



GUIDE TO

# Library People Counter Systems

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# Guide to Library People Counter Systems



At your library, you serve patrons by providing the programming, resources and space people need to work, learn, have fun and build a community. A library is a valuable space in the community. Patrons without technology at home can use the computers and digital media in your facility that they might otherwise not be able to afford or access. Public, school and university libraries can offer a learning space for people of all backgrounds and ages.

If you want to serve your patrons as effectively as possible, you should understand how they use your facility's services and how you can optimize your operations.

## What Is a Library Counter?

A library counter, or people counter, is an electronic device that counts how many individuals pass through a certain space, such as a library entrance. Our VisiCount software at Traf-Sys separates the numbers by time and entrance, adding other variables like staffing hours, weather conditions and daily special events. The technology used in these counters varies from simple light beams to more complex sensors and cameras.

One of the greatest challenges across industries is measuring how many guests or customers enter a facility during the day. In the retail sector, for example, a

store may want to track how many customers enter. At Traf-Sys, we provide our people counting system to several industries and businesses, including:

- ✓ Libraries
- ✓ Retail stores
- ✓ Casinos
- ✓ Shopping malls
- ✓ Student unions
- ✓ Museums
- ✓ Visitors centers
- ✓ Public sector facilities

## Why Do Libraries Need People Counters?

Many statistics are available about the usage of libraries, but there is little information on how many people actually use the facilities. Since many library resources are digital now and people use them within the facility without checking them out, it can be challenging to determine how many visitors use these resources. This is where library people counters come in.



Since many library resources are digital now and people use them within the facility without checking them out, **it can be challenging to determine how many visitors use these resources.**

A people counter gives your library a way to track who enters and exits the building, allowing your library to keep records and use hard facts to request additional technology. Here are some of the reasons why a people counting system is essential for libraries:

- ✓ **You can make more informed business decisions:** Door counters can allow you to track which entrances and rooms patrons use most and at which times so you can better allocate resources and make informed decisions.
- ✓ **You can keep your library in compliance:** As needed, you need to report statistics to the state and operate within budget restrictions. A people counting solution allows you to gather the necessary information and use this data to show you comply with the state's standards.
- ✓ **You can better make your case for funding:** Budget cuts can lead to reductions in operating hours and staffing, making it difficult for libraries to continue serving the community. With data from a people counter, you can prove your library needs more staff, services, technology or increased hours of operation to serve the people using it properly.

This guide will help you understand how implementing a people counting system can help your library and how you can best leverage the data from this system. You will also learn more about:

- ✓ Using people counters in libraries
- ✓ The modern library
- ✓ Data collection for libraries
- ✓ Solving staffing problems
- ✓ Building a better budget for your library



# Using People Counters in Libraries

Before you decide whether to use a people counter in your library, you should understand the purpose of these systems and the different types of solutions. If you determine that your library needs a people counting system, you can identify the best people counter for libraries, particularly for your facility.

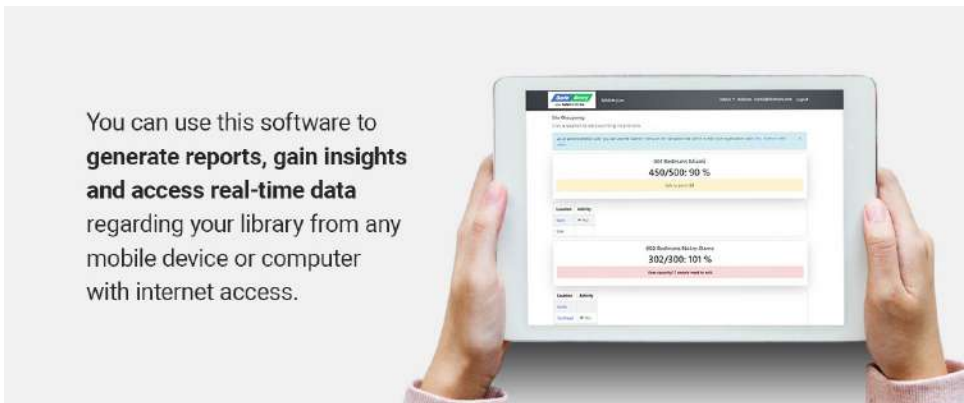
## The Purpose of People Counters

People counters serve several purposes in a library environment, including making more informed decisions, making cases to administration and staying in compliance with regulations and standards. At Traf-Sys, our software is 95% to 99% accurate, so you can use the data confidently. To understand how you can use people counters, you first need to know how these systems work.

