

More than Books

“You can get *that* at the library?”

Kilowatt Meters

It is second nature to me to think of the library as “More than Books on a Shelf,” but a friend expressed surprise recently that we check out Kill A Watt devices. These are easy-to-use monitors, supplied in collaboration with the Northwest Audubon, that allow people to measure how much energy an appliance uses and identify energy hogs in the home.

Online Databases

Not everything on the Internet is free! The library subscribes to a number of online databases that could add up to being prohibitively expensive for individuals. For example, you can get access, through the library, to a database of hundreds of magazines and journals that includes the full text of articles. If you want to search “Consumers Reports” for ratings on refrigerators – a paid service – you can do it at no individual charge at the library.

Another wonderful database for students and book club enthusiasts, among others, is the Gale Biography database. Although I find I use it myself most often for biographies of authors, living and dead, it covers anybody who is – or ever was – of some significance.

Thanks to a federally funded grant administered by the Illinois State Library, we’re adding some new databases of particular interest to job seekers, but that’s another whole article.

Meeting Space

When the library board began planning a new library, they wanted it to be a community meeting place. At first, some people were skeptical about their vision. Now, the most common complaint I receive is that we don’t have enough meeting space! Go figure!

In addition to library programs, such as the recently completed American History Lecture Series, which drew a total audiences of 50 to 100 people per program, all sorts of groups and organizations schedule library meeting rooms for their own regular meetings. It is becoming trickier and trickier to fit them all in. Some evenings, I’ve opened the Local History Room so a group can use it as meeting room space.

Don’t just think of the large meeting rooms on the first floor, though. There are two small meeting rooms upstairs that are perfect for one-on-one sessions. I know they were originally intended as study rooms, but I also promote them to business people who may wish to have more private places to meet with employees or clients than their own quarters provide.

A third meeting room upstairs comfortable seats six people or, maybe, eight, if you really like each another.

E-readers

Remember when the library circulated art prints? Although that collection has come and gone, we're doing a booming business now lending e-readers. It is a great way to 'try one before you buy one,' if you're not sure whether you will enjoy reading e-books. You can also sample Nooks and Kindles to get an idea of which you prefer.

Along with e-readers, we're able to lend electronic versions of books to read on e-readers, smart phones, and tablet computers. Thanks to our participation in a consortium of area libraries, the size of our collection of electronic books is growing all the time.

Please let me hear from you if you are frustrated by the wait for an e-book. The titles you want to see are our top priorities, whatever their format.

Library Director Carole Dickerson may be reached by phone at 815-233-3000, ext. 216, or by email at cdickerson@freepubliclibrary.org.