridge Public Library! We are very happy to report that door count continues to soar. In 2024, we welcomed 293,475 patrons, to the building, a **4% increase over 2023**.

Our dynamic programming played a key role in this growth. After a slight dip in 2023, adult program attendance grew by 8.3%, indicating renewed interest and strong program offerings. Notably, our Global Neighbors programs achieved record-breaking attendance.

Youth programs saw steady growth, showing strong community re-engagement with youth activities. Youth attendance in 2024 (20,382) exceeded pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the success of programming strategies for this audience, particularly in story time attendance. We have been putting an emphasis on working smarter, not harder, by utilizing our program budgets to hire affordable, high-quality performers, crafters, and artists. This approach not only enhances the programming for our elementary and middle school-aged patrons but also helps to avoid staff burnout associated with developing programs. These efforts reflect a proactive approach to enhancing the user experience and ensuring that the library remains relevant in a rapidly changing environment.





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Technology

We continue to see a notable increase in unique clients using our Wi-Fi and public computer terminals. We are especially pleased to see the Library becoming a go-to destination for students, particularly during final exam seasons in the winter and spring.

In 2024, we also made a significant investment—both financially and in staff resources—toward redesigning our library’s website. Launched in April 2024, the new site offers an improved user experience, is mobile-friendly, and meets ADA compliance standards, ensuring greater accessibility for all patrons. These enhancements have already had a measurable impact, resulting in a 10% increase in unique visitors to www.parkridgelibrary.org.

Technology Usage	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Change
Wi-Fi sessions	375,463	542,729	522,911	590,213	13%
Wi-Fi unique clients	10,225	15,652	18,896	21,207	12%
Public PC use	5,592	12,095	15,577	15,850	2%
Website visits	230,894	206,372	209,264	242,459	16%
Website – unique clients	109,129	101,488	101,563	111,471	10%

Spaces

Our five private study rooms remain in high demand, with usage up 7.4% compared to 2023. In 2023, the Library Board voted to eliminate the \$35 fee for nonprofit groups using the 3rd Floor Meeting Room. Since implementing this change, we’ve seen a significant increase in community group usage:

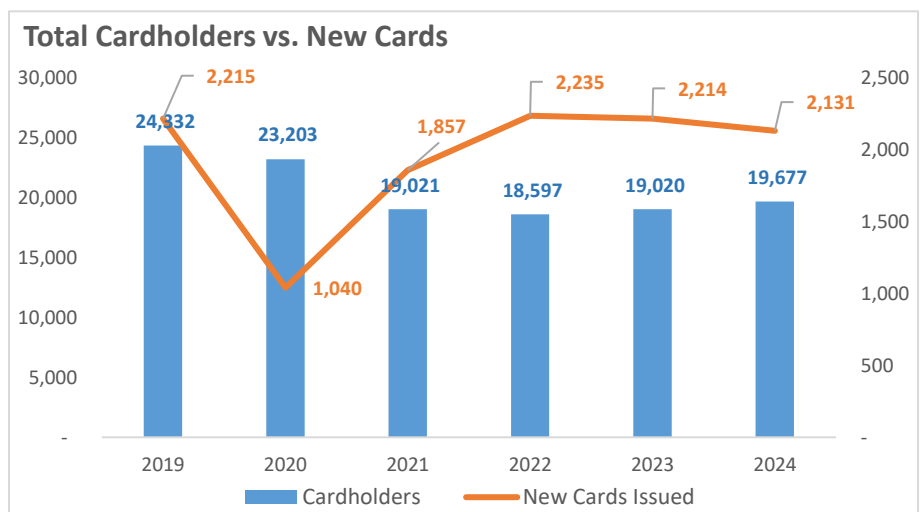
- **38** uses in **2022**
- **76** uses in **2023**
- **115** uses in **2024**

This growth has brought new faces into the library, including scouting troops, local nonprofits, and groups from the Chamber of Commerce, further strengthening our connection with the community.

Cardholders

Total library cardholders have reached their highest level since before the pandemic. Due to the increased frequency of purging inactive cards from our system, current totals do not reflect the higher numbers seen in 2019 and 2020.