At Traf-Sys, our people counters function differently to give you accurate counts depending on the building layout. A horizontal entrance counter, for example, works by counting how many interruptions occur with an infrared sensor. Infrared sensors collect data in a narrow doorway that only a single individual can walk through at a time. On the other hand, overhead counters can provide accurate numbers for open areas and wider doorways. An overhead system counts patrons with video and thermal sensors.

- ✓ **Video sensors:** A video sensor counts people with video footage. This type of sensor may offer better accuracy.
- ✓ **Thermal sensors:** A thermal sensor detects the presence of a person by detecting body heat. With a thermal sensor, you can prioritize patron privacy.

Both types of sensors have unique advantages, so regardless of which system you select for your library, our solutions can help you assess the collected data. You can use this software to generate reports, gain insights and access real-time data regarding your library from any mobile device or computer with internet access.



## Which People Counting System Should You Use?

A few different people counting systems are available, and the right one for your library depends on your needs and preferences. At Traf-Sys, the different types of people counting systems we offer include:

- ✓ **Overhead people beam counters:** As the name suggests, an overhead people counting sensor is mounted to the ceiling before the entrance. Overhead counters are reliable because they can distinguish between moving objects, such as a child versus a cart. Examples of available models include the Gazelle series, the Spectrum series and the Eclipse Video Sensor.

- ✓ **Horizontal people beam counters:** A horizontal beam-type sensor is mounted on each side of a doorway. This type of counter projects a laser beam across an entryway. When a person passes through the beam, the sensor registers that they have entered or exited the doorway. When two people walk through the beam at the same time, the system may only count one person. While these counters tend to be less accurate than an overhead sensor, they are sufficient for many organizations and can be more affordable.
- ✓ **Wired people counters:** A wired network connection is needed for an overhead people counter.
- ✓ **Wireless people counters:** A wireless counter is battery-powered and can be used with a horizontal counter.
- ✓ **Bi-directional people counters:** A bi-directional people counter distinguishes between someone walking in or out.
- ✓ **Uni-directional people counters:** A uni-directional counter does not distinguish between someone walking in or out. With this type of counter, the total traffic each hour is divided by two to calculate the number of visitors.

The type of people counting system that is right for your library will depend on the setup of your entrance and the size of your facility.

- ✓ **Setup of each entrance:** You will need to consider which people counter is the best option for each entry or area. For example, your main entrance may only require a horizontal door counter, while the computer lab or children's area may be better suited to an overhead thermal sensor.
- ✓ **Size of your library:** If you have multiple entrances and areas for which you want to track foot traffic, you may want to install several people counters. For example, you can install a people counter at the entrance, the children's reading section and the audiobook area. These counters will help you pinpoint when the highest number of patrons visit these parts of the library and how you can optimize your staff scheduling accordingly.





If your average visitor count seems to be growing, you can determine when to hire a new staff member.

## Does Your Library Need a People Counting System?

Consider your library's needs to determine whether a people counting system is right for your facility. The following criteria can help you decide if your library needs a people counting system:

- ✓ **Whether you need to optimize staffing:** When you understand your typical foot traffic density, you can optimize your staffing. Plan schedules more efficiently and ensure you have enough staff members to cover duties during the busiest hours and seasons. If your average visitor count seems to be growing, you can determine when to hire a new staff member. For this purpose, a people counting system that offers hourly or real-time data is the best solution.
- ✓ **What level of accuracy your library requires:** If you want a high level of accuracy and precision from your people counters, you may want to opt for overhead counters, especially if you have wide entrances or want to distinguish between objects and people or even adults and children.
- ✓ **What marketing metrics you want to assess:** People counters can help you analyze specific marketing metrics and conversion rates. For example, you may want to evaluate whether a specific promotion has the desired effect.
- ✓ **Whether you need to optimize space utilization:** You may also want to know how many visitors your library gets to certain areas or rooms and which areas are not drawing in as many patrons. You may also want to compare traffic through entrances. With this data, you can better utilize your space and determine whether

you need more room for specific areas. For example, you might find you need more meeting rooms or a larger children's area.

