MANAGERS OF ACCESS

THEN

With the approach of the dreaded "Y2K" in 1999, the roles of information professionals were changing rapidly. All through the 1990s the world was adjusting to the new digital era, and librarians who had long been the stewards of information in a very physical sense now found themselves not only stewarding that information but having to teach people how to access it.

According to Newton, "There are great opportunities for information professionals to become the key educators in a skills are crucial for the success of individuals and communities in the next century." Information professionals were now having to pivot to being educators rather than merely guides, and doing so in a world that was facing uncertainty in the face of a new millennium.

It is not enough to merely have the knowledge and lead people to it; now generations must learn to use new tools themselves, with information professionals at their back to guide their paths.

NOW

Today's information professional wears many hats (see Figure 1). While they still provide information stewardship and guide patrons towards access and equipment, today they also often find themselves donning the mantle of social worker, assisting patrons with job applications, access to government benefits, and guides them to community charity resources in their time of need.
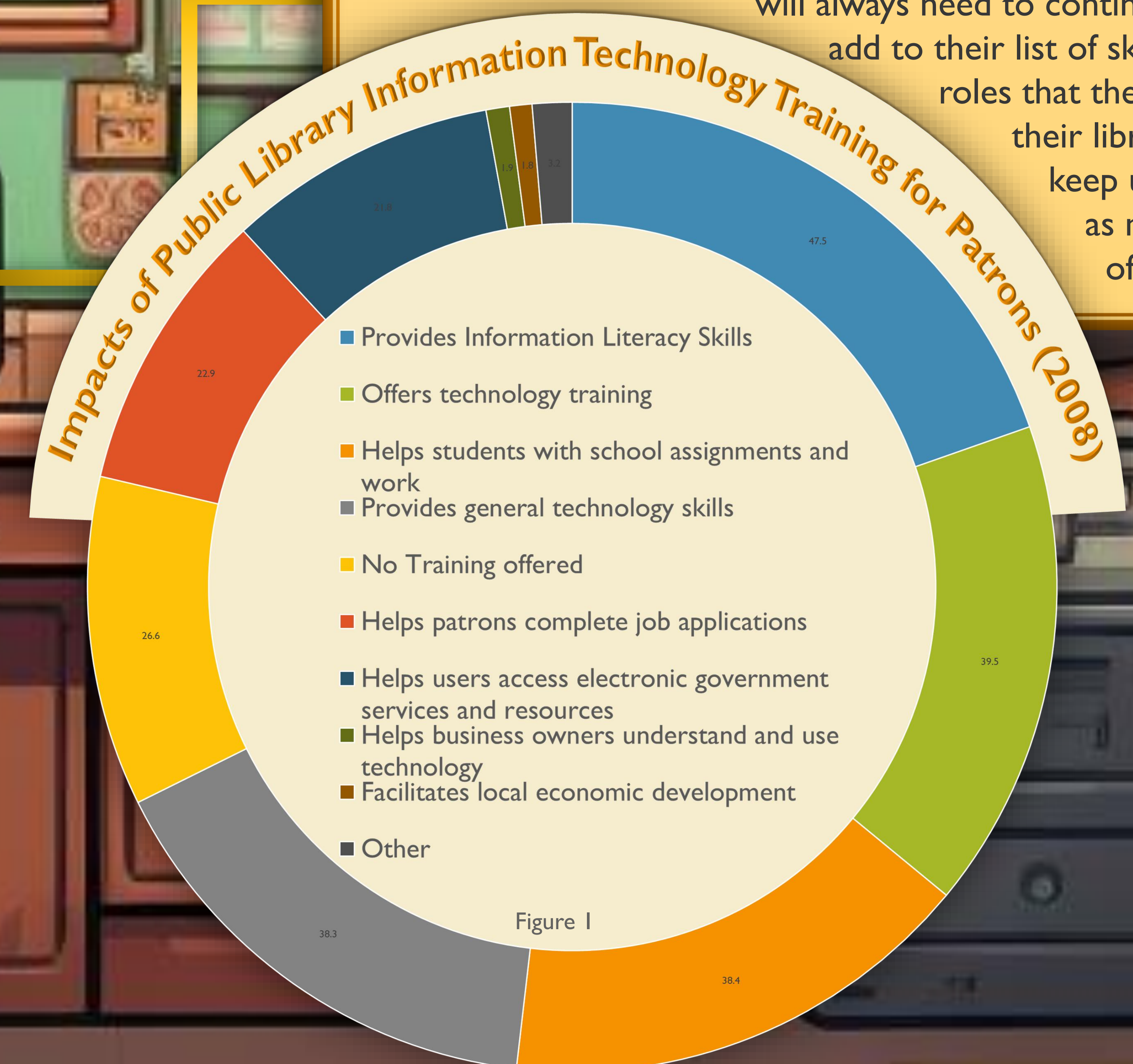
From helping with homework to providing computer classes for children, seniors, and business entrepreneurs, the library is a place for more than books and information professionals have had to adjust their work cycles and training to keep up with the needs of the community and stay relevant in the ever-evolving digital age.

TOMORROW

Tomorrow's information professional will have even more to keep up with, and more than just service it will be crucial to keep up with marginalized populations and underserved communities to ensure equity across their service areas.

Just recently the British Archives has done an introspective look at their own service areas and found issues with racial justice. "It is not enough to watch … and wait for professional bodies and other sector leaders to fix racism in the sector" is as much of a recognition of the issue as it is a call to action (Chilcott, 2021). Racism joins the wall of issues that information professionals will need to tear down not only for their institutions and themselves but for their patrons and volunteers as well. Transphobia, homophobia, ableism, classism, and so many more social social issues are stepping into the much-needed spotlight and will be at the forefront of the kind of services that library information professionals will need to add to their plate in order to continue to serve the community. To remain relevant in changing times, information professionals will always need to continue to add to their list of skills and roles that they play in their libraries to keep up with as managers of access.

Impacts of Public Library Information Technology Training for Patrons (2008)

- Provides Information Literacy Skills
- Offers technology training
- Helps students with school assignments and work
- Provides general technology skills
- No Training offered
- Helps patrons complete job applications
- Helps users access electronic government services and resources
- Helps business owners understand and use technology
- Facilitates local economic development
- Other

Figure 1

References

Background image: MidJourney, Inc. (2023). Midjourney. [AI image generator]/ https://midjourney.com/home

Figure 1: Jaeger, P. T., & Bertot, J. C. (2009). E-government Education in Public Libraries: New Service Roles and Expanding Social Responsibilities. Journal of Education for Library and Information Science, 50(1), 39–49. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40732560

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