

The Tennessee Electronic Library (TEL) began as a project spearheaded by the Tennessee Library Association and Tenn-Share, a resource sharing group composed of over 450 libraries and information agencies of all types and sizes in Tennessee. In May 1997 TENN-SHARE published "The Tennessee Electronic Library: A Proposal for Delivering Information Resources to Local Communities." In the same year, the Tennessee Advisory Council on Libraries voted to give shared online databases to all types of libraries its highest priority for statewide library service.

Since 1999, *TEL* has provided access to electronic resources for all Tennesseans through any computer with Internet access. TEL currently provides citizens access to 18 databases that cover humanities, education, business, science, current events, art, politics, economics social sciences, law, health, computers, environmental issues and general interest topics. TEL is supported by federal funds under the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and is administered by the Tennessee State Library and Archives, a division of the Tennessee Department of State, Riley C. Darnell, Secretary of State.

TEL is being used at an ever-increasing rate and shows no evidence of slowing. In 2001 there were 3.3 million searches and in 2003 over 4.7 million searches were recorded

TEL saves individual libraries money by providing core reference materials, journals and newspaper citations and is of special benefit to smaller and rural libraries since they could not afford these databases on their own.

In order to expand TEL, additional funds need to be secured. To work toward that goal, Tenn-Share works to find an equitable cost-sharing model and TEL advocates lobby the State Legislature for additional funds.