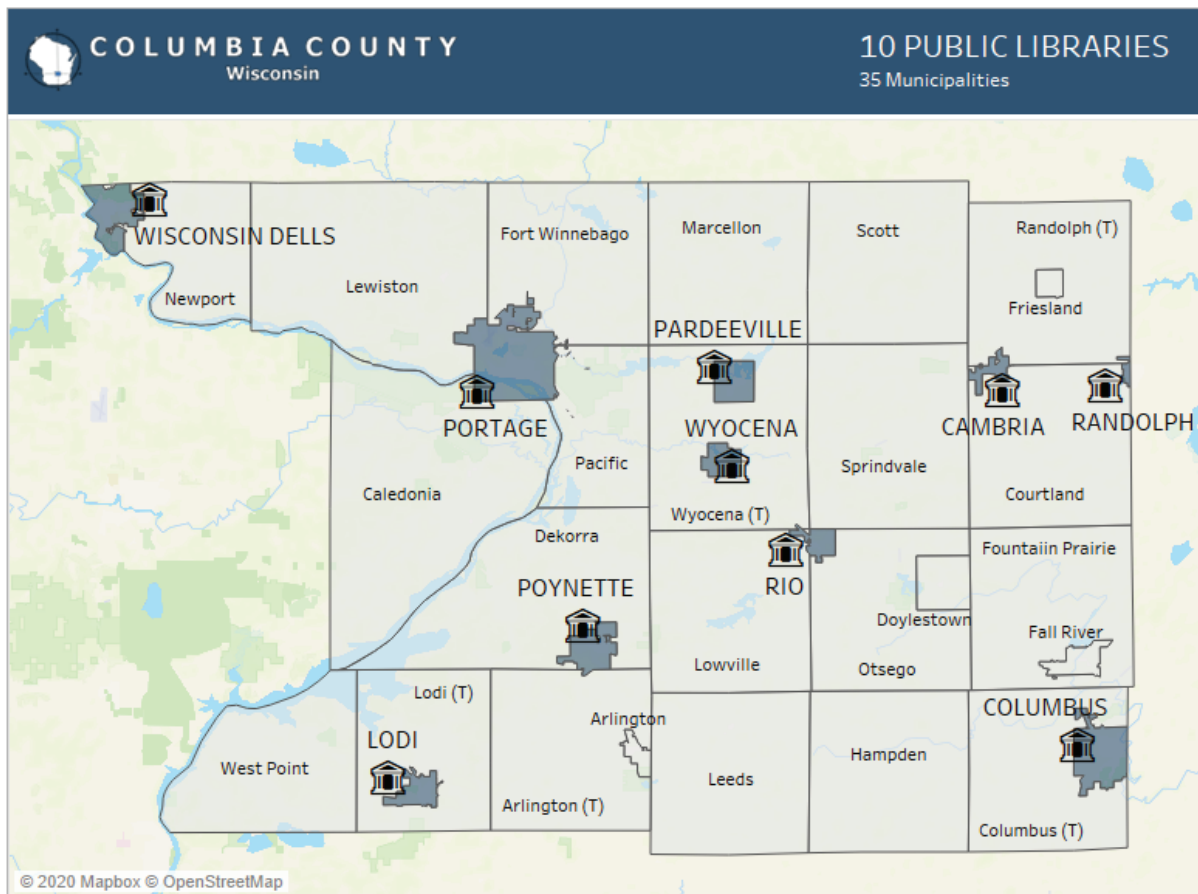


COLUMBIA COUNTY | 2021-2025 PLAN FOR LIBRARY SERVICES



INTRODUCTION



The mission of the Columbia County Library Board (CCLSB) is to advocate for public libraries and to ensure quality library service for all residents of Columbia County.

The CCLSB meets bimonthly at each county public library on a rotating basis. The county public library directors also meet bimonthly, and the Board and directors hold a joint meeting at least once annually to discuss library needs and services within the County. Library service to county residents, both rural and municipal, is provided by the libraries in Columbia County with assistance from county funds. These public libraries are in the communities of Cambria, Columbus, Lodi, Pardeeville, Portage, Poynette, Randolph, Rio, Wisconsin Dells (a joint library with the village of Lake Delton in Sauk County), and Wyocena.



ABOUT COLUMBIA COUNTY

Economy. Located in South Central Wisconsin, Columbia County attracts tourists throughout the year. Portage, the county seat, is one of four incorporated cities in Columbia County. The economy of Columbia County is dependent on agriculture, manufacturing, health care, social assistance, forestry, retail trade and tourism, particularly fishing and hunting.

People. The 2019 estimated population of Columbia County is 57,282. Of this population, 35,017 individuals live in municipalities that maintain a public library, and 22,265 live outside those municipalities (known as “rural residents.”) Columbia County is projected to achieve modest but steady population growth through the next 20 years. The largest projected population growth will be among senior citizens, who will place greater and greater demands upon existing services.



