

Using the Online Compare Tool

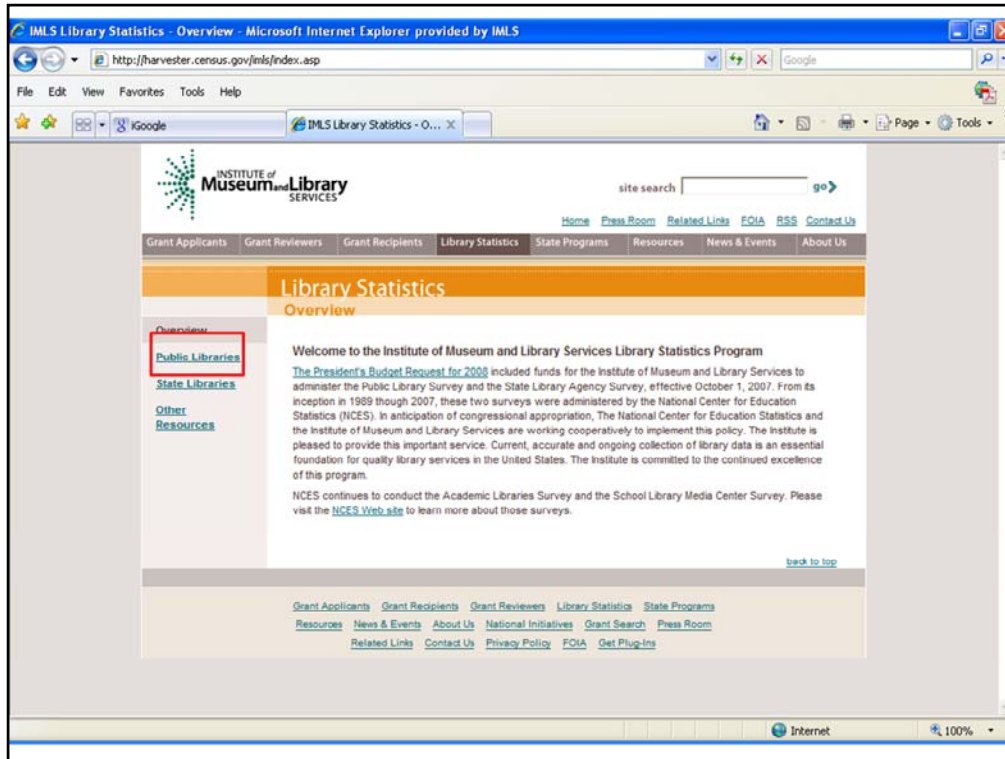
Everett Henderson



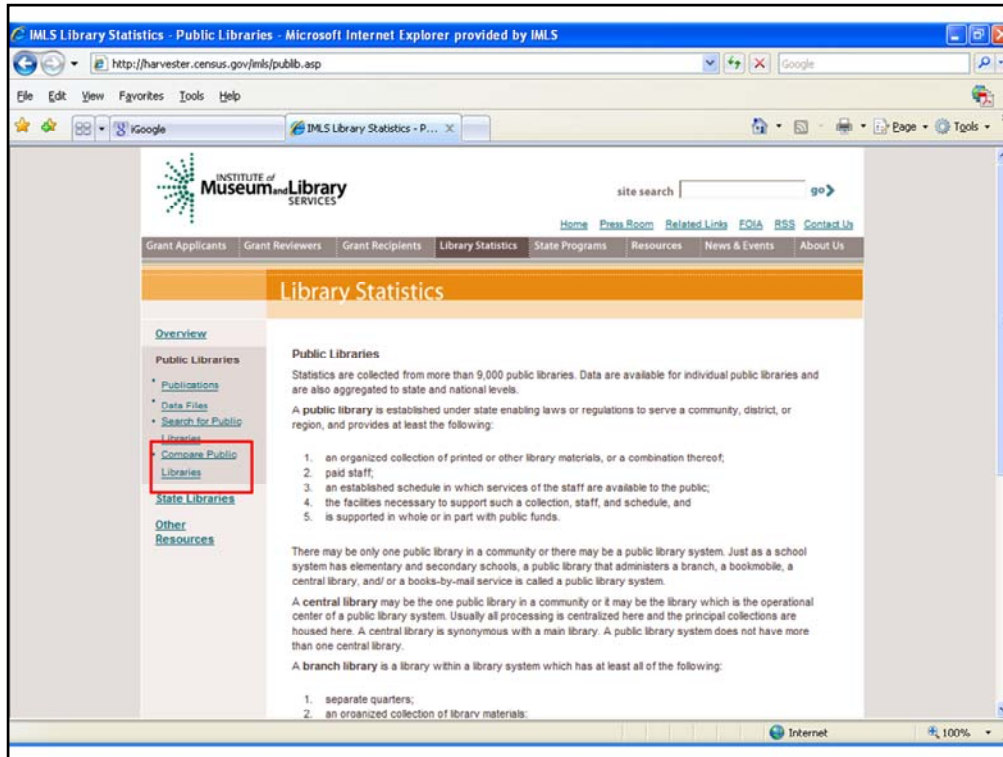


The next few pages will show how to access the Compare Tool webpage. Go to www.ims.gov and click on the *Library Statistics* link (in the red box on the slide). The Compare Tool page can also be accessed directly using the following link:

<http://harvester.census.gov/ims/compare/index.asp>



At the **Library Statistics Overview** page, click the *Public Libraries* link.



Under the **Public Libraries** heading, click on the *Compare Public Libraries* link.

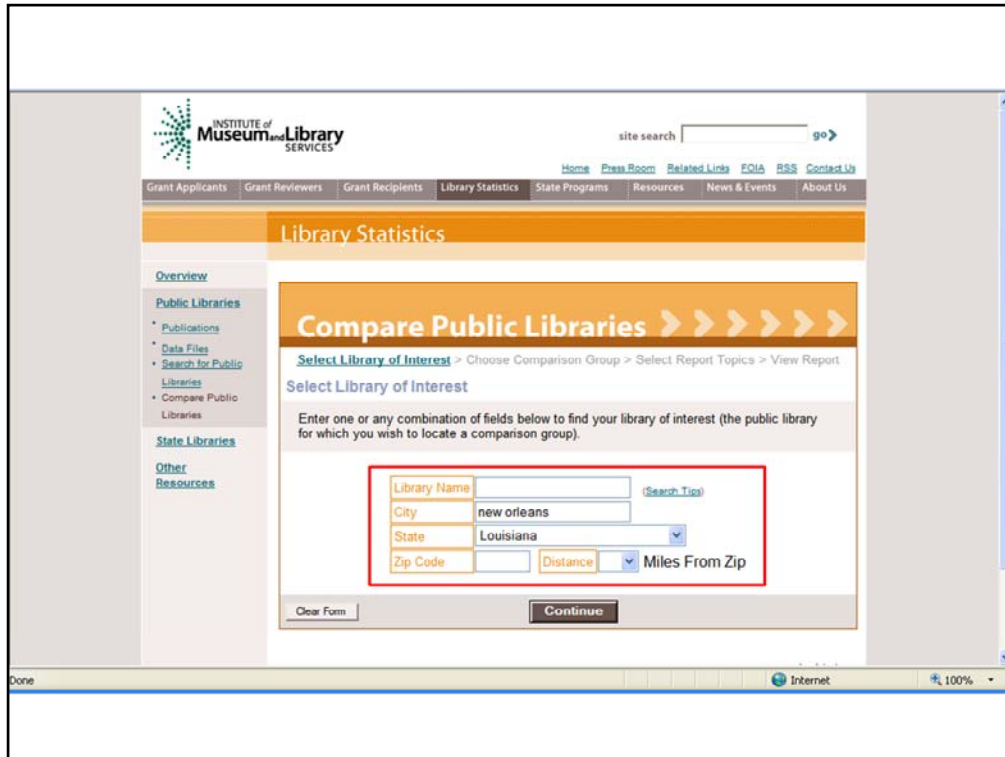
<http://harvester.census.gov/imls/compare/index.asp>



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Compare Public Libraries tool. At the top, there is a site search bar and a navigation menu with links for Home, Press Room, Related Links, FOIA, BSS, and Contact Us. Below the navigation menu is a banner for "Library Statistics" with a sub-banner for "Compare Public Libraries" featuring a series of arrows. The main content area includes a "Welcome to Compare Public Libraries" message, instructions on how to use the site, and a "Begin Search" button highlighted with a red box. A sidebar on the left contains links for Overview, Public Libraries, State Libraries, and Other Resources. The footer of the page includes the text "Compare Public Libraries uses Fiscal Year 2006 data from the Public Libraries Survey, which was conducted by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)." and three links: "About Compare Public Libraries", "About The Data In Compare Public Libraries", and "About the Public Libraries Survey".

