Bringing the World of Internet to All Patrons, Including Our Most Rural Missourians

REMOTE ELECTRONIC ACCESS FOR LIBRARIES (REAL) PROGRAM

Program Vision

In collaboration with other publicly funded agencies, the Remote Electronic Access for Libraries (REAL) Program strives to connect public libraries with each other and with schools and universities through the Internet to ensure that public libraries are the center of excellence for information service to their communities.

134
library systems

Program Participation

Today, the REAL program supports **134** of Missouri's estimated **150** public library systems. Supporting Missouri's smallest communities, **87%** of Missouri libraries have fewer than **25** FTE employees and **75%** have fewer than **10**.
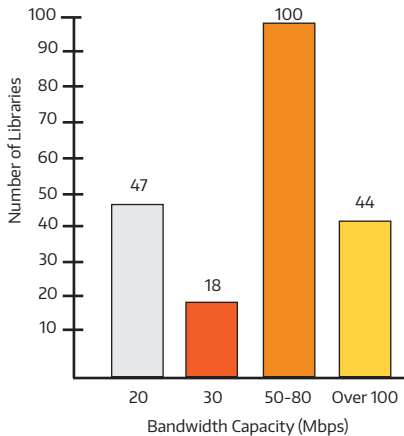
REAL Program Goals

· Extend the "information superhighway" to the local community level in Missouri by providing routine access to public service, civic projects, community information and reference services via an Internet connection to the rest of the nation and the world.

· Provide a basis for interagency collaboration by laying the groundwork for wide-area networking of public libraries throughout Missouri.

· Enhance resource sharing by delivering a wide range of information services to libraries that could not otherwise individually afford them.

· Train the Missouri library community in search tools, procedures and access points for providing high quality services through automation.

· Missouri citizens will have the opportunity to share in the National Information Infrastructure. This means citizens of Missouri will not be left out of the information explosion because they lack the financial resources to provide their own computers and connectivity.

The REAL Program is funded through an appropriation in HB12. This appropriation is made to the Office of the Secretary of State and administered by The Missouri State Library to provide affordable services through the Missouri Research and Education Network (MOREnet) including Internet connectivity, technical training, network consulting and cybersecurity services.
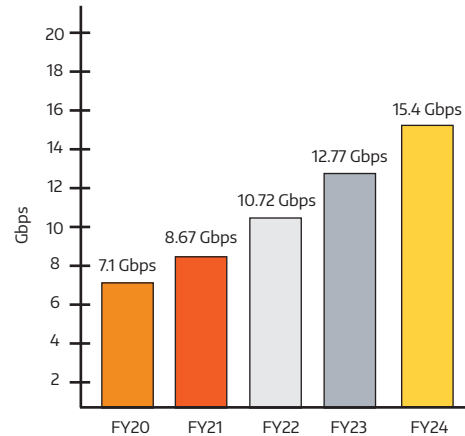
MEASUREABLE IMPACT OF THE REAL PROGRAM

CURRENT BANDWIDTH CAPACITY

Number of Libraries vs Bandwidth Capacity (Mbps)
- 20: 47
- 30: 18
- 50-80: 100
- Over 100: 44

With REAL funding, we have been able to increase close to 70% of REAL library connections to our target of 50 Mbps. In FY 22, only 44% of Missouri Libraries connected with REAL funding had achieved this.

BANDWIDTH GROWTH

Gbps by fiscal year
- FY20: 7.1 Gbps
- FY21: 8.67 Gbps
- FY22: 10.72 Gbps
- FY23: 12.77 Gbps
- FY24: 15.4 Gbps

As technology use continues to expand, the need for bandwidth grows each year. Between FY 23 and FY 24, growth was nearly 20%.

MAXIMIZING FEDERAL DOLLARS
Over the last 5 years, MOREnet has applied for $5.647 million in Federal E-Rate funds on behalf of REAL participating and eligible connected libraries. This funding represents a 74% discount on connectivity costs for REAL libraries in 2024.

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firewalls, access points and switches have been implemented since FY22, with more equipment ready to be deployed to libraries in FY25

REVOLUTIONIZING TECHNOLOGY TO PROTECT USERS AND DATA IN MISSOURI LIBRARIES
Libraries enable their patrons by providing a high speed, reliable Internet connection that may not yet be available at their home. They use that connectivity to access personal health and financial data, apply for jobs, participate in government programs, partake in professional development, or to conduct business. Thanks to funding from the REAL Program, 133 libraries in the state of Missouri are now using new network and security solutions to improve their bandwidth and protect their locations from data breaches and cybersecurity attacks. Not only are the libraries benefiting from updated and more secure networks, REAL funding also includes five years of management from MOREnet experts, which is especially crucial for small library systems. Learn more about how the REAL program is revolutionizing libraries across the state at more.net/revolutionizing-morenet-missouri-libraries-with-real-funding.

DIGITAL EQUITY INITIATIVES
We have worked with MOREnet to develop a detailed curriculum, facilitator guide with resources and access to an online learning platform about technology to expand digital literacy across the state (digitalequity.missouri.org). Topics include guides on how to access Internet connections, how to protect data and how to evaluate information online. In over a year, 90 facilitators across 21 counties were trained, empowering them to support underserved populations in embracing the digital world.

Additionally, Missouri libraries have access to Northstar Digital Literacy to enhance staff skills and expand digital equity within their community. Comprehensive modules, interactive assessments and flexible learning formats proved effective in improving staff skills and empowering them to become digital literacy champions. Based on pilot programs, we believe broader community engagement with digital literacy initiatives will lead to positive outcomes, including reduced recidivism, decreased senior isolation and improved career prospects for Missourians.

CURRICULUM & CONTENT
MOREnet is pleased to partner with REAL to provide libraries as well as nearly 500 Missouri school districts with the necessary resources to offer electronic information, such as online resources of credible, citable databases, job and career readiness as well as resources on digital and financial literacy. These online resources make it easier for people across the state to access reliable, citable information close to home.

EBSCO Searches
220,376,076

HeritageQuest Searches
570,114

LearningExpress Library Searches
37,202

Rosen Digital Searches
9,508

Search data from FY24