While we registered slightly fewer new patrons in 2024 (2,131) compared to 2023 (2,214), the overall increase in active cardholders suggests that our efforts to re-engage inactive patrons before they are purged have been successful.





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A key factor in this success is the email drip campaign implemented by our Marketing and Patron Services Managers, which targets users nearing inactivity thresholds. These emails serve as timely reminders, highlighting the many ways patrons can benefit from using their library card.

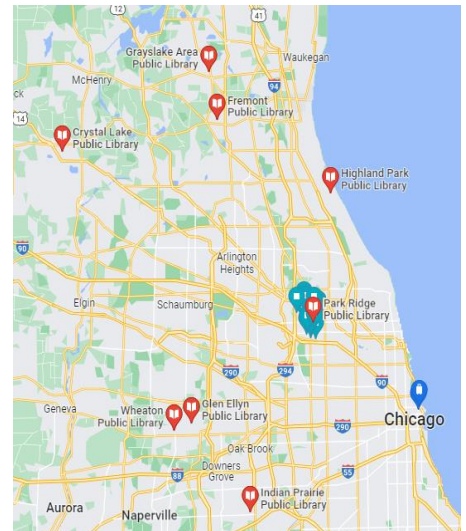
Conclusions

As this is my third year preparing this analysis, I feel confident in identifying the following trends:

- While cardholder numbers have not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, our programming participation and door counts clearly show that people are coming to the Library for more than just materials. Patrons are increasingly utilizing our study spaces, work areas, meeting rooms, and creative spaces.
- It’s also evident that digital collections are here to stay, reflecting a lasting shift in how people access library resources.
- Our ongoing strategic planning will help guide decisions about collections that are trending toward obsolescence and inspire new ways to reimagine and repurpose spaces to better serve our community’s evolving needs.

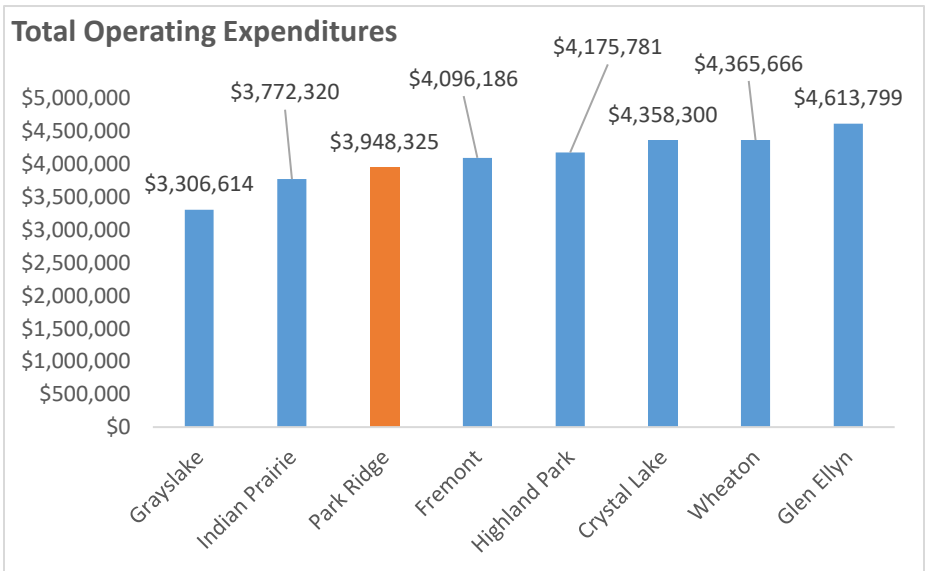
Comparable Libraries

For the past two years, I used data from the most recent Illinois Public Libraries Annual Report (IPLAR) database and the United States Census Bureau *QuickFacts* reports to develop a list of comparable libraries. Our comparable libraries have operating expenditures between \$3 and \$5 million dollars and have similar demographic profiles to the City of Park Ridge. I have reviewed the list developed last year and determined that the same list is applicable for this year’s analysis. The most recent IPLAR data available is from FY23. Since libraries have varying fiscal years, this data is representative of dates anywhere from January 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023. For the Park Ridge Public Library, the data is from January 1 – December 31, 2022.



