



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

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Libraries Helping Rhode Island Get Back to Work

(Providence, RI) Recession-hit Rhode Island residents are heading to their local libraries to borrow books, and movies, take advantage of free Internet access ... and receive job search help. A recent Library Board of Rhode Island (LBRI) survey of public libraries found that between November 2008 and March 2009, 99.6% of responding Rhode Island public libraries have helped people search for a job through one-on-one instruction, workshops, and/or resource guides.

“Many people who find themselves out of work do not have the technical skills to apply for jobs in today's job market,” noted Mark P. McKenney, Chair of the Library Board of Rhode Island. “Even jobs that don't involve computers, such as cashiering or greeting customers, do require applicants to submit their information online.”

Some patrons who took advantage of their local libraries' offerings had never used email before. At the same time, many people who had been in white-collar jobs for years found themselves looking for work after not having needed to update their resume for several years. (93.8% of respondents had helped patrons with resume writing).

As Rhode Island librarians recognized their communities' needs, two-thirds were able to create new programs and resources, including:

- computer classes that taught how to craft resumes using Microsoft Word and then send those resumes by setting up and using email accounts
- career counselor sessions focusing on resume building and job interview techniques
- brochures and handouts with recommended books and web sites, as well as resume and job search tips
- web pages and wikis with links to additional career sites and information
- purchases of new resume and cover letter books to meet increased demand

All of these job search aids were provided free of charge to library users, many of whom are struggling after layoffs or salary reductions. Nearly three-quarters of libraries had also helped people with public assistance applications such as unemployment benefits, food stamps, and TDI.

The Library Board of Rhode Island (LBRI) is a statewide group composed of citizens and representatives from libraries of all types. LBRI advises the Office of Library and Information Services on policy issues, supports legislative initiatives, and acts as an advocacy group on behalf of libraries.

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