This is the **Compare Tool's** homepage

(<http://harvester.census.gov/imls/compare/index.asp>): Click the *Begin Search* button to begin the comparison process.



The first step in the process is to select a library (administrative entity) of interest. This library will serve as your reference point during the comparison process. Libraries can be searched for either directly by name or by geography (city, state, zip code and/or distance from zip code).

Overview

Public Libraries

- Publications
- Data Files
- Search for Public Libraries
- Compare Public Libraries

State Libraries

Other Resources

Compare Public Libraries >>>>>>

Select Library of Interest > Choose Comparison Group > Select Report Topics > View Report

Select Your Library of Interest

If the library you are looking for is not in this list, [try a new search](#). Hide Outlets

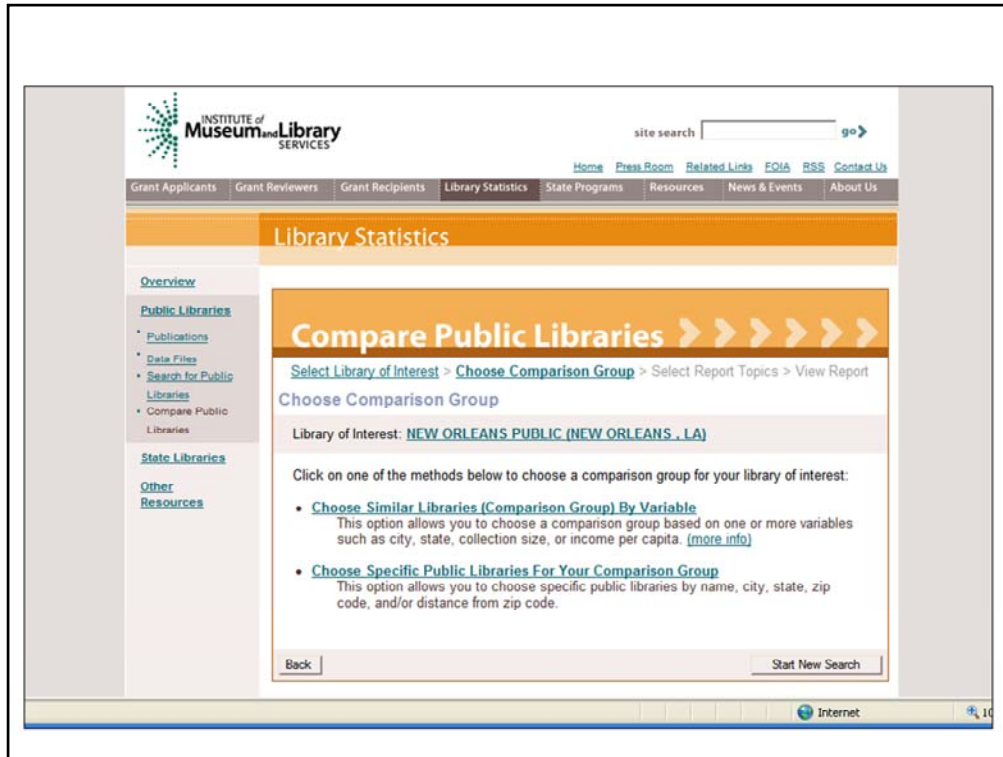
Result 1-10 of 14
[Next 10 Results](#)

Library System	Outlet Library	Outlet Type	City	State
<input checked="" type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC			NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	ALGIERS REGIONAL BRANCH	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	ALVAR BRANCH	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	CHILDREN'S RESOURCE CENTER	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	CITA DENNIS HUBBELL BRANCH-ALGIERS PT	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	EAST NEW ORLEANS REGIONAL BRANCH	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BRANCH	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	MILTON H. LATTER BRANCH	Branch Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA
<input type="radio"/> NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC	NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY	Central Library	NEW ORLEANS	LA

Internet 100%

Select library, then click *Continue*

In this example, I searched for the New Orleans, Louisiana public library system. The Compare Tool returned the New Orleans Public Library administrative entity. Note that by clicking the show/hide outlets button that is highlighted in red on the slide, you can also view the outlets that belong to that administrative entity.



