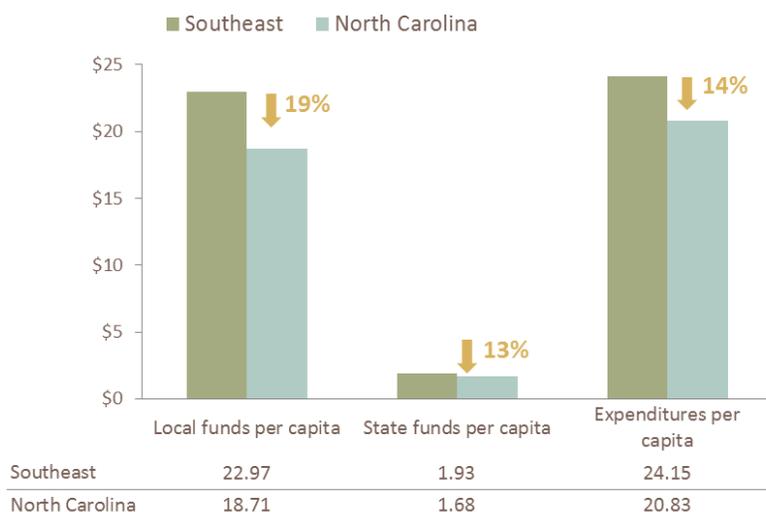


Public libraries provide critical learning and information resources for individuals, families, local businesses, and non-profits. They broaden opportunities for people of all ages through access to information and technology, and anchor community improvement efforts by providing programming that addresses workforce development and educational needs – from job search assistance to early literacy (Swan *et al.*, 2013, 1).

Figure 1

Comparison of funding and expenditures

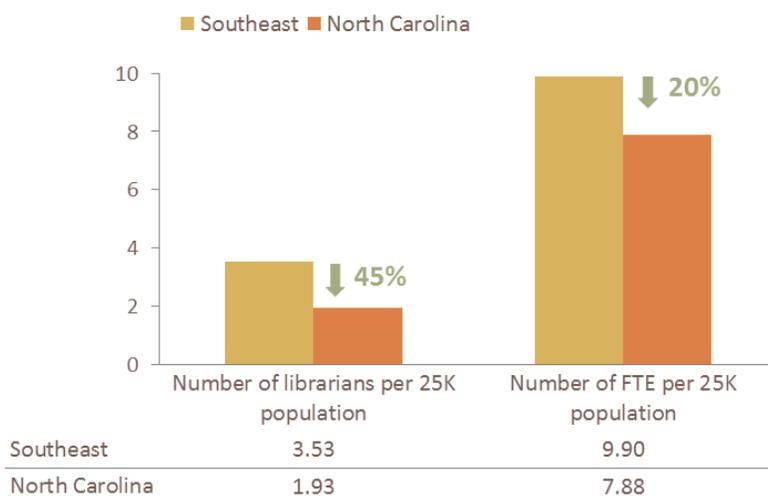


In January 2013 the US Institute for Museum and Library Services released the most recent Census Bureau statistics for the national public library survey, fiscal year 2010. This comprehensive report illuminates the lay of the land for public libraries at a national level.¹ But where does North Carolina stand among its peers?

As illustrated in Figure 1, compared to the average for Southeastern² US states North Carolina public libraries received 19% less local funding and 13% less state funding per capita. The state’s libraries in turn spent 14% less per capita than the average for the region.

Figure 2

Comparison of library staffing

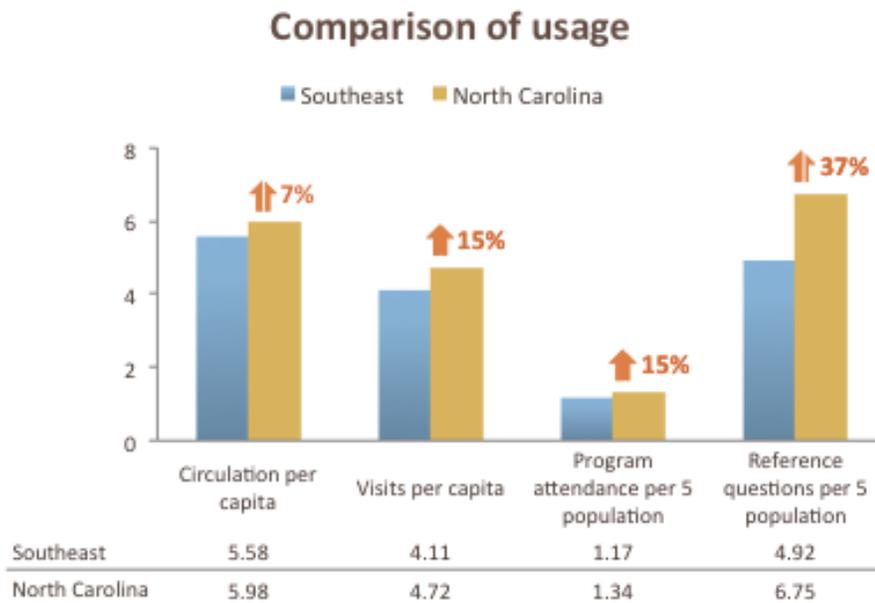


North Carolina ranked second from the bottom among all US states in the number of librarians per capita, despite an abundance of library graduate programs in the state, including the top-ranked program at UNC-Chapel Hill (Swan *et al.*, 2013, 36). Figure 2 shows that compared to the Southeast average, North Carolina public libraries had 45% fewer librarians per 25,000 population and 20% fewer FTE.

¹ Swan, D. W., Grimes, J., Owens, T., Vese, Jr., R. D., Miller, K., Arroyo, J., Craig, T., Dorinski, S., Freeman, M., Isaac, N., O’Shea, P., Schilling, P. Scotto, J. (2013). Public Libraries Survey: Fiscal Year 2010 (IMLS-2013-PLS-01). Institute of Museum and Library Services. Washington, DC. Available online at: www.ims.gov/PLS

² States in the “Southeast” are defined by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis’ regions. The Southeast includes: *Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia*. For more information, see: <http://www.bea.gov/regional/docs/regions.cfm>

Figure 3



While North Carolina’s public library funding and staffing were poorer than the regional average, our public libraries experienced more library visits per capita, circulated more materials per capita, answered more reference questions per capita, and had higher library program attendance per capita (Figure 3). North Carolina ranked 6th out of all US states in the number of reference questions per capita, despite combined library facility opening hours ranked in the bottom 10 for all US states.

Public computers and Internet access are essential services provided by libraries to their communities, allowing people to search for jobs, gain basic digital literacy and computing skills, conduct research and homework assignments, perform online training, and access computer software.

North Carolina ranked 40th of all states in the number of library computers available to the public per capita. Compared to the Southeast average, North Carolina libraries had 12% fewer computers available to the community. Despite weaker funding, fewer computers, and 25% fewer opening hours per capita than the regional average, North Carolina’s community members logged 14% more computing sessions per opening hour per capita than the Southeast regional average. This highlights the huge demand in the state for free Internet computing – a service that residents can only find at public libraries in 60.5% of North Carolina libraries’ communities.³

“This highlights the huge demand in the state for free Internet computing – a service that residents can only find at public libraries in 60.5% of North Carolina libraries’ communities.”

³ Hoffman, J., Bertot, J.C., Davis, D.M., Clark, L. (2011). Libraries Connect Communities: Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2010-2011. American Library Association Office of Research & Statistics. Chicago, Ill. Available online at: http://www.ala.org/research/initiatives/plftas/2010_2011