- ✓ **Whether you need your data in real-time, hourly or daily:** In some cases, you may only want a daily count of visitors to your library. If you aren't concerned with off-times or daily peaks, you can choose straightforward hardware. However, an overhead counter or more accurate directional counter may be essential if you want hourly totals. If you want to monitor current occupancy, you need a solution with real-time tracking.
- ✓ **Whether your facility can accommodate wireless or wired solutions:** If you do not want to worry about battery replacement, opt for a wired people counter. For a wired system, you need a 110V power outlet. A wireless solution tends to be more affordable upfront but requires regular battery changes.

## CHAPTER 2:

# The Modern Library



Technology plays a crucial role in the modern library. Today's advanced technology can improve the experience your library offers patrons, so make sure you have the tech you need. By leveraging this technology, you can make more informed decisions.

## How Can We Make the Library Better?

Constant improvements in technology allow for improvements in library spaces, especially in academic libraries that need to accommodate new technology for research and learning. New innovations can improve how library patrons discover content, making it more relevant and accessible. Along with education and research capabilities, the increased accessibility of digital resources will also affect librarians. Library staff may need to learn new skills and use new technology to help patrons use these tools.

Today, people use libraries for more than accessing information. Instead, community members and students are also looking for a space to be more productive. You should also have internet access available so students can get the materials they need.

The modern library is a place where technology creates better experiences for everyone who uses it. Tech has led to changes in library architecture, including

implementing new technology to enable virtual meeting and active learning spaces. In some cases, library patrons' changing needs may require a total overhaul of the space's design.

## Library Technology You Need

Your library can use technology to modernize your facility and improve patron experiences. The following are examples of technology you may want to include in your library:

- ✓ **People counters:** In libraries, people counters can help determine how many patrons visit and when. Track foot traffic to different rooms and areas to ensure the space is optimized for patrons. If patrons use a specific area infrequently, for example, you can redesign that space to make it more appealing and useful for patrons.
- ✓ **Internet of Things (IoT) networks:** Having access to the internet is more of a necessity today than a luxury, which means the Internet of Things (IoT) networks are also more critical than ever. IoT enables a connection between everyday devices and the ability to transfer data between devices over the internet. Libraries can use IoT in various applications, such as tracking program attendance and room usage. Libraries can use IoT to facilitate a better user experience for patrons.
- ✓ **eBooks:** Due to technological, social and economic factors, the use of eBooks and eReaders is on the rise. Today, both community and academic libraries offer

Libraries offering eBooks need to **track the use and success of these materials** and how they compare to physical books.



access to eBooks. Libraries offering eBooks need to track the use and success of these materials and how they compare to physical books. Though tracking which physical books have been checked out is simple, tracking the use of eBooks can be more challenging if people access them in the library but don't check them out.

- ✓ **User-focused interfaces:** Interfaces that provide a personalized interaction with the user can improve your patrons' library experience. For example, you can use large screens to display information or project an interactive game for children on the floor. New tech allows you to offer a digital experience beyond the computer.
- ✓ **Makerspaces:** Makerspaces are collaborative learning environments that enable patrons to explore interests, create projects and share materials. Patrons can use a makerspace to express their creativity or for educational purposes. Examples of makerspaces include parent-child crafts, painting workshops or games for young children. Makerspaces can attract more patrons to your library and solidify your facility as an educational space in the community.

## Making Informed Decisions

Technology can help your library enhance your space and make better decisions regarding your layout and programming. Depending on your budget, you can implement technology to improve your facility with cost-effective options or a more significant investment. If you cannot afford to purchase dozens of tablets for your facility, for instance, you may be able to upgrade existing resources as a more affordable option. Examples of changes you may want to make to your layout and programming include:

- ✓ Implementing displays in a designated area during a book reading or movie showing that bring awareness to similar books.
- ✓ Creating art galleries for crafts patrons made at your library.
- ✓ Placing tablets on shelf end caps that allow patrons to check out books, find materials and access the card catalog.
- ✓ Developing exhibits, kiosks and cafes optimally placed for the greatest use and visibility.

