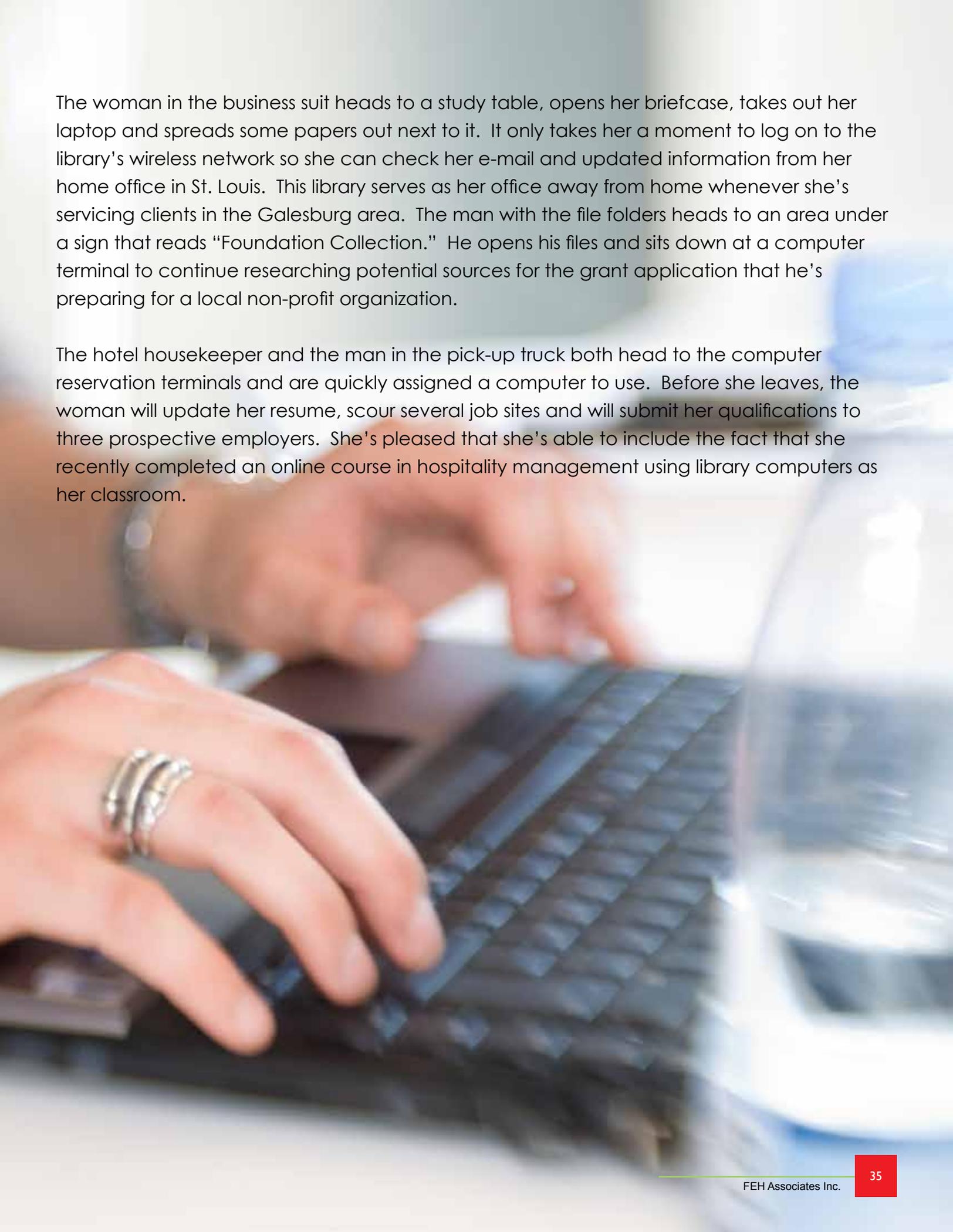# A day in the life....

