



LOUISVILLE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

EQUITY AUDIT 2023

Louisville Free Public Library Equity Audit 2023

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Introduction

In 2021, The Louisville Free Public Library joined other Louisville-Jefferson County Metro agencies in creating an Equity Vision Statement. The intent of this statement is to focus the Library's equity efforts and achieve measurable improvements in how each of our patrons is treated, regardless of their socio-economic status, race, gender, and cultural diversity.



Our Equity Vision Statement

The Louisville Free Public Library supports and continues to enhance diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging within our diverse collections, inclusive programming, and equitable services provided to all members of our community. The library also makes diversity and inclusion a priority in planning and decision-making for staffing, collections, services, and organizational change.

The purpose of this Equity Audit is to better understand the current status of our library system and identify areas of needed adjustment. Driven by an awareness of Louisville's history of segregation and redlining, it quantifies the allocation of resources by branch, with the understanding that each branch represents a unique neighborhood with unique needs. It also describes the results of a collection audit conducted in 2022, which was a deep-dive into the diversity of the books, magazines, DVDs, and other items in our collection to determine the extent to which the collection reflects the diversity of our service area. It then looks at the demographic makeup of the Library's staff to identify areas where representation of the full scope of our community may not be represented satisfactorily. Steps already being taken to raise awareness of equity issues across the enterprise are described. Finally, the audit ends with a list of recommendations to address the inequities discovered throughout the process.

Each of these items together helps describe the current state of equity, inclusion, and diversity in our system.





Section 1: Resources and Facilities

Branch Comparisons

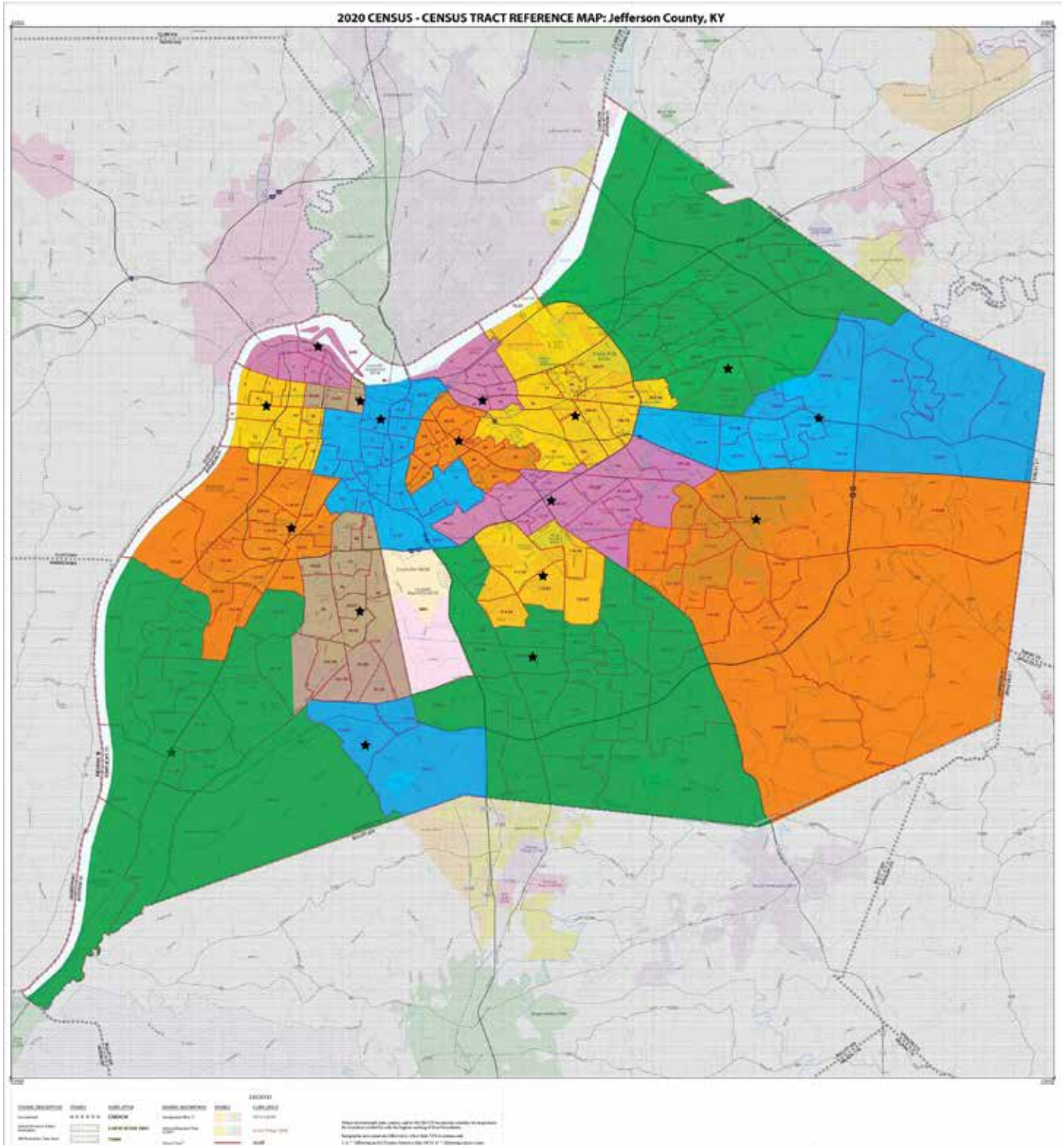
The Branch Comparisons Report evaluates the allocation of physical resources across the community – how well is each location equipped to serve the population of its service area. Metrics examined include: items per capita, square feet per capita, population per public PC, population per public staff full-time equivalent (FTE), circulation per capita, hours open per week, and the ratio of population to program offerings. Comparing the allocation of resources leads to identification of areas where inequities exist.

