

# Stats in the Time of COVID-19 – Webinar Questions and FAQs

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## PROGRAMMING – DOES IT COUNT, AND HOW?

**If I post a link to someone else’s program (e.g., a popular author records a storytime, a virtual tour of a national park) should I count the views?**

Only count programs in which your library has some part in the content creation. If you have an online event in which a group watches the state park video together and you lead a discussion of it after, that’s a program. If you simply post the link, it’s not.

**But what if we pay a performer to record a video for us – like a children’s magician?**

This is the exception to the above rule. It’s a program if and only if that performer is doing an individualized program for your library specifically. A program that’s recorded in advance for multiple libraries (e.g., *Mo Willems Draws!*) or purchased through a subscription would not count.

**Is there a minimum time requirement for the length of a program? My virtual programs are significantly shorter than their in-person counterparts, since there’s no patron interaction.**

There is no time requirement. Programs can be as long or as short as you need them to be.

**Our library offers Make and Take (Grab and Go, etc.) activities. Is it a program?**

No. However, we are adding a Y/N question to the 2020 report as to whether you offer this sort of service, as well as an optional follow-up question for recording how many were taken.

**We have been doing a Program in a Box where we also record a video with staff demonstrating the activity.**

**How do we count this?** Answer YES to the Make and Take question on 2020 report (see above). Because this mirrors an in-person craft program, count each program/video as VIRTUAL – RECORDED, and count the views as attendance.

**How do I count a Make and Take program where patrons interact with staff via email, Zoom, or Discord as part of the program?**

Answer YES to the Make and Take question. If the Zoom/Discord is open to multiple patrons in a set, advertised time frame, this can be also count as a VIRTUAL – LIVE program, with the live patron interactions count towards attendance. If it’s primarily email consultations or singular interactions, do not record it as a program. Instead, record each one-on-one interaction as a reference transaction.

**We are doing a hybrid with a recorded storytime where participants can come into the library to pick up story extenders such as crafts and sensory items. Is this one or two programs?**

This would still count as one program, but the addition of make and take crafts means you would answer YES to the Make and Take question.

**Are repeated recorded programs counted each time they’re offered?**

Count how many times you “perform” it: how many times did you record it, or how many times did you livestream the program? If you record a video once, it is one program, regardless of how many times or places you post it. If you have one storytime that you livestream in the morning and then start all over and livestream it again in the afternoon, it is two programs.

**What if you record a program, then premier it as if it's live? That's an option through Facebook.**

It counts as a one VIRTUAL – RECORDED program.

**We have a program where we announce a Q&A that will happen at a certain time/date and ask patrons to watch a posted video in advance. How do we count this?**

Count this as one VIRTUAL – LIVE program.

**If I post a recording of how to use a database or how to use various copier functions, are those considered programs?** This one's a bit subjective. Ask yourself - would it be a program if you did it live? Would you add it to your library's calendar of events? If not, it's probably a great way to provide instruction – but not a program.

**If our library has a blog, how would we (and can we count) the number of people who read a blog post?**

We currently do not track the number of social media/blog posts and engagement.

**We're doing a podcast. How would we count that?**

Podcasts are considered a service offered by the library – and are not counted as programs for the purposes of the survey. They are not interactive/dependent on patron participation and would not normally be advertised on the library's calendar of events.

## ATTENDANCE

**Do I need to take role call at online programs?**

It's not required. Not everyone will have the time/resources to do this. There will be times when multiple people are sharing the same computer and logged in as one guest. If you have reason to believe this is the case, count it. Otherwise, tell us how many people you know attended, and know that these numbers may be slightly underreported because of it.

**Do I need to break up programs and attendance by age groups?**

Only programs with a live element (in-person or virtual – live) need to be categorized by age. Recorded programs do not need to be categorized by age.

**What if I share a video across multiple platforms – which one do I count?**

While a single video will count as one program, regardless of how many times you post it, you can count the views from any/all platforms where it is posted.

**Our library promotes our programs via Facebook posts and other social media. Should we count the views and comments on the promo posts as well?**

No. Only record social media interactions if on the program itself.

**What number do I use for...**

**Facebook:** Record REACH, not ENGAGEMENT. Count views that register at 1 minute+.

**Zoom:** Peak Concurrent Views

## CURBSIDE SERVICE, APPOINTMENT ONLY, REDUCED HOURS

### **Are we counting curbside pickup in the stats? If so, how?**

You will be asked to answer YES/NO as to whether your library provided “outside service.” While you are welcome to track the number of people using the service for your own records, we are not collecting that data at this time. **Do not count curbside service as library visits.**

### **Why DOESN'T curbside service count as a visit? Patrons are driving to the library for service, which my staff provides.**

Historically, visits have ONLY included the number of people who have entered the building during open hours. To make the data comparable from year to year, we need to keep our definition of visits (and open hours) the same. That's why we've added questions to the report for 2020 – to capture services that aren't counted elsewhere, such as curbside pickup.

### **How does IMLS define the COVID-19 time period?**

For the purposes of the report, the actual dates don't matter. Instead, it's a matter of whether your library closed/purchased more e-books/etc. *in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

### **Regarding Number of Weeks an Outlet Had Limited Occupancy Due to COVID-19: Does "limited" refer only to hours, or are we also considering limitations to capacity, and types of use of the library? Is open by appointment only considered closed or limited opening?**

**Any change/reduction to library services would be considered limited.** Limited public occupancy practices can include reduced hours open, limits on the number of public members inside the physical building, appointment only on-site library use, visitor time limits, closed stacks or meeting rooms, etc.

## REFERENCE

### **Is there a way to tally and "get credit" for longer reference interactions in order to more accurately reflect our time? There are so many days when we have just a few reference questions, but we may have spent 10-30 minutes each on these?**

and

### **To what extent should you document the length of time you spend answering detailed reference questions?**

For IMLS' purposes, it makes no difference how long a reference questions lasts; they are all counted the same. However, as the state library is seeing our public libraries call more and more for this type of reference distinction, we added an additional question about your number of **Instructional Reference Transactions** to the report starting in 2019. While it is not required, we encourage libraries that count these more involved one-on-one interactions to report that figure to us, so as to better get a feel for how many of our reference transactions are of this time-intensive variety.

### **Can we count questions answered over social media?**

As long as the questions meet the definition of reference transaction, they can be answered via social media, telephone, email, etc.

### **When counting reference done on social media, do we need to pick one of our library locations for tracking purposes, or is the number simply added to a total for the library system as a whole?**

We're looking for the total for the whole of the system.