It's 8:45 on a sunny May morning in Galesburg, Illinois. A steady stream of cars is pulling through the library's drive-up book-drop. People are starting to gather in the library's front lobby awaiting opening time. A woman in a business suit glances at her watch as two older gentlemen share their observations on the weather, Washington, and the world. A man in his mid-thirties carrying a bundle of overstuffed file folders walks around a kiosk filled with notices of community events. A flat-screen TV monitor at the top of the kiosk announces the library programs scheduled during the coming week. The man adds an upcoming meeting on his smartphone by scanning the QR code displayed on the screen.

A mother and her eight-year old daughter sit on a bench pouring over what appears to be a text book. A woman in a hotel housekeeper's uniform joins the group and a middle-aged man drives up in a pick-up truck and parks near the library's entrance just as a staff member approaches the inner door with keys in hand. Another day is about to begin at the public library.

As the door opens, the gathered group pours into the building, each with a specific purpose in mind. The senior men head for the comfortable chairs near the fireplace where the staff has just put out the morning newspapers. They'll soon be joined by three or four other "regulars" who will sip coffee, scan the newspapers and discuss the issues of the day. Occasionally they glance up at four suspended flat-screen TVs mounted on a nearby wall that are set to closed captioning and are tuned to CNN, the Weather Channel, ESPN and CNBC.

