

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES

MS. BOONE: Hello. I am Mary Boone. I am the state librarian in North Carolina. Our state library is located in Raleigh, our capital city, and we provide not only a library for citizens and for state government but also we do work with public libraries all over our state. It was from this library development program that really sprang forth our program that we call the Job Search Workshop.

During the winter this year, as the economy began to become more and more problematic, we saw that more and more of our public libraries across North Carolina were finding a lot of people coming in, needing to use computers, needing to look for jobs. As we know so many jobs can only be applied for online and more and more as they lost their jobs had less and less access to the Internet at home. They were giving up their cable service and their Internet access and, in some cases, people never had a computer at home. The interesting thing we found is that some of these were long term employees who were losing jobs after many years, who had not applied for a job in a long time, and not only did not have the equipment, the computer, the Internet, they didn't really have the skills that are necessary to apply for a job online. Just to know how to use the computer and apply for a job.

We came up with the idea, in fact, our secretary of Cultural Resources, Linda Carlisle, came on the job in January after the election of our governor, Beverly Perdue, and Secretary Carlisle said even though we are cutting back on our budgets right now at the state level, this is too important for us not to address. So, with her support and with support also from our North Carolina Department of Commerce, we put together a small funding package that enabled us to provide nine workshops across North Carolina.

North Carolina is a very wide state so we find that we always do things at least in three different areas. So many people in our public libraries have had their travel budget cut so much that they aren't able to travel to the workshop so we decided we were going to do as many as nine. This is a program we created ourselves, our library development program. Our chief of library development and our various library development consultants got together, looked at some of the things that were already out there being done by libraries including libraries here in North Carolina. You know, putting together some resources to help with job searching.

I think what really created the most success for this program was then we went to our colleagues at the job link career centers. These are located all over the state and we partnered with them, not just financially. They gave

us a little money to do the program from the Department of Commerce, but they became an integral part of the program. In all nine locations where we have these one-day workshops we brought together not only public librarians but also people from the local job link center of the local employment security commission office. We have them interact together as we looked at resources and then after lunch we had a panel at which these people whose job it is to help people find jobs, talked about what they do, where they are located.

We also included community colleges in this because we find many people who become unemployed often will go back for additional job training and there are some special programs at community colleges around our state.

This happened over a period of several weeks in March. We did our nine programs. We got very good feedback from librarians. Something like 94 percent of the librarians that they learned a great deal or learned something at least in these workshops. But also we had really established good linkages with our partners in the employment security commission and North Carolina job link career centers.

What happened after that is what I find particularly interesting. All across the state we have stories now of local public libraries partnering with their

local job link centers or their local employment security commissions, for example, in Davidson County there is an organization called Davidson Works. Well now Davidson Works is working out of all of the -- I think there are four or five main libraries and four branches in Davidson County and each one now has Davidson Works workshops that are being done together and this is a partnership that I think will last long after this immediate crisis is over.

We have also other libraries that are producing information specifically on searching for jobs. Print resources you can look at and there is one that has done a checklist on doing an online application. We created a wiki so that in addition to the resources that we included in the training program some of our other libraries are now coming in and posting their resources. That is how I know in part about some of these various handouts and other educational materials that are being produced.

Another important partner in this program that I want to make sure to mention is NC LIVE. NC LIVE is consortium of electronic resources that is available in our state to all public and academic libraries. Electrical databases is really how it started but there is really much more than that now: eBooks, electronic books, audio books, reference resources, all kinds of things as well as some of the major databases. Already on NC LIVE available to anyone

with a library card in North Carolina is the learning express library, which is wonderful for helping people do practice tests and tutorials for taking tests that they may need to pass in order to enter a new profession. In addition to that, they also have career library that helps people with career research learning how to explore new areas of employment.

NC LIVE has been a good partner. They looked at the eBook collection and decided that some of their books were not as up to date as they needed to be and in time for this workshop they ordered 200 new titles of electronic books that are now available on writing resumes and all this sort of thing. So this supplements the books that are available in local libraries and it also, I like to say, it levels the playing field across the state. Even if you are in a small rural library, through NC LIVE you have access to all the same materials that someone in one of our major cities like Charlotte might have.

