

These days, if you want to read a book, send a note, or apply for a job, most likely, you will reach for some technology to do it. In fact, our society has become so technology oriented that new gadgets come out quicker than many people can learn how to use them. Some people are falling behind in the tech craze and many are turning to a seemingly unlikely resource: their public library.

Libraries are often the only option for free access to computers and the Internet, and the role of tech in libraries is growing beyond just computer access. If you need to learn to use the computer, download an e-book, load an app on your mobile device, or get assistance with your new tech gadget, your community library is the place to be. In Colorado in the past month alone 4,244 people received technology assistance in just 63 libraries.

Taking the place of those old wooden card catalogs and stamped due dates are online catalogs, databases, computers, e-book readers and so much more that allow anyone to explore ideas, information, and stories beyond the printed book. Of course you can still get a great book or magazine to read but these days many Colorado libraries are taking the use of technology to the next level and are focusing on the role that technology can play in fostering creativity, engagement, and creation.

Jamie LaRue, the Douglas County Libraries Director, has created one of the only agreements in the state that allows the library to own (not lease) its e-content. Along with checking out e-books from the library, his library is also supporting writers in e-publishing. For example, LaRue has been working with Jeannette Albersheim, a woman who was on the front during WWII with the Red Cross and has been writing about those experiences. This amazing woman had something important to share: stories that add to the fabric of our history and culture. However, writing about your experiences and having a viable and manageable way to share those stories are two very different things. Albersheim needed assistance to get her stories out and that is exactly what she received from the library in Douglas County. Library staff helped her get a [blog](#) going and is now working with her to get her content up and out into the community.

Albersheim and people across Colorado have something to say, art to share and creations to contribute. What they don't have are the knowledge and skills to get their creative content in a sharable format and out into the world. This is where many librarians are stepping in and supporting content creation in their community in a variety of ways.

Libraries across Colorado are purchasing state of the art technology and offering training to allow individuals to create and learn online tools. For example, the Anythink Wright Farms, part of the Rangeview Library District, just received a grant to install a digital learning lab for video and music production classes and creations. In the San Luis Valley, the Conejos Library District just offered classes on how to create online greeting cards in their newly grant-funded public computer center. In northeast Colorado, the public/school library in Fleming checks out digital cameras and helps people learn to use them to share their photography. This, too, is a grant-funded initiative. These are just a few examples of how libraries are using technology to foster

active and engaged community members, as creative ideas like this are taking place all over the state. Stop by your public library and see what you can create.