

Emerging library trends

Library offers everything digital and help navigating Artificial Intelligence

Wow! 2023 just began, and here we are, closing in on the holidays already. I struggle with the shorter hours of daylight, and it's the time of the year when I'd better run any errands on my way home because, once there, I don't want to go out again. Thank goodness for Christmas lights!

If you're feeling housebound, remember there's always something going on at the library. You'll find our monthly Pioneer ad in the edition distributed on the last Wednesday of the month. Our library newsletters are also available in print, at the library, and around town. You can also send your email information to info@jclcd.org and receive the monthly newsletter in your email inbox.

We pause some of our regular activities in late December, and in January, we're back with information literacy classes at area schools, weekly story times, and other activities. We are adding Saturday adult digital literacy classes this winter. Our winter speakers series, "Talk About," is scheduled for January-March. And then we're headed for spring.

We, librarians, do our best to keep up with public library trends and advances – the evolving functions, services, and programs, and creating flexible spaces. Today, I'm sharing a few emerging technology trends.

What are some emerging public library trends?

1. Digital everything

Before I came to the Jefferson County Library, I was a university librarian with a 100% digital library. It worked great since most students focused on degree completion and worked during the day. To have online resources available 24/7 was an essential service. One of my goals for our library was to make more resources available to you from your home.

Libraries constantly work to



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THE LIBRARY
— Jane Ellen Innes

meet today's patrons' evolving needs with digital resources, including eBooks, audiobooks, digital journals, and databases. These online resources allow users to access a wide range of materials from anywhere, at any time, with just a library card and an internet connection. Users can borrow and return these materials online, eliminating the need to visit the library physically. This 24/7 accessibility caters to the diverse schedules of library users, making reading materials available whenever needed.

2. Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines. It is an advanced technology run by algorithms, computers, or robots that use real-time data to simulate human intelligence. Remember Watson, the Jeopardy robot? He was first created in 2010, and since then,

AI has advanced into a sophisticated tool. Today, artificial intelligence is programmed to think, act, and respond just like an actual, live human. It can be applied to all fields, from agriculture to medicine to businesses and libraries.

I'm pretty tech-savvy, yet I've been slow to embrace AI; I think it's because the topic is daunting when there is so much to learn and no idea where to start. I believe libraries should provide value-added services and, in this case, can sift through the information and share it in smaller bites. (I guess that means we will need to research the applications of AI and how it can help you and me.)

ChatGPT is a well-known natural language processing tool driven by AI technology. The language model can answer questions and compose emails, essays, and code. It's free today, but moving to a subscription model in February 2024, I'm sure others will follow. I'm thinking about how to provide access to services like these with library card access.

Even with the many new

technologies becoming available, don't be fooled into assuming that the traditional role of public libraries as repositories of books is a thing of the past. In a recent column for Publishers Weekly, data showed that most library patrons visit the library expressly to check out books, with activities like using free WiFi or library computers trailing behind. Lending materials is the library's #1 service.

There's value in both digital materials and resources and print materials. Our job at the library is to ensure that the needs of all of our technology-diverse patrons, from newbies to early adapters, are met. That's one reason we are launching digital literacy classes this winter. Topics might include setting up email, how to evaluate information, internet safety, or cybersecurity. If there's a topic that you'd like to learn about, send an email to info@jclcd.org and let us know.

Building Expansion Update

My January column will be an update on the progress of our

building expansion project. We are scheduling community input sessions in Madras, Culver, and Warm Springs for January/February. Please reach out through email (info@jclcd.org) or by phone (541.475.3351) if you'd like us to share an in-person update with your group.

December Events, Activities, and Movies

Most of our weekly programs continue through Friday, December 22. Regular programs resume in 2024. Please check out the event calendar on our website for details. There are no charges for any of our programs.

December 8 – The Muppet Christmas Carol @ 4:00 p.m.

December 15 – Barbie @ 7 p.m.

December 22 – Noche de Cine los Viernes @ 7:00 p.m.

The holidays are always a time to reflect, regroup, refresh, and then restart. Happy holidays to each of you. We're looking forward to an interesting and exciting 2024.

"I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year." — Charles Dickens