

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ILLINOIS:  
HOW EQUITABLE IS LIBRARY ACCESS?

An Abstract of  
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## ABSTRACT

This study examines public library districts across the state of Illinois to determine the extent to which equitable access of library resources is achieved. Three areas of interest are specifically considered: equity in the resources per capita available in library districts, demographic characteristics correlated with any inequities, and the distribution and demographic characteristics of Illinois residents that live in places outside of a public library district (nonresidents).

Using 2013 data from the *Public Libraries in the United States Survey*, Illinois public library district per capita expenditures, professional staff, books, and internet-connected computers were examined across the state statistically and spatially. Wide variation was found in each of the four per capita variables across the state, with levels of inequity highest in the staff per capita variable. Library expenditures and professional staff per capita were positively correlated with library district median household income and the percent of the population who is Hispanic, while the number of books and computers per capita were positively correlated with the percent of the population who is white and percent of the population over 65 years old. Regression models for each of the library variables explained some of the variation across library districts, with better explanation for expenditures per capita and staff per capita ( $r^2 = 0.4322$  and  $0.2671$ ) than for books per capita and computers per capita ( $r^2 = 0.1015$  and  $0.0715$ ). Nonresident library areas have statistically significantly lower household incomes and higher percentages of the population over 65 years old than areas in library districts. These results suggest several areas for improving public library equity across the state.