The next step is to choose a comparison group; this is the group of libraries that we will compare our reference library to. We can create a comparison group using either of the two following methods:

- Choosing by Variable - selecting this option allows us to select libraries that fall within a certain range on characteristics such as size of legal service area, total circulation and operating expenditures.
- Choosing Specific Libraries - allows user to choose specific libraries using the library name, city, state, zip code and/or distance from zip code.

Public Libraries

- Publications
- Data Files
- Search for Public Libraries
- Compare Public Libraries

State Libraries

Other Resources

Compare Public Libraries >>>>>>

Select Library of Interest > Choose Comparison Group > Select Report Topics > View Report

Choose Comparison Group By Variable

Library of Interest: [NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC \(NEW ORLEANS, LA\)](#)

Select a variable to identify your comparison libraries by clicking on it's name.
Click the category name or plus(+) sign below to view the variables in that category.
To see the definition for a topic, click the Question Mark.

[View All Variables](#) | [Hide All Variables](#)

Geography —

County	Geographic Service Area	Region
State		

Organizational Characteristics —

Administrative Structure	Meets FSCS Public Library Definition	Legal Basis
Interlibrary Relationship	Number of Bookmobiles	Number of Branch Libraries
Number of Outlets	Population of Legal Service Area	

View all Variables option selected

In this demonstration, I decided to choose similar libraries by variable; this brought us to the **Choose Comparison Group by Variable** screen. Here, different categories of variables are listed (Geography, Organizational characteristics, etc.); all of the variables underneath the categories can be shown or hidden by clicking on the “View All Variables” or “Hide All Variables” options, respectively. I decided to create a comparison group based on the population of the legal service area.

Note that only one comparison variable can be added at a time.

Compare Public Libraries >>>>>>

Select Library of Interest > Choose Comparison Group > Select Report Topics > View Report

Choose Comparison Group - Specify Range for Population of Legal Service Area

Library of Interest: [NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC \(NEW ORLEANS, LA\)](#)

What range would you like to use for **Population of Legal Service Area**? Pick one method below.

Method 1. Enter a percentage number, then click **Continue**.

Select comparison group members whose **Population of Legal Service Area** is within plus or minus % of the value for your Library of Interest (231,145.00).
(Tip: 20% is the default range; you can change it by entering a different percentage in the box above.)

OR

Method 2. Enter a number in one or both boxes, then click **Continue**.

Select comparison group members whose **Population of Legal Service Area** is...

■ At Least

■ No More Than

(Tip: You are not required to enter a value into both boxes.)

Continue

After choosing a comparison variable, we must then choose a range for it. There are two methods for doing this:

- **Percentage Basis** - here, we elect to create a comparison group comprised only of libraries that fall within a certain percentage of our comparison library's value for the comparison variable that we selected. The default value is 20%, but this can be changed by entering your own number in the box under "Method 1". I chose 10% in this example.

- **Absolute Numbers** - here, we can specify absolute numbers to choose the acceptable range of values for the variable our comparison group is based on. By entering a number in the "At Least" box, you select a minimum value of the comparison group, variable, by entering a number in the "No more than" box, you are picking a maximum value. By entering numbers in both boxes, you can designate a lower and upper bound for the value of your comparison variable.

I chose to use the percentage basis for this demonstration.



Now that we've chosen a range for our comparison group, we are taken to a screen which summarizes the results of our query. There are a few key elements in this screen which I have chosen to highlight using arrows and boxes.

The yellow box highlights the number of libraries that are in our comparison group.

