

# LIBRARIES AND TECHNOLOGY: The Internet is Just the Beginning

Over the past decade, millions of Americans have turned to public access computers in libraries to search for job and career information, get live online homework help, and consult health databases and publications. Via blogs, virtual book clubs, and downloadable books libraries have, in turn, begun to leverage technology and the Internet to reach new audiences and offer new services.

## Key Fact:

In 1994, 20.9% of all public libraries were connected to the Internet. In 2004, 99.6% were connected, and 98.9% offered public access.

## Public Opinion:

Half the public (52%) gives their local library an "A" or a "B" for having enough computers. More than one-third (35%) report that they have visited the Internet site of a public library.

### "Tribal Connections" to Health U. of Washington Health Sciences Library, Seattle, WA

<b>PROBLEM:</b>	How to provide reliable health information to Native American and Alaskan Native communities, which are diverse and geographically isolated.
<b>SOLUTION:</b>	The National Library of Medicine helped establish <i>Tribal Connections</i> , a health news and information website accessible through tribal and urban libraries.
<b>WEBSITE:</b>	<a href="http://www.tribalconnections.org">www.tribalconnections.org</a>
<b>BEHIND THE SCENES:</b>	As part of the project, the National Library of Medicine helped connect 16 tribes and Native villages to the Internet.
<b>SIGNS OF SUCCESS:</b>	Thanks to new funding, <i>Tribal Connections</i> is expanding to include original columns on nutrition and diet, combining Western and Native American approaches.

### "Have Laptops, Will Travel" Maricopa County Public Library, Phoenix, AZ

<b>PROBLEM:</b>	Many seniors lack basic computer skills or home Internet access, keeping them from the wealth of online information of potential interest and use to them.
<b>SOLUTION:</b>	"Have Laptops, Will Travel" uses portable computer labs—and older adult volunteer instructors—to teach seniors basic computer skills and help them get online.
<b>BEHIND THE SCENES:</b>	The district rotates its inventory of laptops through each of the 14 branches.
<b>SIGNS OF SUCCESS:</b>	Maricopa's success has inspired similar programs in the region. In <i>Life Changes: The Future is Now!</i> , the Parker Public Library hosts computer training and consumer health classes using a wireless mobile computer lab, with instructors, materials, and resources provided by Arizona Western College.

### A Sampling of Other Innovations

**Community Library of Allegheny Valley (PA).** Developed a blog to connect homeschooling families to one another and to the library's resources. [www.alleghenyvalleylibrary.org](http://www.alleghenyvalleylibrary.org)

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg County Library (VA ).** Offers workshops for adults on Legal Research on the Internet. [www.plcmc.lib.nc.us/beyondBooks/newsletter.asp](http://www.plcmc.lib.nc.us/beyondBooks/newsletter.asp)

**Cleveland Public Library (OH).** Offers computer sessions where young people help their grandparents conduct online searches. [www.cpl.org](http://www.cpl.org)