1. Crystal Lake Public Library
2. Fremont Public Library (Mundelein)
3. Glen Ellyn Public Library
4. Grayslake Area Public Library District
5. Highland Park Public Library
6. Indian Prairie Public Library District (Darien)
7. Wheaton Public Library

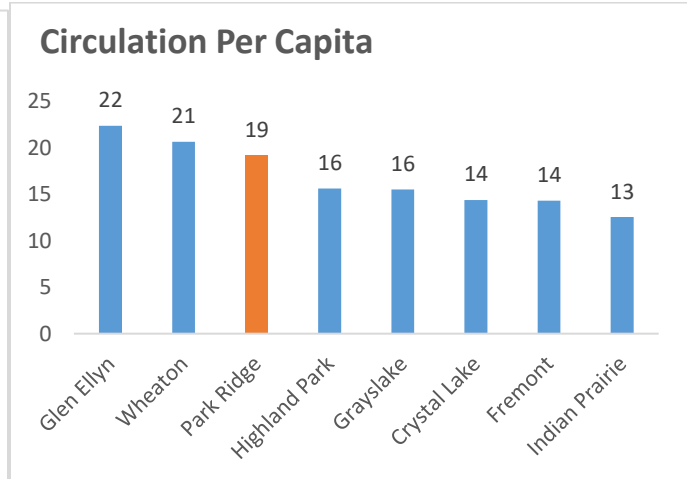
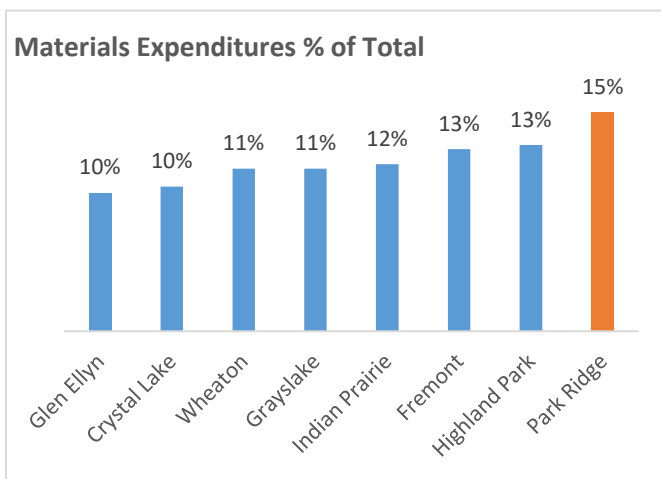
Funding and Spending: In reviewing data from comparable libraries, Park Ridge Public Library continues to be an excellent value for taxpayer dollars. Compared to our peers, our Library has the third lowest operating expenditures, while maintaining a reasonable tax rate. Our expenditures compared with our peers has slightly increased over the past three years, but expenditures for all libraries were impacted in 2020 and 2021 by COVID.



