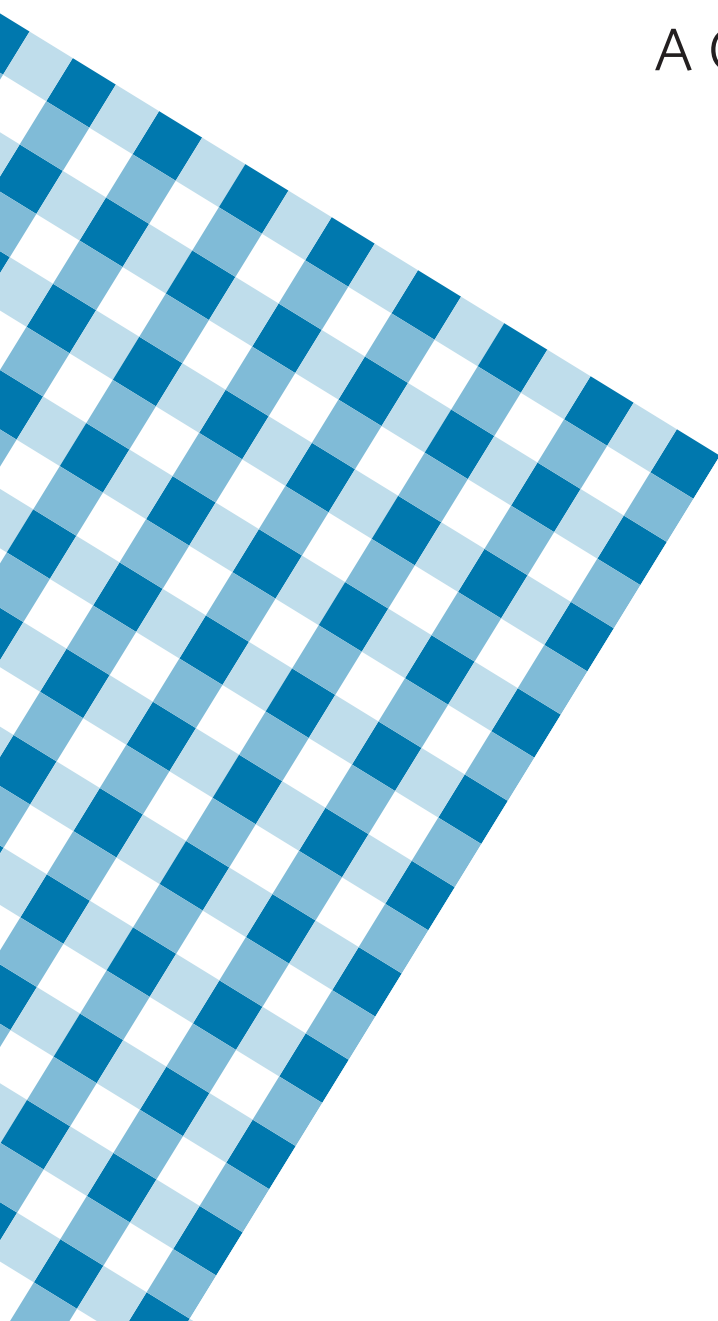


# The Joy of Computing

A Cookbook for Small and  
Rural Libraries



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## Getting Started



*What can we do to maintain public computer security? Where can we go to get technical support for our public computers? How can we help users with limited computer skills? What can we do to ensure a healthy, functioning public computer? How do I get more computer funding?*

These are just a few of the public computing questions being asked by administrators in small, rural libraries across the United States. They are also the questions . . . along with many others . . . that are answered in *The Joy of Computing*. Comprehensive in scope, this Cookbook brings together current best practices, important insights, and useful tools from the community for building and supporting a successful public computing environment. This first section of the Cookbook highlights the MaintainIT Project and its efforts to promote sustainable models of technical support for public computers in libraries throughout the U.S. It also provides a high level overview of the Cookbook and discusses the ways in which to use it to ensure that your public computing environment operates with technical efficiency and is managed at its potential.

### **TOPICS COVERED:**

- About This Cookbook
- How to Use the Cookbook
- An Introduction to the MaintainIT Project



## About This Cookbook

### COOKBOOK ORGANIZATION – WHAT’S INSIDE?

The Joy of Computing contains “how to” details geared toward the technical concerns most pertinent to today’s small, rural library. This Cookbook is a collection of recipes based on the ideas and feedback from librarian “Chef’s” throughout the country. Our Chefs in residence are promoting their favorite meal plan and recipes for cooking up a well running computer and happy patrons! For that reason, we’ve compiled a selection of recipes that complement each other — just like a certain appetizer and dessert will make a main dish even better.

The Cookbook is divided into the following core sections:

- **Getting Started** introduces the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation US Libraries Initiative and MaintainIT initiatives. It also discusses the ways this Cookbook can assist you in proactively and creatively supporting public computing and Internet usage in your library.
- **Meal Plan 1: Focusing on Your Ingredients for Success** digs into the steps that rural libraries should take to assess their public computing needs. It also covers the many key factors to consider in building and maintaining a more robust public computing environment, securing appropriate funding, budgeting for technology, and ensuring program sustainability.
- **Meal Plan 2: Meat and Potato Public Computers** contains guidelines for properly configuring the public computing environment, as well as the tools necessary for specific public computing security issues and network maintenance.
- **Meal Plan 3: Volunteers for the Kitchen** offers a concrete set of “how to’s” for recruiting and using public computer support volunteers such as students, accidental techies, retirees, neighbors, etc. It also discusses staff training opportunities and provides a list of useful resources.
- **Meal Plan 4: Computer Culinary Academy—Getting the Technology Training You Need** includes coverage of the training and support resources needed to build your skills and help with further developing your libraries resources
- **Meal Plan 5: Future Menus for Library Technology Service** looks at the strategic thinking needed to effectively plan for and appropriately address downstream public computing needs, resources, and required support.
- **Appendix** includes helpful tools, resources, and guidelines for managing and maintaining your public computers.



