

## Trainer Profile

### Ed Garcia

#### Librarian Ed Garcia Spreads Digital Knowledge



Ed Garcia at work at the Cranston Public Library.

Ask the staff at any public library in Rhode Island what the library's most popular area is and you'll almost always get the same answer: the computers. For the Cranston Public Library's Central Branch, the state's busiest, that's certainly true, says Ed Garcia, Library Director at the Cranston Public Library.

"For the last two years or so, with the way the economy's been, we've had a lot of people who are unemployed coming in here to look for jobs," he says. But despite the availability of computers and broadband Internet, online job searches have proved an obstacle.

"We've found that there's a lot of people who don't know what to do. It's not just that they don't know how to apply for a job; they don't know how to print things out," he says, adding that even "the unemployment application online was a real challenge for people."

But that's set to change in 2012, thanks to Broadband Rhode Island's Digital Literacy Training program.

The curriculum, a core part of BBRI's mission and funding, is designed to increase the number of people in the state who have the skills needed to take advantage of online career, educational, government, and entertainment resources using Rhode Island's broadband infrastructure. That need is substantial: While Rhode Island has among the fastest broadband speeds in the country, nearly 30% of Rhode Islanders don't use the Internet at all.

The curriculum is being developed by BBRI and consultants, drawing from a proven model offered by the Goodwill Community Foundation. To teach residents, BBRI is partnering over 100 Community Anchor Institutions—libraries, colleges and universities, and non-profits—including the Cranston Public Library. BBRI will train staff at the Community Anchor Institutions who in

*(Ed Garcia profile continued)*



Ed Garcia leading a digital literacy training for the initial pilot at the Cranston Public Library.

turn will provide the training directly to residents. Garcia and the Cranston Library recently participated in a train-the-trainers pilot.

The Digital Literacy Training program fits into the services that the Library is already providing, says Garcia, including “tech bootcamps” that teach attendees how to use technologies from e-readers to the web to photo sharing services.

To Garcia, participating in the Digital Literacy program was natural.

“Libraries have always been the community place that people go. We’ve always been the ones that offered free computers, free Internet, a lot of educational resource. For us, it was a no-brainer to be involved,” he says.

With the success of the pilot, he’s looking forward to the program’s full rollout in 2012.

“Hopefully once the pilot is over, with the curriculum being done, we’ll have a lot of libraries throughout the state jump on board,” thus spreading the learning even further. “If we can prepare a group of people to move on in the economy of the 21st century,” he says, “that would be tremendous.”