

Google visit to Martin Library sign of change

Your Turn

Robert Lambert
 Guest columnist

York County Libraries will always be more than a place to borrow books. We provide spaces to meet, to exchange ideas, to educate our kids, and so much more. Our view is that the role of a library should always evolve to meet the needs of the communities who rely on our tremendously valued resources and services.

Today, the very nature by which we consume information has transformed. This is evident in all aspects of life, but no more so than the workplace. Fifty years ago, workers spent time using pen and paper to catalogue information. Today, employees use digital spreadsheets and documents to keep track of activity. Local businesses now rely on search engines and social media to connect with customers. Nearly all of us use email to communicate with our colleagues and clients.

Together, the use of these tools is called “digital skills,” and they are ubiquitous in the 21st century workplace. A recent study by Burning Glass and Capital One found that more than 8 in 10 middle-skill jobs – jobs that require a high school diploma – require digital skills. Overall, middle-skill jobs average \$20 per hour. According to the National Middle Skills Initiative, middle skills jobs account to 54% of Pennsylvania’s labor force.

At York County Libraries, our mission is to make sure our community members have access to the training they need to learn digital skills. Throughout the nation, libraries are embracing this new role. In fact, according to the American Library Asso-

ciation, nearly three-quarters of public libraries assist their members with job applications and interviewing skills, 90% help their cardholders learn basic digital skills, and just under half provide access and assistance to entrepreneurs looking to start a business of their own.

We are amplifying this role through a partnership with Grow with Google, the tech company’s initiative to help create economic opportunities for Americans. This week, Grow with Google’s tour stopped at Martin Library for a day of workshops aimed at teaching digital skills to small busi-

See LAMBERT, Page 3D

nesses, job seekers, and anyone wanting to improve their skills. In addition, Google trainers provided librarians and professionals from other organizations with tools and resources to provide ongoing digital skills training to community members.

This is a critical first step. What constitutes as a “digital skill” will continue to change as technology evolves and we find new uses for it in the workplace. At York County Libraries, these kinds of technology-based programs are driving our need to expand our space and digital services at our libraries. The community need is clear. Our libraries need expanded digital media labs and learning

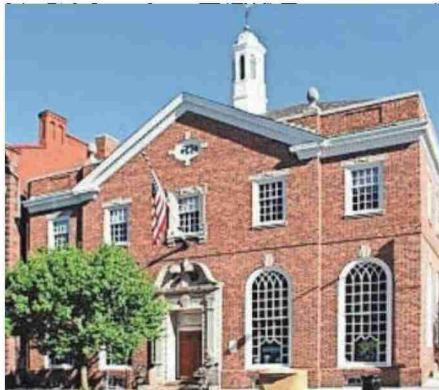
zones. To address this need, York County Libraries has launched a capital campaign to create the transformational centers that community members want and need. Our libraries are in a unique position to inspire York Countians to dream and help them learn the skills needed to discover a career track, succeed in a job interview, or set up their own business. We share a common mission with Google in that we are both



working to equip the workforce of today and tomorrow with the skills needed for success.

Google's visit to Martin Library is indicative of how libraries have changed from being solely a place to check out a book to a place to learn, connect with experts and grow digital skills.

Robert F. Lambert is president of York County Libraries.



Martin Library is the flagship of the York County library system. FILE