

PLAINFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY PROMOTES TECHNOLOGY SKILLS IN THE COMMUNITY WITH IC3 AND MOS



As more people find their employment journey crossing multiple careers, industries, and roles, the need grows for programs that quickly and efficiently help job seekers update and certify their skills, particularly in Digital Literacy. Few modern jobs do not require the ability to proficiently, efficiently, and securely, use technology and the Internet.

That is where institutions like New Jersey's Plainfield Public Library and Certiport come in.

"Plainfield is a community disproportionately affected by the digital divide," says Mary Ellen Rogan, PPL Director. "The lack of access to computers and the skills that would come with that access hurts our residents, particularly when seeking employment. Wi-Fi, and public access machines are great, but they aren't

enough to close the skills gap and level the employment playing field for our residents. We need to provide the training and certifications necessary for adults to reenter the workforce and thrive in jobs in today's economy."

In partnership with the City of Plainfield and The New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, PPL added an intense IC3 Digital Literacy and Microsoft Office Specialist training and certification program with the help of Certiport exams and prepared learning materials.

Certiport's industry-recognized certifications help define the knowledge and skills needed as a trusted metric to measure learning outcomes, while validating the learner's success and preparing them for 21st century employment.

"The program has been a massive success due to a few important factors," says Scott Kuchinsky, PPL's Adult Literacy Coordinator, citing strong partnerships, client support, and high-quality training. "We also knew that an entry-level, industry-recognized digital literacy certification like Certiport's is one of the fastest and most cost-effective ways to make clients more employable. There is almost no career for which these foundational skills

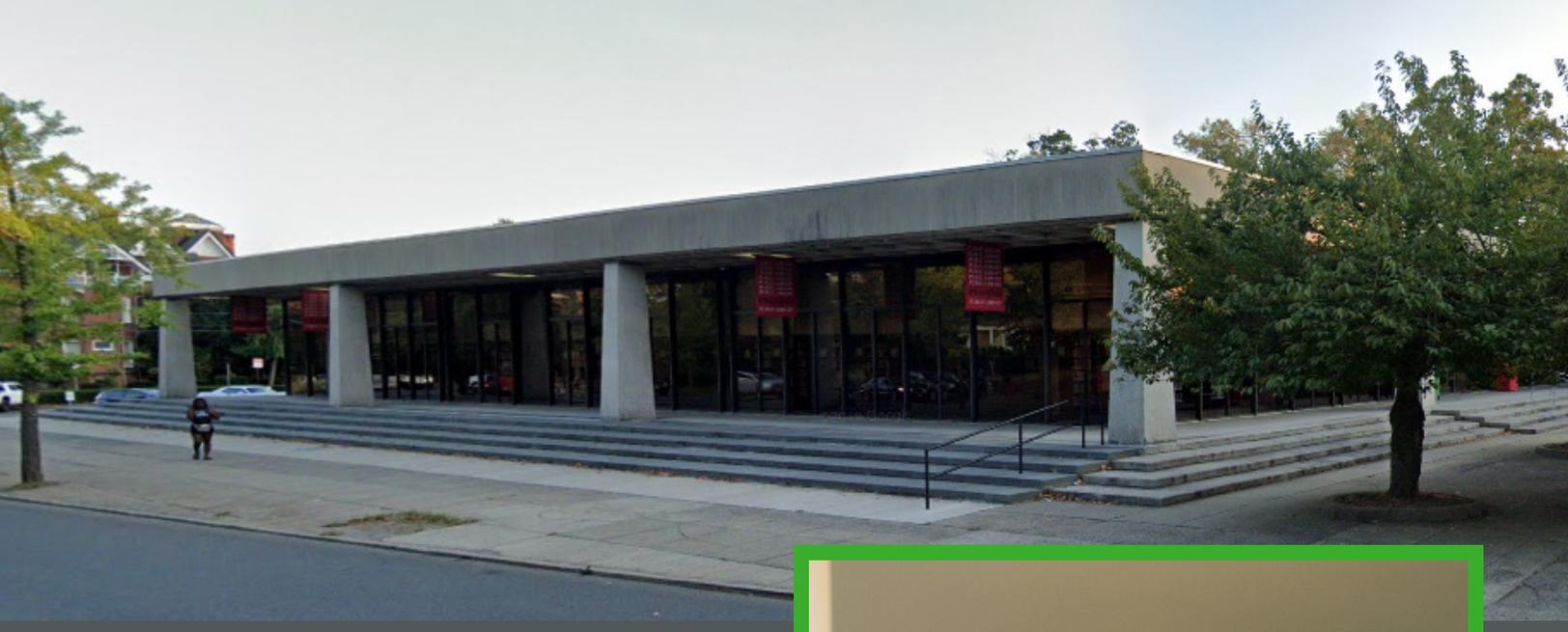
would not be an asset and a huge value added."

Certiport's IC3 Digital Literacy certification measures introductory computer skills that apply to almost any career pathway. The program includes three exams to help one progress from a basic understanding to a mastery of the concepts required to be digitally literate. IC3 Spark targets the same foundational concepts as IC3 Digital Literacy but was created for individuals, who are totally new to computers and the Internet, to address their lack of digital skills.

The Microsoft Office Specialist certification takes the next step to guarantee that every certified user has demonstrated the ability to command the features and functionality of Microsoft Office products, preparing them to get the most out of these widely used applications.

"Offering a variety of certifications allows us to address our learners varied needs," says Colleen Connell, PPL Program Administrator. "We have participants who have never used a mouse, and we have others who come in wanting to learn Microsoft Access. The combination of offering IC3 and Microsoft Office Specialist certifications allows us to cater to both."





Certification Improves Outcomes

Plainfield Public Library's program has already produced 174 IC3 certifications and 17 Microsoft Office Specialist certifications. Due to this success, PPL's partners, the City of Plainfield and the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development have funded the construction of an additional computer lab to expand the program. They have been operating at near capacity since opening their doors.

There's a great synergy to the tiered learning. "Learners who pass IC3 certification are encouraged and motivated to keep working towards the more advanced Microsoft certifications," says Franco Henriquez, PPL Coordinator of Digital Instruction. He mentions two women who came into the program who could barely send an e-mail and have now worked their way through IC3 and have each earned Microsoft certifications over the course of a year.

"Our learners all increase their computing knowledge no matter what their starting point," says Henriquez. "Some of our learners have been inspired to use the credits they obtain from the Certiport certifications and pursue higher education. Others have been able to put the skills to work in their current jobs, while others continue their job hunt with a newfound confidence as they are now a step ahead. Many clients have gone on to employment including two Plainfield students, who after participating through a county-funded youth program, were hired as part-time employees at the Library."

Kuchinsky explains that the program succeeds because of a broad multi-agency partnership including Certiport, NJLWD, Union and Middlesex County American Job Centers, and the City of Plainfield. The successful proof of concept has led to interest in expanding the program at both the county and state level.

