



Friends of Battle Ground Community Library

PO Box 2272, Battle Ground, WA 98604

February 25, 2011

A 2010 Report to the membership and interested citizens.

In October of 2006, a special meeting of the Trustees of the Fort Vancouver Regional Library District (FVRL) was held in the Battle Ground City Council chambers. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to Battle Ground citizens regarding the need to direct unspent library tax reserves toward the replacement of the 50-year-old Battle Ground library.

Within the FVRL, taxes resulting from growing real estate values had created surpluses that were being held as uncommitted reserves. However, Trustee speculation on how these monies might be spent did not, up to that point, include spending any of it on helping to fund a new Battle Ground library.

Washington State law provides that when communities band together to form intercounty and county rural library districts, they will have direct access to real estate taxes. The state does not restrict how these taxes are used and specifically provides that they may be applied to purchase real estate for library purposes (RCW 27.12.220). Municipal libraries unlike the libraries in rural districts are not funded directly by property taxes but share in the revenues of cities that create them. Examples of municipal libraries are those in the cities of Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, and Camas.

The presence of the City of Vancouver in a Washington intercounty rural library district is unique for a city of its size. Vancouver is the largest city in Washington State to be a member of an intercounty rural library district. FVRL is also the only district of its size to fund a main library in addition to a separate unit for central administration, both of which are located in Vancouver.

At the October 2006 meeting, testimony from the Friends of the Battle Ground Library spoke to the disproportionate application of library taxes collected in, but not spent on, the rural county and the great need for better balanced and improved library services. Testimony was read from Clark County

Commissioners supporting the application of reserves to the Battle Ground project. One Commissioner was present at the meeting, but was unsuccessful in her efforts to address the Trustees. State Senator Joe Zarelli was also present and spoke in favor of applying library district uncommitted surpluses to the Battle Ground project.

Ultimately, the Trustees, in a split vote, allocated \$750,000 to the Battle Ground Project. Two Trustees, both residents of Vancouver, voted against this action. An editorial in the *Reflector* later scolded the citizen audience for being rowdy. And although some participants were unhappy, the Battle Ground project was advanced and the idea of a fairer sharing of tax resources, held in common for all the citizens of the FVRL library district had, perhaps, its first public hearing.

Shortly thereafter, FVRL management created a new Battle Ground project budget that added new financial detail and established a new fundraising goal for the Friends/Foundation/Community. That goal was 100% achieved. A revisit to the budget by FVRL management nearly a year later found that still more monies were needed and the Trustees provided those sums from the facility reserves existing at that time. The library opened in May of 2009 and completed its first full calendar year of operation last year.

It is now time to report on the results and ask:

- Was it worth it?
- What evidence is there that public library services have been enhanced?
- Are citizens living and paying taxes in this library's service area getting better value in exchange for their taxes?
- Was it done without waste and are the expanded library services efficient?

We would reply as follows:

The new, larger facility with the addition of a community room and more adequate parking is both cost effective and efficient. It is very popular in the community it serves. Replacing a 50-year old library with a net expenditure of only \$160 per square foot of public funds, and with no new taxes and without any new public debt, was an extraordinary achievement. Compare \$160/sq ft for the new Battle Ground Library with new library facilities presently being built in the City of Vancouver at an immediate cost of over \$400 /sq ft and an eventual cost of \$600-\$800/sq ft depending on interest paid by the time the bonds are retired.

Circulation growth at the new Battle Ground library for the years 2009 and 2010 very nearly equals the total net growth in library circulation of all the other 12 libraries in the FVRL system combined. Bookmobile counts and central office counts such as automatic renewals or books by mail are not included.

Circulation growth:	2008	2010	2 year increase
Battle Ground	312,847	532,047	219,200
Total FVRL libraries w/o BG	2,412,361	2,640,490	228,129

The new Battle Ground library is presently sustaining a rate of circulation increase that amounts to over 200,000 items of circulation annually over the average circulation in the old library in the eight-year period prior to its closing. This amounts to four additional items of circulation for every man, woman, and child in the mid-county service area. Last year, for the first time, these Mid-Clark County citizens enjoyed circulation numbers that approximates those of similar public libraries elsewhere in Washington State.

