



CHIEF OFFICERS OF STATE LIBRARY AGENCIES

201 East Main Street, Suite 1405 | Lexington, KY 40507 | Phone: 859-514-9166 | www.cosla.org

October 7, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Giuliana Bullard, IMLS, 202-653-4799

gbullard@imls.gov

Timothy Cherubini, COSLA, 859-514-9826

tcherubini@cosla.org

IMLS and COSLA Announce Project to develop Public Library Data and Outcomes Action Plan
*“Measures that Matter” seeks broad input to improve ability to tell
public library value through data*

Washington, D.C. – The [Institute of Museum and Library Services](http://www.imls.gov) (IMLS) and the [Chief Officers of State Library Agencies](http://www.cosla.org) (COSLA) have begun a project to examine, evaluate, and map the landscape of public library data collection in the United States. The Measures that Matter project will develop a Library Data and Outcomes Action Plan with key library stakeholder groups for a more coordinated approach to the collection of public library data nationally. The project’s ultimate goal is to effect a framework within which outcomes, outputs, and indicators can be drawn upon to consistently and effectively demonstrate the role, value, and impact of public libraries.

Thousands of public libraries diligently contribute to data collection efforts each year. While the value of data collection to measure library impact is broadly recognized, concerns have emerged about the proliferation of surveys in recent years. There is a lack of coordination between collecting organizations, resulting in a greater burden for local libraries, duplication of efforts, and uncertainty about the sustainability and long-term access to data.

Measures that Matter is a first step aimed at building bridges between data collection activities of various organizations. It will engage broadly with the library field and promote a greater understanding of the issues related to library data. And it will help ensure that data collected reflects the 21st century library.

“The authorizing statute of the Institute of Museum and Library Services directs us to take an active role in library research and data collection, and as administrator of the Public Library Survey, IMLS is responsible for the most comprehensive annual library collection effort in the country,” said IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew. “Our survey is only one piece of the puzzle, however. Until we have better coordination and planning among all data collecting organizations, there will be information gaps and shortcomings. We are delighted to be working with COSLA on the Measures that Matter project and expect it will lead to more timely and relevant data so that we may all tell the story of the value of public libraries in the United States.

“Measures that Matter will only succeed with broad participation from the field,” said COSLA President and Connecticut State Librarian Kendall Wiggan. “COSLA does not have all of the answers, but we are pleased to be in a position with IMLS support to mobilize library practitioners, state library agency staff, data experts from inside and outside the field, professional associations, researchers, funders, and the public. We have the opportunity to rethink the landscape of public library data collection and enact better practices that will better serve us well into the future.”

“Measures that Matter” will bring the field together in dialog around current important issues of data. It will produce an element-based review of current data collection efforts that results in a “data map”; a series of webinars for library practitioners and the larger library community about library data; and a spring summit featuring components of a public library data and outcomes action plan.

For periodic updates about the project by email, join the [COSLA Measures that Matter email list](#) and check the COSLA website: <http://www.cosla.org>.

The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** is celebrating its 20th Anniversary. IMLS is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s [123,000 libraries](#) and [35,000 museums](#). Our mission has been to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. For the past 20 years, our grant making, policy development, and research has helped libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit [IMLS at 20](#) (www.imls.gov) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) is an independent organization of the chief officers of state and territorial agencies designated as the state library administrative agency and responsible for statewide library development. COSLA’s reach extends to every public library in the United States. Its members are leaders in the library field and collectively bring the perspective of 53 states and territories to bear on ideas, strategies, and practices. COSLA’s purpose is to provide leadership on issues of common concern and national interest; to further state library agency relationships with federal government and national organizations; and to initiate cooperative action for the improvement of library services to the people of the United States. Visit www.cosla.org and follow us on Twitter [@COSLA_US](#).