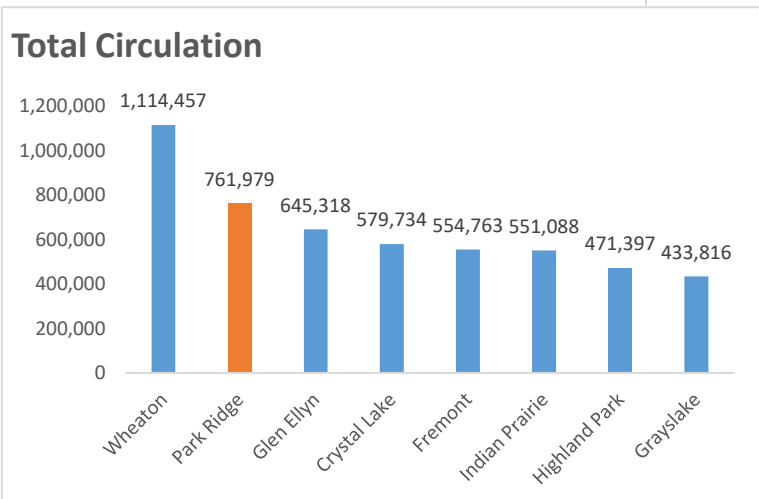
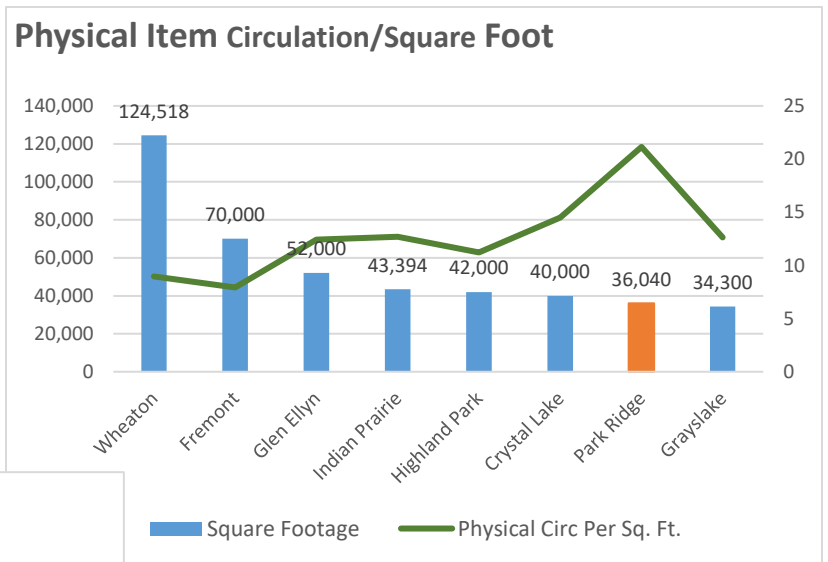


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Collections and Circulation: Our spending on collections is the highest as a percentage of total expenditures, when compared with other libraries, at **approximately 15%**. This has proven successful for us as we have the third highest **circulation rate per capita** among our peers at **19 circs per capita**. The Illinois State Library recommends that public libraries spend a minimum of 8-12% on collections.



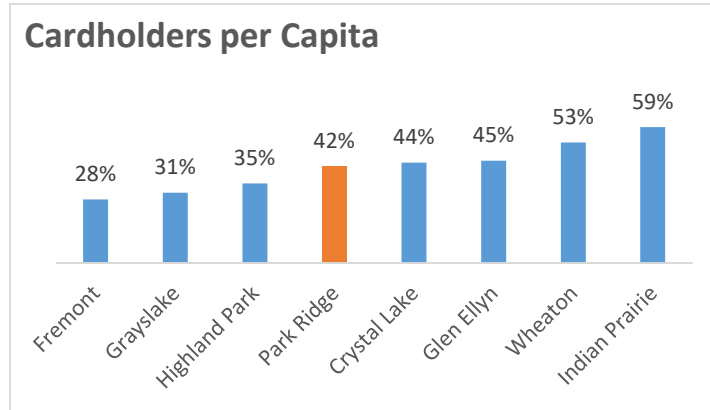
We know that our building is small for the size of our community, prior (and current) Library trustees and administrators have been thoughtful about the highest and best use of public spaces to give patrons the most access to library collections and services. PRPL moves **40% more physical materials per square foot of space** than the closest comparably sized library, Crystal Lake Public Library with 40,000 square feet. In terms of overall circulation for FY22, we once again rank **second at 761,979 total circs** compared to Wheaton Public Library whose building is 3.5 times larger than Park Ridge.





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Cardholders: Compared to our peer libraries we are slightly above average for cardholders per capita. We are continuing to prioritize improvement in our total cardholders statistic, as noted above.



Conclusion: The Park Ridge Public Library continues to be an excellent value for our taxpayers and the community. We have a hard working and professional staff who anticipate and respond to the needs of our patrons as evidenced by our strong circulation, program attendance, and building use statistics. When compared to our comparable libraries, we demonstrate a commitment to spending on collections as library materials are at the core of our service model. This data provides insight into library engagement levels and highlights opportunities to increase cardholder outreach and participation within the Park Ridge community. I hope that attracting new cardholders will be a key focus in our upcoming strategic plan goals, ensuring that more residents take advantage of the valuable resources and services we offer.