Library System. Through membership in the South Central Library System (SCLS) residents and libraries have access to:

- over 3 million physical items that includes over 2.5 million books and 375 thousand videos
- over 200K e-books, e-audio, e-video content (Overdrive)
- delivery of shared materials, approximately 1/3 of items borrowed at Columbia County libraries were borrowed from libraries outside Columbia County
- technology and library catalog services and support, including Help Desk
- professional development and continuing education programs for staff
- consulting services including graphic arts, strategic planning, digitalization, workforce development support and data services.

ADVOCACY

“Libraries are the kinds of places where people with different backgrounds, passions and interests can take part in a living democratic culture.”

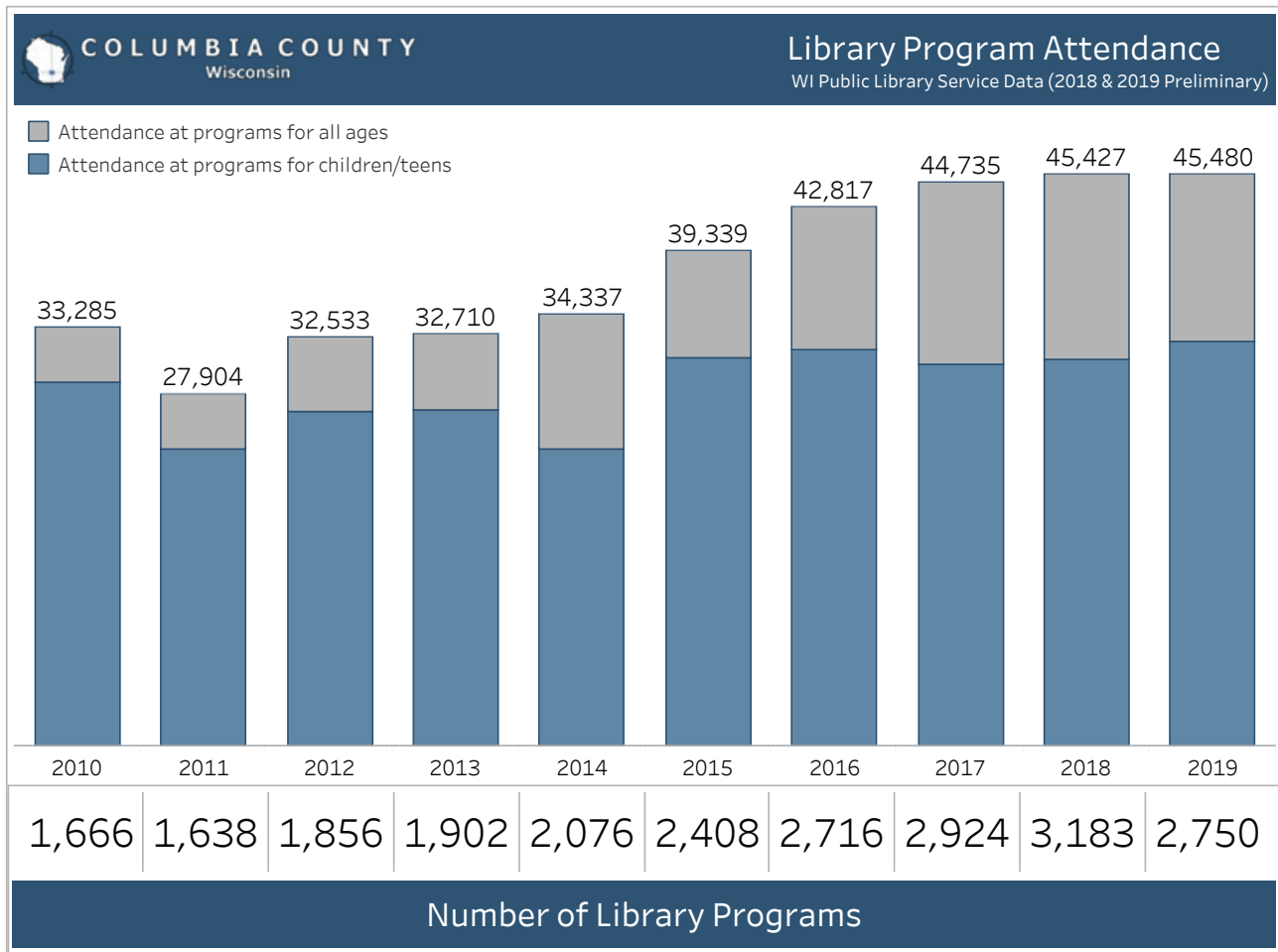
E. Klinenberg, “To Restore Civil Society, Start With the Library,” *The New York Times*, Sep. 08, 2018.