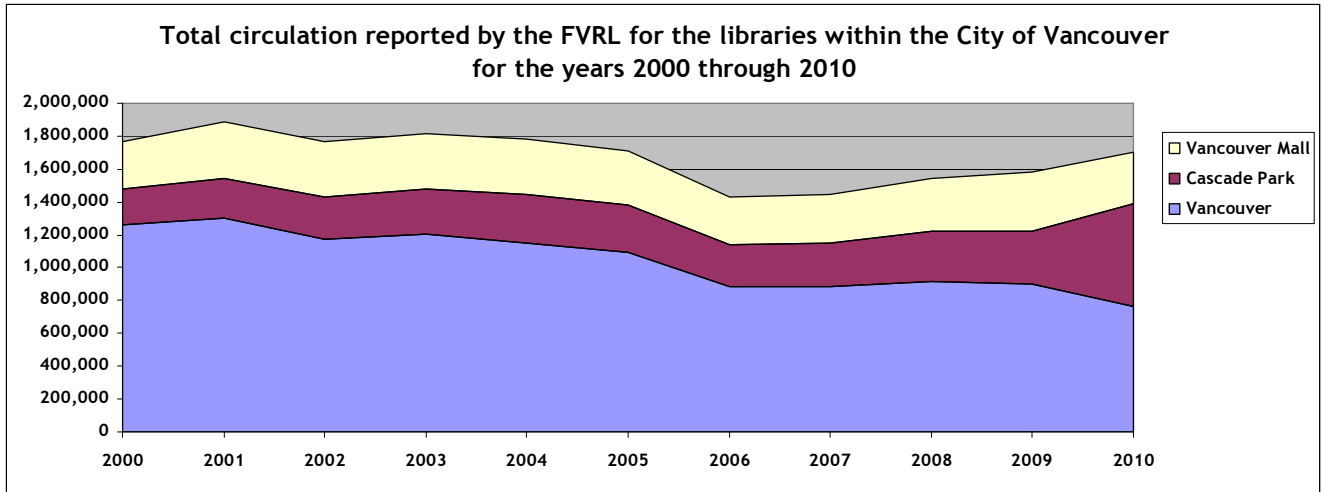
In 2010, the new facility produced 37 items of circulation per square foot of floor space. This was greater than the FVRL average of 23 and more than any other FVRL library except Vancouver Mall. Vancouver Mall, at 43 items per square foot, has the advantage of being allowed to open 17 more hours each week than Battle Ground.

The 2010 turnover rate (the amount of circulation divided by the number of items in the collection) at 7.63 exceeded that of all FVRL libraries and was nearly twice the district average of 4.33. The hardest working books in the district appear to be in Battle Ground.

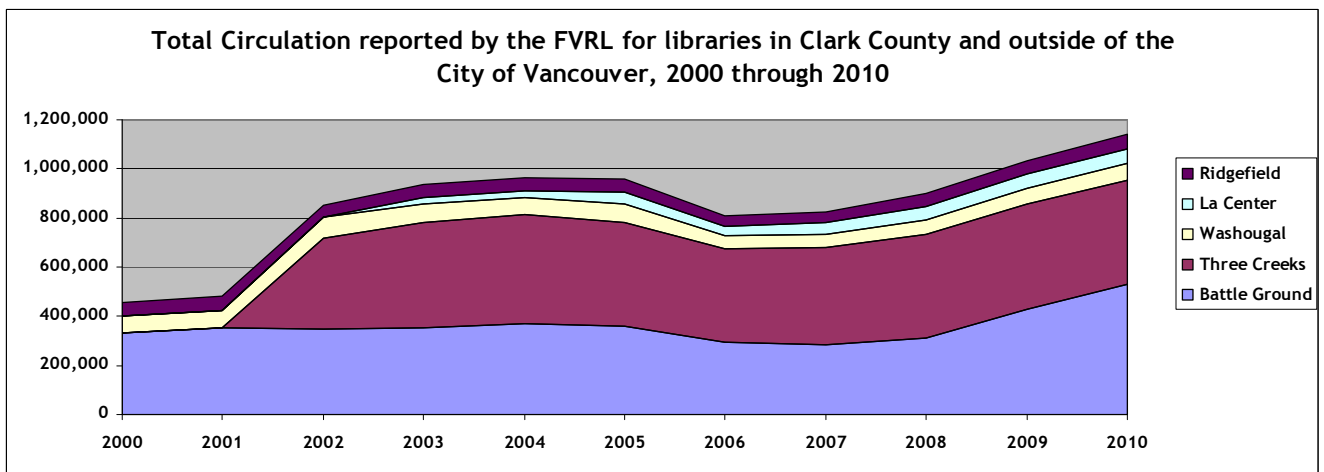
The Battle Ground staff is excellent. Circulation per FTE employee was outstanding at nearly 44,000 items each. This number is very near the 46,000 reported for the new Cascade Park Library which was generated with the aid of labor saving automated materials handling equipment (AMH) not available in Battle Ground. The average circulation per employee in the district was about 26,000 items per employee with or without AMH equipment.

