State Library Guidebook: Support for Digital Literacy in Public Libraries

OCLC WebJunction®

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

Introduction

State library agencies provide strategic and programmatic support to public library institutions to benefit local communities and help transform people's lives. Statewide planning by state library agencies helps prioritize resources and support based on common and pressing needs across public libraries. Digital literacy is a critical area of need for support that has been growing in importance for public libraries in serving their communities. Digital literacy will continue to evolve as a necessary skill-set for individuals, organizations, and communities to have in order to participate in our ever more connected society.

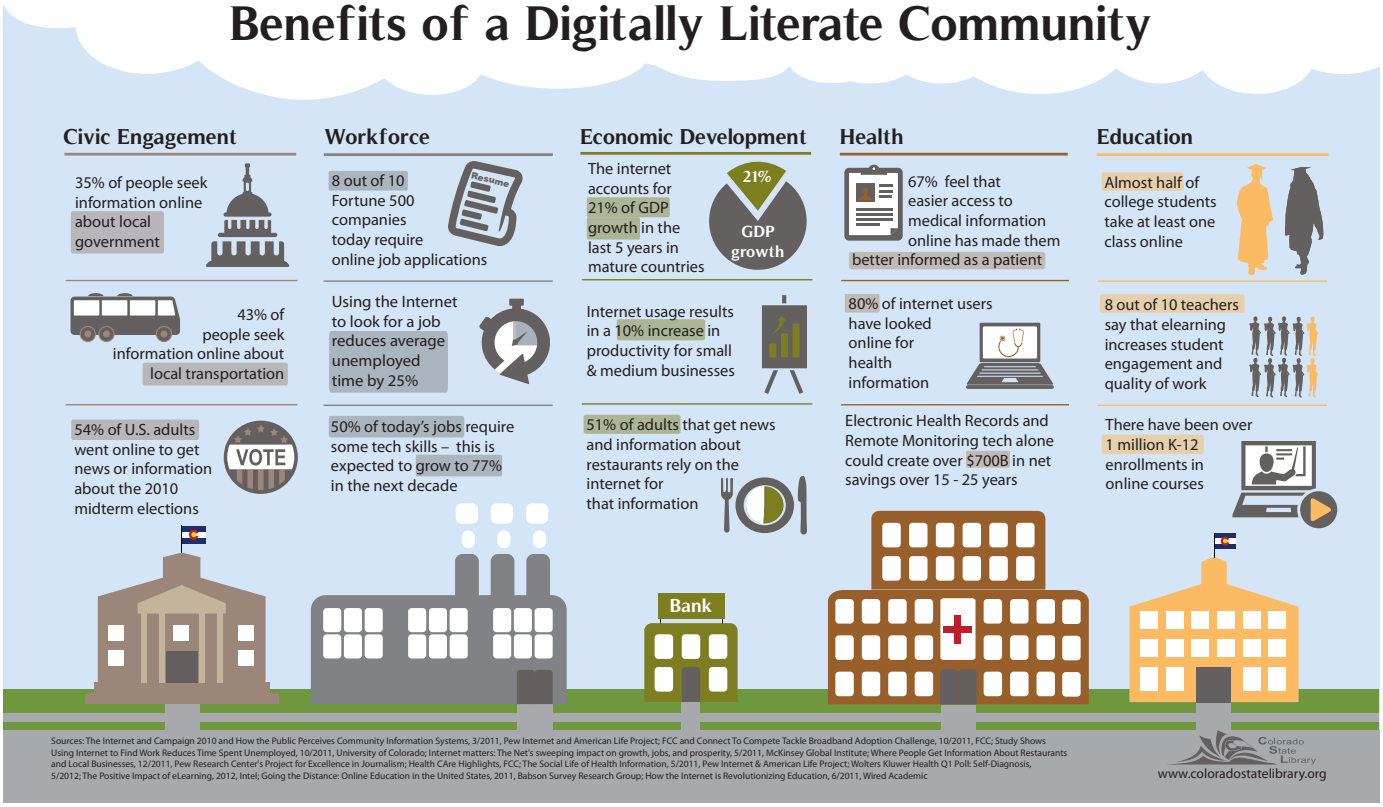
In their January 2013 Digital Literacy Task Force Report, the American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy (ALA OITP) defines digital literacy as the following:

"Digital literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information, an ability that requires both cognitive and technical skills."[1]

The report goes on to outline the significance of digital literacy to individual and community success, noting that:

- "The public's attainment of twenty-first century digital literacy skills is essential if the United States is to compete economically, educationally, and intellectually in the global environment.
- Two major federal initiatives—the National Broadband Plan, released in 2010, and the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, initiated in 2009—focused national attention on digital inclusion and spurred government agencies to develop policies and programs to expand broadband access and adoption as one important component of digital inclusion.
- Broadband Internet access is essential, but access alone is not enough. Basic computer skills and high-level cognitive skills for finding, evaluating, ethically using, creating, and sharing information also are required for digitally inclusive communities.
- The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) estimates that 66 million people in the United States lack basic digital literacy skills.
- To fill the gap for library users who lack access to the Internet at home or need assistance in using it, public libraries offer resources, technology, and services to people of all ages and abilities across the country."[2]

Digital literacy benefits communities in many different and valuable ways. The infographic below, created by the Colorado State Library, shows the range of benefits from civic engagement to education.[3] Public libraries across the nation have been actively building digitally literate communities through relevant digital literacy services and free public access to technology.