Libraries as Social Infrastructure. Columbia County libraries are open to everyone, regardless of their age, their race, their ethnicity, their social class or their citizenship status. Libraries are one of the last remaining places where people of all ages and backgrounds can find shared participation in meaningful projects. They promote relationships and support networks among neighbors who may never otherwise meet. They teach valuable life skills to kids and adults alike. They provide things to see, things to do, and programs to take part in for people who may be lonely, disconnected, or disadvantaged. Libraries invest in everyone, give other people a chance and make us who we are at our best moments today.

Technology and Unemployment. Job seekers now use the Internet to seek employment, in part because this is the only way to apply for many job opportunities. However, millions of Americans lack home Internet access (20.3% of Columbia County households are without an Internet subscription).

One essential community institution is positioned to meet this growing need—the local library. Libraries provide reliable high-speed Internet access, and library staff are invaluable in assisting and instructing residents on using technology and improving their technology skills.

LIBRARY PROGRAMS

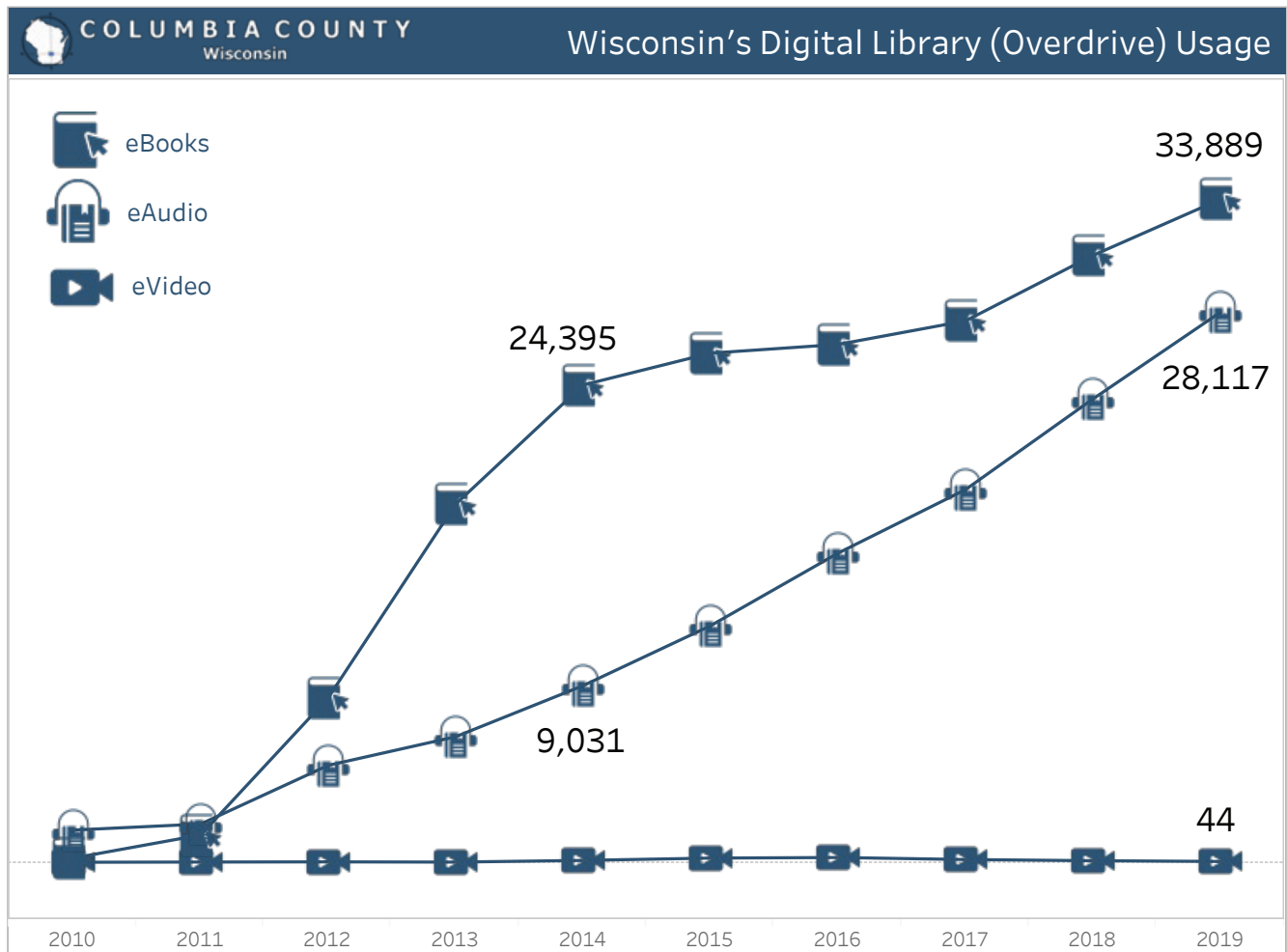


The benefits of library programming reach residents of all ages in Columbia County.

