

Librarian's Shelf by Lori Neid

Can you identify this local landmark?

See if you can identify this popular Columbus destination strictly from "clues" pulled out of their 2013 Annual Report. Warning - prepare to be surprised.

While this place is not a retail store, the organization's doors are open 64 hours a week, 52 weeks a year (except for a few of the major holidays), year in and year out. It has day and evening hours, plus it's open Saturdays and Sundays.

While it's not a church, it's located downtown, it's open to everyone and the employees welcome any visitor who comes walking through their front doors, regardless of background, beliefs, or education.

While it definitely isn't McDonald's, last year, these employees served more than 126,000 people in the building. They also have a drive-through, but those numbers aren't included in this count.

While not Columbus Community Hospital, this institution has a successful non-profit Foundation dedicated to supporting the organization's mission. Private donations and investment growth over the years have enabled this charitable fund to grow to an impressive \$1.5 million and some of that money is going to be used in the near future to improve the building and user-experience.

While it isn't an Apple store, this facility has 25 public-access computers and last year, those computers were used a whopping 46,187 times. It also has iPads, e-readers and soon, laptops.

While not NetFlix, you can access 3,750 videos here in addition to online videos. Speaking of entertainment, this venue offers free events throughout the year. In 2013, it hosted 473 special events, all open to the general public. Total attendance at these various events was more than 21,000 people.

While not a Starbucks, this destination has free Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, tables with electricity for plugging in a laptop, quiet corners to work or study, and even private rooms that you can reserve in advance. While not a convention center, a lot of people choose to meet here every month.

While not a daycare, this facility serves thousands of kids and families each year – in 2013, at least 14,500 of them attended something here. There are materials specifically designed for young children, activities and entertainment events offered just for kids. Kids also have their own child-friendly area and paid professionals are dedicated to meeting the unique needs of this young clientele.

While not a country club, members and guests can always find a place to hang out, get online, hear a speaker, meet friends, host a meeting, grab a movie, ask questions, or just browse. This facility offers all the materials and services at no charge to users and "the management" isn't concerned with making a profit.

While not the US Postal Service, the institution delivers. Perhaps you've seen their extra-large bus traveling to various locations in Platte County? While not a museum, there is beautiful artwork to see, pieces to borrow, and even an art gallery on the premises.

While not Barnes & Noble, there are books here -- nearly 84,500 of them, covering every topic imaginable. While not Amazon, if you put a price tag of \$17 on each of those books, the inventory would be valued at almost \$1.5 million. In addition to all the items available on-site, they also have a virtual warehouse that includes another 27,800 electronic items available for users – at no charge, of course.

Hopefully by now you've figured out this "mystery" institution is our very own Columbus Public Library. Today's public libraries are far more than just big buildings full of books. Our Columbus library is a one-of-a-kind destination (both real and online) for tens of thousands of people seeking information, entertainment, and access to services not readily available elsewhere in our community. If you aren't already one of our 14,555 library cardholders, consider yourself invited. We're ready and waiting to serve you.