Public internet use has exploded in Battle Ground going from two terminals to twenty-two although we are still well below the state averages for all libraries in providing public internet access.

Battle Ground's successful circulation growth is part of a dramatic shift in circulation that has taken place in Clark County. The libraries in the City of Vancouver, although dominating the district from its beginning, have not produced circulation growth in the last decade that either equals or exceeds the numbers produced back in 2000. In the year 2000 Vancouver libraries produced 71% of total library district circulation. In 2010 this number had been reduced to 53%.



In contrast, the Clark County circulation numbers for libraries outside of Vancouver grew from 457,948 items in the year 2000 to 1,140,975 items last year. This 149.1% increase was primarily the result of the libraries in Three Creeks, La Center, and Battle Ground providing an improved level of access to residents in long underserved rural Clark County.



Clark County citizens living outside of Vancouver provide the majority (56%) of the funding received in the entire FVRL library district. Rural Clark County has long been the “cash cow” of the system contributing most in terms of tax revenue and using least in terms of expense. Rural Clark County Libraries are smaller in size and thousands of citizens living north and east of Battle Ground have no public libraries at all within convenient reach of their homes and schools.

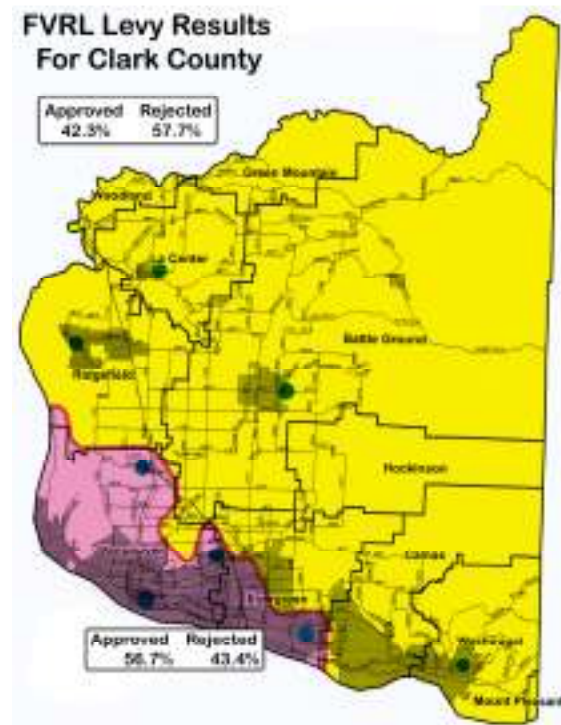
The newest downtown Vancouver library (planned to be finished in 2011) will be the largest single library building ever built in an intercounty or county rural library system in all of Washington State. This single facility, by itself, will be 21% larger than the combined total space in all the other 10 libraries in the FVRL

district outside of Vancouver. By the end of this year, Vancouver with 35.5% of the population and 33.6% of the tax base will have 62.4% of the district's total library space.

And, while the majority of the citizens of Vancouver have bravely agreed to tax themselves to repay millions of dollars of debt incurred to build these unique Vancouver facilities, the Vancouver portion of the FVRL tax base will not support the additional staffing and operations expense associated with this vastly expanded space. Residents of Vancouver have every right to bold facilities that reflect their civic pride, but not at the cost of stripping the rural district of funds needed to provide for at-home public library services.

The recent 21.7% increase in district-wide levy taxes appears to be destined to primarily support new Vancouver libraries with only token benefit for the rest of the district. Were this increase of over \$3,600,000 annually applied to building on the Battle Ground model, it would be sufficient to build and furnish, without any debt, a library the size of Battle Ground every other year.

Although the library tax increase was approved by a slim margin district-wide, it was rejected by the majority of voters of Clark County. It failed in 98 out of 100 Clark County precincts north and east of interstate 205. It was rejected in the Hockinson area by nearly a 2 to 1 margin. It was rejected in the Amboy/Yacolt area by nearly a 3 to 1 margin. These communities have over 2,000 elementary-age school children, all without any at home public libraries.



