

# **THE ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN HELPING CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS FIND EMPLOYMENT**

PRESENTATION BEFORE THE CONNECTICUT STATE LEGISLATURE  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday, February 16, 2016

PREPARED BY:

**ELLEN G. CARTLEDGE-JANPOL, MLS, MBA**

**JETS PROGRAM MANAGER**

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

333 BLOOMFIELD AVENUE, SUITE A

WEST HARTFORD, CT 06117

[ECARTLEDGE@JFSHARTFORD.ORG](mailto:ECARTLEDGE@JFSHARTFORD.ORG)

860-236-1927, EXT. 7120

[WWW.JFSHARTFORD.ORG](http://WWW.JFSHARTFORD.ORG)

AND

**REFERENCE LIBRARIAN**

SIMSBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

725 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CT 06070

[ECARTLEDGE@SIMSBURYLIBRARY.INFO](mailto:ECARTLEDGE@SIMSBURYLIBRARY.INFO)

[WWW.SIMSBURYLIBRARY.INFO](http://WWW.SIMSBURYLIBRARY.INFO)

860-658-7663

Good Evening! I'm Ellen G. Cartledge-Janpol, JETS Program Manager at Jewish Family Services of West Hartford, CT and also Reference Librarian, Simsbury Public Library, Simsbury, CT. I also have the honor of co-chairing the Customer Service Committee of the Connecticut Library Association of which I sit on the Board of Directors. I am also a member of the American Library Association and the Special Libraries Association and former President of the Connecticut Valley Chapter of the Special Libraries Association. I have both an MLS (Master's in Library Science) and an MBA.

I'm wearing three hats this evening. I will talk about the role that public libraries play in assisting Connecticut residents in gaining and keeping employment; how they complement the roles that private organizations, such as the JETS program, play in the employment process; and finally, how public libraries helped me gain employment.

First, let's talk about the role of public libraries in the job-seekers world. Since 2008 when the Great Recession began, public libraries were instrumental in providing access to resources and training for job seekers. They provide technology access and instruction. As the center of their communities, they provide locations for job centers, meeting rooms, and for networking – the lifeline of job-seekers. The Simsbury Library, for example, gives training on Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, free of charge, to anyone. Simsbury is not alone in giving this training. They also provide classes on every aspect of social media – LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter – you name it. With their Technology Learning Center, the job-seeker can come and participate in a class and either learn a new skill or update skills they currently have. When faced with that awful question on a job interview “What have you been doing since you lost your job?” – they can proudly answer that they have been attending classes, updating skills, and keeping current on technology and social media trends. The Simsbury Library also has a very effective Business Resource Center – a local, one-stop location for business information and support. It provides personal service, unique and relevant business programs, and a very carefully selected collection of business resources. And, most importantly, it encourages conversations, collaborations, and networking.

But the public library not only provides resources, librarians can help job-seekers write resumes, prepare for job interviews, provide access to computers, and prepare for Skype interviews. I happen to be getting my Career Development Facilitator certificate, an internationally recognized certificate, that will provide me with more skills to assist the job-seeker in targeting their companies, searching for employment, and identifying and inventorying their skills.

In reviewing the February 2016 calendar of programs at Simsbury, you will see programs on LinkedIn, the professional business networking social media site, and opportunities to meet with SCORE Business Consultants.

These programs are special, but they are not unique to just Simsbury. Review your hometown's library website and you will see similar programs.

Now, I'm putting on my JETS Program Manager hat. JETS, the Jewish Employment Transition Service provided by Jewish Family Services of Greater Hartford, is the largest private networking and employment program for people "in transition" in Connecticut. This non-sectarian program currently reaches over 3000 people throughout Connecticut with its career-oriented programs, its volunteer human resource consultants, and its Employment Opportunities Newsletter. It began as a response to the Great Recession in 2008 and is still growing strong, even though we are supposedly in recovery. We recently entered our seventh year. The program has grown 66% since 2008. We are very proud of our career-oriented presentations given twice-monthly at Beth El Temple in West Hartford. We get top-notch speakers who talk on everything job related – how to write a resume; how to prepare for an interview; what social media sites to use and how to use them. Our evaluation surveys tell us how we are meeting the mark in all areas of job searching.

But we are lacking something: we cannot provide our job-seekers with 24/7 access to business databases and electronic information and most importantly, cannot provide access to free hands-on computer training. Though we provide timely information on business and employment-related topics, we cannot provide our participants with that necessary next step. At this point, I say "hallelujah" for public libraries! We refer our participants, who are often unaware, of the many free services provided by their public libraries. They are so grateful! Every one of

them returns to us with positive feedback about their public libraries and their helpful local librarians. We are scratching each other's backs, but also providing relevant services for these people. The JETS Program also has a sub-program called Job Search Work Teams, which are sponsored by JETS, but meets outside of the JETS. Where can these groups meet on a weekly basis? At your public libraries, naturally. We have groups in Glastonbury, Simsbury, and Newington – all of whom meet at their public libraries.

Finally, I will talk to you about how the public library saved me and gave me the skills to get a job. Again, I will refer you to that wonderful year of 2008, specifically for me December 31, 2008. It was on that day, I was laid off from a good paying, rewarding position at a firm in Hartford. I joined the other millions of Americans who began to participate in the Great Recession. With limited savings, a very ill husband, no immediate job opportunities, and only unemployment and my husband's social security to live on, I needed help. I found it at the Simsbury Public Library.

I didn't live in Simsbury – in fact I lived 45 minutes away – but had heard through the grapevine that Jennifer Keohane, Business Resource Librarian at the Simsbury Library, was on a mission to help unemployed people find work. I called her up; she invited me to come see her that day; and we spoke for two hours. When I left that meeting, I had one thing that had eluded me since I lost my job: “HOPE”. Jennifer provided me with a roadmap as to how to find a job; encouraged me to attend the programs that Simsbury offered; and most importantly, listened to the journey of my life.

The next day, I began to attend every program that Simsbury offered. Though I had good skills in Word and Excel, my PowerPoint was a work in progress and social media was a new term. In fact, one evening Jennifer sponsored a talk at the Library on social media that was electrifying – over 150 people attended, interacted with the speaker, and everyone came away energized and excited about this new media. She was opening the eyes of everyone to what the Library could offer and how it was the center of the community. Jennifer encouraged me to return to my “original” profession – librarianship. Nine months after I was laid off, I had a job at a public library!

So those are the stories of how libraries help job-seekers. You know the stats: In the last year, Internet computers were used 4 million times; 2 million people attended library programs; total public expenditures for Connecticut's Public Libraries: \$195 million. Estimated total value of library services to Connecticut's residents: Over \$715 million!

Public libraries are the best investments the state and towns of Connecticut can make. We help people get back on their feet after being knocked-down by this crazy world. Don't turn your backs on us now by cutting our funding even more when our residents need us.

Thank you.