We fully realize that as long as NC LIVE is there their resource is there. But if you don't have good broadband you can't use them all. We have videos from PBS, for example, on our NC LIVE and if you don't have good broadband you can't look at a PBS video. A teacher can't show a PBS video in her school, for example. We are very, very interested in the broadband stimulus package.

It really didn't cost that much to do this program. What it cost was staff time and now with our budget reductions we can't do as much travel as we normally do. Our library development librarians are usually traveling all over North Carolina. So we really focused our energies on this one program. We brought our staff together and we created it. We looked at things that other people have done, but we created our own program internally and then we went out and carried it out ourselves. We did the whole thing really from start to finish. In many ways it is more rewarding that way, I will say, but it wasn't that difficult to do.

We established several goals. One of the things we always try to work toward in North Carolina is creating equality of services across our state. We are the 10<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the nation with over 9 million people and we have some of the most highly sophisticated biotechnological industries and then we have lots of rural farmland or mountains where there is not as much population and there is more poverty. So we always are trying to balance out access in our state. By going all around the state we were able, I think, to really bring some resources where they needed to be, but one of the things that was so surprising about this the people in the urban areas who are already doing some of this said they benefited from this

program as well because they learned more. They were able to share what they were doing but they were also able to learn from others because they had not necessarily made some of these community contacts that I was talking about earlier.

One of the things that we discovered when we were doing our job search workshop is that many of the people who were looking for jobs not only do not have computers at home but also do not necessarily have the skills that are necessary to use the computer to do an online application or an online resume or even an online email in which to send forward the resume and application for a job.

One of the things that public libraries do so effectively is training courses in the use of computers and libraries have been doing this for a decade or more all across the country and certainly all across North Carolina. So that we find that people coming in looking for jobs are also looking for skills. They need to know how to use the computer and we find people coming in sometimes are very shy.

I heard a wonderful story about a woman who came in the local public library who had worked at a textile mill for 33 years. She had never touched a computer. She didn't know how to use the mouse and she was embarrassed and a little unhappy about all this, but after spending 10

or 15 minutes with one of our library staff members she was happy. She was comfortable. She was laughing and she says 'now I will be glad to come back and work with you on this.' Before she left she was signed up for some basic computer training courses.

Not only are people learning how to apply online they are actually acquiring some skills that will make them more employable through public libraries, through our computer training courses, and this is something we do for people of all ages so that sometimes older people who never really developed computer skills like this textile worker who really didn't ever need them and now in sort of what should be the twilight of her career she finds herself having to enter a whole new era in a workplace. It is very interesting. It is also very rewarding work for public librarians.

We are planning our budget for the coming year so we are able to plan what programs we will do. Unfortunately, we have had to take budget cuts during the middle of our operating year this year. So basically we have stopped traveling and we have stopped doing training programs that we normally would do all year long. What we found was so exciting I think about the job search workshop is that instead of feeling like, 'oh well we can't be as normal' we really focused everyone onto this one project,

our library development staff that is. They were able to really get together and work together to focus on what we felt was the greatest need. We have created a model that not only is available to other states but that we will use again because we want to do additional training programs like this that will help with things like small businesses, development, and personal finance development, this kind of thing. We want to do more training programs. We have given up some of the things that we normally do, but we feel very good about the fact that we have something that really is resonating all across our state and that continues to...as our wiki is constantly updated that continues to give us more and better resources to make available to our public libraries.

One of the things that has been interesting about doing this job search program is that we've gotten big publicity about it not only here in North Carolina in local newspapers where we were having our workshops but in some of the national library media and as a result we have heard from several states all over the country as far west as California and the Midwest and the Southeast. Other states that are interested in doing exactly the same kind of programs, other state libraries are doing it for public libraries in their states, but also from public librarians who are interested in being able to do the kind of

formalized program. I think that is probably the key.

Public libraries have been doing this kind of work for a very long time, but it was only through this program that people became truly intentional about it. They created specific resources, Web sites, handouts, training programs and there were a lot of other libraries around the country, state libraries as well as public libraries that were interested in seeing what we had done because there is no need to reinvent the wheel when you can look and see what someone else has done and then adapt it to your local circumstances. So we were very excited about that and had a lot of fun talking with colleagues all around the country and sharing information. We are learning from them as well as they are learning from us so that was particularly rewarding for us.