The woman in the business suit heads to a study table, opens her briefcase, takes out her laptop and spreads some papers out next to it. It only takes her a moment to log on to the library's wireless network so she can check her e-mail and updated information from her home office in St. Louis. This library serves as her office away from home whenever she's servicing clients in the Galesburg area. The man with the file folders heads to an area under a sign that reads "Foundation Collection." He opens his files and sits down at a computer terminal to continue researching potential sources for the grant application that he's preparing for a local non-profit organization.

The hotel housekeeper and the man in the pick-up truck both head to the computer reservation terminals and are quickly assigned a computer to use. Before she leaves, the woman will update her resume, scour several job sites and will submit her qualifications to three prospective employers. She's pleased that she's able to include the fact that she recently completed an online course in hospitality management using library computers as her classroom.
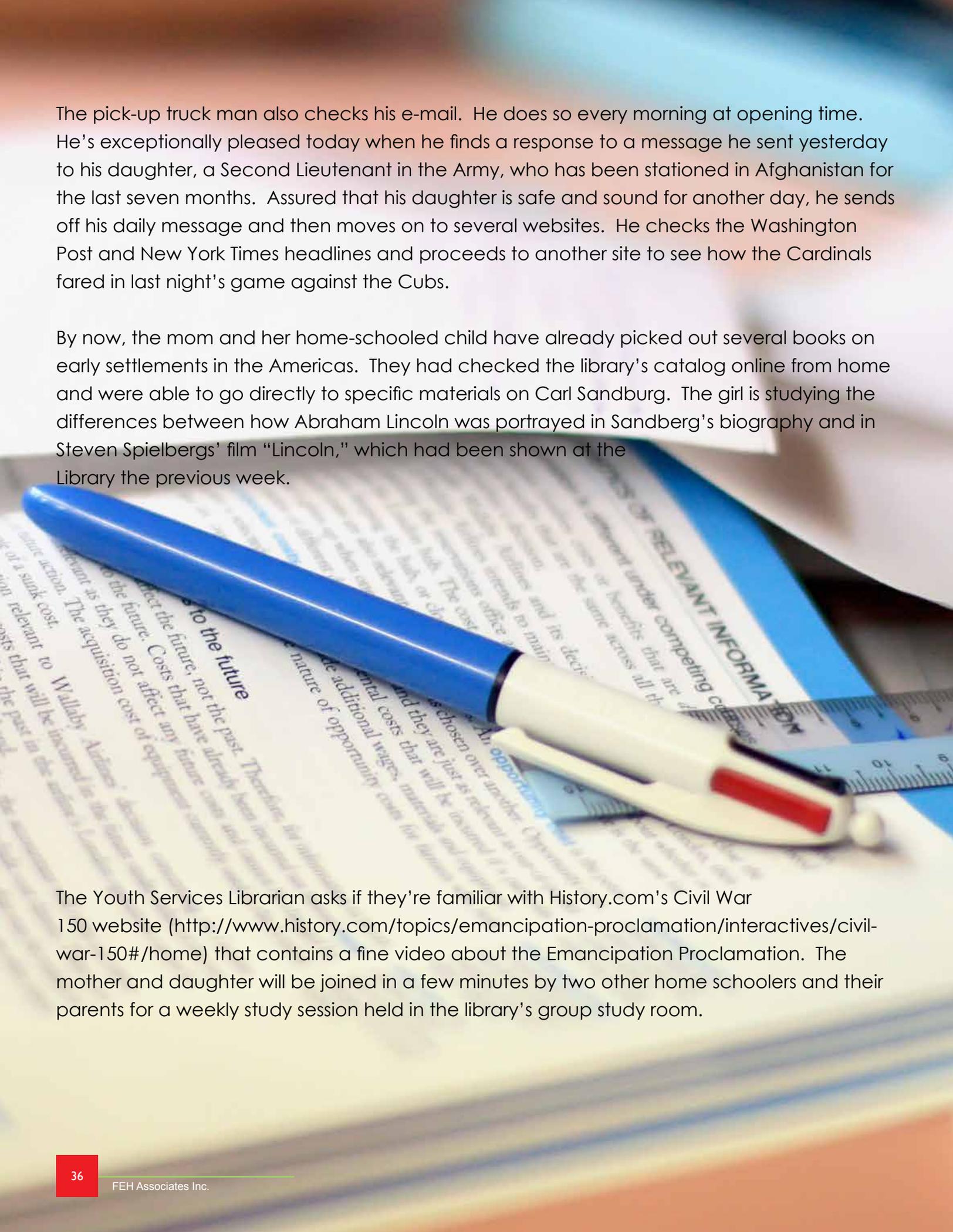
The pick-up truck man also checks his e-mail. He does so every morning at opening time. He's exceptionally pleased today when he finds a response to a message he sent yesterday to his daughter, a Second Lieutenant in the Army, who has been stationed in Afghanistan for the last seven months. Assured that his daughter is safe and sound for another day, he sends off his daily message and then moves on to several websites. He checks the Washington Post and New York Times headlines and proceeds to another site to see how the Cardinals fared in last night's game against the Cubs.

