SDL Usage Report
ProQuest Platform 2015-2020

This report provides data on 5 years of searches and retrievals from the collection of databases provided by the Washington State Library's contract with ProQuest and accessed via the standard ProQuest platform. The following databases are included, although not all of them were available on this platform throughout the entire 5 year time period (note platform start dates for those in the second column):

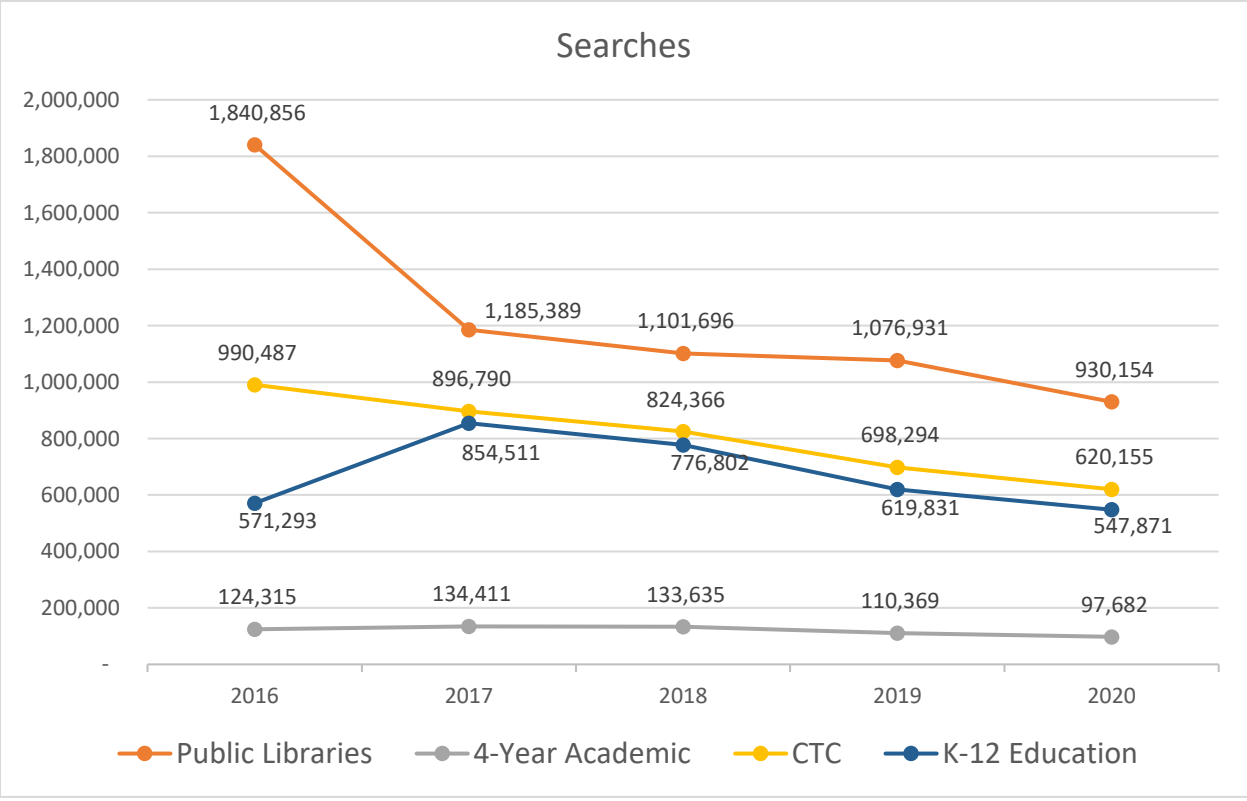
- Research Library
- ABI/INFORM: Trade & Industry
- Consumer Health Database (previously Family Health Database)
- U.S. Newsstream
- eLibrary (12/14/17)
- SIRS Discoverer (8/1/19)
- PTSDpubs (11/1/17)
- Coronavirus Research Database (3/31/20)

