

Building Rural Libraries and Community Development

PURPOSE: Reinforce the relevance of librarians in the community by providing a sustainable virtual network of economic and community development resource providers previously unavailable to rural librarians.

“There is a tremendous power in the library. The library is a force. When the library can be used as a launching pad for economic development, that can only serve the library well as well as the community.” -- Anne Craig, Director, Illinois State Library

“Public libraries are natural partners in local economic development efforts. They are usually centrally located in a community and provide a variety of resources designed to foster human growth and development, promote early literacy and school readiness, and develop workforce capacity.” -- Christine Hamilton-Pennell. IIRA Research Report, Winter 2008, Vol 18, Issue 10.

“Investment in public libraries not only benefits individuals, but it also strengthens community capacity to address urgent issues related to economic development.” -- Urban Libraries Council (2007). Making Cities Stronger.

“...libraries must create partnerships with the other players in local economic development efforts and take an active leadership role in reaching out to the business community.” -- Christine Hamilton-Pennell. IIRA Research Report, Winter 2008, Vol 18, Issue 10.

Supporting Organizations

- ▶ Western Illinois University Libraries
http://www.wiu.edu/library/info/info_web.sphp?id=233
Contact: Phyllis Self, Dean of Libraries, P-Self@wiu.edu
- ▶ Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, <http://www.iira.org/>
Contact: Timothy Collins, Assistant Director, T-Collins@wiu.edu
- ▶ Alliance Library System, <http://www.alliancelibrarysystem.com/>
Contact: Kitty Pope, Executive Director, kpope@alliancelibrarysystem.com

To address concerns surrounding the future of rural libraries, Western Illinois University along with the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (IIRA) at WIU, Alliance Library System, and the Western Illinois Entrepreneurship Center (WIEC) collaborated to find solutions for keeping these community institutions viable and productive. Technology offers rural libraries the chance to take the lead in assisting citizens; business leaders and public offices build their communities. An LSTA grant for \$37,248 was awarded in November 2007 to “Building Rural Libraries and Communities” as a pilot program to create a sustainable virtual network of resource providers.



The Building Rural Libraries and Communities Program

- ▶ Helps rural public librarians learn about successful best practices used elsewhere,
- ▶ Provides tools and training to rural librarians to become more knowledgeable about resources to facilitate local community and economic development,
- ▶ Builds a regional consortium of library consultants, local librarians, and community agencies to support community enhancement initiatives, including WIU Libraries, Alliance Library Systems (ALS), IIRA, and the Western Illinois Entrepreneurship Center (WIEC) to:
 - provide pilot training programs to build capacity to respond more effectively to queries about entrepreneurship and community development.
 - promote rural libraries as crucial access points for information needed to support effective public and private develop decisions.
 - enhance rural libraries' roles as local public spaces to hold meetings, educational training, and other activities related to community development and building a culture for entrepreneurship.
 - provide two-way video capabilities to enhance the libraries' internet capacity for the librarians and their patrons.

Participating Libraries

- ▶ Beardstown Houston Memorial Library
<http://www.beardstown.lib.il.us/library/>
- ▶ Carthage Public Library District
<http://www.carthage.lib.il.us/>
- ▶ Chillicothe Public Library District
<http://www.chillicothepubliclibrary.org/>
- ▶ Eureka Public Library District
<http://www.eurekapl.org/>
- ▶ Farmington Area Public Library District
<http://www.farmingtonpublic.org/>
- ▶ Galesburg Public Library
<http://www.galesburglibrary.org/>
- ▶ Havana Public Library District
<http://www.havana.lib.il.us/library/>
- ▶ Kewanee Public Library District
<http://www.kewaneelibrary.org/>
- ▶ Macomb Public Library District
<http://www.macomb.lib.il.us/library/>
- ▶ Toulon Public Library District
<http://www.toulonpld.org/>

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Website:

www.alliancelibrarysystem.com/rural