



LIBRARY A VITAL TOOL FOR JOB SEEKERS

Hard financial times are boom times for public libraries, experts say, noting that scanning computerized job banks and filing résumés via the Internet largely have replaced the old regimen of burning shoe leather and knocking on doors. In Houston, visitors at some library branches have increased by more than 10% from the last fiscal year. More than half the city's libraries have seen increases, and staffers no longer are surprised to find job hunters waiting at the doors when they open. "It's definitely taking place. All over the country, usage of public libraries has increased as the economy has come down," said American Library Association President-elect Camila Alire. She cited an association study revealing that library patronage jumped 8% during the 2001 recession. "The numbers probably will be bigger across this recession," she said. Libraries, both as a center for job-finding resources and for free entertainment, offer job seekers "the best bang for their buck," Alire said. Branches offer visitors free computer use, wireless Internet connections should they bring their own laptops, and, in many cases, free computer classes in English and Spanish.

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