Service Area Populations

Branch service areas are defined by identifying census tract and usage information. A map of the service areas is available on the following page.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	SERVICE AREA POPULATION
1	South Central Regional	121,144
2	Northeast Regional	94,327
3	Southwest Regional	86,980
4	Bon Air	58,328
5	Jeffersontown	56,895
6	Main	54,187
7	Iroquois	50,725
8	Middletown	42,851
9	Shively	40,875
10	Highlands-Shelby Park	34,223
11	St. Matthews	29,197
12	Shawnee	28,413
13	Newburg	17,820
14	Crescent Hill	14,819
15	Portland	14,490
16	Fairdale	9,533
17	Western	7,744

Service Area Map



Items Per Capita

Items per capita describes the total number of items in a branch's collection, divided by the population in the branch's service area.

LFPL's total items per capita is 2.07, which places it thirteenth out of sixteen peer cities.¹ Having a sufficient number of items ensures that patrons are able to find the resources they need and have shorter wait times.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	ITEMS PER CAPITA
1	Main	6.96
2	Crescent Hill	3.45
3	Western	3.30
4	Fairdale	2.86
5	St. Matthews	2.85
6	Southwest Regional	1.61
7	Highlands-Shelby Park	1.60
8	Northeast Regional	1.57
9	Newburg	1.51
10	Bon Air	1.46
11	Shawnee	1.29
12	Iroquois	1.19
13	South Central Regional	1.17
14	Jeffersontown	1.15
15	Portland	1.11
16	Middletown	0.91
17	Shively	0.69

While it is possible for patrons to request books from other LFPL locations, this process takes multiple days and can be a burden on the patron. Some branches are limited in their ability to grow their collections based on physical space restrictions in the building. This is the case for Portland, which is currently being renovated to add additional space. The St. Matthews and Shively libraries share their buildings with their respective local municipal city governments.

¹ Cleveland, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Toledo, St. Louis County, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Dayton, Nashville, Memphis, Lexington, Columbus, Atlanta, Charlotte, Cuyahoga County.



Square Footage Per Capita

Square footage per capita measures the square footage of each branch divided by the population living in the branch's service area. For counties with populations over 25,000, *Kentucky Public Library Standards*, 6th Edition, defines three levels of standards compliance for this metric: Essential = 0.6 sf per capita; Enhanced = 0.8 sf per capita; and Exemplary = 1 sf per capita. The Library as a whole fails to meet the minimum standard, and only five locations meet the standard for their specific service area.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	SQ. FT. PER CAPITA
1	Main	3.08
2	Fairdale	0.80
3	Western	0.77
4	Crescent Hill	0.69
5	St. Matthews	0.65
6	Newburg	0.46
7	Southwest Regional	0.45
8	Portland	0.41
9	Northeast Regional	0.38
10	Shawnee	0.35
11	Highlands-Shelby Park	0.33
12	South Central Regional	0.32
13	Bon Air	0.31
14	Iroquois	0.30
15	Jeffersontown	0.19
16	Middletown	0.12
17	Shively	0.08



