

Not the Same Old Shhh!

BY JODI L. BUMGARNER

VISITED THE LIBRARY LATELY? You know, the place with dusty bookshelves, study carrels and librarians who shush you if you talk above a whisper? You may be surprised.

Even though I've worked at the Westerville Public Library for more than eight years—in several different positions—I'm still surprised when people think that the internet has made the library obsolete.

While technology gives people the capability to carry hundreds of books around on their phones, today's libraries offer much more. The truth is, libraries have evolved to meet the needs of the community. Not only is the library a one-stop repository of knowledge, but it also is a community center where people of different backgrounds and socioeconomic status can come together.

Want to use a 3-D printer or learn Somali? Get an art print to decorate your wall, grab a cup of coffee, play a video game or just just—gasp!—read a book or magazine? Patrons can do all that and more. And although the library does offer quiet study areas, shushing is kept to a minimum.

Our librarians are information curators and technology specialists. But the basic purpose remains the same: to help people learn new skills and help them connect. We bring people together and continuously add access to emerging tools.

During our children's programs, the library parking lot is filled to capacity. It is a popular spot for teens to hang out after school and during the summer, and offers programs aimed especially at them. The computer lab is always occupied. We circulate more than 40,000 items—such as books, DVDs, CDs and children's puzzles—a week.

As a community resource, the library has something for everyone, and best of all, most of these resources are free with a library card.



JODI L. BUMGARNER is a coffee services associate at the Westerville Public Library. For more information about library services and programs, go to westervillelibrary.org.



We even have some services patrons may not be aware of:

- Do you visit the library because you don't have internet access at home? Check out one of our hotspots and take the internet with you.
- Want to encourage an introverted child to read? Make a Saturday appointment with our therapy dog and read him/her a picture book.
- Staging a home you're trying to sell? Bored with your décor? Take one of our art prints off the wall to check out for a month.
- Craving a snack in the middle of a job hunt or studying for an exam? Stop by the coffee and snack bar to grab an energy drink or a fresh-baked cookie.
- Rode your bike to the library? Check out a bike lock for on-site use so your ride will be here when you're ready to go home.
- Want to learn more about Pinterest or how to make money on eBay? Having trouble understanding Microsoft Office? There's a class for that.
- Do you want to learn another language or find out more about your ancestors? Find out the safety rating for a new car you're considering? Our subscription databases offer access to Mango Languages, Ancestry.com and *Consumer Reports*.
- Many libraries allow patrons to download audiobooks and e-books.



COURTESY WESTERVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY (2)

Patrons can check out art prints from the collection (left) or fuel up at the coffee and snack bar (above).

But the Westerville Public Library also subscribes to Freegal, a streaming music service, and Zinio, which puts popular magazines on a smartphone or tablet. Comic book or manga fan? Check out Comics Plus for hundreds of downloadable titles.

- Want to be more energy-efficient? Check out an electricity usage monitor, which allows the user to measure the power consumed by household appliances and determine the actual cost.
 - Have a book club? Our book discussion kits contain seven copies of the book, plus an instructional guide that includes reviews, author information and discussion questions. If you don't feel like starting your own, the library has several to choose from, including our "Page Turners" virtual book club (no meetings!).
 - Need something notarized? We have several notaries on staff. Just call and make a free appointment.
 - The library doesn't just do high-tech. We offer a variety of craft classes, such as painting, sewing and crochet, an open chess club, ethnic cooking classes and more.
- Public libraries are remarkably adaptable institutions. Learning tools, services and information access are changing rapidly. So if you haven't been to the library lately, stop by. You might be surprised.