Using people counters to measure attendance to your programs is one of the most helpful steps for data collection in a library. People counting solutions from Traf-Sys allow you to collect patron data, strategically use your library resources and effectively serve your patrons.



Depending on your budget, you can implement technology to **improve your facility with cost-effective options** or a more significant investment.

## CHAPTER 3:



# Collecting and Using Data in Libraries

When it comes to data collection in a public library, you should start with the data your library already collects and understand how you can use it to improve your facility.

## Know What Goes on in Your Library

Data collection is essential in any industry, and libraries are no exception. While libraries can easily provide data from existing systems, this data is mainly about services used and does not equate to patron numbers. For example, the number of books checked out does not equal the number of patrons who used the facility. This is where data from people tracking systems comes in.

## How to Use Your Data

It isn't enough to simply collect data from public libraries. Library staff should also know how to analyze and leverage this data to enhance the experience and draw in more visitors. You can use the data from your people tracking system in several ways to improve your library, such as:

## 1. Determine Demographics

One of the ways you can use the data from your people tracking system to improve your library is by determining the demographics of your patrons. While you might know some of your community's demographics, there may be pieces of the picture that you're missing or demographics you're overlooking. With people counters, you can get a more comprehensive view of your patrons.

You may also want to use public sources to learn more about your community demographics. For example, you can compare your patrons' addresses with the addresses in your library's service area to analyze how much of your community you are serving. You can also access or request information from county or city government agencies to tap into geographic and demographic data.



### Determine Demographics

While you might know some of your community's demographics, there may be **pieces of the picture that you're missing** or demographics you're overlooking.

## 2. Identify Popular Services

Learn more about what your patrons want or need by determining what they use the most. Use simple tools to poll your library's patrons and members of your community to identify what they want from your facility. For instance, you can use social media to gather helpful feedback on the types of activities, media and programs your community desires.



In a community of retired adults, you may want to favor titles that appeal to an older population. If your community is composed of young, busy families, you may want to incorporate more children's literature in your audiobook collection that these families can enjoy at home. Use the data you gather from social polling and other surveying methods to align your library's activities and assets with your community's wants and needs. Meeting your patrons' requests will increase your relevance in the community and drive foot traffic to your facility.

### 3. Create Displays

In your library, you have a limited amount of space in which you can promote titles. Fortunately, you can analyze the relevant data to decide which titles should receive promotional treatment and ensure your displays have the maximum effect. Technologies like people counting systems can help you identify which displays attract the most attention and which are being overlooked.

Use the insights you gather from your data to influence your future displays. If a display for a popular novelist does well, for example, you can create another display when their next bestseller is published. If a novel has a film adaptation, you can display the book and the film together.



**If a display for a popular novelist does well, for example, you can create another display when their next bestseller is published.**

## 4. Track Program Popularity

You put a lot of time and effort into planning your programs, so you want to ensure they're a good use of your time. Objective data from your library people counter can help you identify which programs are the most appealing and popular among your patrons. Your library may operate with a limited budget, so you must ensure you allocate your dollars to the best programs.

If you run a program for the first quarter of the year and it performs poorly, you may want to replace it with another program that draws in a bigger audience. Keep in mind that which programs are successful can change over time, especially as technology advances. Embrace new ideas and programs while you leverage and analyze your data.

## 5. Determine Peak Hours to Optimize Scheduling

You can also use data from your people tracking system to improve your library by determining the peak hours for optimizing staff scheduling. Your peak hours can help you decide who should work specific shifts and the areas and programs where they are most needed. Perhaps you need more IT staff in the afternoon or more front desk staff on the weekends.

When you identify your library's peak hours, you may also find that you need to hire new staff members or add new roles to keep up with library services and patron requests during the busiest times at your facility.

We cover more on this topic of solving staff problems in Chapter Four.

## 6. Help Allocate Budget

Technology can sometimes seem unaffordable to libraries, especially those with smaller budgets. But investing in a people counting system can actually help your library create more room in your budget. Knowing the areas in your library that receive the most foot traffic can inform where you should allocate your resources and where you should reduce spending.