- Book groups encourage reading to become a lifelong habit.
- Summer reading programs help children keep their skills up and encourage reluctant readers to be drawn in by the activities.
- Broad-based children programming supports personal and educational growth and nurtures curiosity.
- Programs generate interest in local communities and encourage involvement.
- Job fairs assist potential employers and employees in making connections within their communities.
- Programming meets the educational, cultural and recreational needs of county residents.
- Engagement with other organizations leads to networking, enrichment and reaching all populations.
- Library programming promotes collaboration, hands-on learning, problem solving and the creative process.



OVERDRIVE



2014-2019 = 85% increase in usage

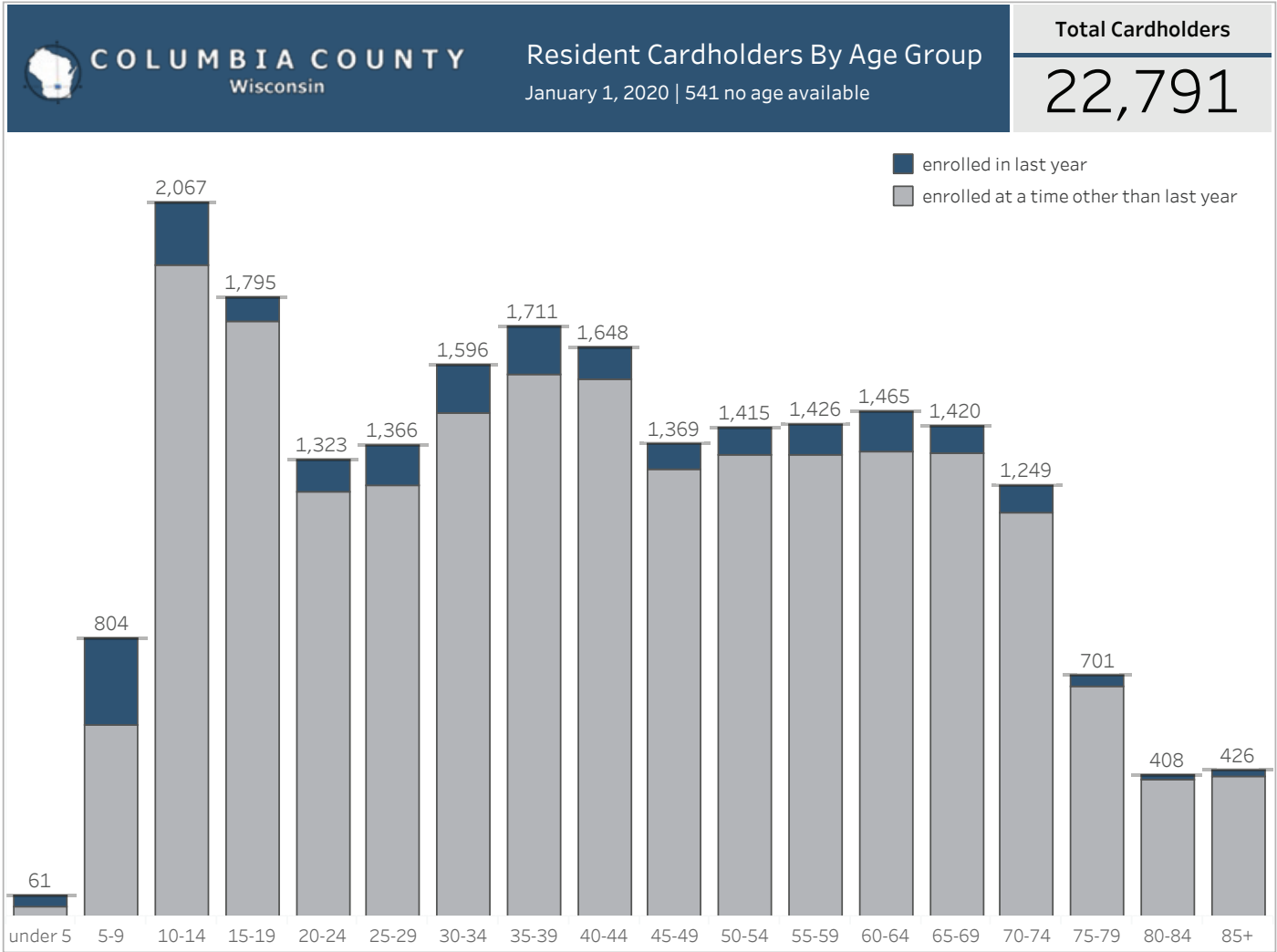
Overdrive is a statewide library resource funded by all libraries to provide downloadable eBooks, eAudio and eVideo and is accessible to all county residents with their library card.

