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The library can do that: Start-ups get valuable assistance from Tulsa City-County library research

By Sharon Bishop-Baldwin For the Tulsa Business & Legal News 5 hrs ago 0



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Martha Gregory (right), Research Wizard coordinator at the Tulsa City-County Library, assists Jan Sabo, marketing director at Dvorak, a Tulsa-based company that makes law enforcement training products, Tuesday at Central Library. CORY YOUNG/F Tulsa Business & Legal News

Research Wizard
Research Wizard is a



If libraries make you think of endless rows of dusty books and the

unique service of the Tulsa City-County Library System that can provide in-depth information that is customized to meet your business needs and maximize your time and profits. Topics include competitor intelligence, market research, trademark protection, industry analysis and international markets.

For more, visit researchwizard.org.

What can the library do for you?

Here are just a few of the things you can do at the Tulsa City-County Library you may not be aware of:

- Get married
- Record a music album
- Learn a new language
- Operate a flight simulator
- Learn to play the guitar
- Take a sewing class
- Convert VHS tapes to digital files
- Fly a drone
- Learn to edit photography
- Take a computer coding class
- Try out DIY laser engraving
- Do your own screen printing

Dewey Decimal System, you better hold onto your hat.

The [Tulsa City-County Library System](#) is also one of the premier research institutions for local entrepreneurs needing guidance on creating business plans, identifying customers and competitors, and gauging the market.

Kiley Roberson, the library system's communications director, says the library and its [Research Wizard](#) service — with program coordinator Martha Gregory and associate Jennifer Pawlowski — is a natural fit for startups.

"We subscribe to first-class resources that businesses know and use every day, like Dun & Bradstreet, Hoovers and Dow Jones, and we have a long history of service to the business community," she said. "In response to the current growth of entrepreneurship, we have fine-tuned our rich assortment of key business tools for the entrepreneurial community by focusing on those that will be most useful."

Roberson said would-be entrepreneurs are told to learn their market, but instead of being a starting point, that's often the first stumbling block.

"Library staff will point them to the perfect tool for each task, teach them how to use each one, and, best of all, make those tools conveniently available from home or office via the Internet with just a library card," she said.

Dax Neal, a business development officer for Blue Sky Bank in Tulsa, said he is able to use the library's research tools to identify companies that would be a good fit for his bank's services.

"It can be a challenge for startups and newer businesses to secure financing because they don't have historical financial data," he said. "The library's research database helps us to compare metrics from existing businesses in the same field and determine if the start-up's business plan aligns with those of existing companies that have had success."

Roberson said the library's tools include databases for downloading lists of prospective customers, market studies, industry profiles, financial ratios, demographics and market data. She added that library users can build their own in-house

working database with material from the library's systems.


"We even offer GIS mapping software and a large plotter printer to help customers visualize their best markets," Roberson said.

Neal said Blue Sky Bank's principal owner, Gentner Drummond, is an entrepreneur who has a deep understanding for how companies large and small should be operated, and "it's this entrepreneurial spirit that drives us to seek out creative solutions for our customers."

It was Blue Sky's CEO, Evans Rector, who turned Neal on to the library.

"I spent some time with Martha Gregory, the research wizard at the library," Neal said. "She is a great teacher and a wonderful asset to the library. I am astonished at the extent of research material available through the Tulsa City-County Library. I use the library's research tools on a weekly basis, and I still haven't even scratched the surface."

Roberson agrees, ticking off the possibilities.



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“We have helped companies meet challenges of every kind,” she said, “and we have touched every aspect of business start-up: raising capital; patenting and trademarking products and services; mapping markets; building customer prospecting databases; and gathering key numbers to support new ventures.”

And Roberson said things are only improving. Early next year, the library will begin offering a new software application called Gale Small Business Builder, a digital tool that helps aspiring entrepreneurs and experienced small-business owners plan, start or optimize a small business or nonprofit.

Neal said the library is a great resource for any new business needing a better understanding of the competitive environment.

“As an entrepreneur is developing their business plan, it is important for them to research the key indicators that will determine the feasibility of success,” he said. “They need to understand the local market economy and how to most effectively reach their target demographic.

“Through the library’s research database, an entrepreneur can find information about local ordinances and regulations, laws that may affect their business, financial data for competitors, trends related to their specific product or service, and a myriad of measurable data points to help guide them to success.”

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Tulsa Business & LEGAL NEWS
 Vol. 88, No. 100 | Tuesday, December 14, 2017 | A Daily Journal of Commerce Since 1908

Jobless, labor participation rates down
Concern grows over available workforce

BY MIKE AVERILL
 For the Employment & Legal News

Tulsa County's unemployment rate has dropped dramatically in the last week, but most would not be reflecting the results of January alone. A local unemployment rate of 6.3 compared to 12.3 in January 2017.

That would not be the case as an absolute positive indicator of the economy.

But for most local news, development professionals, the rate is a red flag. And the more the rate dips, the more their concern grows.

Typically, recession can be a positive occupational indicator. But unemployment increases as they grow, then they don't.

For about 3 percent of the workforce, in fact — but it's looking for a new job or waiting until the job is available.

"Before I proceed, that means there aren't enough workers to fill jobs, said Shirley Calkins, executive director of Workforce Tulsa.

"It's essential every business, and I think it's clear we're talking about it in an appropriate way," she said. "We need to work on strategies to pull

Unemployment rates: Tulsa County vs. U.S.

Year	Tulsa County	U.S.
2007	~10%	~4.5%
2008	~10%	~4.5%
2009	~15%	~5.5%
2010	~15%	~5.5%
2011	~15%	~5.5%
2012	~15%	~5.5%
2013	~15%	~5.5%
2014	~15%	~5.5%
2015	~15%	~5.5%
2016	~15%	~5.5%
2017	~6.3%	~5.5%

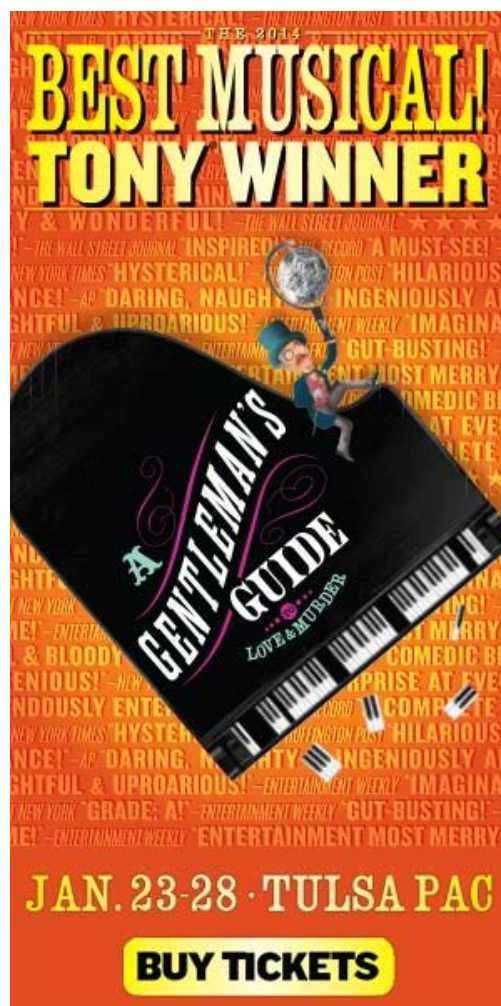
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Nikkei225	22694.45	-63.62 (-0.28%)
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