

Conclusion

When we go through an economic downturn, sacrifices are inevitable. Budgets get cut, funding runs dry, volunteer efforts slow down and jobs are eliminated. For non-profit-driven organizations like libraries, the damaging effects of these cuts can be mitigated by long-term planning, effective budget management, membership in a consortium and most importantly, a creative, open-minded approach that uses employee ingenuity to stretch every dollar to its absolute limit.

While librarians have seen and survived many economic downturns, our current economic crisis poses new challenges. This economic slump, possibly the worst since the Great Depression, is also the first of this magnitude to occur in the Internet age. While the economy has slowed, the rapid development of new Internet technology has not. The technology needs of library patrons keep pace with consumer technology, and while library budgets may fall short, the demand for library technology services

grows. Early reports of expanded use are in the double digits, some as high as 48 percent increases in library usage. This is all exacerbated by the sheer magnitude of the economic downturn, as well as the fact that many librarians were reporting inadequate technology funding for years prior.

We've seen how these problems are affecting librarians, both through anecdotal evidence and raw data. There is no question that we have a major mountain to climb, and that these budgetary problems will probably get worse before they get better. Still, that is not a reason for complacency, or to blindly accept a situation where technology services are reduced, bandwidth is inadequate or hardware cannot be replaced. By adapting and drawing on each other for solutions to address this crisis, libraries can keep pace with the demand for new technology under any circumstances and retain their crucial role as facilitators for technology in communities across the country.