Population Per Public Computer

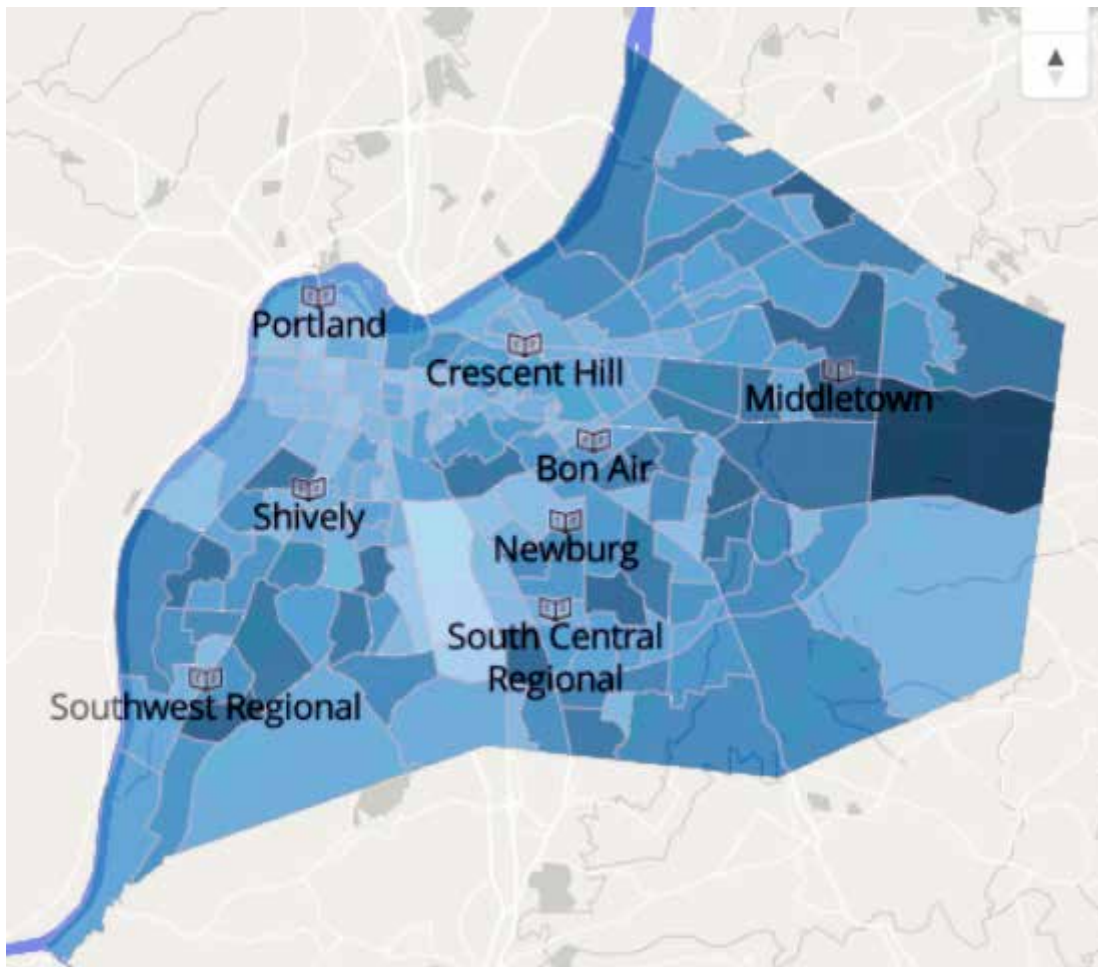
Population per public computer describes the service area population divided by the number of public computers that are available at each branch. These count only regular-use computers, not special-use laptops.² A lower number indicates that the branch has fewer people per computer, and is better able to meet that population's needs. A higher number indicates that there are more people per computer at the library.

The system-wide measure for Population Per Public PC is 969:1 (649 computers for 628,594 people).

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	POPULATION PER PUBLIC PC	NUMBER OF PUBLIC PCs
1	Western	277	28
2	Fairdale	329	29
3	Main	542	100
4	Newburg	557	32
5	Shawnee	661	44
6	St. Matthews	749	39
7	Highlands-Shelby Park	835	41
8	Portland	966	15
9	Iroquois	975	52
10	Crescent Hill	988	15
11	Southwest Regional	1,279	81
12	Bon Air	1,496	39
13	Northeast Regional	1,626	58
14	Shively	1,635	25
15	Middletown	1,948	22
16	Jeffersontown	1,962	29
17	South Central Regional	2,203	55

² Regional branches have additional laptops available for use in classes. These laptops are not otherwise regularly available to the public.

Home Internet by Census Tract



The map above shows access to home internet by census tract. The darker shaded areas indicate a higher percentage of households with access to home internet. Western, Fairdale, and Main, the branches with the best person-to-computer ratio, are also in the areas of the city with the least access to the internet. While Middletown and South Central have worse person-to-computer ratios, they also are located in areas of the city with high amounts of home internet access. This suggests that it is less important to concentrate computer resources there.

Population Per Public Staff FTE

The population per public staff FTE describes the service area population divided by the Full-Time Staff Equivalents at each branch. These can fluctuate based on whether or not all positions are filled. These totals reflect the number of positions that provide library services directly to the public. They do not include staff that are in non-public-facing roles, such as IT and Business Office staff.

A lower Population Per Public Staff number means that there are more staff people available to address the needs of the patrons and the community. The median among Louisville's peer cities is 1,652.29.

LFPL's system-wide Population Per Public Staff is 2,776. This places Louisville in fourteenth place out of sixteen peer cities in our annual Benchmark Cities Report. Per the table below, only three of LFPL's branches fall below the median of our peer cities, suggesting that the branches who are above the median need additional staffing resources.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	POPULATION PER PUBLIC STAFF FTE
1	Fairdale	829
2	Jeffersontown	1,211
3	Western	1,291
Peer City Median: 1,652.29		
4	Shively	2,096
5	Portland	2,415
6	Crescent Hill	2,470
7	Newburg	2,546
8	St. Matthews	2,781
9	Highlands-Shelby Park	2,976
10	Shawnee	3,343
11	Northeast Regional	4,288
12	Middletown	4,511
13	Main	4,712
14	Iroquois	4,831
15	Bon Air	5,555
16	Southwest Regional	5,612
17	South Central Regional	7,342



Circulation Per Capita

Circulation per capita refers to the number of items circulated, divided by the service area of the branch. Items can be circulated by any patron, not just those who reside in the branch's service area. Items that can be circulated include books, CDs, DVDs, magazines, board games, and other material types.