This report focuses exclusively on two key data points:

- Searches
- Document Retrievals

The time period for this usage report is based on the federal fiscal year, i.e., from Oct. 1 through Sept. 30 of each year. So the 12-month periods that are included are as follows:

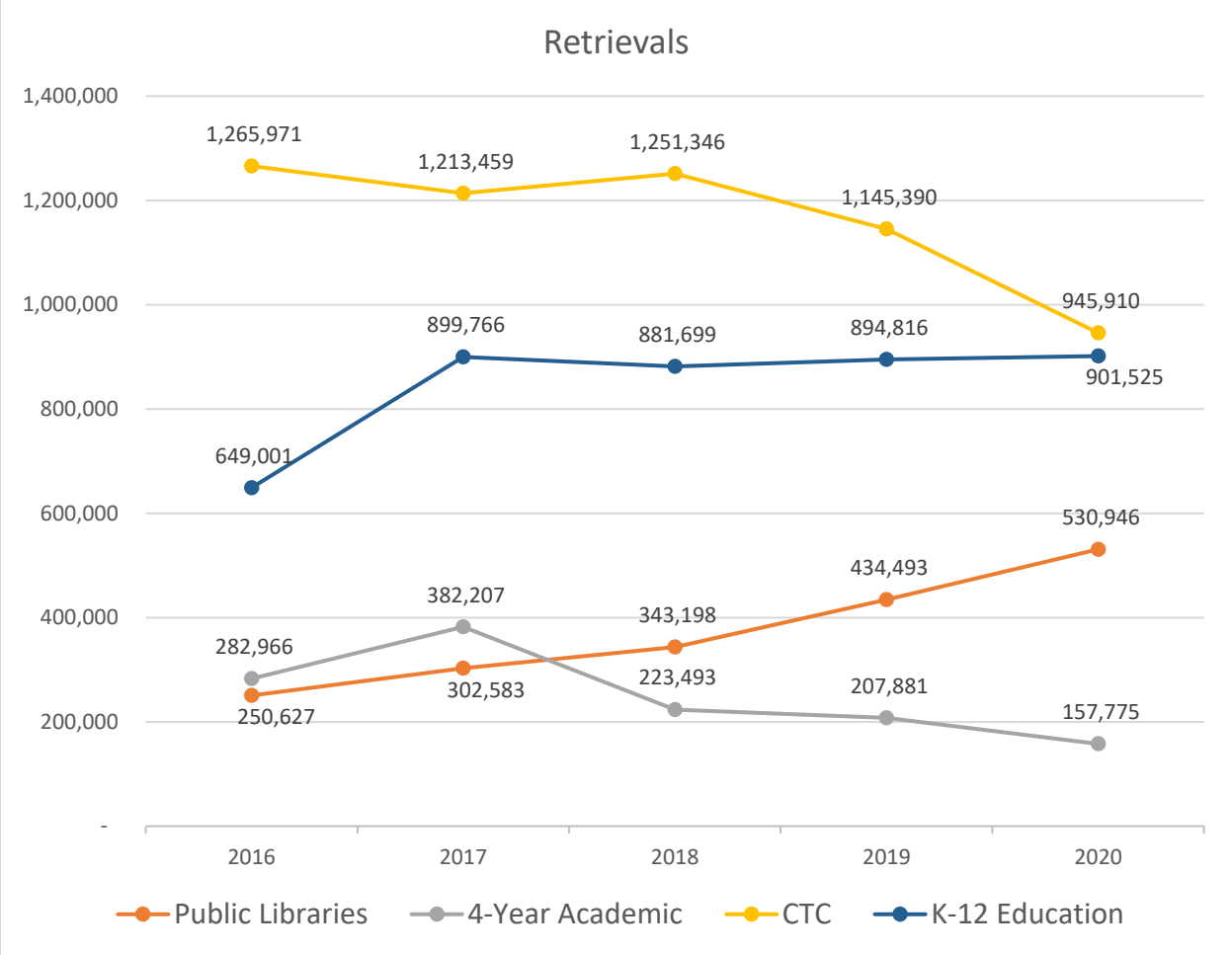
- Oct. 1, 2015 through Sept. 30, 2016
- Oct. 1, 2016 through Sept. 30, 2017
- Oct. 1, 2017 through Sept. 30, 2018
- Oct. 1, 2018 through Sept. 30, 2019
- Oct. 1, 2019 through Sept. 30, 2020