"Benefits of Digitally Literate Community," Colorado State Library, used under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike license: http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/

State library agencies are well-positioned to foster an open and encouraging environment for local public libraries to expand capacity in response to digital literacy needs in their communities. Equally important, state libraries can be strong advocates for the essential digital literacy services provided by libraries and promote partnerships for digitally inclusive communities.

This guidebook was developed under a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and has been created specifically for state library agencies to use in exploring and considering potential state-level investments and partnerships that advance digital literacy efforts. It is comprised of three primary sections: 1) an overview of the current state of digital literacy in public libraries; 2) a proposed framework for considering specific types of digital literacy supports; and 3) a sample planning process designed for state library agencies. The guidebook is designed as a reference tool, rather than a prescriptive roadmap for state library agencies.

The content of this guidebook is based on multiple sources of information and project-based experience. National program models and survey data were examined to understand trends and resources. A digital literacy planning process was piloted by OCLC's WebJunction and partner state library agencies in Illinois, Mississippi, and West Virginia. Interviews with local public libraries provided case studies of digital literacy services and needs. State library agencies across the country provided ideas for possible digital literacy supports and specific examples of state-level investments. Relevant resources have been provided both within the guidebook itself and as appendices or links to external content where appropriate.

We hope that the experiences of state and public libraries captured in this guidebook inspire new investments and partnerships that advance digital literacy across the nation.

1. Digital Literacy, Libraries, and Public Policy: Report of the Office for Information Technology Policy's Digital Literacy Task Force – January 2013. *Pg. 2*
2. Digital Literacy, Libraries, and Public Policy: Report of the Office for Information Technology Policy's Digital Literacy Task Force – January 2013. *Pgs. 2, 3, 16*
3. Colorado Infographic available via Creative Commons License; http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/BTOP/download/pdf/bbp_dec2012.pdf

Digital Literacy Planning in Action

Finding time for focused planning is fundamental in order to identify and prioritize the opportunities for potential state library action. WebJunction partnered with state library agencies in Illinois, Mississippi and West Virginia to design and pilot a planning process for expanding digital literacy supports. This section of the guidebook reviews the basic elements of a recommended planning process along with things to consider based on what worked well with these state library agencies.

Step 1: Review existing state library priorities and supports for digital literacy
Objective: Familiarize team and stakeholders with existing state library priorities, resources, programs and partnerships that support digital literacy efforts.

Step 2: Assess the current status of digital literacy efforts, statewide and within local libraries
Objective: Deepen understanding of current state of digital literacy services and infrastructure in local libraries.

Step 3: Discuss common challenges and desired state library support
Objective: Ensure digital literacy planning focuses on the most important local library needs and the highest value state library support options.

Step 4: Brainstorm potential new state library investments in resources and partnerships for digital literacy
Objective: Explore how your state library might further support digital literacy services in public libraries given local library needs and state-level priorities.

Step 5: Scan the state and national landscape for digital literacy resources
Objective: Consider initiatives, projects, and funding sources at both the state and national levels that could be leveraged by the state library.

Step 6: Prioritize support ideas for further exploration
Objective: Narrow down the brainstormed list of possibilities into a smaller set for further research and exploration.

Stakeholder Engagement

Intentional stakeholder engagement can result in a more informed planning process that brings a broader view, fresh perspectives, and creative ideas for advancing digital literacy in your state. For the state library, it expands awareness of community needs, existing resources, and potential partners at the state and regional levels. For library representatives, it provides an opportunity to share local perspectives on digital literacy efforts, challenges, and possible state library supports. For other state agencies and organizations, it strengthens understanding of library services and surfaces new possibilities for working together.

Each partner state library took a unique approach to engage stakeholders in their planning process and obtain a variety of diverse and valuable perspectives. For example, the West Virginia Library Commission included representatives from public libraries and other state agencies in the facilitated planning meeting. They found that this engagement provided: *"...a great opportunity to explore the perceptions and needs of libraries in the field. It was also an opportunity for non-library participants to expand knowledge about the roles libraries play."*

There are several key factors to consider as you design stakeholder engagement for your planning process. As you review the recommended steps in this guidebook, think strategically about the following questions:

When: At what points in the process do you want to engage internal and external stakeholders? What reasons or benefits are there for this engagement?

Who: What perspectives do you want to obtain in terms of groups, organizations and individuals? We suggest that you consider a wide range of internal and external stakeholders such as:

- State library agency representatives (library development consultants, technology support staff, talking book and braille staff, state library trustees and advisors)
- Public and school library representatives (a range of library types and sizes, library system leaders, state library association leaders)
- Other state government agencies and committee representatives (State broadband planning groups, Department of Education, Community College Commission, Economic Development, Community Service Agency)
- Nonprofit and community-based organizations (Centers for nonprofits, 4H clubs, AARP, corporate foundations)

How: In what way do you plan to engage each stakeholder? Possibilities include advisory group membership, planning meeting participation, focus group invitations, and interview and survey requests, among others.

