

Public Abstract

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The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate the impact of technology on organization change in public libraries. Over the last 12 to 15 years, public access computers have been introduced into public libraries of all sizes. Once the public access computers were connected to the Internet, the computers have brought into the public library patrons that had not previously used the services there. The main research questions were 1) How has the public library culture changed since the introduction of computers for patrons use? 2) What adjustments were necessary to deal with the influx of computers and other technology in public libraries? 3) Have public access computers changed the way the library is organized and how it was staffed?

Using qualitative methods through semi-structured interviews at 14 Midwest medium sized libraries the researcher determined three main themes focusing on city government, facilities and services, and organizational change. Many of the libraries are housed in older facilities that are not meant for computer technology to support public access computers. The facilities have had to be retrofitted in creative ways. The public libraries also provide a wide range of services.

City government has not always adequately funded public libraries and the public access computers. The lack of financial support has become a major road block for some of the libraries in the study and prevents them from updating computer hardware and software for their patrons and community.

Lastly, resistance to change has been a large influence upon the introduction of computer technology in public libraries. While public access computers are actually not the first technology introduced into the library, it has had a large impact upon the day to day processes and staffing in the libraries.