

Tough times bring depressed to libraries

by UPI

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Ill. -- U.S. public libraries increasingly are becoming havens for depressed, unemployed people who say they have nowhere else to go in tough times, librarians say.

"I guess I'm not really used to people with tears in their eyes," reference librarian Rosalie Bork of Arlington Heights (Ill.) Memorial Library tells The New York Times.

"It has been unexpectedly stressful," she says. "We feel so anxious to help these people and it's been so emotional for them."

Libraries from New York to Los Angeles are seeing increases in patronage, often from 10 percent to 30 percent, over previous years, the newspaper says.

But this is straining libraries' ability to respond effectively to patrons' needs, librarians say.

They find newly homeless people asleep at cubicles, others who can't read or write asking for help filling out job applications, still others sitting at computers trying to use the Internet with no idea what the Internet is, the Times says.

In Los Angeles, the police say the Central Public Library has become a magnet for thieves.

In Arlington Heights, near Chicago, two homeless men who had been using the library for shelter got into a fight on the outside steps, with one man stabbing the other six times, leaving him bleeding beside the book drop, the Times said.

The man was charged with attempted murder and the victim survived.

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