By now, the mom and her home-schooled child have already picked out several books on early settlements in the Americas. They had checked the library's catalog online from home and were able to go directly to specific materials on Carl Sandburg. The girl is studying the differences between how Abraham Lincoln was portrayed in Sandberg's biography and in Steven Spielbergs' film "Lincoln," which had been shown at the Library the previous week.

The Youth Services Librarian asks if they're familiar with History.com's Civil War 150 website (http://www.history.com/topics/emancipation-proclamation/interactives/civil-war-150#/home) that contains a fine video about the Emancipation Proclamation. The mother and daughter will be joined in a few minutes by two other home schoolers and their parents for a weekly study session held in the library's group study room.
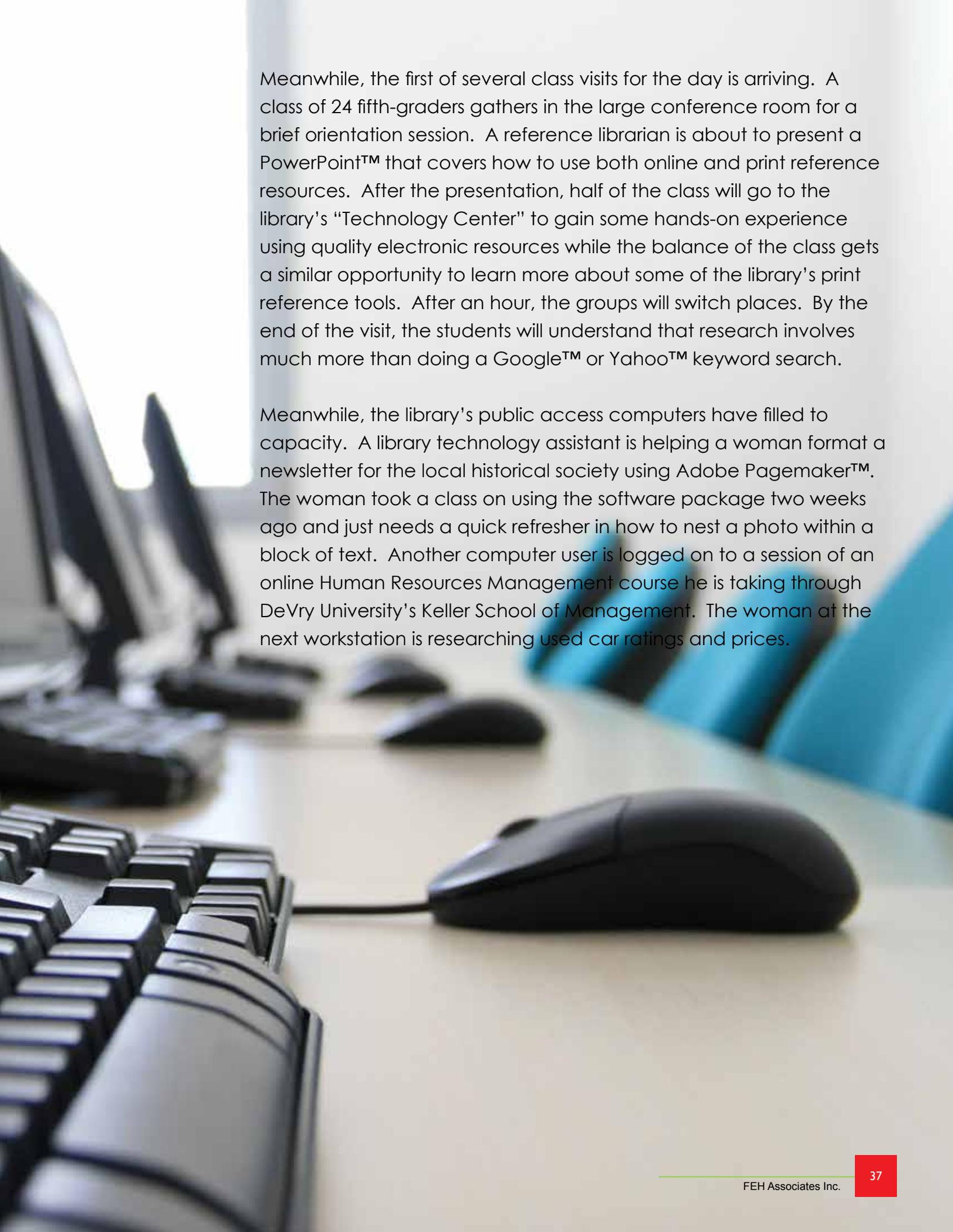
Meanwhile, the first of several class visits for the day is arriving. A class of 24 fifth-graders gathers in the large conference room for a brief orientation session. A reference librarian is about to present a PowerPoint™ that covers how to use both online and print reference resources. After the presentation, half of the class will go to the library's "Technology Center" to gain some hands-on experience using quality electronic resources while the balance of the class gets a similar opportunity to learn more about some of the library's print reference tools. After an hour, the groups will switch places. By the end of the visit, the students will understand that research involves much more than doing a Google™ or Yahoo™ keyword search.