## WHO IS THE COOKBOOK FOR?

The Rural Sustainability Project, another effort funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, focuses on issues and challenges that rural library staffs typically identify as obstacles in sustaining public access computing. They have created a continuum to help libraries assess progress towards sustainability.

You can use the Rural Sustainability Continuum to determine where your library is right now, and adapt the Cookbook content to your needs. The Cookbook will be particularly useful for libraries currently in Stages 1-3 of Tech Connections, Upgrade & Maintenance, and Staff Training.

<http://www.webjunction.org/do/DisplayContent?id=11778>

## WHY THIS COOKBOOK WAS CREATED

Rural library staff have a challenging job when it comes to keeping computer systems up and running. Typical issues include:

- Not enough time
- Not enough money
- Limited resources to help with public computers

In response, CompuMentor, and the library community have developed this “how to” Cookbook, which contains a complete set of recipes for efficiently managing your systems.

## WHAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO DO WITH THE COOKBOOK

- Assess system lock-down and disk-protection software.
- Perform routine maintenance—such as installing software updates and patches—to help sustain public computers.
- Direct patrons to instructional resources for those with limited computer literacy skills.
- Find and utilize resources that can assist with your public computers.
- Identify methods for getting appropriate technical support.





## How to Use the Cookbook

You can use this Cookbook in a number of different ways. If you are new to overseeing a public computing environment, you should begin here and work your way through each section in turn. If you are more experienced, but want certain information on a particular topic, you can go directly to the relevant section and review that material.

### COOKBOOK CONVENTIONS

This Cookbook includes two sidebars that contain extra information and useful references.

	<p><b>Notes from a Chef</b> provides real life examples and supporting quotes from library staff involved in sustaining public computing services across the country.</p>
	<p><b>Other Tasty Recipes</b> points you to related subject matter covered in this Cookbook or in other resources.</p>

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN...A NOTE ABOUT WINDOWS

As you will notice, many of the recommendations in this Cookbook are for Windows-based computers. While we don't endorse Windows as the platform of choice, the overwhelming majority of rural libraries with whom we spoke have Windows-based public computers. Thus, it seems to be the most useful platform for the widest audience. In this Cookbook, we discuss some innovative methods of building public computers using other operating systems, such as Linux.

We are also focusing our recommendations on Windows 2000 and XP. While there are libraries that still use Windows 98 and NT computers, you will get better support and security if you upgrade to at least Windows 2000, or Windows XP.

By using these operating systems, you will find you have better security features including firewall and automated security updates. If you upgrade to Windows XP, you will also have the ability to use the free "Windows SteadyState" for disk-protection and workstation lockdown.

Microsoft has also distributed a new operating system called "Windows Vista". You can keep updated on the strengths and challenges of this system by reviewing **Rodney Greensage's blog at :**

[http://aals-techie-blog.blogspot.com/2007\\_03\\_01\\_archive.html](http://aals-techie-blog.blogspot.com/2007_03_01_archive.html)



## An Introduction to the MaintainIT Project

### BACKGROUND

The MaintainIT Project is an effort of CompuMentor, home to TechSoup, a non-profit serving fellow nonprofits and public libraries with technology information, resources, and project donations. Funded by a three-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation US Libraries Initiative, the MaintainIT Project ([www.maintainitproject.org](http://www.maintainitproject.org)) focuses on proliferation and adoption of best practices for maintaining public computers at libraries in 18 states that receive hardware upgrade grants from the foundation. The ultimate goals of the MaintainIT Project are to increase the number of libraries with functioning, regularly maintained public computing services and to strengthen their capacity for ongoing self-support of public computing, at both the individual library and regional library system levels.

The MaintainIT Project goals are rooted in the belief that public libraries can build on tremendous existing resources to create a rich body of technical knowledge. It involves getting the right people together, giving them the opportunity to share their learnings, and communicating the results in the most relevant and usable format.

### THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION US LIBRARIES INITIATIVE

Since the late 1990's, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation US Libraries Initiative has partnered with U.S. public libraries in their efforts to make public computing available to all library users. To this end, the foundation's U.S. Libraries Initiative has given grants to over 11,000 libraries resulting in installation of over 47,000 computer "packages" including suites of software (e.g., Internet, productivity, children's and educational material), training for librarians, and long-term technical assistance. Today, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation US Libraries Initiative continues to support public libraries and provide access to information technology that can improve health, educational, and economic opportunities. The foundation also helps public libraries access the necessary tools to regularly upgrade their computers and receive the training and technical assistance they need.

<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/UnitedStates/USLibraryProgram/default.htm>

### COMPUMENTOR PROGRAMS

CompuMentor conducts a range of major programs on the national, international, and the local level. It powers the nonprofit technology web site TechSoup.org ([www.techsoup.org](http://www.techsoup.org)) and its distribution service for donated and discounted technology products, TechSoup Stock ([www.techsoup.org/stock](http://www.techsoup.org/stock)). It also collaborates with local and regional partners to bring technology implementation and support to nonprofit organization through the Healthy & Secure Computing program (<http://www.techsoup.org/toolkits/hsc/>).