State law (RCW 27.12.260) requires that library Trustees shall make a report to the legislative body of the governmental unit wherein the board serves, showing the condition of their trust during the year, the sums of money received for the library fund from taxes and other sources, the sums of money expended and the purposes of the expenditures, the number of books and periodicals on hand, the number added during the year, the number retired, the number loaned out, and such other statistics and information and such suggestions as they deem of public interest. A copy of this report shall be filed with the state librarian.

This law requires that FVRL Trustees provide performance statistics to the Joint County Commissioners of Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat Counties who collectively appoint and remove library trustees. Financial data in the form of State Auditor reports is available to all, but performance data is hard to come by and it has not been shared with these Joint County Commissioners. However, the copy of this data (when filed with the state librarian) is merged with other state wide library performance information and published by the office of the Secretary of State for Washington. Presently state-wide library statistics for the years 1999 through 2009 are available at:

<http://www.sos.wa.gov/library/libraries/libDev/publications.aspx#WASStats>.

What follows is a small portion of that information sorted to match and compare library districts similar to the FVRL. The fairest comparisons come from looking at districts with approximately equal income. For instance, the King County district in Washington State, while organized in a similar fashion to the FVRL, is perhaps the largest library system in the nation and generates 86% more local library tax per resident than does the FVRL. Thus it is unlikely that the FVRL could ever emulate its results. The Timberland district, on the other hand, serves a similar population with similar revenues per capita, but consistently attains superior results compared to those reported by the FVRL. We should be able to understand how we differ from what is typical performance and identify for attention those areas where we need improvement.

For the comparison that follows, we looked at library districts that are organized under the same legal definition and are all funded primarily from real estate tax revenue. We compared only those that were plus or minus 10% of the per capita revenues generated by the FVRL. Please see chart #1 and chart #2.

Chart # 3 tells us that the FVRL spends the least per capita of this group to support its collection, spending only 58% of the group average in 2009. Had collection expenditures been at the group average, FVRL would have spent \$2,366,000 in 2009. What was spent was about one million dollars less or \$1,372,021. The 2009 budget coincidentally had a one million dollar surplus.

Chart # 4 and Chart # 5 tell us that in the last ten years, the FVRL collection per capita for both printed material alone and for both printed and electronic material combined runs only about 69% of the group average and was the smallest collection per capita in the entire group in 2009.

Chart # 6 details circulation per capita figures and shows the FVRL as dead last. If we do not replenish the collection and we do not offer it in a way that reaches most of our citizens, we get embarrassing results. With the same funding, the FVRL does not achieve more than 77% of the group average circulation per capita.

Chart #7 compares our internet computers per capita. In this case we were dead last in not only this group but in all libraries in the entire state in 2008, and were in the bottom 5% in 2009.

In addition to this comparison of library materials and circulation, the data offered by the Secretary of State allows a comparison of service outlets, registered borrowers, programs, summer reading programs, and reference transactions. The FVRL does not seem to excel in any of these areas and does not appear to be successful at keeping pace with its peer library systems in Washington State. We know of no public annual reports produced by FVRL Trustees that provide the above data despite the legal requirement to furnish it at least to the Joint Commissioners.

Trustees hold appointed non-elected positions and, since all other library district management is created by these trustees, citizens have few opportunities to directly influence library leadership. They certainly have no votes that can determine their leadership. If they do not, by their own initiative, voice their concerns, they are without input. For the public good, they must exercise their right to speak and they must do so without fear of reprisals or intimidation.

The Battle Ground Library is a success by any measure. It cost FVRL nothing that did not come from the pockets of the citizens served by this library. Rural citizens already fund more than their fair share of FVRL expenses including that of FVRL's central administration. These citizens have no reason to value Vancouver facilities more than those closer to their homes and have no desire to subsidize disproportionately library services in the City of Vancouver at the cost of fewer services and reduced hours at home.

We, the Friends of the Battle Ground Library, will work hard in 2011, as we have in previous years, to enhance and improve the Battle Ground Library and we will remain vocal advocates for improved and nondiscriminatory library services.