2019 Overdrive volumes available

- 157,350 downloadable books (eBooks)
- 55,245 downloadable audio books (eAudio)
- 852 downloadable videos (eVideo)



CARDHOLDERS

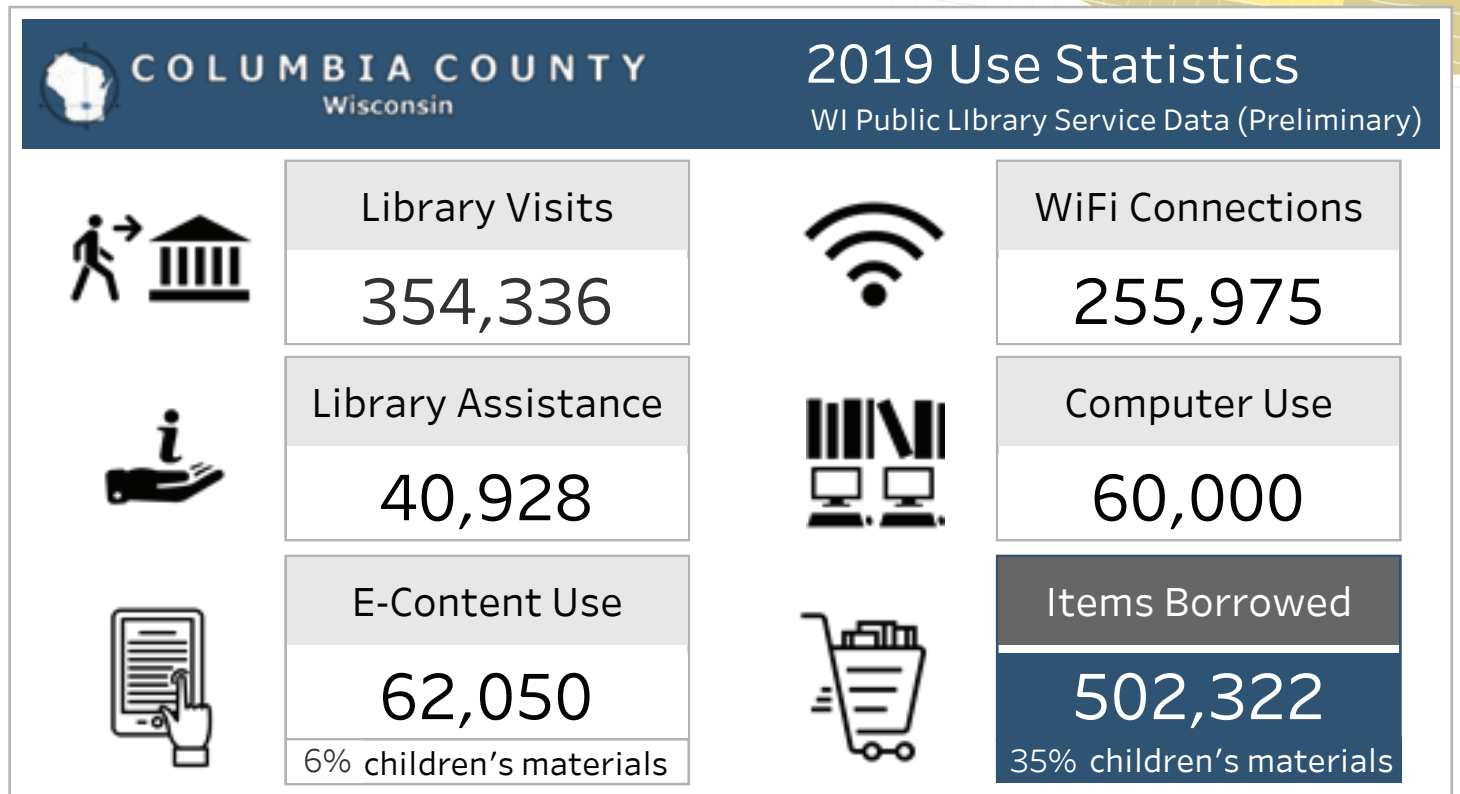


Total resident cardholders is an underestimate because it is only some Rio residents.



- 22,791 Columbia County residents have LINKcat library cards. That is 40% of residents.
- 21% of Columbia County cardholders are under 20.
- 10.9% of children under 18 live in poverty.
- 35% of materials borrowed are children's materials.
- 25% of Columbia County cardholders are over 60.