You can use a people counting system to prevent budget cuts and show proof that your library deserves facility and technology upgrades. Additionally, you can use the data from your counters to eliminate the resources patrons don't use.

We cover more on the topic of building a better budget for your library in Chapter Five.

Knowing the areas in your library that receive the most foot traffic can inform **where you should allocate your resources** and where you should reduce spending.



## CHAPTER 4:

# Solving Library Staffing Problems



You can also use people counting systems to solve library staffing needs and challenges. With this advanced technology, your library can determine when new roles are necessary to accommodate new technologies or programs and keep your library running smoothly. You can also optimize your staff scheduling to ensure you can serve your patrons effectively, even during peak hours.

## Staffing in a Library

Modern libraries face unique staffing needs and challenges that differ from yesterday's libraries. Today's libraries have rapidly evolved from a physical space that only provides on-site resources and services to facilities that also offer virtual and electronic resources.

The current number of staff members may not be enough to accomplish all the tasks and responsibilities in your facility, so you may need to opt for outsourcing, insourcing or co-sourcing to reach your goals.

- ✓ **Outsourcing:** When you outsource, you contract the work out to someone not on staff at your library.
- ✓ **Insourcing:** With insourcing, outside consultants work with your library staff directly.
- ✓ **Co-sourcing:** Co-sourcing combines both external and internal resources and expertise.

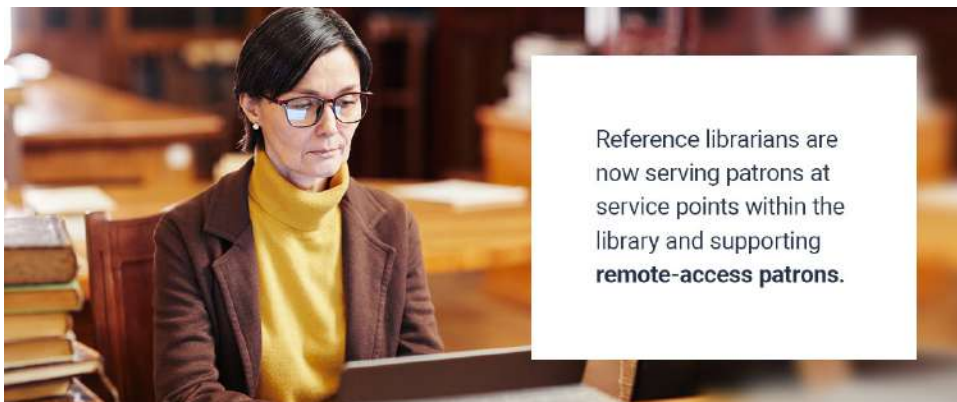
Library staff may need to take on new responsibilities regarding electronic resources while standard tasks like phone calls and binding persist. They may have difficulty handling both old and new responsibilities. Similarly, modern libraries may struggle to enhance knowledge and skill or to plan for the future.

## New Roles

As libraries evolve with new technologies and services, new roles are necessary for library staff to keep everything running smoothly. Libraries of yesterday were accustomed to stability, but today's libraries are experiencing a rapid rate of change correlating with technological advances. With the prevalence of electronic resources comes the potential for issues with licensing, and librarians may need to ensure an electronic product license agreement is appropriate for anticipated patron use patterns.

Similarly, catalogers are entering new roles to enhance patrons' access to electronic resources. Catalogers must now process books and multi-format items, and they need to make informed decisions about linking to electronic journals. A cataloger creates records to accommodate several means of accessing a single resource, and patrons want records that include direct links to an item's electronic version.

Reference librarians are now serving patrons at service points within the library and supporting remote-access patrons. Perhaps remote-access patrons need



Reference librarians are now serving patrons at service points within the library and supporting **remote-access patrons.**

special support, and reference staff members are dealing with an influx of questions via email. Virtual services can be more time-consuming and complex than traditional services in the library, and reference librarians are now filling the new role as educators on information literacy.

Since many libraries now use websites to provide electronic patron services, input from library staff may also be necessary to create a well-designed, user-friendly interface. They will need to maintain and update the library's website continually to keep up with URL changes and broken links. As a result, your library needs to determine how to apply your limited staff resources to most effectively operate your facility.