The first red arrow highlights the comparison variable we have chosen to use, the range of the comparison variable we selected earlier, and the number of libraries which meet this criteria.

The second red arrow highlights the *Add a Variable To Refine Your Comparison Group* button. While we can only select one variable at a time during the process of building a comparison group, we can click on this option in order to add variables that define our comparison group more narrowly.

In this demonstration, I chose the option of adding a variable.

Compare Public Libraries >>>>>>

[Select Library of Interest](#) > [Choose Comparison Group](#) > [Select Report Topics](#) > [View Report](#)

Choose Comparison Group

Library of Interest: [NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC \(NEW ORLEANS, LA\)](#)

Your comparison group has **19** public libraries. [See Libraries In Comparison Group](#)

- Click the link in the 'Value' column below to change the value you selected.
- Click the link in the '# of Lib.' column below to see the list of libraries included in that number.
- Click 'Remove' to remove an item from your comparison group.
- When you are satisfied with your comparison group, click 'Continue'.

Continue

Variable	Value	# of Lib.	
Population of Legal Service Area	+ or - 10% of 231,145	55	Remove
Region	Southeast	1111	Remove

[Add a Variable To Refine Your Comparison Group](#)

[Choose Additional Libraries To Add To Your Comparison Group](#)

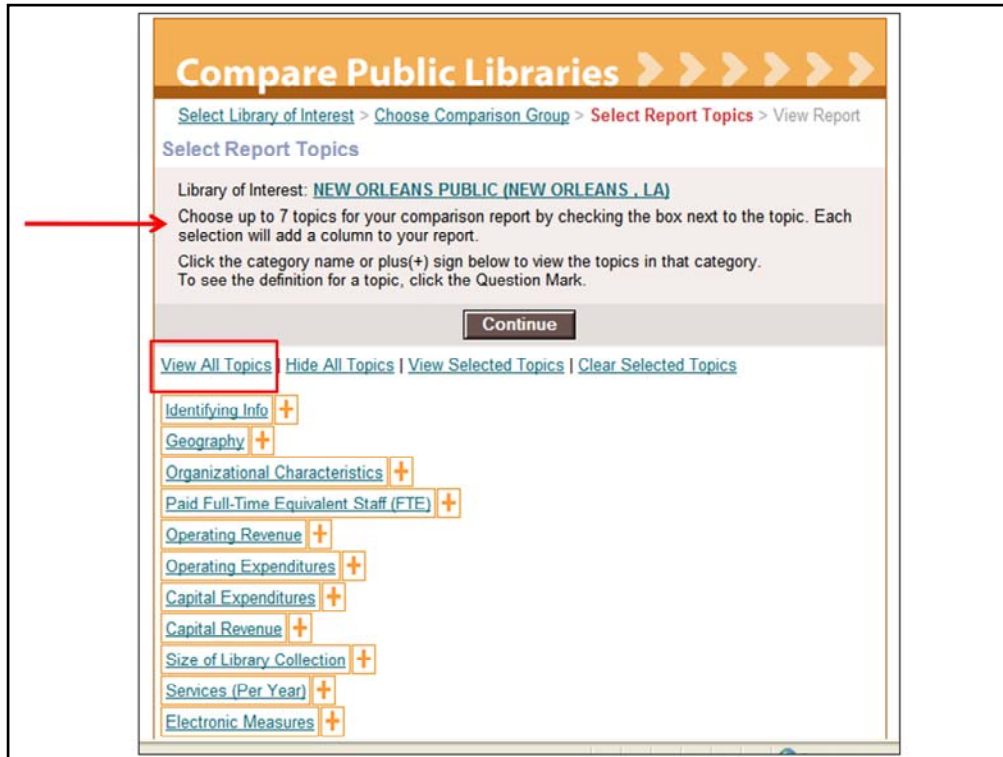
Continue

[Back](#) [Start New Search](#)

I repeated the same steps we took earlier in order to choose a second comparison variable. I decided to only choose libraries that were located in the Southeast (this was the *Region* variable under the *Geography* heading).

