

Tennessee Public Library Services: Critical in Tough Economic Times

Across the nation, the importance of libraries in a difficult economy has garnered national attention. An article in the *Wall Street Journal* reported that many “jobless people are reporting to the library as they used to report to the office.” Libraries help bridge the divide between those who have access to information and those who do not. Nearly 71% of libraries are their communities’ only source of free computer and internet access, a number which rises to 80% in rural areas.

Supporting the Local Economy

Public libraries support local workforce development by providing job information resources, technology training and access.



Small business owners rely on their local library’s business resources for planning, marketing and legal information.

Many publications include the presence and quality of the local public library in their rankings. Relocating families, retirees and businesses also expect a quality local public library.

We have many people who come in . . . needing help to do the most basic things. We have helped people set up email accounts, sign up for the low-income cell phone service, and apply for unemployment.

- Coalfield Public Library (Morgan County)

Connecting Tennesseans

Connected Tennessee reports that **30%** of Tennesseans still do not have internet access at home.

Last year, public libraries helped fill this gap by providing access to the internet **6,076,143** times! Over 90% of Tennessee public libraries offer free information technology training to their patrons.



Millington Public Library

“We are offering several classes to assist people who are learning to use the computer . . . and we are constantly trying to adapt to the needs of our patrons and will be adding more services as needed.”

~Sevier County Public Library

Last year, Tennessee public libraries

- ◆ Welcomed 21,834,297 visitors;
- ◆ Circulated 25,286,570 items;
- ◆ Hosted 1,054,650 people for library programs; &
- ◆ Answered 3,939,542 reference questions!