## Who, When and Where

The data from people counting systems can let your library know who you should be staffing when and where they are most needed. Identifying slow and peak traffic hours can help inform how you can most effectively schedule your staff. You want to avoid being understaffed during a busy time, and during slow periods, you can optimize your labor costs by minimizing how many team members are on shift.

If patrons have to wait too long for assistance, this can sour their experience, and they may decide not to return. People counters at your library's entrances can give you an idea of when you may need additional staff. You can also identify which entries experience more foot traffic and place your staff accordingly. Patrons want staff to be visible and readily available to address concerns or answer questions.

Optimizing staffing ensures your library provides quality service and increases the likelihood of patrons' return visits. Here are some examples of how you may want to optimize your staffing schedule:

- ✓ Put more desk staff on shift during peak hours.
- ✓ Adjust schedules when more staff are needed in children's areas.
- ✓ Recruit new hires if you need more staff to run technology-based services, such as computers or makerspaces.

## CHAPTER 5:

# Building a Better Public Library Budget



A people counting system can also help you refine your library budgeting techniques and build a better budget. This chapter covers how to develop your budget and how people counters in your library can help you stop budget cuts, provide proof of compliance and secure improvements to your facility.

## How to Develop Your Budget

Libraries use budgets to offer patrons as much as possible regarding services, programs and resources. When you carefully develop your budget, you can ensure you use your library's funds effectively and achieve your objectives. Follow the steps below to build your budget:

1. Determine what your library wants to accomplish this year.
2. Identify the total amount of financial resources needed to achieve your goals.
3. Draft budget documents.
4. Get input on your budget from the board of trustees.
5. Approve the finished budget.
6. Secure funding if necessary.

Examples of budgeting methods your library can use include:

- ✓ **Line item budgeting:** This budgeting method is one of the most common and divides your expenses by line into categories, such as salaries, books, supplies and equipment.
- ✓ **Program budgeting:** The program budgeting method focuses on your library's activities and earmarks funds for specific services and programs.
- ✓ **Formula budgeting:** This method uses predetermined standards and financial norms to allocate your funds, such as inputs regarding the ratio of total funds to book stock or the number of academic programs.
- ✓ **Lump sum budgeting:** When your library receives a lump sum of money, you can divide this sum into categories.
- ✓ **Performance budgeting:** Though similar to program budgeting, this budgeting method shifts the emphasis to performance rather than programs. Your fund allocation is determined by the performance of activities and operational efficiency.

**Program budgeting:** The program budgeting method focuses on your library's activities and earmarks funds for specific services and programs.





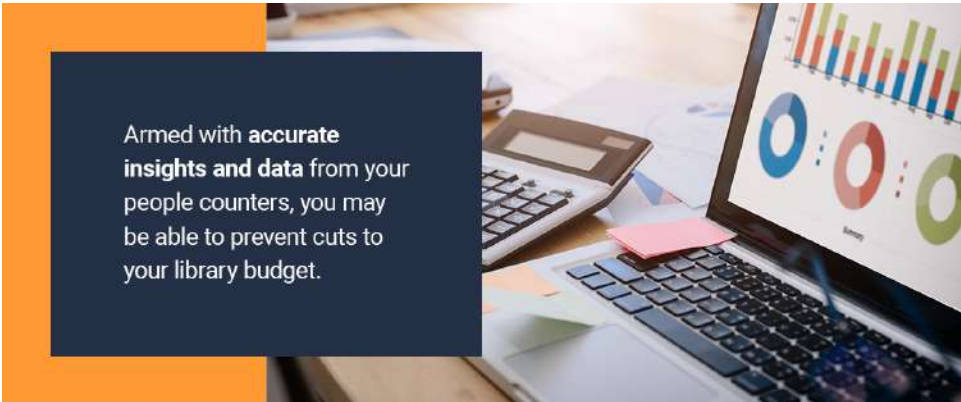
## Stop Budget Cuts

Budget cuts have affected many libraries in recent years. Public institutions and doctoral universities, in particular, have often been the most impacted by budget cuts. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many libraries faced budget cuts ranging from 5% to 14% for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Presently, it's difficult to know whether budget cuts will be permanent or temporary. Budget cuts can force you to reallocate your funds and reduce funds to specific expenditures, such as library programs or activities.