Notice that the number in the yellow box this time is now 19; it was previously 55. Restricting our comparison group to libraries in the Southeast noticeably reduced the comparison group's size. Also note that the Region variable has been added to the list of comparison variables in the table, along with the number of libraries that are located in the Southeast. Note also that we can delete a comparison variable from our analysis by clicking the remove option in the variable table. This option is useful when experimenting with different variables; if you add a variable that makes your comparison group too small, you can quickly remove it using this option.

We are now satisfied with the size of our comparison group, so we click the *Continue* button to move on to the next phase of the process.



Now that we've identified a set of libraries that will serve as a comparison group, we need to select the variables that will appear in our comparison report.

This is done at the **Select Report Topics** page. There are several categories from which to choose variables, including organizational characteristics, operating expenditures, paid FTE staff, size of library collection and electronic measures. The variables under individual categories can be displayed by clicking the plus sign next to that category; all of the variables can be displayed by selecting the *View all Topics* option (highlighted in red on the slide).

Note that even though the text next to the red arrow states that we can choose a maximum of 7 variables, you can go above this limit. 7 is simply the maximum number of variables that can be displayed onscreen in the report output. By exporting the report to Excel, you can display many more than 7 columns.

Size of Library Collection -

[Select All](#) | [Deselect All](#)

<input type="checkbox"/> Print Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Print Materials per Capita	<input type="checkbox"/> Current Print Serial Subscriptions
<input type="checkbox"/> Current Print Serial Subscriptions per 1,000 Population	<input type="checkbox"/> Current Electronic Serial Subscriptions	<input type="checkbox"/> Current Electronic Serial Subscriptions per 1,000 Population
<input type="checkbox"/> Video Materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Video Materials per 1,000 Population	<input type="checkbox"/> Audio Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Audio Materials per 1,000 Population	<input type="checkbox"/> Electronic Books	<input type="checkbox"/> Databases

Services (Per Year) -

[Select All](#) | [Deselect All](#)

<input type="checkbox"/> Total Circulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Circulation per Capita	<input type="checkbox"/> Circulation of Children's Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Circulation of Children's Materials As Percent of Total Circulation	<input type="checkbox"/> Library Visits	<input type="checkbox"/> Library Visits per Capita
<input type="checkbox"/> Total Library Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Total Program Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> Children's Program Attendance

View all Topics option selected

This is the **Select Report Topics** page with the *View All Topics* option selected (all the variables are visible).

I chose state, county, ALA-MLS librarians, print materials, public internet terminals, current electronic serial subscriptions and total circulation as the variables I will display in the report. After selecting your variables, click on the *Continue* button to proceed.

The screenshot shows the 'View Report' interface. At the top, there are three buttons: 'Save Comparison Report' (highlighted with a red box), 'Column Order/Sorting', and 'Show/Hide Averages'. Below these buttons is a link 'Export this report to an Excel file' with a red arrow pointing to it. A red arrow also points to the 'Export this report to an Excel file' link. Below the link is a text instruction: 'Click on a library name to view details for that library. Click on the question mark to view its definition. Click on the bar chart icon to view a bar chart of your comparison group for that variable.'

Library Name	State	County	ALA-MLS Librarians	Print Materials	Number of Public Internet Terminals	Current Electronic Serial Subscriptions	Total Circulation
Comparison Group Average	N/A	N/A	20	480,589	162	3	1,310,353
Comparison Group Median	N/A	N/A	17	517,029	142	0	999,536
Library Of Interest							
NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LA	Louisiana	ORLEANS	N/A	442,493	120	0	235,447
MONTGOMERY CITY-COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY AL	Alabama	MONTGOMERY	9	554,334	175	1	761,072
ALACHUA COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT FL	Florida	ALACHUA	55	722,620	170	0	2,848,398
HIALEAH PUBLIC LIBRARIES FL	Florida	MIAMI-DADE	7	163,314	95	0	161,416
MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM GA	Georgia	BIBB	18	483,797	181	1	1,224,497
SEQUOYAH REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM GA	Georgia	CHEROKEE	6	297,600	225	3	999,536
FLINT RIVER REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM GA	Georgia	SPALDING	19	429,800	176	5	2,110,453

The **View Report** screen is the final result of our selections of variables and comparison libraries. Several options are available at this screen:

- Use the *Show/Hide Averages* button to choose how many of the average and median figures you want to display.
- Use the *Column Order/Sorting* button to choose the order in which you want the report columns to appear, as well as what order the columns will be sorted by.
- The *Save Comparison Report* button allows the user to save the settings they used in crafting their comparison, so that they can quickly recreate or refine a comparison report if necessary.
- The red arrow highlights the *Export this report to an Excel file* link. Click here to export the report to an Excel file. Doing this will export all the variables you selected to an Excel file, not just the ones that are currently visible onscreen (This is applicable in cases where you chose more than 7 display variables for your report).