COUNTY LIBRARY USE STATISTICS | 2019



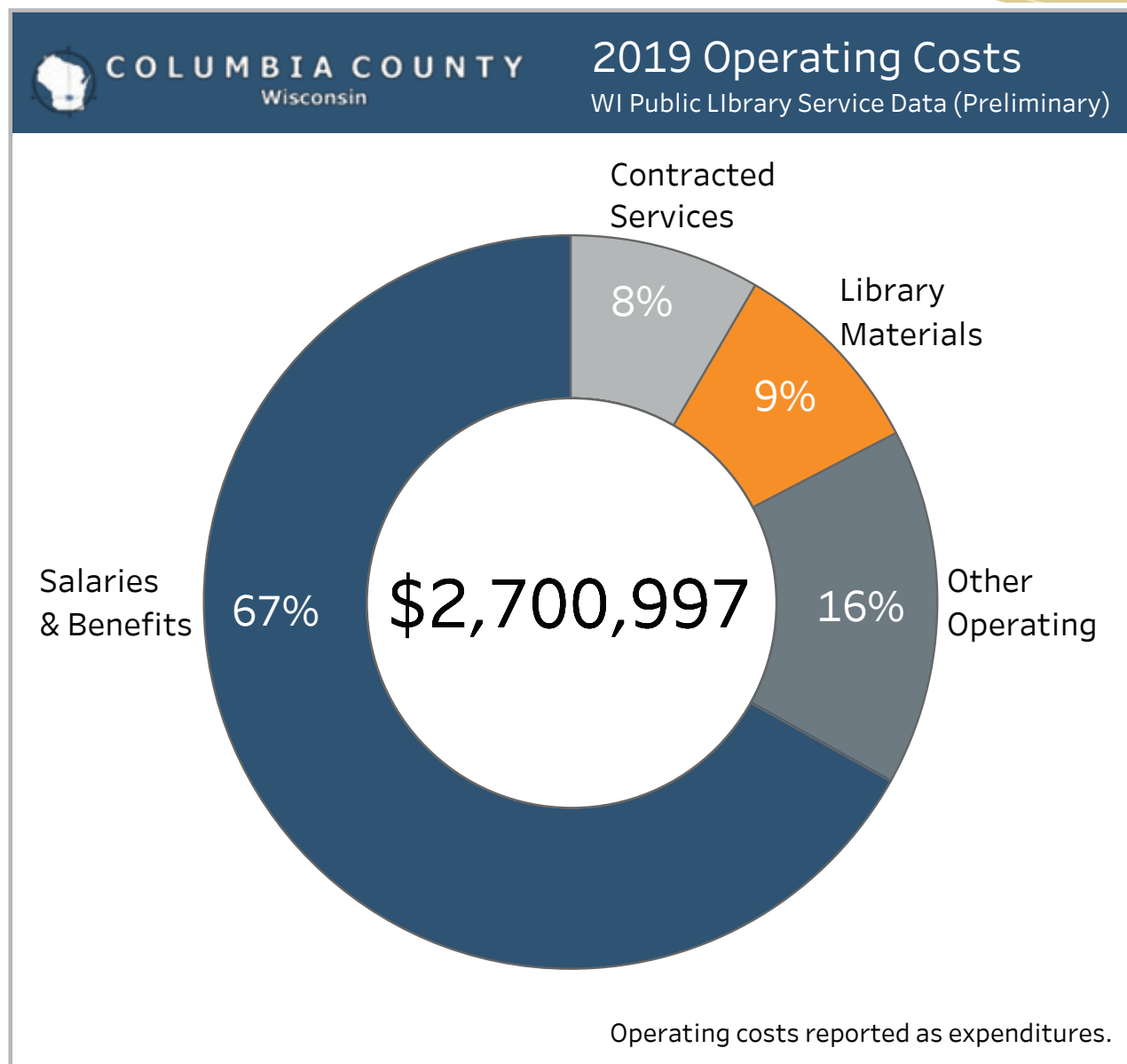
Residents use the library for many purposes. Library services are provided equally to all residents to address the diverse and varied needs of the county,

- Visits to rural libraries increased 40% between 2000 and 2018.
- In Columbia County libraries help to bridge the digital divide.
- Libraries are there to provide personalized technology and information support.

Items Borrowed is the only metric used to calculate county funding.



