



Appendix A:

Library Spotlight: Tips & Techniques

Tip #1

Take a low-tech alternative to time-management software.

The Modoc County Library operates five branches in the Northern California county and only has funds to pay six full-time staffers. Modoc doesn't receive any money from the county and could not afford the software it needed.

“Even grants aren't free because you have to have the time to apply for them,” said Modoc County Library staff member Cheryl Baker.

As such, the Modoc County Library had no means to purchase a time-management application, software that controls the amount of time that an individual can use a public computer. As an alternative, the library has implemented a time-management system that's very similar to the process of checking out a book, a solution that didn't require expensive software.

When a patron wishes to use one of the computers, he or she must visit the front desk and sign up for a time slot. A Library staff member then “checks out” the computer and hands the user a slip, which is due back in one hour.

Tip #2

Disk-Protection software equals automatic computer maintenance.

On any given day, dozens of different users with varying levels of technology skills might work on a library's public-access computers. And while more experienced users might remember to leave the computers just as they found them, novices may forget to delete documents they've been working on, neglect to remove software they've installed, or inadvertently contract a nasty computer virus — leaving your library's small staff to clean up the mess.

To minimize the time staffers spend maintaining their public computers, some libraries have chosen to install disk-protection software, an application that automatically reverts a computer to a previous state. Disk-protection programs first take a snapshot of a system in its “clean” state. Then, the disk-protection program's administrator configures the software to automatically shut down each computer at a specific time — say, midnight each day — and restore it to its original state. That way, no matter what changes computer users have made over the course of the day, the machines will return to their original state as soon as they are rebooted.

The Suwannee Regional Library System, which operates eight libraries across three North Florida counties, has had positive experiences using Faronics' *Deep Freeze*, a disk-protection program that offers volume pricing discounts to libraries and nonprofits.

“We've been using Deep Freeze for a little while and really like it,” said Sherry Millington, a staff member at the Suwannee Regional Library System. They have also locked down user profiles to help further strengthen their computer configurations. “We set up a profile that's for the public access [computers with] limited access to administrative type things like getting into the device manager,



that sort of thing. And they're all password protected so that the staff can restart the machines between users to clear everything out and bring everything back to square one."

Tonya Boltz, a staff member at the Keokuk Public Library in Keokuk, IA, said that implementing Deep Freeze was the best technology decision her library has ever made. "It has saved me many headaches," said Boltz. "And it is easy to maintain."

Editors Note: Some of the content for this story comes from [WebJunction](#).

Other popular disk-protection programs include [CenturionGuard](#) — in use at the Garnavillo Public Library in Garnavillo IA — and [Norton Ghost](#).

Tip #3 **Short on space? Build a mobile computer lab.**

The Colorado River Indian Tribes Library, located in Parker, AZ, currently has five public-access computers that are networked and equipped with a high speed DSL Internet connection. The library hopes to expand its lab by adding new machines, but its facilities are too small to accommodate any extra computers.

To help solve this lack-of-space problem, Gil Harper — The Colorado River Indian Tribes Library's Computer Technology Specialist — devised the idea of a mobile computer lab, which would house nine wireless laptop computers. According to Harper, a mobile computer lab would not only give the library more room for computers, but would also bring technology to community residents who can't travel to the library.

"It makes more sense because [some] people don't have transportation," Harper said. "They don't have access to a car." Harper notes that this is a particular problem for the community's senior citizens, a demographic that the library hopes to reach with its mobile computer program.

Harper helped write the grant that secured the funds necessary to purchase the laptops, the software, and the vehicle that will house the lab. Once the computers have been configured and the mobile lab has been set up, it will be driven to six different locations around the community so that residents can access technology in a location that's convenient for them.

The Colorado River Indian Tribes Library is planning an open house where it will unveil the mobile computer labs to the community and its partners, which consist of senior centers and schools.

"We're going to put all our laptops out so people can look at those, and have the vehicle open so they can look at the vehicle. It will be a joining of the community and our partners," said Harper.



Tip #4 **Share your tech tips in a blog.**

While many underfunded libraries lack employees who are proficient with computers, others might be lucky enough to have a staff member with a higher level of technology expertise. If your library employs a person with a wealth of technology knowledge, encourage them to help other libraries by sharing their tips and thoughts in a blog.

Rodney Greensage, an IT consultant who works with 45 libraries in the Alamo Area Library System in southern Texas, started a blog — dubbed the *AALS Techie Corner* — as a quick means of rapidly sharing information with his clients.

We have a newsletter, and I have a column that I do in there,” said Greensage. “But the blog allows me to splurge a little more and to go off on a tangent — so to speak — if I want to.”

In his blog, Greensage has tackled a number of topics, from the latest phishing scams to cutting-edge gadgets. Upon the release of Internet Explorer 7, Greensage tested it out and shared his impressions in his blog, so that libraries could make an informed decision as to whether to download and install the new browser.

“I wanted to download it [Internet Explorer 7] to the virtual PC, test it, find out what it's about, and give information out to the users,” said Greensage. “And the blog really allows me to do that in an easier session than it is to send it out through e-mail.”

Tip #5 **Convert your old computers into thin clients to squeeze life out of them.**

Your library's old computers may not be able to run the latest version of Windows, but they're not junk! In fact, Kinney County Public Library in Brackettville, Texas, with the help of IT consultant Rodney Greensage was able to add eight computers to its lab using systems that would have been destined for the junkyard.

By converting your computer network into what's called a thin client (a network computer without a hard drive that runs its programs from a server), the libraries were able to squeeze life out of old computers and save money at the same time.

“We just needed memory, and we needed to make sure they each had a video card, a network card, mouse, keyboard and monitor. We were able to run a Unix environment terminal services by booting from the CD-ROM,” said Greensage. “We took that library from six public computers all the way up to 14, and it was sharing their DSL.”

Other area libraries are now asking about their own thin clients — not just an overview of the technology, but how to actually set it up. “Individual libraries asking for [thin clients] are definitely capable of starting that,” said Greensage. “And, they know that if they run into issues or problems, they've also got me — that I can either help them out, or if I don't know it, I can find it out.”

So Greensage is talking to another consultant who would train 10 consultants to help Texas State libraries to set up and support their own thin clients.