The Building Committee of the Friends of the Battle Ground Community Library

Linda Clemmer

Anna Cross

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Sara Striker

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2/22/2011 Statistical data extracted from Washington Secretary of State annual reports for 2009

Chart # 1

Rural County and Intercounty Rural Library Districts in the State of Washington (RCW 27.12.040 and RCW 27.12.090)

	Local Revenue per Capita 2009	Plus or Minus 10% of FVRL
Jefferson County Library	\$86.87	
King County Library System	\$69.30	
Walla Walla County Library System	\$60.55	
Pierce County Library System	\$49.18	
Sno-Isle Regional Library	\$46.53	
Whatcom County Library System	\$46.36	
Whitman County Library	\$41.34	40,876
North Olympic Library System	\$39.15	\$39.15
Timberland Regional Library (2008)	\$38.40	\$38.40
Spokane County Library District	\$37.84	\$37.84
Kitsap Regional Library	\$37.69	\$37.69
Fort Vancouver Regional Library District	\$37.16	\$37.16
Pend Oreille County Library System	\$35.92	\$35.92
North Central Regional Library	\$35.84	\$35.84
Mtd-Columbia Library	\$27.38	
Stevens County Rural Library District	\$25.66	33,444
Asotin County Library	\$22.74	

Population by Library District

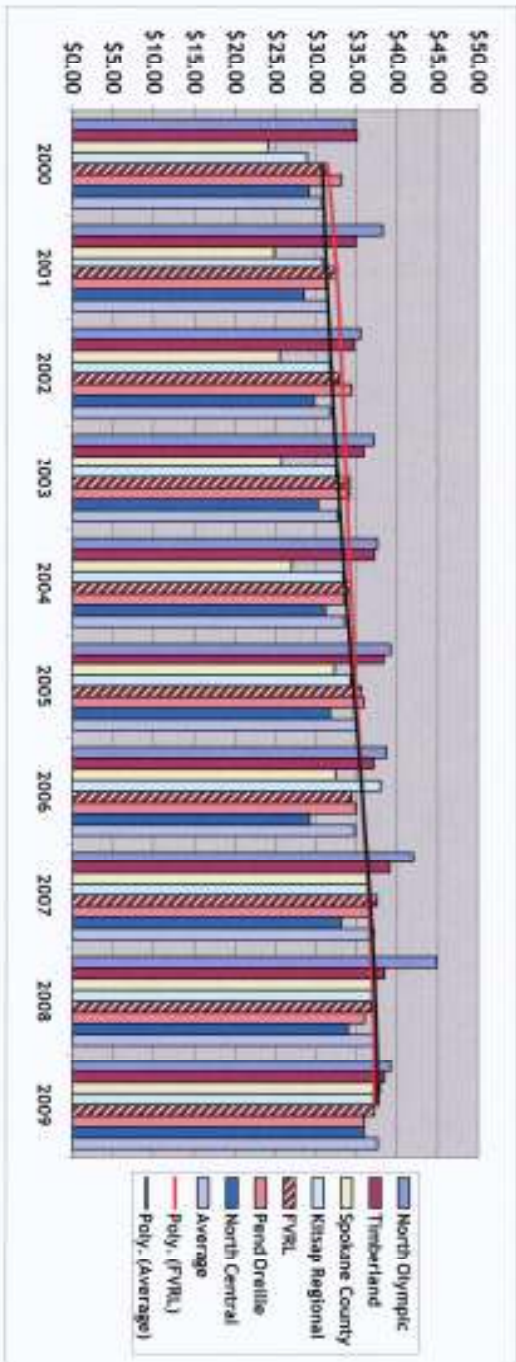
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
North Olympic	66,700	64,454	64,900	65,300	65,900	66,800	67,800	68,500	69,200	69,500
Timberland	402,790	410,039	412,920	416,240	421,195	429,598	439,417	449,303	458,975	464,420
Spokane County	225,542	226,405	229,810	230,925	229,353	232,076	236,120	241,445	247,620	252,230
Kitsap Regional	230,200	233,400	234,700	237,000	239,500	240,400	243,400	244,800	246,800	247,600
FVRL	366,845	372,610	382,905	391,260	401,400	412,460	425,060	436,605	445,750	451,540
Pend Oreille	11,200	11,800	11,800	11,800	11,900	12,200	12,300	12,600	12,800	12,900
North Central	209,075	219,716	221,147	222,465	224,740	227,970	231,675	235,310	239,695	242,775
Totals	1,512,352	1,538,424	1,558,182	1,574,990	1,593,988	1,621,504	1,655,772	1,688,563	1,720,840	1,740,965

Local Revenue (primarily real estate taxes) /capita

Chart # 2

Comparison of rural library districts in Washington State receiving similar local revenues (primarily from real estate taxes).
Data presented on a per capita basis.