Meanwhile, the library's public access computers have filled to capacity. A library technology assistant is helping a woman format a newsletter for the local historical society using Adobe Pagemaker™. The woman took a class on using the software package two weeks ago and just needs a quick refresher in how to nest a photo within a block of text. Another computer user is logged on to a session of an online Human Resources Management course he is taking through DeVry University's Keller School of Management. The woman at the next workstation is researching used car ratings and prices.
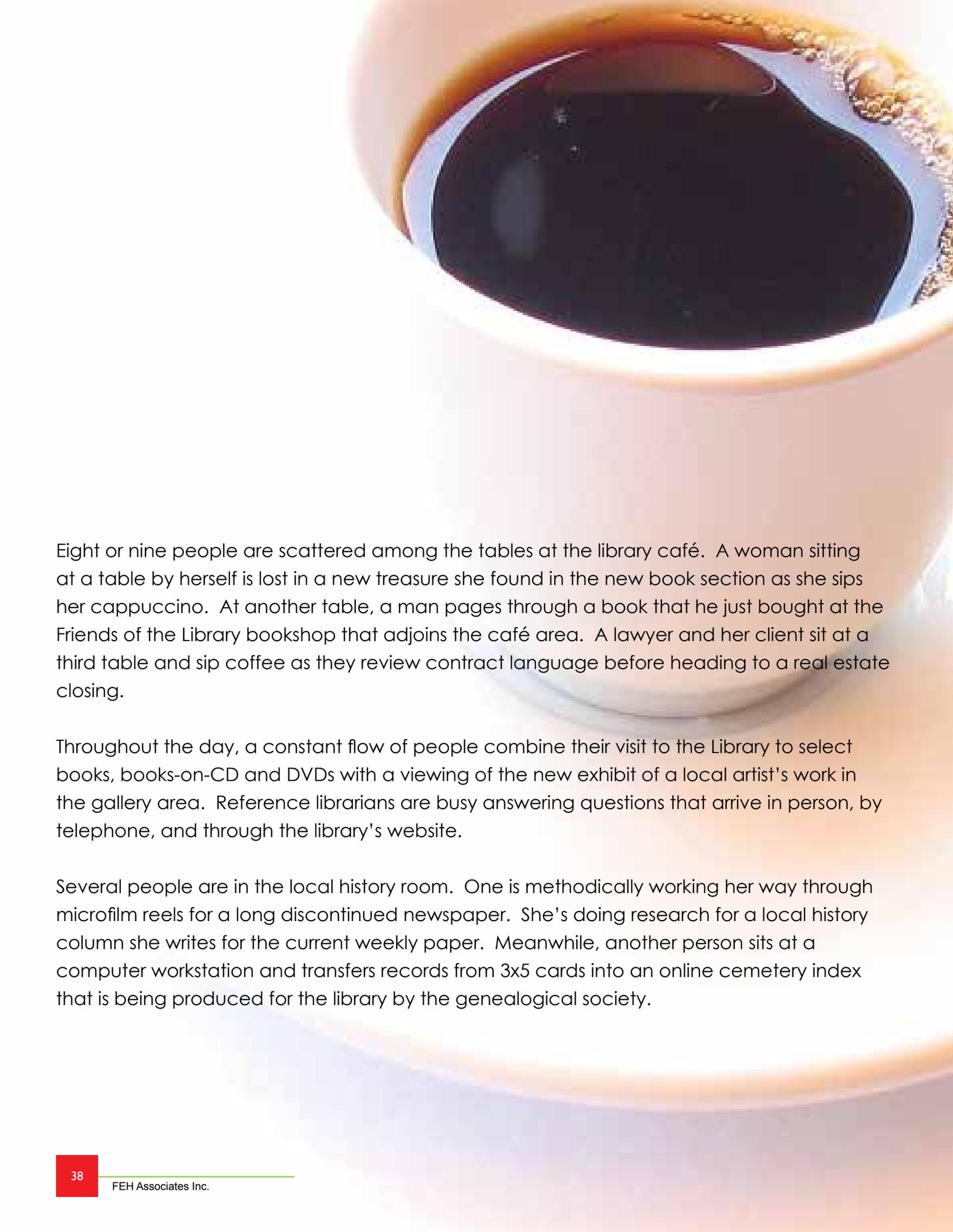
Eight or nine people are scattered among the tables at the library café. A woman sitting at a table by herself is lost in a new treasure she found in the new book section as she sips her cappuccino. At another table, a man pages through a book that he just bought at the Friends of the Library bookshop that adjoins the café area. A lawyer and her client sit at a third table and sip coffee as they review contract language before heading to a real estate closing.

