Libraries Connect Communities:
Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2009-2010
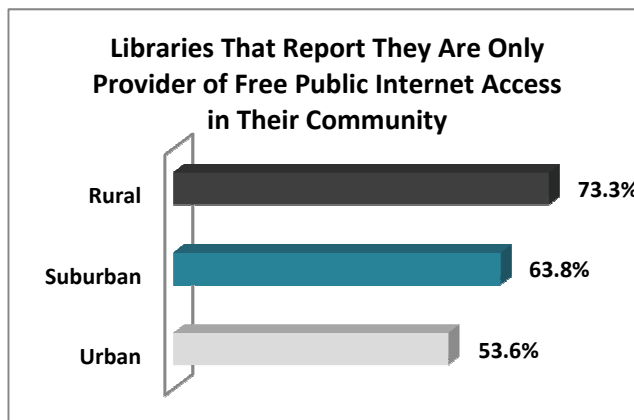### www.ala.org/plinternetfunding

KEY STUDY RESULTS & FINDINGS

Public Libraries Function as Community Technology Hubs

Libraries have actively adapted to their new role as the "one-stop shop" in the digital world by serving as job and career centers and satellite offices for e-government services while continuing to support lifelong learners. Most libraries report use of technology resources increased over the past year.

- 99% of public libraries offer free access to computers and the Internet.

- 67% of public libraries report that they are the only source of free public access to computers and the Internet in their communities.

- On average, public libraries provide 14.2 public computers per location, up from 11 computers one year ago.

Libraries That Report They Are Only Provider of Free Public Internet Access in Their Community

Rural	73.3%
Suburban	63.8%
Urban	53.6%

- 76% of libraries report public use of Internet computers increased in 2009.

- 82% of libraries provide free wireless access, up from 37% only four years ago.

- 88% of libraries provide access to job databases and other job opportunity resources.

Libraries Ensure Access to Online Government Services

Libraries Reporting That Staff Help Patrons Access E-Government Services

51.9% → 54.1% → 78.7%

2007-08   2008-09   2009-10
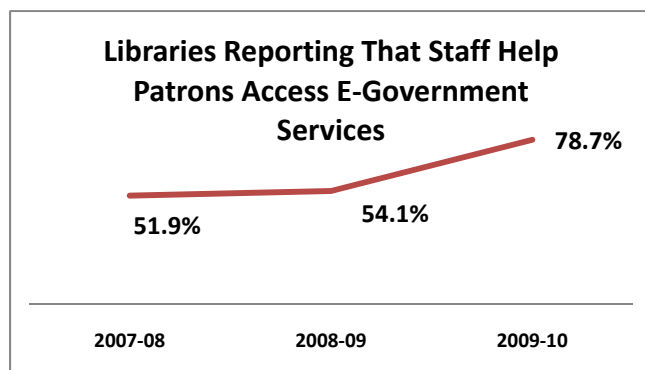
Libraries find that their involvement in government services is both increasing and changing. Today's public libraries are helping solve patrons' problems with their understanding of government agency programs:

- 79% percent provide assistance to patrons applying for and accessing e-government services, up 23% from last year.

- Two-thirds of public libraries provide assistance to patrons completing government forms.

- 21% partner with other local, state or federal agencies to provide e-government services, up from 13% just one year ago.

Libraries Support Digital Literacy and Lifelong Learning
Public libraries are both an access point and a learning center for those who need training on how to use computers and navigate the Internet. This training is increasingly essential to gain or upgrade computer knowledge for new employment opportunities.

"*Beginning computer skills are especially important for dislocated workers*," said Brian Clark, operations director for the Nashville Career Advance Center. *"Having computer skills won't necessarily get a person the job, but it means the door won't be slammed in their face [before they can start the application process]."*
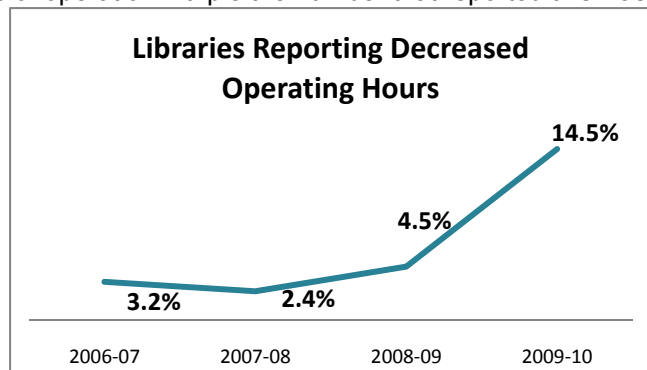
- 89% of libraries offer formal or informal technology assistance to library users, and 24% offer one-on-one technology training by appointment.

- 59% of urban libraries provide formal technology classes, including basic computer skills, software use and online job-seeking.

- 26% of all libraries – and 40% of urban libraries – report patron use of classes increased in 2009.

- A majority of all libraries offer free online access to: subscription databases such as programs that provide free standardized practice tests like the SAT and GRE (95%); online homework resources (88%); audio content (83%); digital reference (72%); and ebooks (66%).

Access to Library Services Declines
At the same time, libraries have expanded available technology resources and public demand has climbed, budget declines are leading libraries to close their doors more often and reduce the number of staff available to assist library patrons.

- 15% of all libraries report decreased hours of operation – triple the number that reported this was the case one year ago. This translates to lost hours at more than 2,400 library branches. Nearly one quarter of urban libraries report reduced hours.

- 59% of libraries report insufficient staff to meet patron job-seeking needs.

- Thirteen state library agencies (28%) report they were aware of public library closures in their states in 2009.

Libraries Reporting Decreased Operating Hours

Year	Percent
2006-07	3.2%
2007-08	2.4%
2008-09	4.5%
2009-10	14.5%

- A majority (56%) of libraries report flat or decreased operating budgets in FY2010, up from just over 40% in FY2009.