Additionally, clicking on the bar graph icon at the top of the columns will display a frequency distribution of the values in that particular column. Note that if you have chosen to display averages and medians in your report, those extra values will be included in the frequency distribution.

Table Output in Excel

Institute of Museum and Library Services

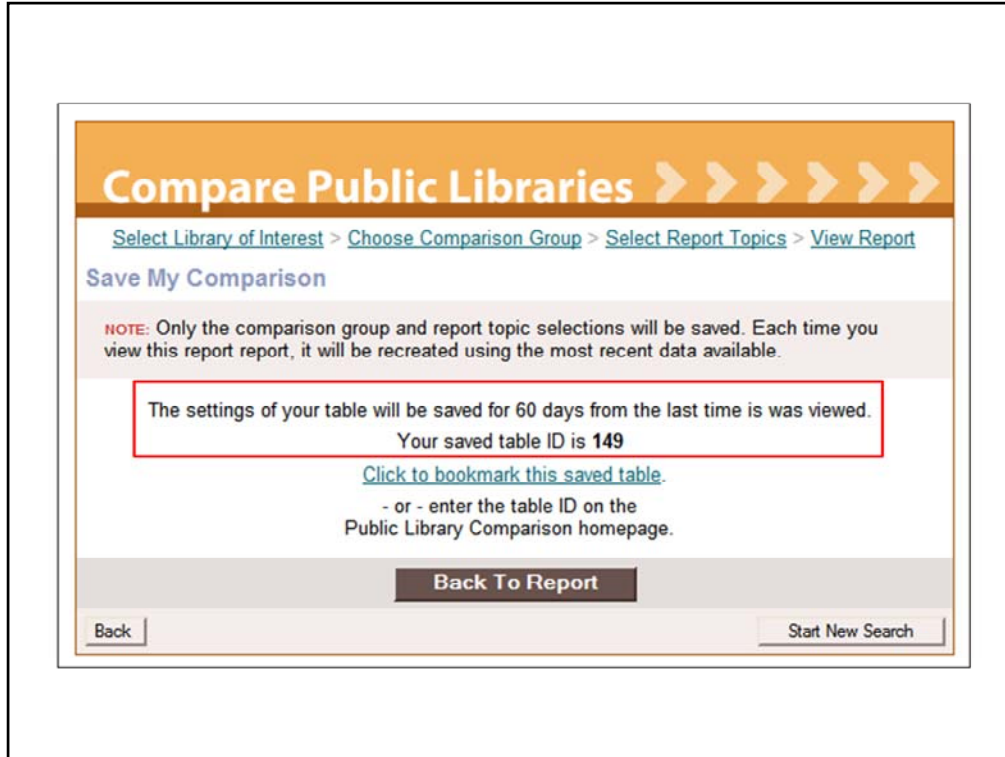
Data from Public Libraries Survey Fiscal Year: 2006

The file contains (19) records based on your search.