Setting clear expectations about what you hope to achieve through stakeholder engagement is critical so you can more effectively determine which stakeholders to engage and how to best do so. It also enables you to provide stakeholders with important context about what you are hoping to accomplish and how their involvement supports success.

Step 1: Review Existing State Library Priorities and Supports for Digital Literacy

Objective: Familiarize team and stakeholders with existing state library priorities, resources, programs and partnerships that support digital literacy efforts.

Reviewing existing state-level priorities and specific supports for digital literacy provided by your state library agency will provide a strong foundation for planning while ensuring strategic alignment.

Strategic and Annual Plans

We suggest gathering and reviewing existing plans for the state library that provide support for public access to technology and digital content. This includes the latest Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) plan as well as the current state library budget materials. Take time to look beyond library development to relevant services and resources provided by other state library departments, such as a Talking Book and Braille Center. Looking through a digital literacy lens, pull together lists of the following information from across the materials reviewed:

- **Goals and priorities:** What is the state library committed to achieving that will advance digital literacy in our libraries and communities? What are the highest priorities?
- **Resources and programs:** How is the state library spending funds to support digital literacy efforts statewide and at the local level? What specific programs and projects have a focus or partial focus on digital literacy?
- **Partnerships and affiliations:** Who is the state library already working with on digital literacy issues at the state and regional levels? Think about partnerships, committees, advisory councils, grant programs, and other types of relationships.

Facilitated Discussion

It's important to discuss the findings about existing priorities and supports with your state library team and selected stakeholders, as appropriate. We found that a facilitated discussion both raises awareness for participants and surfaces less obvious investments in digital literacy. As stated by one of our state library partners, *"We spent more time than we expected on the first objective, but that was a good thing. It was useful to get a very concrete handle on where we currently stand with digital literacy support and partnerships."* Provided below are sample snapshots of what surfaced during planning sessions with the project partner states.

Illinois

- ILEAD U: training program for 40 library staff that covers technology skills and Internet-based services to meet community needs
- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity: grant program supported by the state library that provides free equipment, program funding, and 15 hours of training for local libraries
- First Search statewide database subscription
- Partners for Connected Illinois: broadband stakeholder group that plans to provide grants for broadband connectivity
- Illinois middle mile fiber deployment project funded by the federal Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP)

Mississippi

- e-BEAT: Mississippi State University's Broadband Education and Adoption Team provides regional training to library staff plus training at the library's request, to the general public

- Digital Opportunities Trust program (AmeriCorps grant): public libraries receive an intern to support tech learning for staff and public
- AARP: help people do their taxes via computers at local libraries
- Local community colleges: local and regional programs provide training at libraries
- Computer Clearinghouse: government and organizations donate gently used computers to local libraries

West Virginia

- State Broadband Planning Group: focus on broadband mapping and infrastructure
- State Office of Technology: federally-funded Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) project for middle mile fiber deployment, including high capacity routers for public libraries
- WorkForce West Virginia: federally-funded BTOP project purchased additional computers for libraries complete with workforce-related applications; plan to provide training for library staff on applications
- WorkForce West Virginia: provided state budget funds to help purchase regional office subscription for LearningExpress with addition of time tracking module

Step 2: Assess the Current Status of Digital Literacy Efforts

Objective: Deepen understanding of current state of digital literacy services and infrastructure in local libraries.

It is important to obtain meaningful information to set the context for your planning process, and to take the time to review it carefully. This may include an analysis of information available from within the library field, as well as external sources. You may also wish to create your own assessment process.

As part of any planning process, it's good to start with reviewing various sources of data and research to understand the current state. It's also valuable to conduct a needs assessment through surveys, interviews, focus groups or other methods. These facts and perspectives are powerful tools to inform analyses and decision-making. To inform state library planning, you might leverage several valuable sources of data and information on digital literacy services in public libraries:

- First, national data from the most recent Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study (PLFTAS) can be used as a benchmark by comparing the national findings with state-level reports.
- Second, aggregate findings from the Digital Literacy Survey completed by public libraries in the three project partner states, Illinois, Mississippi, and West Virginia, are available to review. The summary of findings can be found in Appendix A and the survey questions are provided in Appendix B. It might be valuable to complete a similar survey in your state.
- Third, case studies are provided in Appendix C for nine local public libraries in project partner states to provide a better picture of various local approaches and experiences with digital literacy services for different populations served.

National Data on Public Library Services

The Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study (PLFTAS) has been supported since 2006 via a partnership between the American Library Association (ALA) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The data can be used to inform funding needs and constraints, the digital divide between urban and rural communities, library integration of mobile applications and social networks, and heightened requirements for digital literacy services and skills training.

The Public Library Funding & Technology Access Study 2011–2012 website is a robust source of information. It includes valuable tools in addition to the executive summary and full report. There is a press kit with information and graphics relevant for sharing with different stakeholders. Individual state summary data is provided for state library agencies to reference in their own assessment of local library services and funding.