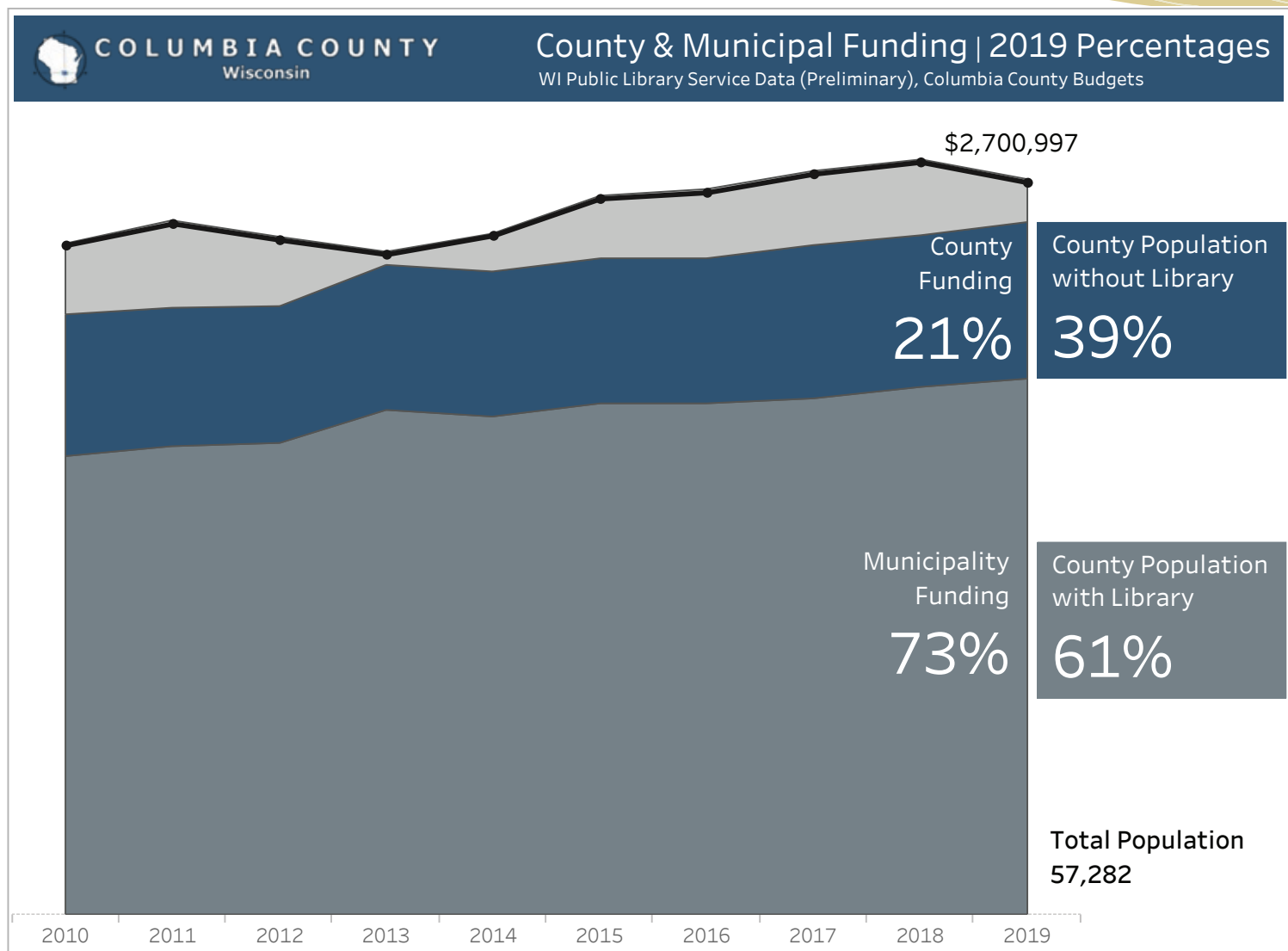
OPERATING COSTS



The largest portion of operating budget is for staff. In 2019, Columbia County libraries employed 41.48 dedicated staff who provided innovative programs and services, maintained collections, and managed the 89,598 square footage of building space.

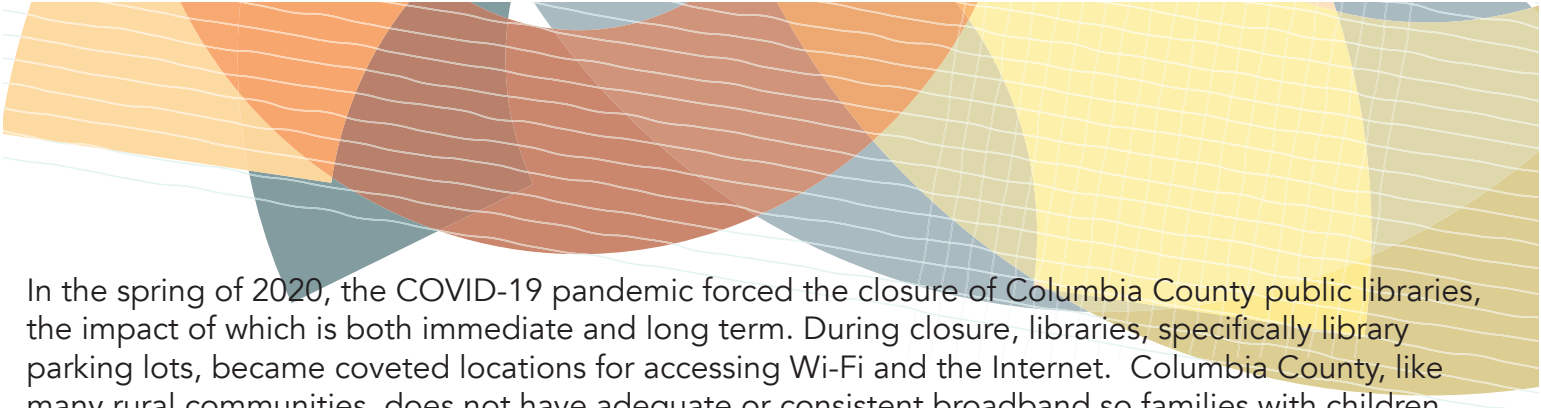
The biggest increase in operating expenses is due largely to the cost of benefits. In the past 5 years, the cost of benefits has averaged a 7% increase per year. Because contracted SCLS services and other operating expenditures are mostly fixed, library service and material expenditures have been reduced to absorb costs not covered by budget increases.