LFPL's total circulation per capita is 4.00, placing it thirteenth out of sixteen peer cities. The median among peer cities is 7.73.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	CIRCULATION PER CAPITA
1	Main	20.654
2	St. Matthews	11.561
3	Crescent Hill	9.584
Peer City Median: 7.73		
4	Northeast Regional	6.078
5	Highlands-Shelby Park	3.675
6	Jeffersontown	3.651
7	Fairdale	3.168
8	Bon Air	2.342
9	South Central Regional	1.557
10	Iroquois	1.557
11	Southwest Regional	1.478
12	Middletown	1.459
13	Western	1.057
14	Newburg	0.661
15	Portland	0.659
16	Shively	0.634
17	Shawnee	0.613



Hours Open Per Week

Kentucky Public Library Standards defines Essential Service Hours as 64 hours per week for populations greater than 75,000 people. Only five of LFPL's branches meet this criterion for Essential Service Hours.

Portland and Western, two of the branches open the fewest hours, are located in Louisville's west end, which has historically experienced economic disinvestment.

BRANCH NAME	HOURS OPEN PER WEEK
Main	68
Bon Air	68
Northeast Regional	68
South Central Regional	68
Southwest Regional	68
Crescent Hill	58
Highlands-Shelby Park	58
Iroquois	58
Jeffersontown	58
Middletown	58
Newburg	58
St. Matthews	58
Shawnee	58
Shively	58
Fairdale	48
Portland	48
Western	48



Population Per Programs Offered

Population per programs offered refers to the number of programs that were offered between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023, divided by the branch's service area population. This refers to in-person programs hosted at the branch, for both adult and juvenile audiences.

RANKING	BRANCH NAME	POPULATION PER PROGRAMS OFFERED
1	Western	14
2	Fairdale	25
3	Main Library	43
4	Crescent Hill	50
5	Highlands-Shelby Park	66
6	Newburg	66
7	St. Matthews	71
8	Northeast	76
9	Iroquois	80
10	Portland	85
11	Southwest	97
12	Shawnee	126
13	Middletown	135
14	South Central	139
15	Jeffersontown	173
16	Shively	301
17	Bon Air	384

With the exception of Bon Air, the branch libraries that offered the fewest programs relative to their populations are the branches with the highest population service areas.



Section 2: Collection Audit

A collection equity audit was completed by LFPL between May 10, 2022 and August 18, 2022. LFPL used a methodology outlined by Karen Jensen, a professional librarian and author of “Diversity Auditing 101: How to Evaluate Your Collection,” published in the *School Library Journal* in 2018.³

Jensen’s method identifies works which feature “Own Voices” writing; or books that feature characters written by authors who share their same racial identities. Featuring “Own Voices” is intended to decrease stereotypes by having storytellers share their own experiences. Furthermore, by only counting main characters, the count is less likely to be skewed by “token” characters who have little depth or relevance, but were added to meet a quota or show a facade of diversity.

As of May 1, 2022, LFPL’s collection had 1,633,097 items, not including items that were In-Process, Missing, On-Order, or Withdrawn.⁴ We determined that a sample size with a 95% confidence level would require 385 items. We audited a collection of 394 items with the expectation that nine of them may be missing or otherwise unable to read. The collection was assigned to eleven different readers within the LFPL system, ten of whom are also book selectors. Each of these readers was asked to identify the race, gender, disability status, and LGBTQ identities of the author or artist of the item, as well as of the main characters.

After this audit, the data was compiled and compared against the various identities of Louisvillians as identified in the 2020 census. The goal of this exercise was to determine whether LFPL’s collection is representative of the diverse identities represented in Louisville Metro; and if not, to encourage book selectors to fill in the gaps.

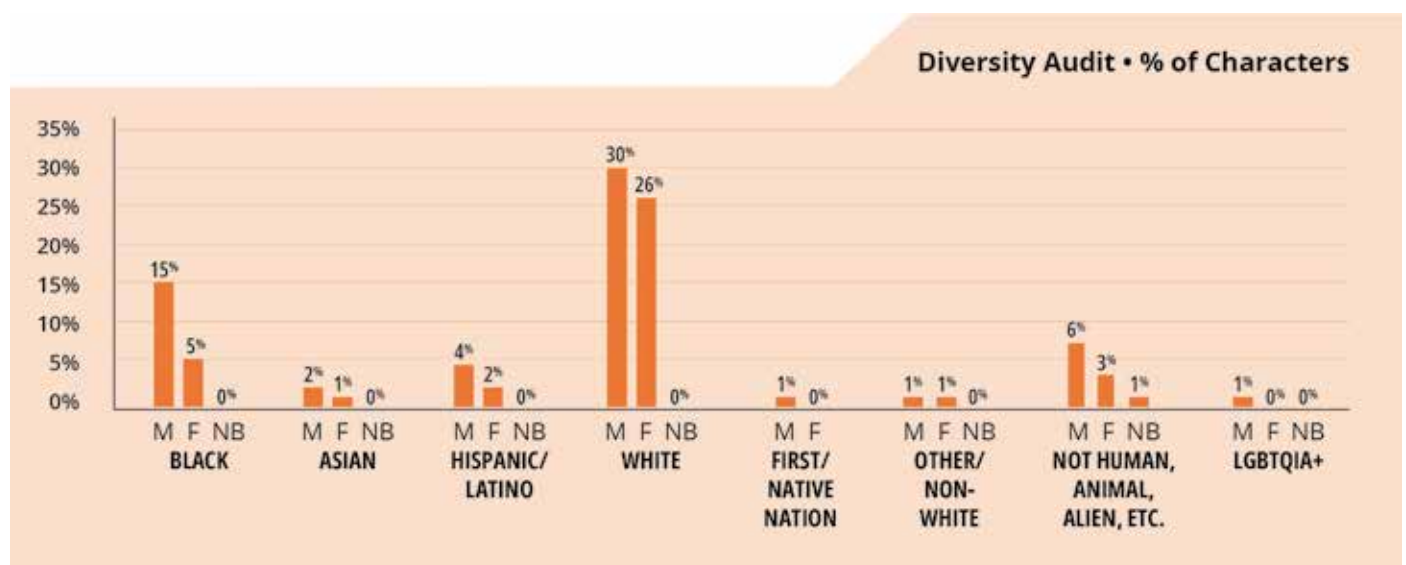
³ <https://www.slj.com/story/diversity-auditing-101-how-to-evaluate-collection>