Key findings from the press kit, executive summary, and full report state that from a national perspective:

- **62%** of libraries report that they are the only source of free Internet access in their communities.
- More than **90%** of public libraries offer formal or informal technology training.
- **91%** of public libraries provide free Wi-Fi, and **74%** of libraries report use of Wi-Fi increased in 2011.
- Over **60%** of libraries report increased use of public access workstations.
- **65%** of libraries report having an insufficient number of public computers to meet demand.
- **57%** of libraries report flat or decreased operating budgets in FY2011.
- For the third year in a row, **40%** of state libraries report decreased state funding for public libraries.[1]

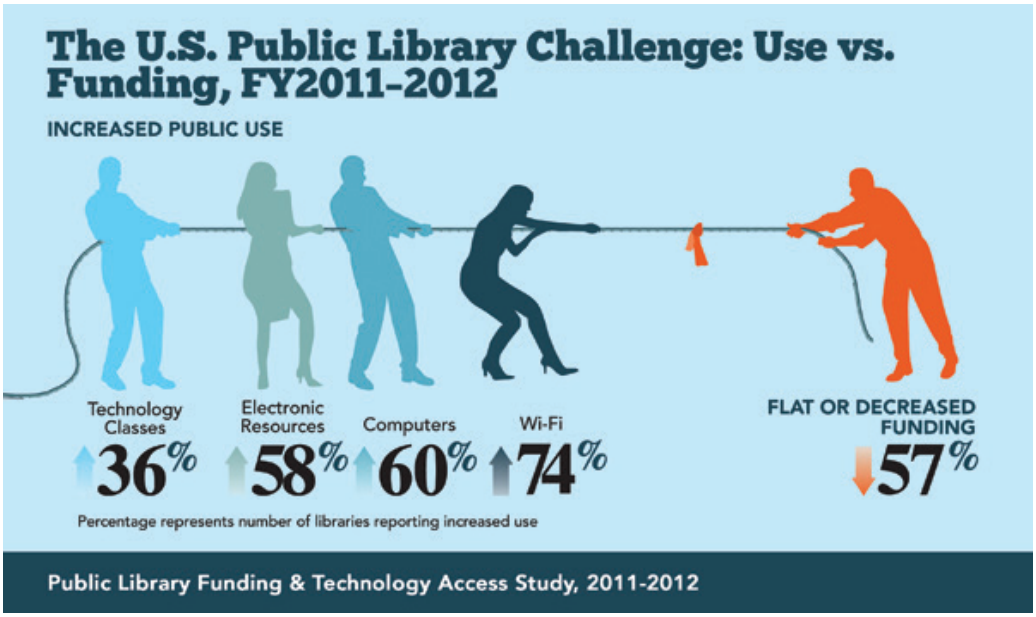
In addition to highlighting increased demand for digital literacy services, PLFTAS data illustrates the diversity of support provided to patrons using online services and resources. The PLFTAS Executive Summary states that library services for job-seekers include:

- Access to job databases and other online job resources (**92.2%**)
- Patron assistance to complete online job applications (**76%**)
- Collaboration with outside agencies or individuals to help patrons seek or attain employment (**34.3%**)

It also reports that public libraries continue to expand e-government assistance as well as partnerships with other agencies to support these services:

- Almost all libraries (**96.6%**) provide assistance to patrons applying for or accessing e-government services
- Over **70%** of libraries report that staff provide assistance in completing government forms
- Nearly **31%** of libraries partner with government agencies, non-profit organizations, and others to provide e-government services

The realities of increased demand for digital literacy services and decreased funding resources challenge all of us to consider better ways to support local libraries. The individual state summary data was used in the project partner states to examine trends, celebrate progress, and surface gaps and potential local library needs. Library development staff contributed stories from their work with local libraries to bring the data to life and challenge some assumptions. This review helped us get the digital literacy conversation started and develop a common perspective on the current state.



Digital Literacy Survey

Public libraries in the project partner states provided thoughtful input in the form of survey feedback and case studies to help inform our understanding of needs and opportunities at the community level, which also contributed to the development of the framework of support and related digital literacy planning approach presented later in this guidebook.

WebJunction partnered with the state library agencies in Illinois, Mississippi and West Virginia to better understand the current context of digital literacy training and assistance provided by local public libraries. Local library perspectives on the challenges they face and opportunities to better serve their communities are critical to informing state-level programs, resources, and partnerships. The Digital Literacy Survey was created and distributed in the fall of 2012 to provide more in-depth context and perspectives on digital literacy efforts by local public libraries.

At the time of analysis, 458 unique respondents representing local public libraries in Illinois, Mississippi and West Virginia

provided feedback regarding the training and assistance they offer to library patrons and partners and the types of support they desire to expand existing services.[2] Of the 458 survey respondents from Illinois, Mississippi, and West Virginia, 80% reported working in libraries serving smaller communities up to 25,000 people. 20% reported working in libraries serving larger communities with 25,000 people or more. Based on survey feedback, it is clear that public libraries are working diligently to meet the imperative for digital literacy training and assistance in their communities.

Survey feedback was assessed for individual project partner states to inform their own initial digital literacy expansion efforts. In Appendix A, there is a summary of survey findings to key questions aggregated from across the three state reports, with some response breakdowns to show variation. A comparative review of these aggregate findings as a team can facilitate a discussion about the current situation in your state.