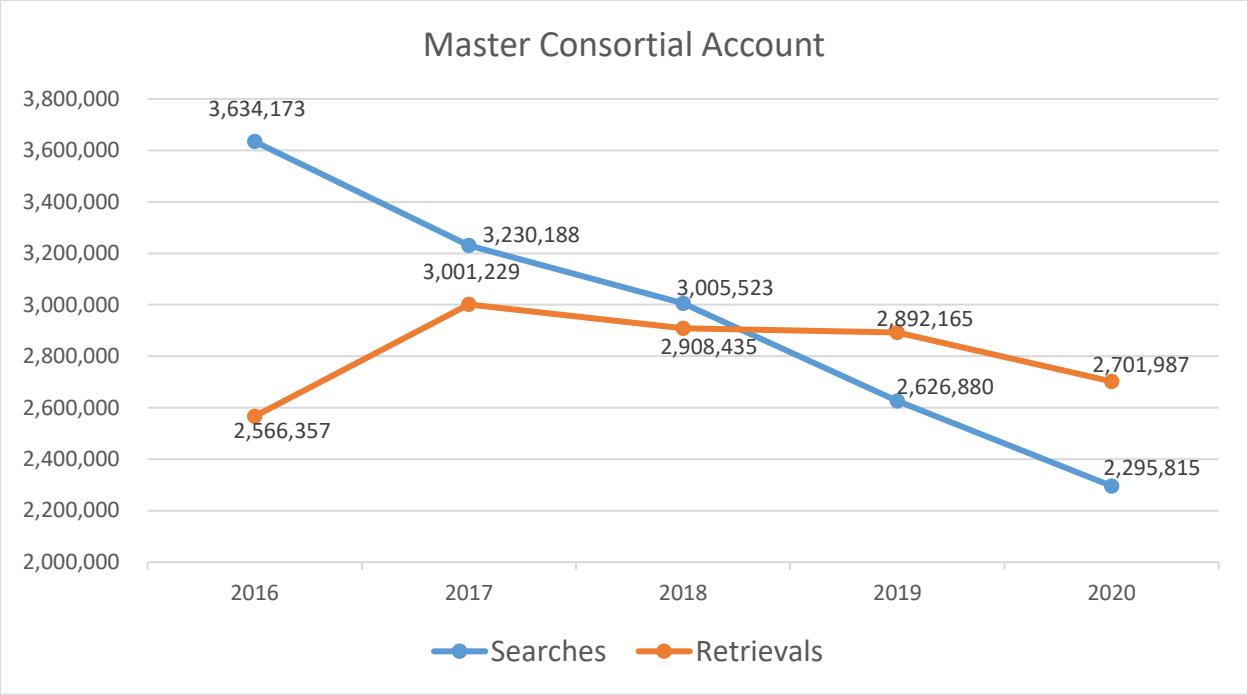
The first chart (above) displays the total number of searches conducted by each library type. This metric is equivalent to the COUNTER 5 “Searches_Platform” which is defined as “Searches conducted by users and captured at the platform level. Each user-initiated search can only be counted once regardless of the number of databases involved in the search.”

One data point worth noting is the big jump in K-12 Education searches between the first and second years tracked here. This increase is likely due to the e-Library database moving onto the ProQuest Platform at that time, where previously its usage had been tracked separately. The slight increase in 4-year academic searches that year may be attributable to the same cause.