FUNDING



The primary source of funding for libraries is from municipal budgets. Based on a state formula, additional dollars are provided by Columbia County for serving county residents.

In 2019 the ten public libraries in Columbia County maintained a combined operating budget of \$2,700,997. Of this, Columbia County expended \$572,550 (21%) to the ten libraries, and reimbursed a total of \$172,331 to the libraries across its borders in adjacent counties. Municipalities expended a combined \$1,970,902 (73%) on the public libraries in the County.



In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the closure of Columbia County public libraries, the impact of which is both immediate and long term. During closure, libraries, specifically library parking lots, became coveted locations for accessing Wi-Fi and the Internet. Columbia County, like many rural communities, does not have adequate or consistent broadband so families with children needing to complete homework online and citizens working from home found connection to schools and work from County public libraries. As communities began to re-open, libraries served as:

- resource centers for the unemployed seeking jobs,
- information resources to fight isolation and boredom, and
- places to reconnect with other resources and agencies.

Looking to the future, the significant decline in circulation of library materials resulting from library closures will substantially impact library statistics for 2020, and therefore the funding base for 2022. Because library funding is statutorily based on circulation statistics, and those statistics are two years behind, the fiscal impact of COVID-19 will be felt most significantly in 2022 and beyond. Obviously, the availability of funding will directly impact how well Columbia County Libraries can meet the goals and objectives outlined in this 5-year plan.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

I. Build partnerships and develop cooperative programs that support local community needs. Public libraries are valued assets and are places that connect citizens to community resources and add to the quality of life in Columbia County communities.

- A. Work with the Sauk, Columbia & Marquette County local job organization Libraries Activating Workforce Development Skills (LAWDS) and the Worksmart Network to effectively reach more people in need in our community, recognizing and matching their needs to available resources. Schedule consults with Worksmart Network; invite speakers into the library; plan appointments with patrons.
- B. Will encourage cooperation among public libraries and schools to promote summer literacy through reading and educational opportunities to retain achievements and reduce summer slide.

II. Provide high quality technology services and increase access to digital resources. The CCLSB acknowledges the importance of access to quality technology services and digital resources to Columbia County residents.

- A. Utilize training available at the System level to educate library staff to use digital apps, such as the Overdrive and Libby app, in order to improve access to eBook and audiobook formats and online resources that enhance the skills necessary to troubleshoot problems of patrons. Arrange for Continuing Education on digital apps and online resources with SCLS, Continuing Education Consultant.
- B. Will encourage the County to actively support library's needs to improve Internet access within the library and throughout the community.

III. Enhance information resources available at the County's public libraries and develop innovative ways to increase their use and reach new audiences. At the heart of any library are the information resources it provides and services. The CCLSB encourages additions to collections in all its libraries and the development of creative ways to enhance their use.

- A. Introduce or utilize supplementary collections that provide unique experiences.
- B. Expand awareness to increase community engagement of events across all County libraries.

IV. Continue to support/advocate for increased funding resources both public and private. The Board acknowledges that the operational costs of libraries such as building collections, SCLS delivery services, library resource payments, et al, increase just as they do for any other program.

- A. Utilizing the resources and strengths of each community and the organizations and businesses that we serve opens up opportunities for cooperation, collaboration, financial support and streamlines the needs of the community with the talents and abilities of the library.
- B. Attend Chamber of Commerce events and meetings, promote and advertise library services in the local papers and network with local leaders to remain relevant within the community. Participate in Chamber of Commerce luncheons; join or ask to speak at Rotary, Kiwanis, Elks, Lions, Optimists Clubs.

V. Continue an ongoing planning process which responds to the changing library service needs of County residents.

- A. The Plan of Service, 2021-2025 serves as a living document to provide direction and focus to all the Columbia County libraries. Using this document to guide the next five years of local libraries offers a collaborative structure that strengthens and moves all Columbia County libraries in a clear and decisive direction.
- B. The CCLSB will look for representation and recruit committed member participation.
 - a. Will look for forward-thinking advocates for the Board.
 - b. Recommend appointments of two County Board Supervisors on the CCLSB.
 - c. Sustain the appointment of a CCLSB member on the South Central Library System Board.