In addition, your state library might consider conducting a similar digital literacy survey with your libraries. In Appendix B, you can find the full set of questions from the survey used with project partner states.

Local Library Case Studies

Digital literacy is a community issue, and as the resource center of many communities, libraries are challenged to provide valuable digital literacy and information technology services in an increasingly complex field. Three public libraries in each project partner state were chosen for a digital literacy case study. Together, they highlight different conditions and approaches to addressing community needs and surface various challenges to expanding local library services.

A brief summary for each library is provided below and the full text of the detailed case studies can be found in Appendix C. The case studies capture the following information: quick facts about the library, community needs assessment, digital literacy at work, making it happen, librarian insights, and a look to the future.

Illinois

Carbondale Public Library: Making recent technologies accessible to students who have limited access to technology, the Project Next Generation program has been a great fit for Carbondale Public Library. They leverage this program to increase their technology training capacity for the often overlooked 5th–8th grade demographic.

Chicago Public Library: Chicago Public Library had a very strategic approach to operationalizing projects and creating partnerships. This has led to clear decision-making processes and increased capacity on relevant projects. They've also integrated their grant-funded CyberNavigator program into a standard part of how they support the digital literacy efforts in their community.

Naperville Public Library: When Naperville Public Library suffered severe budget cuts between 2009 and 2012 they had to get creative with how to continue to offer digital literacy services to their community. The library developed new ways of providing individual support to their patrons beyond the standard training classroom and created consecutive in-depth training sessions for specific learners.

Mississippi

Columbus-Lowndes Public Library: Careful planning combined with harnessing content opportunities resulted in the successful deployment of a mobile training lab and relevant technology training for this Mississippi community.

Jackson-George Regional Library System: The library training program illustrates the value in having a professional technology trainer on staff enables them to clearly understand community technology training needs, and address these needs by levergaging in-house staff in conjunction with a state-funded technology training partnership, they have also been creative with their space in order to provide training without having a dedicated training lab in every building.

Waynesboro-Wayne County Library System: Through a state-funded program Waynesboro-Wayne County Library System is providing their community with an online job search experience that is not available elsewhere in their county. To support the very specific needs of job searchers, the library staff employs a one-on-one model to help patrons.

West Virginia

Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library: With a belief that learners have individual needs and often learn at a different pace, Martinsburg-Berkeley County Public Library offers a self-paced technology training model. This model is supported by technology helpers in the computer lab.

Mary H. Weir Public Library: By leveraging the national AmeriCorps program, the Mary H. Weir Public Library significantly expanded digital literacy capacity in their library.

Raleigh County Library: In 12 short months, this library has gone from being mainly a book depository to a dynamic community partner. Through a keen focus on educating patrons coupled with bringing their technology up-to-date, the library is raising the level of digital literacy in their community.

1. Graphic is from Key Findings at PLFTAS press kit site: http://www.ala.org/news/mediapresscenter/presskits/plftas12
2. 305 respondents from Illinois, 72 from Mississippi and 81 from West Virginia

Step 3: Discuss Common Challenges and Desired Support

Objective: Ensure digital literacy planning focuses on the most important local library needs and the highest value state library support options.

Local libraries face many types of challenges in implementing or expanding digital literacy services. There are different ways that state library agencies can address these challenges through digital literacy supports that go beyond direct funding or grants. It's important to surface and examine the extent of specific challenges statewide or within different groups of libraries. At the same time, the state library needs to obtain input about what types of support would be valuable to local libraries and assess the level of demand.