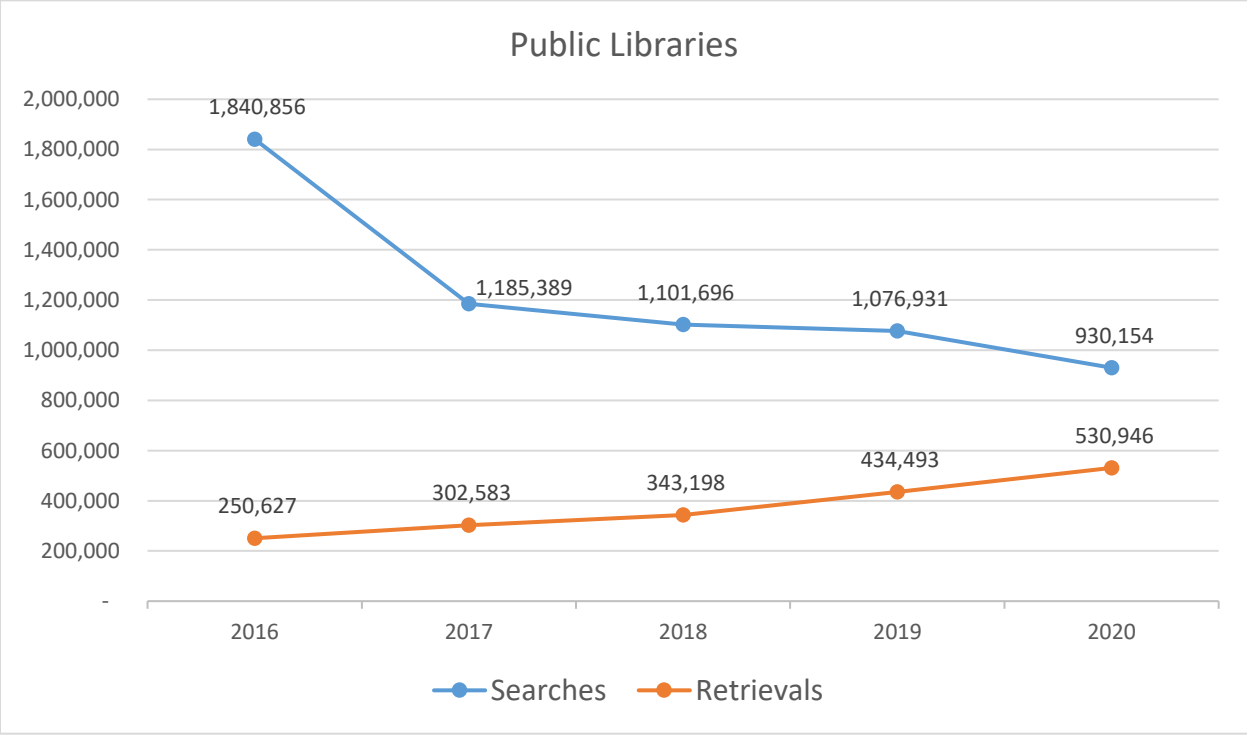
The next chart (below) shows document retrievals for the same period, again separated by type of library. The initial upward bumps for K-12 and 4-year academics may again be attributed to e-Library.