⁴ In process – Items have been purchased and received by the library, but are not yet available to patrons.
Missing- Items that are not showing as checked out, but which cannot be found on the shelf.
On-order – Items that have been ordered, but have not yet been received by the library.
Withdrawn – Items that have been removed from the collection, but not yet deleted from the database.

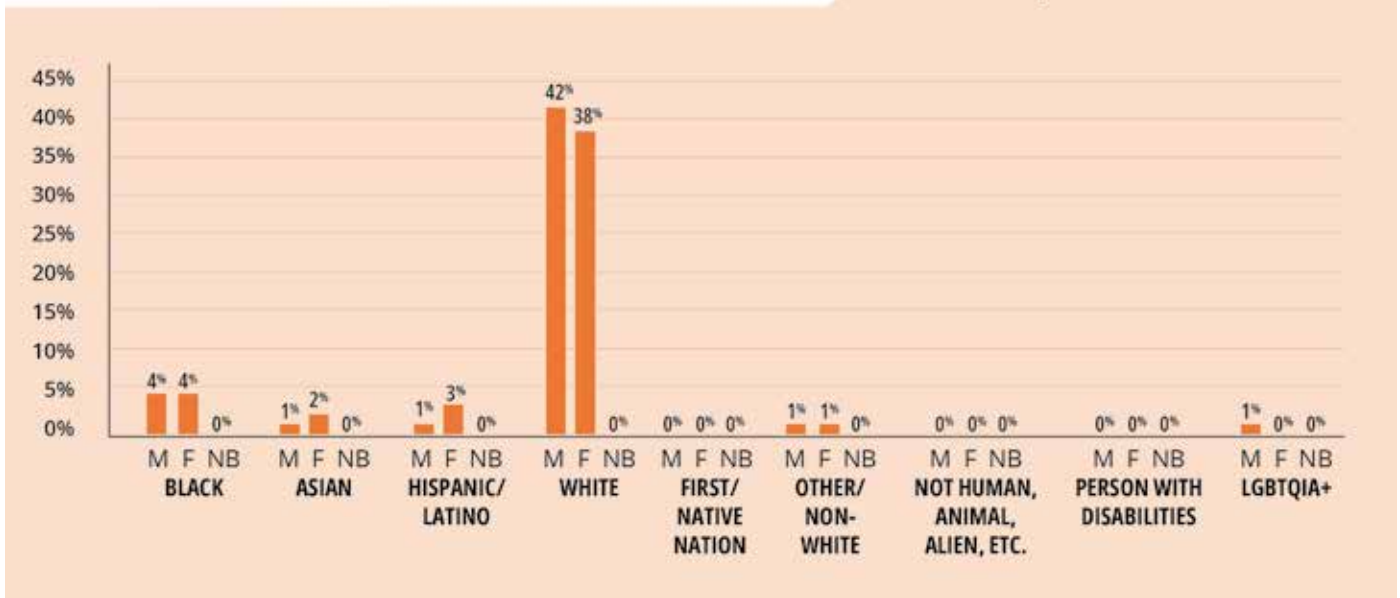
As displayed in the table below, the audit revealed that the large majority of both authors and characters in LFPL's collection are White men and women. 58% of characters and 81% of authors or creators were identified as White. While this does show a strong bias, it also aligns with the demographics of the city, where 65% of residents identify as White. Meanwhile, 20% of characters and 9% of authors were identified as Black, compared with the 23% of Black residents of Louisville. Asian, Latino, and First Nation titles show similar trends, showing that the percentage of characters aligns with the population percentage in Louisville, but the percentage of authors is lower.

	LOUISVILLE METRO POPULATION	MAIN CHARACTERS	AUTHOR OR CREATOR
White alone, percent	68.3%	56%	80%
Black or African American alone	24%	20%	8%
American Indian & Alaska Native	0.10%	1%	0%
Asian	2.7%	2.7%	2.7%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.10%	n/a	n/a
Two or more races	3.5%	n/a	n/a
Hispanic or Latino	6.1%	6%	4%

The visualizations below and on the next page demonstrate just how large the gap is between White authors and characters, and every other group within in the collection. In these charts, M = Male, F= Female, and NB = Non-binary.



Diversity Audit • % of Authors



These numbers suggest that Louisvillians are likely to find representation of a character who looks like or identifies like them in our collection. However, that character is less likely to be written or produced by someone like them, who is writing in their “Own Voice.” Going forward, LFPL can focus on acquiring more items written, produced, created, and sung by non-White creators, creators who identify as LGBTQ, and creators with disabilities.