Needs Assessment

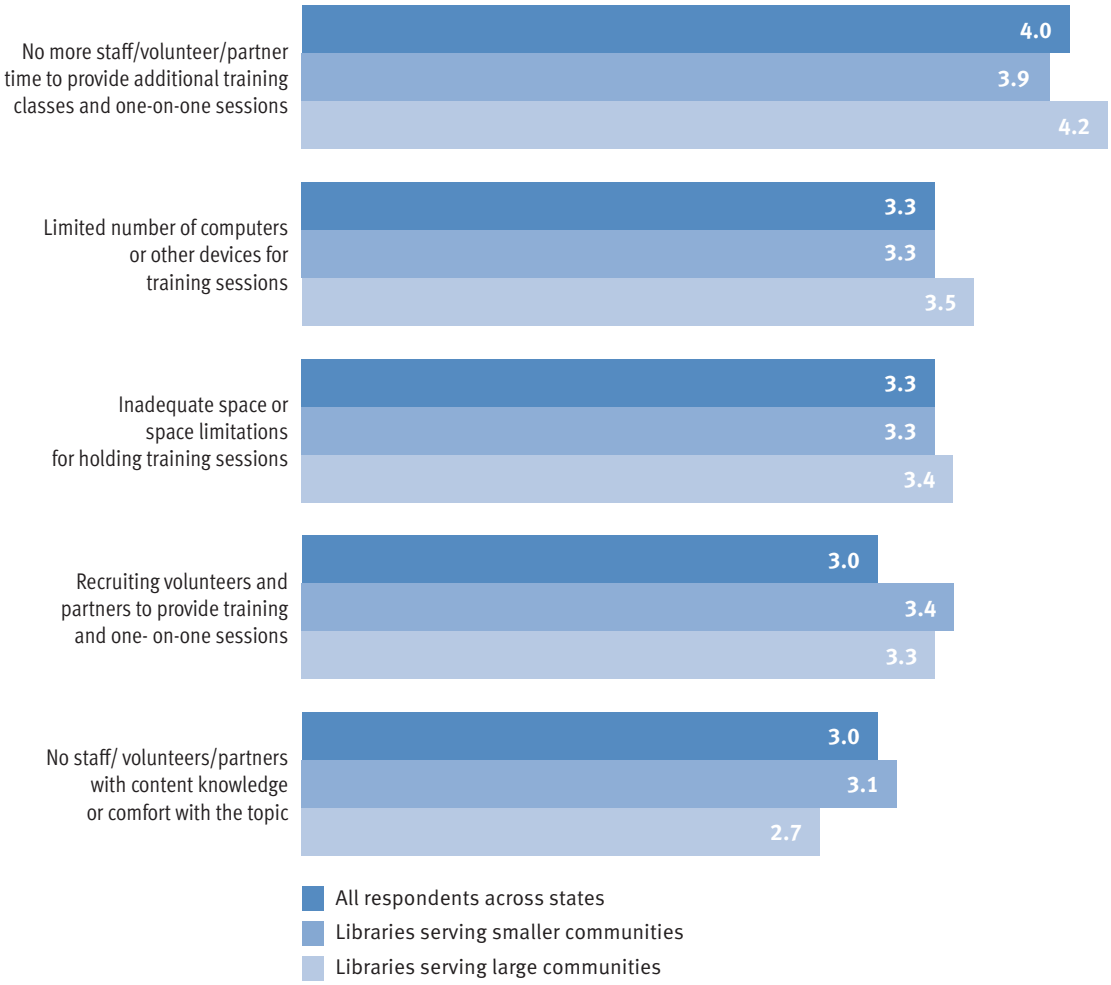
As described in Step 2, public libraries in the project partner states completed a *Digital Literacy Survey* that informed their understanding of the challenges at the local level and surfaced recommendations for state library supports. The findings were very similar across the three partner states of Illinois, Mississippi and West Virginia. There was also common variation between responses from libraries serving large or small communities. Your state library might want to complete a similar survey using the questions provided in Appendix B.

Another approach is to facilitate discussions with your state library team and/or selected stakeholders about the key aggregate findings from the *Digital Literacy Survey* conducted in project partner states. Participants could react to the findings by identifying common challenges that exist in your state and surfacing other needs they know about in local libraries. They could also assess whether any of the recommended types of state library support might be relevant for your state. To support these discussions, we captured the main findings about common challenges and desired support below.

Digital Literacy Survey Findings: Challenges and Supports

We asked public libraries to identify the significance of several possible constraints to expanding the library's training/assistance on information technology and digital literacy. A 5-point scale was used to rank each pre-defined item [1 = not a constraint, 3 = minor constraint, 5 = major constraint]. Among the three project partner states, the issues presented in the next table were identified as constraints (rated at a 3.0 or above).

Constraints to Expanding Library Training and Assistance



Note: Numbers indicate weighted averages for each category across all partner states and by size of population served.

We then asked survey respondents to identify via an open-ended question how their library would improve or expand community access to information technology and digital literacy training if resources were not an issue. Respondents consistently identified themes regarding *increased training offerings, more trainers and 1:1 coaches, and improved technology capabilities/training facilities* as clear capacity extenders.

Themes for Public Libraries to Improve/Expand Community Access

Theme	Total Related Responses via Open-Ended Question	% of Total Survey Respondents (n = 458)
Training offerings	165	36%
Trainers and coaches	91	20%
Technology capabilities/training facilities	78	17%
Marketing and promotion	14	3%
Advocacy and storytelling	2	< 1%
Evaluation and results	0	0%

Provided below are illustrative comments from survey respondents for each major theme regarding how public libraries would like to improve or expand community access to information technology and digital literacy training if resources were not an issue:

Training Offerings

- "In this area there is a need for one-on-one training as opposed to class style. Patrons seem to have specific needs such as how to use e-mail, fill out forms, etc."
- "If resources were not an issue, we would love to offer a once a week training course open to the public that covers a variety of information technology and digital literacy topics. The need is apparent in the community and we have had requests in the past, but we lack the funding and resources to follow through with such a program."
- "Work on promoting several computer training classes following a sign-up for the technological needs. Many need the basics while others have further knowledge and only need to increase their knowledge."

Trainers and Coaches

- "I would like to have a staff person who would be responsible for technology training as well as oversee the system's computers. This person could conduct mini-classes offsite on computer literacy topics as well as how to use library resources."
- "We would hire someone to do the trainings, other than the librarian whose time is at a premium, if we can find someone who would be willing to come out to this rural community to teach it."
- "We need to find volunteers with the correct knowledge to give their time to help teach technology to our patrons."

Technology Capabilities and Training Facilities

- "If resources were not an issue we would have more of a lab set-up rather than scattered computers and dedicated hours to assist patrons as well as a standard schedule of classes people could rely on."
- "Multiple study rooms with various equipment/technology."
- "I would love to have a technology lab for more private instruction."

