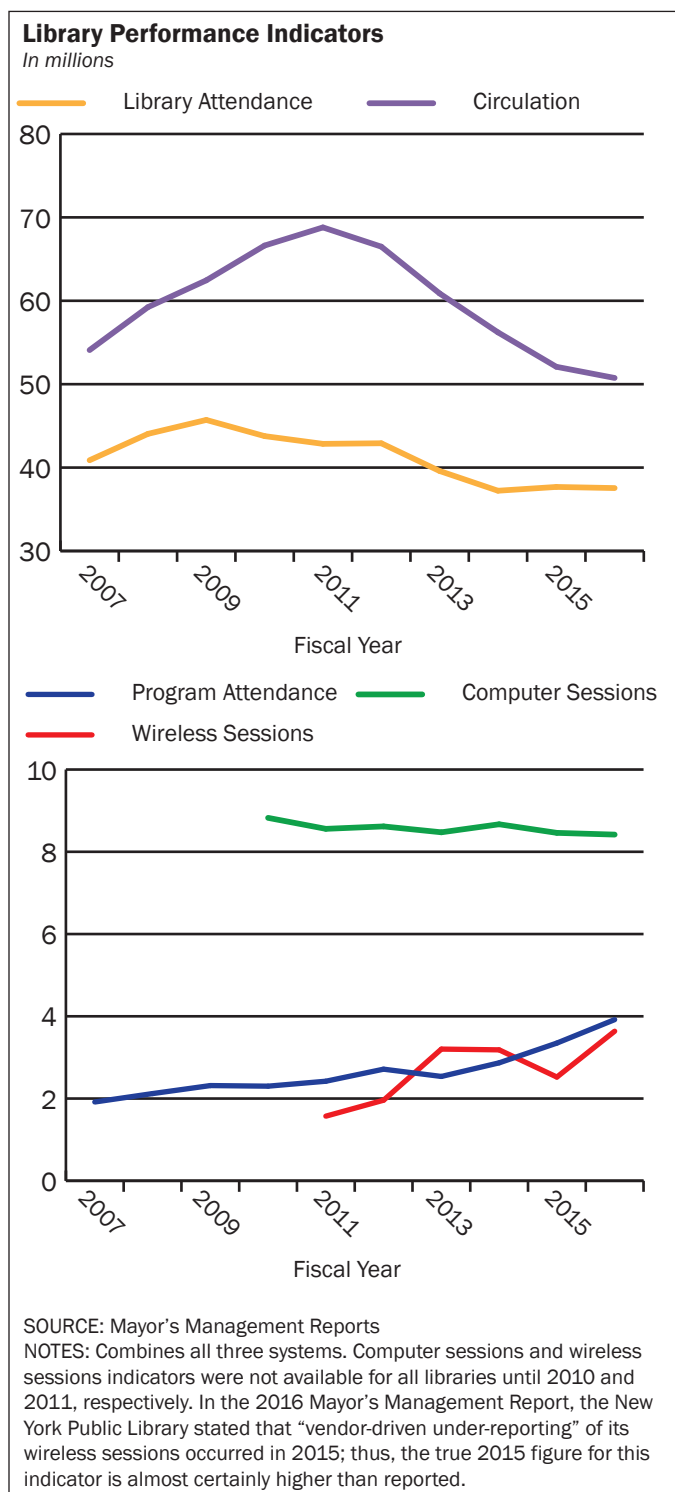


How Have New Yorkers Changed the Ways They Use the City's Libraries in Recent Years?

Five years ago, then city Budget Director Mark Page suggested at a City Council hearing that the city's three library systems—New York (serving Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx), Brooklyn, and Queens—were anachronisms, unnecessary institutions in the age of the Internet, e-books, and search engines. While Page was right that technology had altered the library systems' principal role as a lender of books and other materials, what he had not anticipated was the evolution in other ways New Yorkers would use their libraries. Over the past several years branch libraries in all three systems have become broader community resources rather than repositories of books and information.



- After peaking in 2011 at 68.8 million, the number of circulated items—books, videos, and other material—has since fallen by a quarter to 50.7 million in 2016.
- Total attendance increased from 40.9 million visits in 2007 to 45.7 million in 2009, and then declined to 37.5 million visits in 2016.
- Although total attendance has declined, one component of attendance—attendance at programs—has increased markedly. Attendance at programs ranging from English language learner classes to film presentations has doubled, from 1.9 million in 2007 to 3.9 million in 2016, a 104.5 percent jump.
- Similarly, the number of wireless sessions—times in which either a library laptop or a patron's personal device such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone connects to a branch's WiFi—has more than doubled, increasing from 1.6 million in 2011 to 3.6 million in 2016.
- This 131.5 percent increase in wireless sessions has occurred even as the number of sessions on the libraries' own desktop and laptop computers has remained flat (despite the addition of more than 1,500 computers available for public use from 2011 through 2016).
- The changes in how patrons used the libraries developed as the three systems experienced sharp swings in the amount of city subsidies they received, which affects the numbers of days and hours a week branches stay open. With a \$43 million subsidy increase in 2016, bringing the total to nearly \$360 million, all of the city's libraries were able to be open six days a week—in 2015, only 33 percent of Queens and 65 percent of Brooklyn libraries were open six days a week. Yet from 2015 to 2016 attendance at the three systems remained flat even with the additional days branches were open.

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