The US Census does not collect data on LGBTQ identity. UCLA’s Williams Institute of Law conducted a nationwide Gallup survey in March 2021 to better understand where people with these identities live.⁵ According to the survey, Louisville has a 4.2% LGBTQ population. Meanwhile, both the percentage of authors and percentage of characters in LFPL’s collection were only 1%. Characters with physical and mental disabilities make up less than 1% of the characters in the collection. LFPL selectors can be more cognizant of including stories written by and about people who identify as LGBTQ, and people with disabilities.

Throughout the process we recognized multiple downsides to the Karen Jensen approach. By only counting the authors and characters, we were unable to capture diversity in settings and themes. This will be addressed in future versions of the audit.

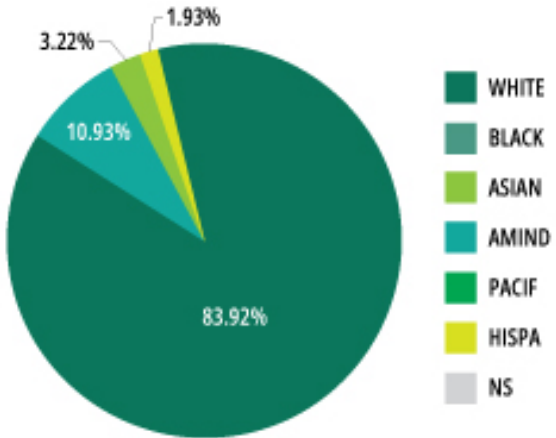
⁵ https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/MSA_Kentucky_Louisville.pdf



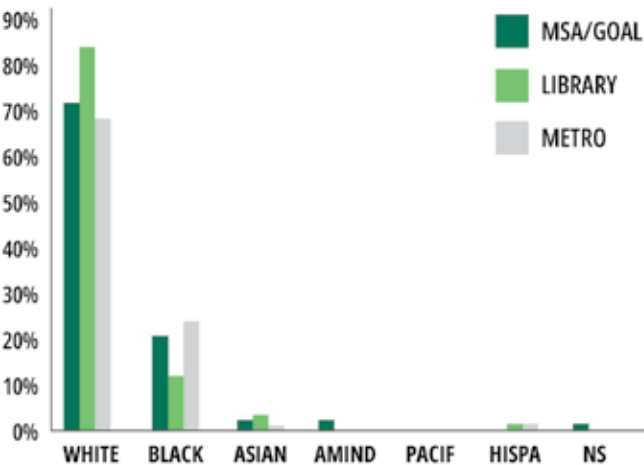
Section 3: Staff Diversity

Louisville Metro Government’s Human Resources Department provided LFPL with the information below regarding the racial diversity of our staff. Currently, the only available information identifying race comes from employee driver’s licenses. The categories available for people to identify as are limited to “Black, White, Asian, and Hispanic.” These narrow categorizations do not allow for the full spectrum of racial identities within the LFPL system. With improvements in the way that racial identity is tracked, staff could self-identify their race and choose from a broader range of options, giving us the opportunity to have more accurate employee information.⁶ However, staff are not required to self-identify, meaning that the data set may be incomplete. It should also be noted that while this list is expanded, it still does not represent every possible group. For example, East Asian people are still counted within the same group as South Asians, even though those groups are from different regions and cultures.

Library Diversity



Library Diversity

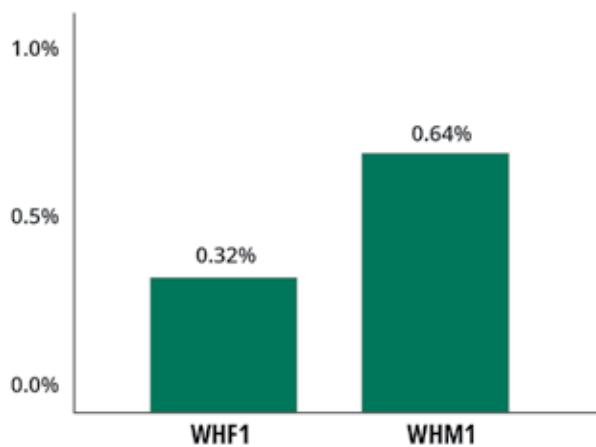


⁶ American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, I do not wish to answer, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Other Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, and White

The information that we currently have tells us that the majority of our library staff at every level is White, and that there are more women in our system than men. This coincides with national trends for library employees. The American Library Association's Member Demographics Survey identifies 81% of members as female, and 87% of members as White.

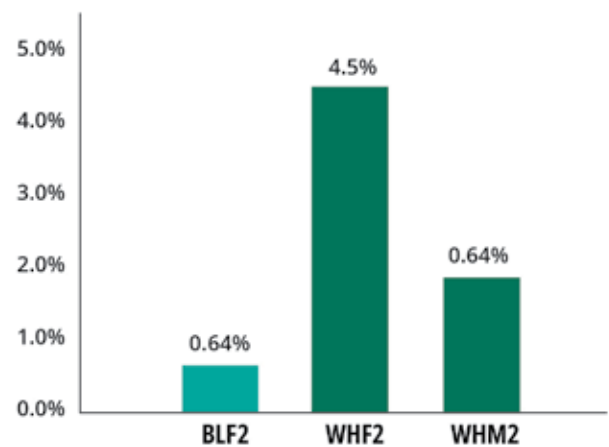
LFPL's staff is currently 84% White. The MSA identified in the figure on the previous page is the Louisville Metro Statistical Area. It serves as the department's benchmark for evaluating the diversity of our staff.