Fortunately, people counter systems can help to prevent budget cuts by showing program success and facility use. With people counters, you can:

- ✓ Track program attendance.
- ✓ Support your funding requests.
- ✓ Determine security needs.
- ✓ Make informed decisions.

Armed with accurate insights and data from your people counters, you may be able to prevent cuts to your library budget. Your data identifies usage patterns and periods of peak demand or low volumes of visitors. You can use hard numbers to support your library's need for funding.



Armed with **accurate insights and data** from your people counters, you may be able to prevent cuts to your library budget.

# Provide Proof of Library Compliance

People counter systems can help your library with reporting your statistics to the state. You need to operate within budget restrictions by limiting technology use or maintaining labor percentages. You can use the data from your people counting system to provide proof of compliance with the state's standards. Taxpayers want to know how their tax dollars are being used, and with this data, you can show your community that you are putting your funds to good use.

Standards can vary from state to state, but they are often used to determine the worth and eligibility of your library for funding. If you run a public library, failure to meet standards and remain compliant could lead to the risk of losing funding.

## Secure Improvements

You can use data collected through people counting to prove your library deserves upgrades and request additional resources and labor.



**Facility upgrades:** If an area or room in your library is in high demand, you may be able to make a case for facility upgrades to ensure patrons can access these spaces when they need them.



**Additional resources:** Your library may be able to use your people counter data to show that your large number of patrons are using in-library digital resources, such as eBooks and computers. With this data, you can make your case for more technology.



**Additional labor:** You may be able to gain back operating hours or staff members by showing how many visitors use your library daily. If many patrons use your facility, you can show you need more staff members or longer hours to serve your visitors adequately.

# Purchase a People Counter System From Traf-Sys



An essential component of operating a library is the collection of visitor data. With this data, you can better measure marketing effectiveness, schedule staff hours and defend important funding requests. Though collecting this data is important, doing so can be challenging.

Manually counting patrons with tick sheets can be time-consuming, distract staff from more crucial tasks like helping patrons and lead to inaccurate data. If your library relies on manual visitor tracking, tally-keeping may be the first thing that slips through the cracks when your staff becomes too busy.

If your library relies on manual visitor tracking, **tally-keeping may be the first thing that slips through the cracks** when your staff becomes too busy.



This is why libraries need people counter systems. If you manage a library or you're in charge of your library's marketing, you may want to invest in a people counter for your library. With our service at Traf-Sys, you can get the information and analysis needed regarding your people counter that you may not have otherwise. Our software helps you analyze the data in the context of your operations.

Compared to our competitors, we offer a higher level of customer service. We can assist you with implementation, provide guidance on interpreting your data and automatically flag any issues with the system. Additionally, we work with more libraries than any other people counting provider.

Benefits of choosing Traf-Sys for libraries include:

- ✓ Support for funding requests: With an accurate library patron count, you can gather evidence supporting your capital expenditures, expansion projects, grant applications and funding requests. Utilize the insights from your patron counter to strengthen your funding and grant applications.
- ✓ Management of circulation rate: You can track library visitors accurately and automatically with a people counting system. After implementing a system, you will automatically receive daily, reliable traffic counts and eliminate the task of using tick sheets. You can also better understand your traffic and identify usage patterns. For example, you can understand how many people checked out books in relation to how many total people visited.
- ✓ Facility management: Implement a people counting system to utilize the data regarding supplies and facility staffing levels that can help you better manage your facility.
- ✓ Display improvement: Create displays in the busiest areas of your library, and figure out where displays for books and other media may be better placed. Data from people counters can help you determine how to improve access and enhance your signs to make them more useful for your patrons.

- ✓ Promotional and marketing activities: With a detailed traffic counter, you can determine what marketing plans work, what don't and how to make your special promotions and events translate to traffic.

Regardless of your library's size and budget, we have affordable solutions to provide you with the people counting capabilities you need. Our service team can help you implement a people counting system that meets your library's specific needs. Request a free quote for our traffic counter, or contact a Traf-Sys representative to learn more about how our solutions can make a difference in how your library operates.

**Request a free quote** for our traffic counter, or **contact a Traf-Sys representative** to learn more



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