2009 population	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
69,500	\$34.72	\$38.19	\$35.43	\$37.10	\$37.52	\$39.15	\$38.64	\$41.98	\$44.50	\$39.15
464,420	\$34.99	\$34.79	\$34.67	\$35.83	\$37.15	\$38.27	\$37.05	\$39.06	\$38.40	\$38.40
252,230	\$24.07	\$24.81	\$25.49	\$25.73	\$26.97	\$32.26	\$32.39	\$36.23	\$37.14	\$37.84
247,600	\$28.84	\$30.79	\$31.62	\$32.38	\$33.28	\$34.23	\$37.91	\$36.30	\$37.06	\$37.69
451,940	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL	FVRL
12,900	\$31.34	\$32.61	\$32.75	\$34.08	\$34.18	\$35.51	\$34.31	\$37.47	\$36.73	\$37.16
242,775	\$33.08	\$31.15	\$34.34	\$34.06	\$33.44	\$35.85	\$34.84	\$36.57	\$36.00	\$35.92
1,740,965	\$29.08	\$28.46	\$29.59	\$30.20	\$31.09	\$31.69	\$29.16	\$33.07	\$33.89	\$35.84
Average	\$30.70	\$31.40	\$31.69	\$32.64	\$33.49	\$35.20	\$34.76	\$37.11	\$37.22	\$37.55

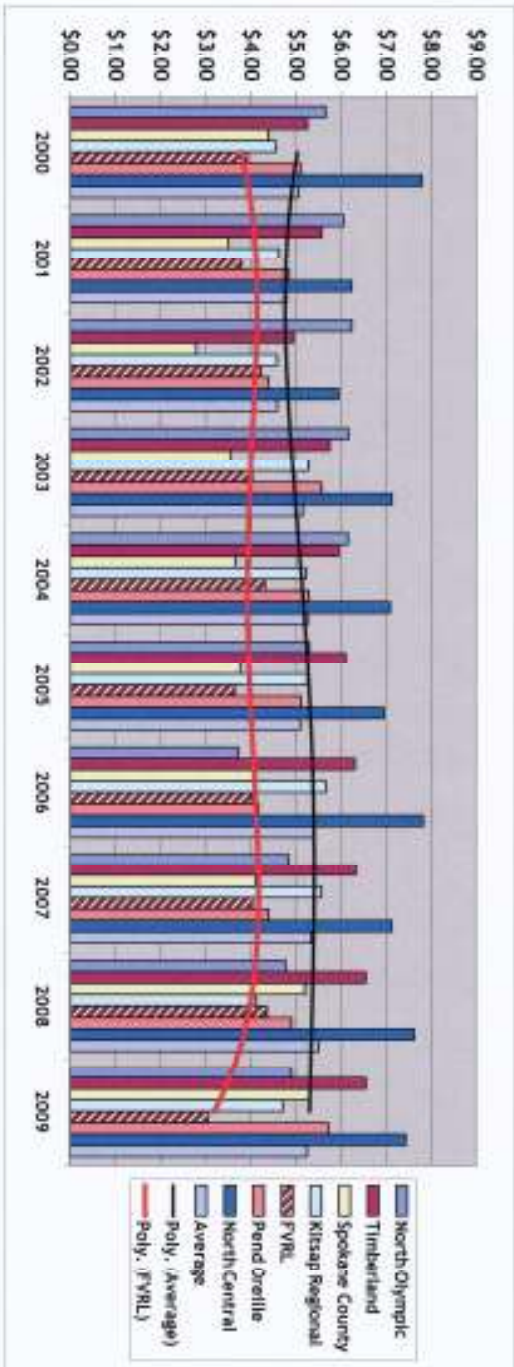


Collection expense /capita

Comparison of rural library districts in Washington State getting similar revenues from real estate taxes.
Data presented on a per capita basis.