Survey respondents were also asked to identify via a subsequent open-ended question one thing their state library agency could do to expand or improve their library's ability to offer more training and assistance to patrons beyond direct financial support. Respondents prioritized the same themes for state-level supports: *increased training offerings, more trainers and 1:1 coaches, and improved technology capabilities/training facilities.*

Themes for State Libraries to Support Public Libraries in Improving/Expanding Access

Theme	Total Related Responses via Open-Ended Question	% of Total Survey Respondents (n = 458)
Training offerings	115	25%
Trainers and coaches	100	22%
Technology capabilities/training facilities	51	11%
Marketing and promotion	19	4%
Advocacy and storytelling	3	< 1%
Evaluation and results	0	0%

Provided below are illustrative comments from survey respondents for each major theme regarding how state library agencies can help expand or improve the digital literacy efforts of local libraries:

Training Offerings

- "The one thing our state library agency can do is to continue to provide access to various online self-paced learning websites and programs."
- "I'd like to see them work to develop standardized training tools that libraries could pull from and just add their own information so everyone is not continuously re-creating everything."
- "Offer free webinars to the public on computer skills and use."

Trainers and Coaches

- "More training for library staff so that the staff understands what is available in an ever changing, technology-filled world."
- "Have a trainer available to teach classes seasonally as needed at different branches."
- "The community needs more educators and instruction using technology and on the benefits of using technology. Networking supporting community collaboration as a resource for program development would help as it would provide a dialogue for a community to work together to promote the 'building of a digital community'."

Technology Capabilities and Training Facilities

- "Being a small rural library, we do not have the space to offer on-site training. The agency would have to assist in finding another location for training plus have the computer equipment."
- "Improve consistent bandwidth availability and advocate for keeping access costs affordable for the moderate to lower incomes."
- "We would like to have a perpetual Wi-Fi available to the community. If funding was not an issue we would have new and fast computers. We would also have digital cameras that could be checked out to the public."

Step 4: Brainstorm Potential Support Ideas

Objective: Explore how your state library might further support digital literacy services in public libraries given local library needs and state-level priorities.

State library supports for digital literacy should be driven by the common needs of local libraries and statewide goals and priorities. An important step in the planning process is to consider a wide range of possible ideas for state library investment in resources and partnerships, and then to narrow the list down based on a set of criteria and stakeholder input.

To assist with the brainstorming process, a framework with six key categories of support was developed and tested with state library partners:

- Trainers and coaches
- Training offerings
- Technology capabilities and training facilities
- Marketing and promotion
- Evaluation and results
- Advocacy and storytelling

This section of the guidebook will introduce each of these categories of support and describe a few promising practices from state library agencies. A large collection of ideas gathered during the COSLA 2012 Fall Meeting and planning sessions with state library partners is also provided in Appendix E.

During the brainstorming process, you may want to revisit existing state library supports, organizing them by category. You might also capture initiatives, projects and resources offered by other state-level agencies and organizations depending on who participates in brainstorming. As a result, ideas may surface to leverage or extend these existing supports in new ways.

Trainers and Coaches

Library staff have many demands on their time. In addition to patron requests for digital literacy support, library staff respond to diverse reference requests, conduct library programming, and manage library operations. Reliable access to trainers and coaches with experience in diverse digital literacy topics provides expanded capacity for libraries to respond to growing patron needs.

Trainers and coaches may come from multiple sources, including:

- Library staff (some may have specialized skills)
- Library volunteers
- Contract trainers
- Trainers provided by partner agencies
- Virtual tutors

In the promising practices that follow, you will find examples of how state libraries helped increase the network of trainers and coaches:

- **Low Cost Training Solution:** In Mississippi, libraries can hire a full time Digital Opportunity Trust TeachUp! intern that has already been recruited and trained to provide technology support for $2,000/year.
- **Using Volunteers to Teach Digital Literacy:** The Idaho Commission for Libraries in partnership with the Idaho Office of Refugees, and the Twin Falls and Boise Public Library systems, created the Digital Literacy Training for Refugees program which utilized native language speakers as trainers to help increase digital literacy skills in refugee communities.

- **Statewide Training Provider:** e-BEAT—a partnership between the Mississippi Library Commission and Mississippi State University Extension Service provides digital literacy and technology training to library communities around the state.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Trainers and Coaches section of Appendix D.

Training Offerings

Information technology and broadband access facilitate opportunities for digital engagement and training opportunities. One example to draw from can be found in the Broadband Adoption Toolkit[1], from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, which identifies a wide range of training content and various digital literacy requirements that emerge in these areas. These include basic software and Internet skills, familiarity with and access to various online government, consumer, or job-seeking information, understanding of social media and creative content resources, integration with personal computing/mobile devices, and safe online practices. Prioritizing the breadth and depth of relevant training offerings to meet such varied patron needs is no small task.