Administration (.96%)



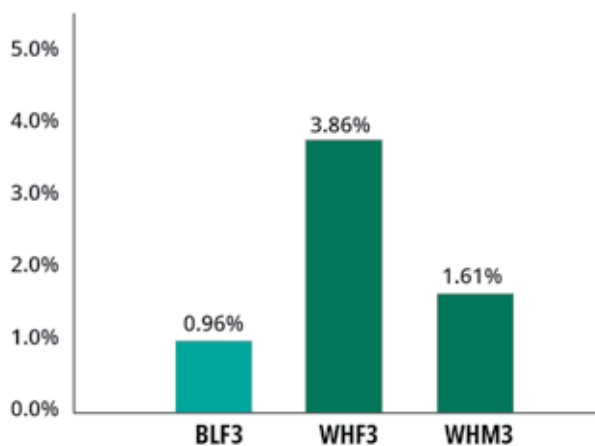
Administration includes Chiefs, Directors, Asst. Directors, etc.

Manager & Non-Front-Line Supervisors (7.4%)



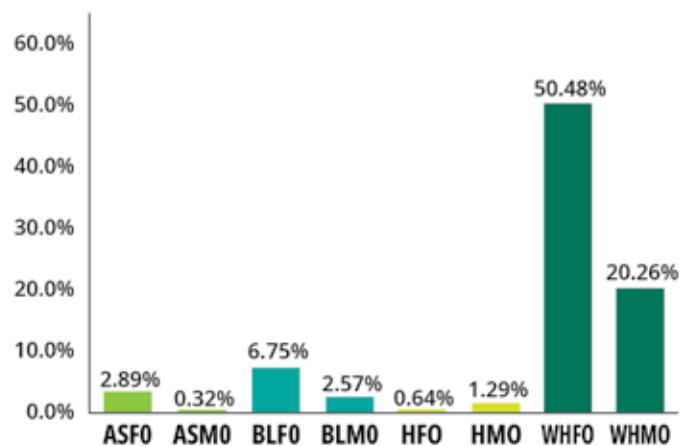
Managers and non-front-line supervisors include those managers that have other managers and/or supervisors as their direct subordinates.

Front-Line Supervisors (6.43%)



Front-line supervisors are those that have non-supervisory employees as their direct subordinates.

Non-Supervisory (85.21%)



All employees without subordinates.



Section 4: Racial Equity Toolkits & Programming

Library programs should be accessible to everyone in the community. Beginning in the second quarter of FY21-22, LFPL instituted the use of the Racial Equity Toolkit for all of the programs created by the Library. The Equity Tool Worksheet is intended to be used during the creation of programming in order for staff to systematically think through the intended audience of the program, and the possible effects that the program could have on racial equity. It is designed to help uncover unconscious biases and help employees to consider points of view that are different from their own.

After one year in use, the Manager of Equity Assessment issued a survey to users of the toolkit to get feedback about how the toolkit was working for them. While some of the feedback was positive, other feedback indicated that the Racial Equity Toolkit is not intersectional enough. The next phase of using the toolkit will be to expand it to include the consideration of gender, religious, and cultural identity, as well as neurological differences and more.



Conclusions and What's Next

The findings of the audit indicate a need for deliberate and thoughtful adjustment of resource allocation in some areas. While some solutions may be quickly implemented, such as a greater emphasis on acquiring a more diverse collection of books and other materials, other solutions, such as resolving inequities in square footage per capita, will require more planning and investment.

Resources and Facilities

- Inequitable distribution of library space across the service area is one of the most pressing issues identified in this study. There is a huge difference between the size of the service areas of the different locations. And the locations that serve some of the most economically challenged neighborhoods in Louisville fall far below state standards. Plans to expand Portland and reopen Parkland are underway. But additional resources are also needed to serve neighborhoods including Shively and Shelby Park.
- The materials collection is inadequate system-wide. This results in some titles simply not being available to the community, while others are available only after a lengthy wait for a reserved copy. The relationship between square footage per capita and items per capita aggravates the situation. For example, there is simply not space in the existing Shively Library for additional materials needed to close the gap between what is available and what is needed to serve the community.
- The need for adequate technology to serve communities with reportedly low levels of home broadband access is a better picture, owing to significant investment in support of the Library's work to bridge the digital divide. But locations like Shively and South Central, both in areas with relatively low broadband adoption, could benefit from additional technology resources.
- Staff to patron ratios system-wide are widely divergent. On the low end, Fairdale has one staff person for every 829 residents. On the high end, South Central has one staff person for every 7,342 residents. Fourteen of seventeen locations are above the peer city median. And some of the locations with the highest numbers of children at risk for falling behind their classmates in reading skills and other measures of school success are significantly behind these benchmarks, including Newburg, Shawnee, Highlands-Shelby Park, Iroquois, and Bon Air.