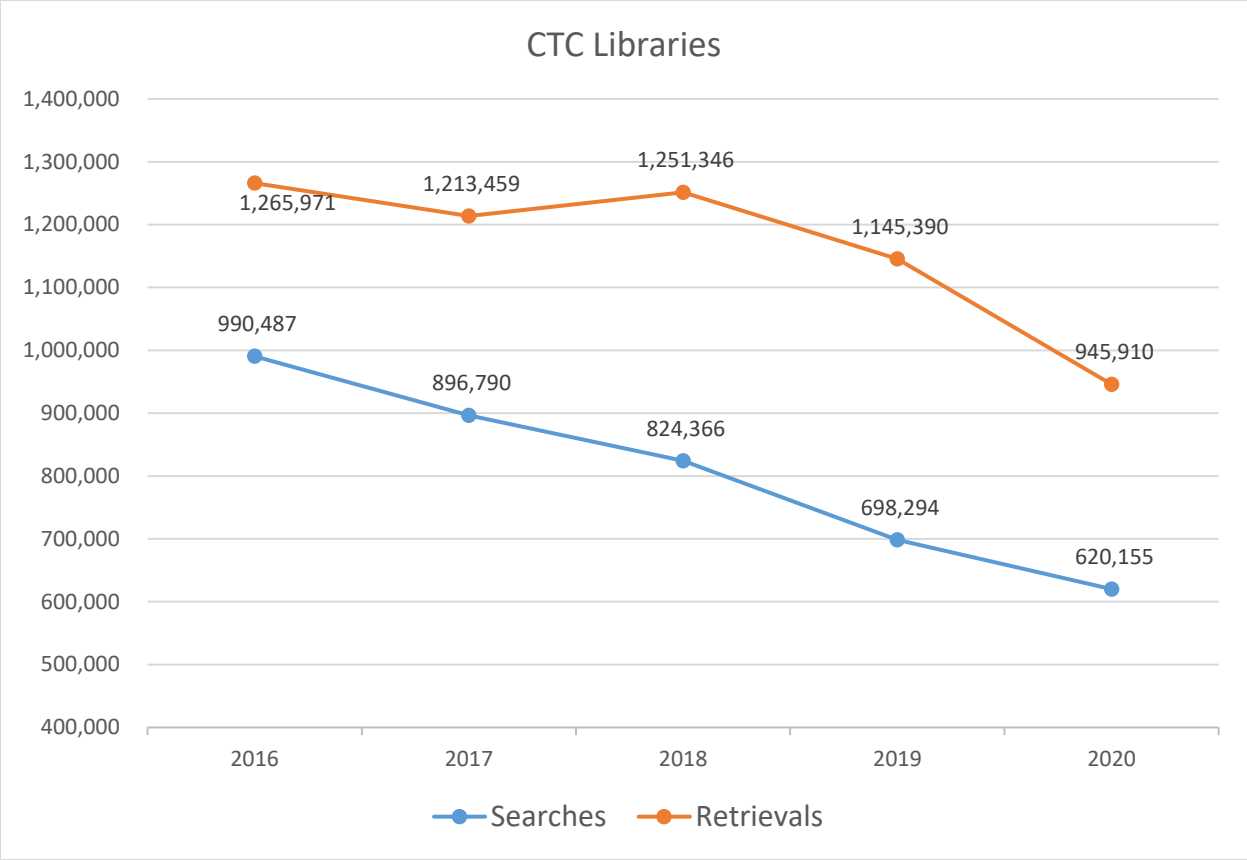


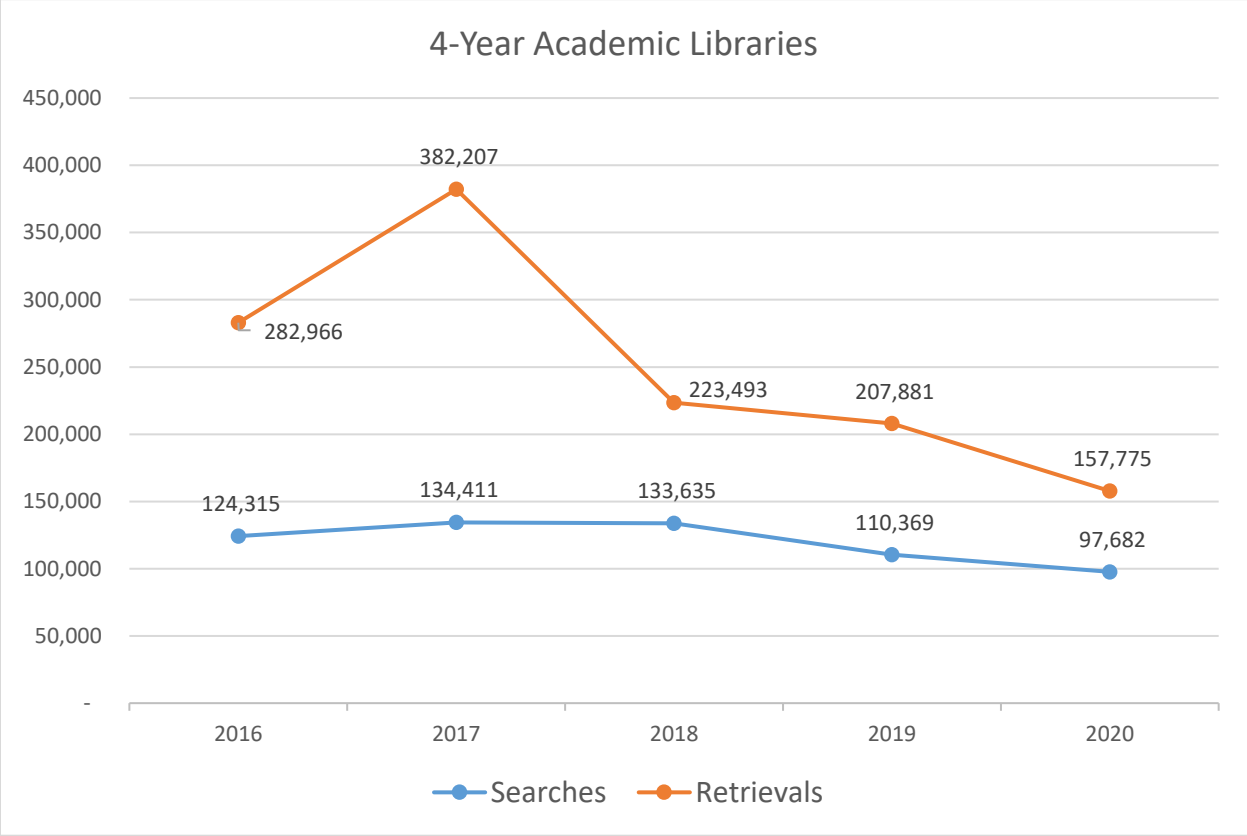
The next chart compares searches with retrievals for the overall consortium combined (Master Consortial Account). While retrievals have generally been dropping overall, not nearly as steeply as searches. Does this imply that searching has become more efficient, with fewer searches retrieving relatively more documents? At the beginning of this 5-year period, there were 0.71 retrievals per search, while by the end, it was 1.18 retrievals per search.