Chart # 3

2009 population	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
59,500	\$5.65	\$6.04	\$6.23	\$6.15	\$6.14	\$5.29	\$3.72	\$4.83	\$4.76	\$4.90
454,420	\$5.24	\$5.56	\$4.93	\$5.74	\$5.93	\$6.09	\$6.30	\$6.32	\$6.54	\$6.54
252,230	\$4.37	\$3.49	\$2.78	\$3.55	\$3.64	\$3.75	\$4.05	\$4.10	\$5.19	\$3.31
247,600	\$4.54	\$4.61	\$4.57	\$5.27	\$5.21	\$5.24	\$5.46	\$5.56	\$4.11	\$4.70
451,540	\$3.90	\$3.78	\$4.21	\$4.03	\$4.30	\$3.63	\$4.01	\$4.02	\$4.35	\$3.04
12,900	\$5.09	\$4.84	\$4.38	\$5.56	\$5.27	\$5.11	\$4.16	\$4.39	\$4.90	\$5.71
242,775	\$7.79	\$6.22	\$5.93	\$7.12	\$7.08	\$6.94	\$7.82	\$7.12	\$7.82	\$7.43
1,740,965	\$5.05	\$4.79	\$4.57	\$5.13	\$5.25	\$5.08	\$5.39	\$5.33	\$5.50	\$5.24
	Average									



Print Books and Serials (not electronic media)

Comparison of rural library districts in Washington State getting similar revenues from real estate taxes.
Data presented on a per capita basis.

2009 population	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
69,500	3.30	3.52	3.20	3.45	3.59	4.23	3.25	3.22	3.28	2.99
464,420	2.35	2.48	2.58	3.18	2.64	3.41	2.90	2.32	2.32	2.32
252,230	2.00	1.82	1.61	1.57	1.52	1.56	1.59	1.54	1.55	1.56
247,600	1.80	1.90	1.88	1.94	2.09	2.39	2.67	1.87	1.77	1.81
451,540	1.83	1.91	1.79	1.84	1.80	1.69	1.73	1.63	1.51	1.46
12,900	3.25	3.01	3.19	3.17	3.15	3.37	3.55	3.64	3.87	3.56
242,775	3.27	3.23	2.44	3.28	2.98	2.24	2.20	2.24	2.30	2.46
1,740,965	2.26	2.31	2.15	2.45	2.28	2.43	2.30	2.06	1.97	1.97
	Average									