- Circulation is a historic measure of the effectiveness of a public library. Reading ability is a key indicator of potential future success. The importance of lifelong learning for staying competitive in a rapidly changing job market is self-evident. As a whole, our system circulates just over half the number of items, per capita, as our regional peers. This is related to several factors documented by this study. One of the most critical is the lack of space to shelve additional materials, compounded by a materials budget that also trails that of our peers.
- In terms of open hours per week, the branches that are open for the fewest hours are disproportionately located in west Louisville. LFPL should work towards standardizing the hours that branches are open and available for patron use. Smaller branches open fewer hours in neighborhoods with the greatest need for support for school readiness, academic success, and job skills development is the single most significant issue identified by our equity audit work.

Collection Audit

- The materials collection represents a majority of White male and female authors. While this majority coincides with the majority of White citizens in the community, some gaps have been identified in the demographic appropriateness of the collection. Two findings in particular require attention: LFPL has fewer than 1% of its collection written by or about people who identify as LGBTQ despite 4.6% of Louisvillians identifying as such; fewer than 1% of the collection is written by or about people with physical or mental disabilities. LFPL book selectors can place an emphasis on purchasing books written by and about these identities in order to create a more equitable collection.

Staff Diversity

- The staff as a whole should better reflect the diversity of the community, which is understood to be a critical factor in public libraries being welcoming places for everyone.
- The lack of representation is more evident in management and leadership positions. These positions routinely require a master's degree in library science, and the challenges of recruiting a diverse leadership team in a public library setting have been well-documented.
- Previous work on this topic has identified barriers that include a lack of entry-level positions and a lack of diverse candidates for existing positions.

Programming

- Programming at the Library requires, first and foremost, adequate staffing. So one would expect to see less programming at the branches where the patron-to-staff ratio is the highest.
- Missing from this study is an examination of how programming dollars are distributed across library locations. Those funds are typically used to hire outside presenters or performers to deliver programming onsite at a library location.
- The use of the Racial Equity Toolkit has helped to improve staff awareness of the implications on racial equity of programming choices. That work has been focused on the programs that are being developed or presented, and in the future will need to focus on gaps in the programming, similarly to how the collection was audited.



Next Steps

- As the library undertakes creation of a new Library Master Facilities Plan beginning in July 2023, the findings of this audit need to be incorporated into any plans for allocation of capital resources across the community.
- Three capital projects that are already underway will help address the inequities that exist in physical library facilities around the city. A reopened library in Parkland, an expanded library in Portland, and a newly built library in Fern Creek will begin the work of closing the gap between Library resources and state standards. But additional work is urgently needed at Shively, Highlands-Shelby Park, and Middletown, three locations which are not on par with the rest of the system in terms of size, resources, and/or staffing.
- Additional operating hours at Fairdale, Western, and Portland would address one longstanding inequity in library operations.
- Staffing levels need to be evaluated to determine whether inequities can be addressed by reallocation of existing staff to different locations or if additional staffing would be required.
- As new strategic goals and initiatives are developed, use of the racial equity toolkit and the inequities identified in this report can aid in selection of metrics to be tracked and in the prioritization of goals and initiatives.
- There are more than 80 languages represented in LFPL's book, magazine, and film collections (cf. <https://www.lojic.org/lfpl-international>). As a next step in providing equitable resources, an audit needs to be conducted on how well we are meeting the needs of non-English and English-as-a-second-language speakers in our community. These findings will guide the ongoing development of the Library's Language Access Policy, a plan now required of all Louisville Metro Departments.
- Library book selectors should place an emphasis on purchasing books written by and about underserved populations in order to continually increase the diversity of the materials collection.
- The Racial Equity Toolkit should be enhanced to be more intersectional. This work can be led by the Library's Manager of Equity Assessment in coordination with the Metro Louisville Office of Equity.
- An analysis of public and private funding for programming at each branch is a necessary next step.
- In order to better represent the Louisville community, LFPL needs to focus on strategies for recruiting from a diversity of backgrounds, as well as on strategies for employee retention. Plans are being developed for a management training program which would make more opportunities for advancement available. The Library is also working with the Library Foundation to relaunch a scholarship program which provides funding for library staff to pursue a master's degree in library and information science. This program was paused during the COVID pandemic and is being rethought now as a means to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates for future vacancies.
- The Library is also partnering with JCPS to serve as a co-op site for JCPS students. This would be an invaluable means of introducing high school students to the career opportunities that the Library presents.
- The Library needs to continue work being done to develop working relationships with library sciences faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities that have an ALA-accredited library sciences program. Outreach

should be expanded to local organizations that work with underserved and marginalized communities, e.g. The Urban League, the Office of Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods, Metro United Way, and more. These entities should be sent LFPL staff openings on a regular basis as they become available in order to connect with communities who may be interested in applying.

- Two new affinity groups were created in the first quarter of FY22-23. One affinity group is for staff who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, or Asexual (LGBTQIA+), and the other is for staff who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Two full-time union staff members volunteered to lead these groups. These groups can work to identify and address root causes of disparities indicated in previous staff engagement surveys in the level of belonging experienced by those who identify with these groups.

Public libraries around the world pride themselves on being places that welcome everyone and work to alleviate the inequities that have long existed in our society. Taking seriously the work indicated by this equity audit is an important step for the Library to be intentional in increasing our impact on building a city that offers the greatest possible opportunities for success to everyone in our community. The action steps prescribed here are only the beginning. It is critical that this work continues to evolve to both widen its reach and increase its depth of evaluation.

