



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

August 31, 2001

Dear State Librarian:

As you are well aware, The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) has been working in consultation with the FSCS Steering Committee, the COSLA representatives, the U.S. Census Bureau (the data collection agent), and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) staff to improve the timeliness issues with the Public Libraries Survey (PLS). In fact, a plan was developed and shared with State Data Coordinators that had the following goals:

- Meet the needs of states, accommodating three fiscal year cycles;
- Meet the needs of Census, promoting data submission on a flow basis; and
- Meet the timeliness requirements set out by NCES to improve the Library Statistics Program through timelier reporting and publishing of library data and related publications.

Meeting the Needs of States

The plan proposed a very optimistic goal: The fiscal year (FY) 2001 PLS would have a mail-out date of November 15, 2001, a data collection close-out date of May 31, 2002, and release of the data file and survey report in January 2003. However, several states indicated they would experience major hardships in meeting the close-out date. Therefore, to enable full participation by the states, we have extended the close-out date to **July 31** for the FY 2001 (and FY 2002) PLS. The revised plan also means the data file and survey report will be delayed two months. **We are still proposing a November mail-out/May close-out/January data release for FY 2003 PLS and beyond. (However, we have not given up on having future data releases within the same calendar year as data were collected.) We will work with the “hardship” states in order to meet this goal.**

No changes will be made to the content of the FY 2001 PLS in order to reduce the burden on the states, the FSCS Steering Committee, NCES, and Census during the transition to the new data collection cycle. The training workshop for state data coordinators will be held in December this year, to accommodate the new schedule.

Meeting the Needs of Census

Also, as of the FY 2001 PLS, states have been placed into one of two reporting groups, based on their fiscal cycles, in order to stagger data submissions and thus enable timelier processing of the data by Census and NCES. (See following tables.) The survey due date is April 15 for Group #1 states and July 31 for Group #2 states. These are firm due dates—no extensions will be granted.

State Reporting Groups

Reporting group and fiscal cycle	States and U.S. territories	Number of states and territories
Group #1 (July–June)	AK, AZ, CA, CT, DE, GA, HI, IA, IL, KY, MA, MD, MT, NC, NM, NV, OK, OR, RI, SC, TN, VA, WV, WY	24
Group #2 (October–September, January–December)	AL, AR, CO, DC, FL, ID, IN, KS, LA, ME, MI, MN, MO MS, ND, NE, NJ, NH, NY, OH, PA, SD, TX, UT, VT, WA, WI, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands	31

Meeting the Standards of NCES

The following table presents the key dates in the collection and publication process for the FY 2001 PLS. States may begin reporting anytime after data collection begins in November 2001, regardless of their reporting group, and they are encouraged to do so. However, states should NOT report early if it adversely impacts their response rate. It is important that states make every effort to get a complete response from all libraries. If the number of libraries responding to an item is not at least 70 percent of the total number of libraries in your state, the data will not be included in the survey report in your state total, and a notation will appear in the report explaining the suppression of the data for your state due to failure to meet NCES statistical standards. As has been done in the past, data will be estimated for libraries that do not report any data or that leave some items blank, using existing imputation methods.

FY 2001 PLS Schedule

Reporting group and fiscal cycle	Number of states and territories	Survey mail-out date	Keppel Award date	Survey due date	Survey report and data file release date
Group #1 (July 2000–June 2001)	24	November 15, 2001	March 15, 2002	April 15, 2002	March 31, 2003
Group #2 (October 2000–September 2001)	12	November 15, 2001	June 30, 2002	July 31, 2002	
Group #2 (January 2001–December 2001)	19	November 15, 2001	June 30, 2002	July 31, 2002	

Future Plans

NCES is investigating developing a display tool to provide access to the unedited data on a flow basis to states as they submit their data. This model is currently in use with other NCES survey data. Edited un-imputed public library data will continue to be made available in the Peer Comparison Tool.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Owings
Associate Commissioner
Elementary/Secondary and Libraries
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cc: State Data Coordinator