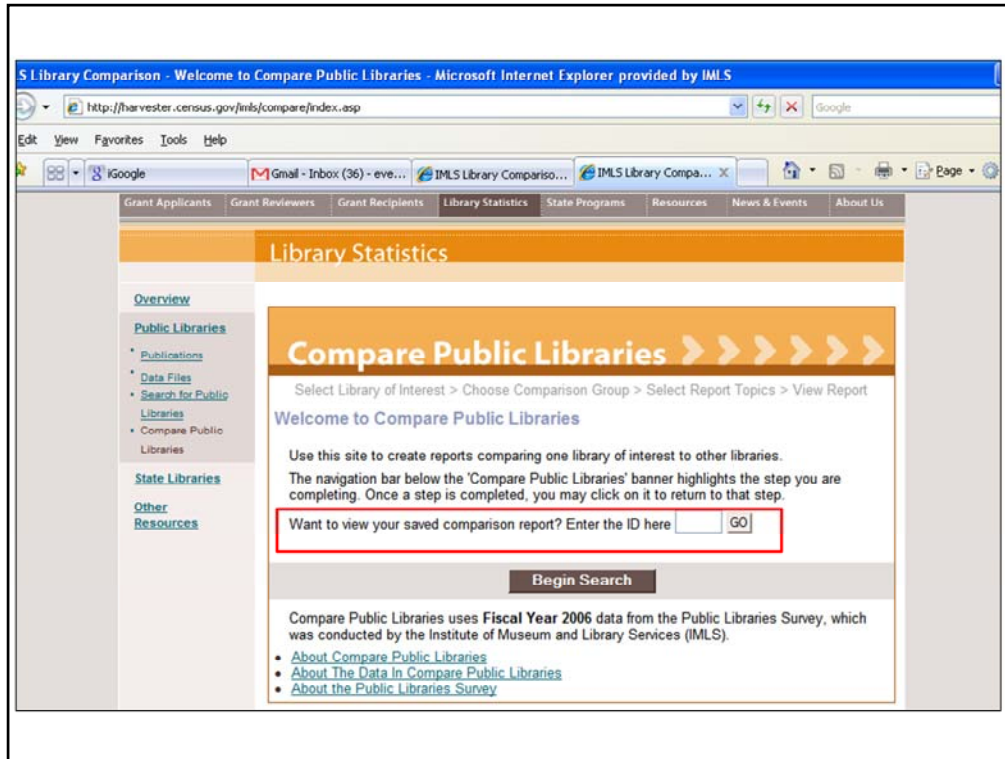
IMLS is not responsible for the manner in which these data are presented. These data are provided as an extra service to the user. To download full Public Libraries datasets, please go to the Public Libraries homepage: <http://nces.ed.gov/>

Library Name	Total Circulation	Total Librarians	Current Electronic Serial Subscriptions	Number of Public Internet Terminals	State	County
Comparison Group Average	1,310,353	30	3	162	N/A	N/A
State Average (LA)	263,783	12	1	56	N/A	N/A
National Average	234,516	5	7	22	N/A	N/A
Comparison Group Median	999,536	26	0	142	N/A	N/A
State Median (LA)	118,580	3	0	27	N/A	N/A
National Median	44,587	2	0	7	N/A	N/A
NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY (Library of Interest)	235,447	N/A	0	120	Louisiana	ORLEANS
LOUDOUN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY, VA	3,942,444	50	0	42	Virginia	LOUDOUN
ALACHUA COUNTY LIBRARY DISTRICT, FL	2,848,398	58	0	170	Florida	ALACHUA
FLINT RIVER REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM, GA	2,110,453	20	5	176	Georgia	SPALDING
CHESAPEAKE PUBLIC LIBRARY, VA	1,956,559	28	0	178	Virginia	CHESAPEAKE
LEXINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM, SC	1,780,437	26	3	117	South Carolina	LEXINGTON
ASHEVILLE-BUNCOMBE LIBRARY SYSTEM, NC	1,471,860	14	0	125	North Carolina	BUNCOMBE
DURHAM COUNTY LIBRARY, NC	1,359,711	39	0	105	North Carolina	DURHAM
SHREVE MEMORIAL, LA	1,236,098	48	0	433	Louisiana	CADDO
MIDDLE GEORGIA REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM, GA	1,224,497	19	1	181	Georgia	BIBB
SEQUOYAH REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM, GA	999,536	6	3	225	Georgia	CHEROKEE

This is the output we get when we export our report into Excel.



This is the screen that you are brought to when you click on the "Save Comparison Report" option at the View Report screen. Your report settings are assigned a table ID - be sure to write this down. The settings will be saved for 60 days since the last time your table was viewed.



Access your saved report by entering your assigned table ID in the highlighted box on the **Compare Public Libraries** homepage:

<http://harvester.census.gov/imls/compare/index.asp>