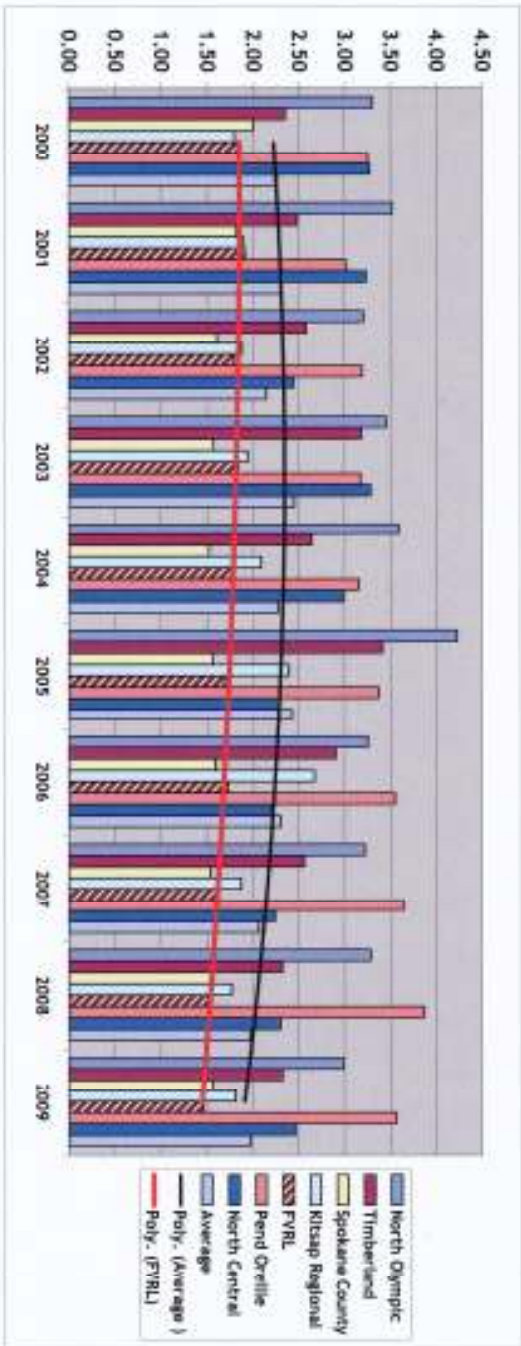


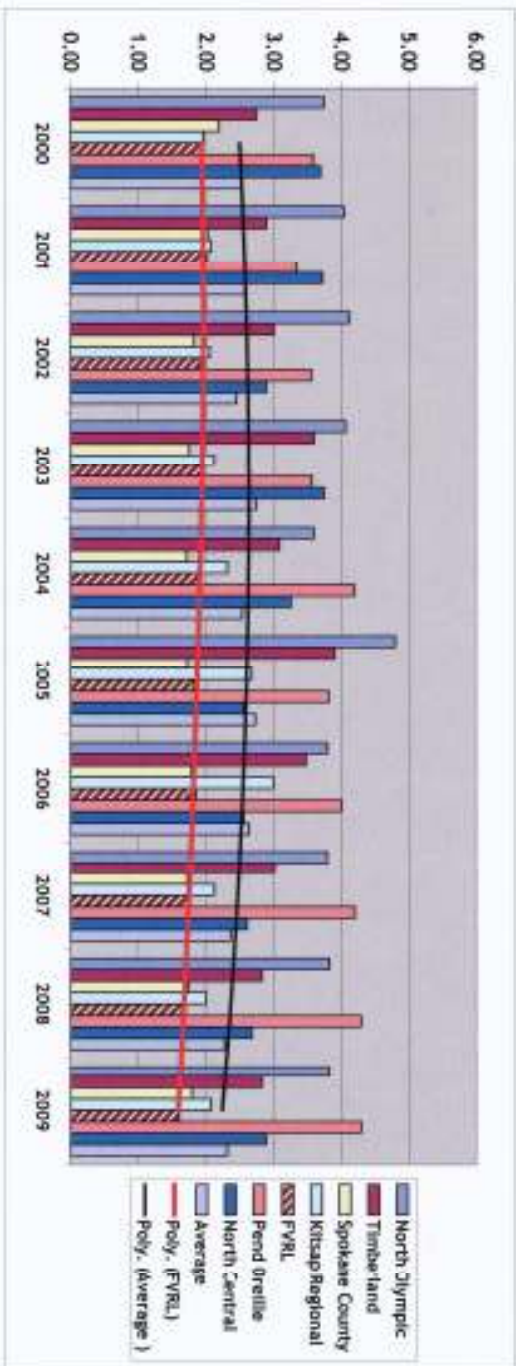
Chart # 4

Collection/Holdings /capita

Comparison of rural library districts in Washington State getting similar revenues from real estate taxes.
Data presented on a per capita basis.

Chart # 5

2009 population	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
69,500	3.74	4.04	4.12	4.06	3.55	4.80	3.79	3.79	3.82	3.82
464,420	2.74	2.89	3.00	3.59	3.08	3.90	3.47	3.01	2.82	2.82
252,230	2.19	2.02	1.82	1.75	1.71	1.72	1.78	1.72	1.74	1.79
247,600	1.96	2.07	2.05	2.12	2.31	2.67	2.99	2.12	2.00	2.07
451,540	1.91	2.01	1.90	1.96	1.93	1.82	1.85	1.76	1.64	1.60
12,900	3.58	3.33	3.55	3.56	4.15	3.81	4.00	4.20	4.19	4.29
242,775	3.69	3.72	2.89	3.74	3.25	2.55	2.55	2.60	2.67	2.88
1,740,965	2.52	2.59	2.45	2.73	2.53	2.72	2.63	2.36	2.27	2.31



Circulation /capita

Comparison of rural library districts in Washington State getting similar revenues from real estate taxes.
Data presented on a per capita basis.

Chart # 6

2009 population	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
69,500	10.90	12.29	12.27	12.24	11.62	11.87	11.16	10.79	11.66	12.59
464,420	9.84	10.15	10.42	10.65	10.69	10.56	10.55	10.63	10.55	10.64
252,230	8.09	8.26	7.91	7.67	7.51	7.29	7.42	7.53	8.03	9.82
247,600	8.37	9.23	9.62	9.82	10.48	10.46	10.83	10.81	10.80	10.80
451,540	7.27	7.50	8.10	8.14	8.03	7.71	6.77	6.70	7.12	7.16
12,900	5.30	5.60	5.06	5.91	6.14	6.81	6.92	6.13	5.64	8.18
242,775	6.56	6.37	6.12	5.84	6.42	6.35	6.23	6.31	6.93	7.59
1,740,965	8.29	8.61	8.79	8.82	8.93	8.79	8.57	8.57	8.84	9.28
Average										