Throughout the day, a constant flow of people combine their visit to the Library to select books, books-on-CD and DVDs with a viewing of the new exhibit of a local artist's work in the gallery area. Reference librarians are busy answering questions that arrive in person, by telephone, and through the library's website.

Several people are in the local history room. One is methodically working her way through microfilm reels for a long discontinued newspaper. She's doing research for a local history column she writes for the current weekly paper. Meanwhile, another person sits at a computer workstation and transfers records from 3x5 cards into an online cemetery index that is being produced for the library by the genealogical society.

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Mid-afternoon, a pre-school class arrives at the Library. They're headed to the outdoor children's terrace to listen to a master storyteller share an African folktale called The King and the Tortoise. At the end of the tale, each child will go to the craft area where they'll make a tortoise to take home with them.

After school, the teens arrive and quickly head to the Teen Area. Three begin to work on a PowerPoint™ presentation at an oversized computer workstation in the group study room. The presentation will be their report for a group project they're doing for their social studies class. A pair of sixteen year-olds don headphones to listen to a DVD that they're watching in the video den/gaming area. The video will be the subject of a discussion program scheduled for later that afternoon. The program was planned by the library's teen advisory council, which is composed of a dozen kids ranging in age from 14 to 18.

The after school hours also signals the arrival of a host of younger schoolchildren, some of whom arrive with a parent or grandparent. Other children arrive by themselves and quickly choose their spots in the children's room. Several spread out and start working on their homework while others head directly for the "series" books to see if they can find the next episode in the lives of their favorite characters. A retired teacher who volunteers four afternoons each week during the school year makes the rounds providing homework help. A children's room assistant is showing a man and his six-year old son where to find the books on dinosaurs. A children's librarian is beginning an after-school program for fifth and sixth graders. Many of these children are regulars who show up nearly everyday. Several kids are sitting at colorful computer stations playing educational games.

The middle of the afternoon also brings a tour that includes local elected officials, the director of the chamber of commerce and the advance team of a high-tech firm that is considering relocating to the area. The library is one of the premiere sites on the community's "economic development" tour that is given to commercial prospects.

The meeting rooms at the Library are busy throughout the evening. A group of 15 would-be entrepreneurs are meeting in a large conference room with representatives of the Small Business Administration and the Senior Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE). Among other things, they learn that they can attend a class later in the week in the Library's Tech Center on how to develop a business plan. In another conference room, a group of 12 mystery fans are gathered to discuss "The Forgotten," David Baldacci's latest "whodunit." Several of the tutoring rooms are in use.

In one, a literacy volunteer tutors a young man in his twenties who is working toward a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.). In another study room, a second volunteer who is fluent in Spanish works with woman who has recently arrived in the United States and who is beginning to learn English. Meanwhile a "twenty-something" is honing his test-taking skills using the "Learning Express Library" service in preparation for applying for a job.

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A public hearing about a proposed highway expansion is taking place in the all-purpose meeting room while a group of paramedics are participating in a continuing education teleconference that will help them keep their certification up-to-date.   A family story hour is being held in the children's program room. The interactive session helps new parents learn how to engage their infants in important pre-literacy activities that help develop speech and motor skills. Knox College students occupy several study carrels scattered throughout the building and the Tech Center is offering a training session in how to use Microsoft Excel™. Every workstation is filled.

At 9 PM, the library finally closes its doors for the day, but library service doesn't end. Well into the night, people are accessing the library's web site to reserve and renew books and to access the "Gale Reference Center" databases. Reference service also continues after hours because a group of Illinois libraries have banded together to offer virtual reference service on a "24X7" basis. Citizens can call an "800" info line number anytime between 9 in the evening and 9 in the morning for reference assistance. Each night of the week, a different library in a different part of the state provides the staffing and resources for the service. The phone calls are seamlessly routed to the appropriate library. The virtual reference service also answers reference questions online in "real time."

Far-fetched? Not really. The scenario portrayed above isn't a dream. The Galesburg Library already does many of the things mentioned and, in some libraries across the nation, all of the services are being offered. A new facility will mean that the description of a day in the life of the Galesburg will become closer to fact than fiction!

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