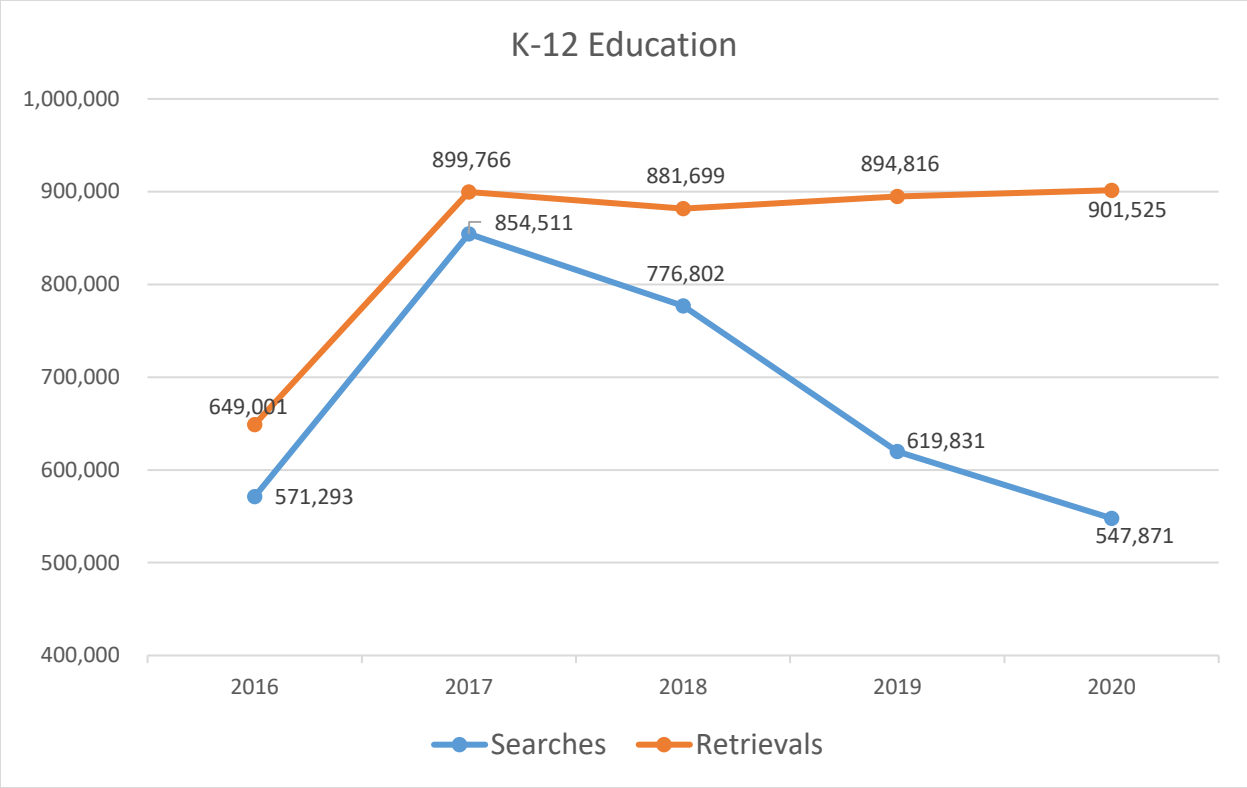


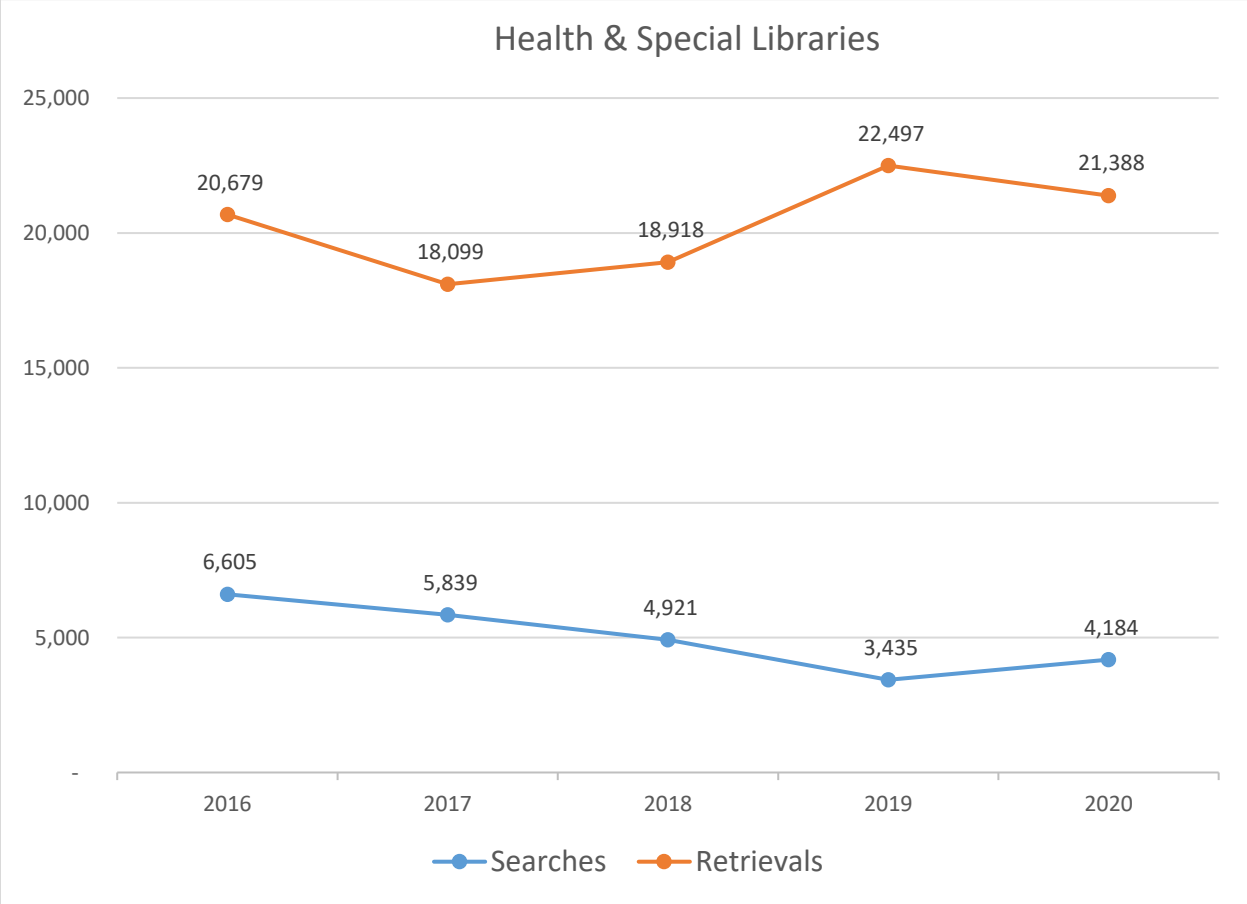
The next five charts compare searches to retrievals for each type of library: Public, CTC, 4-Year, K-12, Health & Special. Some points worth noting: public libraries are the only type where the number of searches consistently exceeds the number of retrievals, and yet public libraries are also the only type of library for which either category (in this case retrievals) consistently increases during the period being measured. Those Health & Special users seem to be the most efficient, with over 4 retrievals per search. Perhaps because a higher percentage of their searches are conducted by librarians instead of end users.




CTC Libraries
1,400,000
1,300,000
1,200,000
1,100,000
1,000,000
900,000
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
1,265,971
1,213,459
1,251,346
1,145,390
945,910
990,487
896,790
824,366
698,294
620,155
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
Searches
Retrievals


4-Year Academic Libraries
450,000
400,000
350,000
300,000
250,000
200,000
150,000
100,000
50,000
-
282,966
382,207
223,493
207,881
157,775
124,315
134,411
133,635
110,369
97,682
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
Searches
Retrievals


K-12 Education
1,000,000
900,000
800,000
700,000
600,000
500,000
400,000
899,766
881,699
894,816
901,525
854,511
776,802
649,001
619,831
571,293
547,871
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
Searches
Retrievals


Health & Special Libraries
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
-
22,497
21,388
20,679
18,099
18,918
6,605
5,839
4,921
4,184
3,435
2016
2017
2018
2019
2020
Searches
Retrievals

Some final points worthy of note: yes, overall usage continues to decline during this period. Yet, document retrievals don't decline as much as searches, suggesting that users became more efficient, or perhaps attributable to a higher percentage of library staff usage compared with end users, who are inevitably less well-trained. And usage is still relatively robust, considered as absolute numbers. In the most recent year, users conducted almost 2.3 million searches and retrieved over 2.7 million documents, which is nothing to sneeze at. That's about 1 retrieval for every third person, statewide.