

RPL Means Business

There is a time and place for Google, and business research is not one of them ... you are going to end up getting a website that wants you to pay \$1,000 for a report or it's not going to be accurate, and you're going to waste your time.

– Jennifer Byrnes, RPL Business Librarian

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The Rochester Public Library's Business Division was in the news recently, winning a **Top Innovator Award for Workforce and Economic Development** from the Urban Libraries Council. This award recognizes the outstanding work of the RPL's Business Division, highlighting how the division's staff has responded to challenges caused by significant changes in Monroe County's business climate. No longer could the Rochester area rely on its Big Three companies; instead, it would be vital for the community to have the energy and creativity of many smaller companies – so how best to support them?

In today's world, information is critical. But getting timely information can be expensive in both costs and staff time. RPL's Business Division staff recognized that start-up companies, like all smaller companies, lack the internal resources of major corporations, such as in-house libraries, researchers and librarians. And since RPL already had librarians with business research skills and access to key research tools and business databases, they developed their award-winning program by proactively making companies aware of its expertise and capabilities, as well as adding additional research tools.

An innovative outreach program was created specifically for Eastman Business Park (formerly Kodak Park). Led by Librarian Jennifer Byrnes, she provided key research to help EBP managers identify potential new businesses to contact about locating in EBP. Available in-person as well as by phone and email, Ms. Byrnes became for multiple EBP tenants – without charge – the equivalent of an in-house researcher. With her training and experience, she often found in a few minutes information that might take a company's staff weeks to find, if ever.

Additional subscriptions for key business databases (IBISWorld and Frost&Sullivan) were purchased by the **Friends & Foundation of the Rochester Public Library**, which works to support the RPL. According to its executive director, Ned Davis, "The [FFRPL](#) felt it was important to facilitate the acquisitions of these two costly but super-useful databases, and we have been quite pleased with how important and valuable they have been to local business. With Jennifer's work, plus these subscriptions and other RPL databases, companies at EBP and elsewhere in Monroe County have obtained reports, for free, that otherwise might cost them thousands of dollars – or simply not been affordable. FFRPL has been delighted to help."

This outreach effort at EBP is just one part of the Business Division services to companies throughout Monroe County. Its [Business Resources](#) webpage lists numerous databases useful for businesses and RPL's research specialists utilize their expertise and these databases to provide confidential support. Interested businesses can call 585-428-8130 to learn more or to schedule an appointment.

The RPL also has a *Small Business Resource Center*, which maintains a [webpage of useful links](#), materials on key aspects of starting and running a small business, and a monthly program, *First Wednesdays for Small Business* (10a-12:30p in the Kate Gleason Auditorium). The Library also houses the [Chester F. Carlson Patent & Trademark Resource Center](#), providing information, specialized databases and a Patent Research Librarian who assists inventors with conduct patent and trademark searches. It is one of only 80 PTRC's in the country, and is partially supported by grants from the Chester & Dorris Carlson Charitable Trust through the Friends & Foundation of RPL.

With this wealth of expert services and resources, it is easy to see that *RPL Means Business*. In just one recent 12-month period, Rochester businesses, including those located in the Eastman Business Park and elsewhere, used RPL databases to generate multiple reports – without charge – that otherwise would have cost (as individual downloads) in excess of **\$1.5-million**. A business person would accurately see using these RPL's databases as a great Return On Investment – while a lay person might instead just call RPLs work **priceless**.