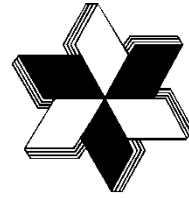




# ***CITY NEWS***



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## **GRANT HELPS PUBLIC COMPUTING AT LIBRARY**

Knights Foundation Grant Brings Wi-fi, Expands Computing Services

The Wichita Public Library will benefit greatly from a \$122,500 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The generous grant was announced today at the Westlink Branch Library in a media conference with the Knight Foundation's Local Program Director Anne Corrison, City Council Member Jeff Longwell, Wichita Public Library Board of Directors Secretary Melissa Alley, Director of Libraries Cynthia Berner Harris, and Juanita Iniguez, a registered nurse and customer of the Library's computer services.

This grant is "another example of the public-private partnerships that characterize our great city and made Wichita an All-America City in 2009," said Council Member Jeff Longwell. "The goal of this grant – to help narrow the digital divide – is truly transformational. This is particularly needed during these tough economic times when an increasing number of residents need access to information and services that will help them manage the challenges and access the opportunities of global competition."

Use of services and resources has increased dramatically at the Library during the past year, with circulation of materials occurring at rates 25 percent higher than last year's levels. "What has changed most dramatically about our public computer use is the number of people making use of this library service for employment-related activities," said Wichita Public Library Board of Directors Secretary Melissa Alley. "A survey conducted earlier this year showed that nearly 50 percent of sampled users were using the Library's public computing services for purposes relating to jobs, job hunting or business activity. Just over 10 percent - and as many as 18 percent in one branch location – were also using computers for tasks relating to claiming unemployment benefits."

The grant will enable the Library to offer wireless internet access, add computers to expand the amount of public access computing available in libraries, develop a mobile computing lab to teach technology classes at branch libraries, and update curriculum for computing classes, including self-paced tutorials accessible at all locations. "Each of the grant components has been a long-standing need of the Wichita Public Library. Now, with the help of the Knight Foundation, our Library's capacity for providing public computing and access to online information will better match customer demand for these services," said Alley.

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