Some general concepts of support for expanding training offerings include:

- Packaged face-to-face training curriculum
- Off-the-shelf training aides for patrons
- Self-paced training access (via online services or mobile devices)
- Partner agency training access and coordination

Provided below are promising practices by state libraries that invested in expanding the breadth and depth of training offerings in local libraries:

- **Statewide Training:** Texas State Library and Archives Commission created the Technology Expertise, Access and Learning for All Texans, which focused on individual partnerships with 38 library partners at 154 sites, as well as a mobile unit to help expand trainings in libraries of all sizes and with varying needs.
- **Online Trainer Resources:** On the heels of the BTOP grant, Colorado developed a site to make the digital literacy materials developed as a part of the grant as well as future materials available to librarians.
- **Self-Paced Online Learning Portal:** West Virginia Library Commission has been offering LearningExpress courses online at no cost to their residents since 2001.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Training Offerings section of Appendix D.

Technology Capabilities and Training Facilities

Libraries need to continually update and maintain their technology capabilities to meet patron demands for broadband access and digital literacy supports. These capabilities include computers and other digital devices, software and applications, and Internet connectivity. Expansion of technology-based training also puts pressure on library facilities in terms of space requirements and off-site training locations. Libraries can face challenges with needs assessments, procurement, installation, and maintenance of their technology resources. They also may seek support with facilities design and construction to create flexible and dedicated spaces for digital literacy training and coaching.

State library agencies can help address these challenges with the following types of support, among others:

- Discounted devices and peripherals through statewide procurement or negotiated rates (e.g., computers, tablets, e-readers, smart phones, VOIP headsets)
- Assistive technology packages for computers to support patrons with specific needs
- Video conferencing equipment packages
- Mobile training labs that can be borrowed by libraries around the state
- Partnerships with other agencies for use of their training facilities

The promising practices below capture some ways that state library agencies are helping to improve library facilities and technology capabilities for digital literacy services:

- **Statewide video conferencing technology:** By building partnerships with other state agencies to acquire discounted video conferencing technology, the Indiana State Library has increased distance learning opportunities for continuing education credits, as well as required technical workshops to local libraries, reducing the cost for already tight local budgets.
- **Statewide Improvement on ADA Facilities, Technology, and Training:** Colorado State Library addressed accessibility by investing in assistive technologies hardware and software. They added 64 ADA workstations and hired three dedicated trainers to support libraries throughout Colorado from January 2011 to December 2012.
- **Mobile Training Facilities and High Speed Broadband Provider:** Five E-mobiles - vans with laptops, high speed Internet, and trained technicians - were created in partnership with local community anchor sites, such as libraries and community colleges, to provide training and equipment to rural and underserved communities across New York state.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Technology Capabilities and Training Facilities section of Appendix D.

Marketing and Promotion

Community members need to be connected to digital literacy services at local libraries and other community organizations. This requires marketing and promoting library offerings such as training classes, individualized coaching sessions, free use of computers and other devices, and free Wi-Fi Internet access.

Libraries also serve as valuable referral partners for educational institutions, workforce development agencies, and other community services. Many of these organizations provide free or low-cost digital literacy services that complement what the library can offer. Cross-promotion among providers would better connect community members with the offerings they need and want. It would also raise the profile of libraries as leaders in connecting digital literacy resources at a community level.

State library agencies can support local libraries with marketing and promotion in a number of ways:

- Participation in training "locator" tools
- Sample local marketing campaigns
- Statewide marketing and social media campaigns
- Outreach to partner agencies to formalize cross-promotion activities

Provided below are some state library promising practices in supporting the marketing and promotion of digital literacy services:

- **Statewide Library Awareness Initiative:** *We Geek the Delaware Dream* is the transformational phase of the Geek the Library initiative. Delaware Libraries and their partners facilitate transformational opportunities for their communities to explore their passions and maximize unique talents and achieve the Delaware Dream. Delaware libraries support these interests with millions of books, movies, music, magazines, newspapers, Internet access, programs, workshops, community collaborations, and more.
- **Statewide Marketing Initiative:** NJworks@yourlibrary is a statewide marketing initiative of the New Jersey State Library that seeks to raise awareness of new career resources and build key partnerships with community and state organizations using a variety of promotional materials.
- **Leveraging Government Resources for Promotion:** The Idaho Commission for Libraries partnered with multiple government agencies enabling them to extend their reach to promote new services like increased broadband and upgraded computers, as well as leverage existing online resources such as the Department of Labor's career portal.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Marketing and Promotion section of Appendix D.

Evaluation and Results

Library staff have the opportunity to engage face-to-face with patrons and witness firsthand the positive influence that digital literacy services have on patron lives. It's important to gather qualitative and quantitative information on both services delivered and the impact of those services. Supporting systems for capturing results, be it formally or informally, will help libraries improve services and tell their advocacy story. Outcome-based evaluations will provide deeper insights about the impact and benefits of digital literacy services.

State library agencies can provide support for capturing results and evaluating service benefits in the following ways:

- Standardized data collection and reporting tools
- Local training scheduling and tracking tools
- Routine story collection templates
- State-funded evaluations of service impact and benefits
- Statewide reports that capture results and stories

In the promising practices that follow, you will find examples of how state libraries have provided evaluation supports and results for digital literacy services:

- **An Online Survey Tool to Evaluate Technology Use:** An online survey tool developed by the University of Washington provides a survey, analysis of the resulting data, and customized advocacy material to help libraries evaluate their own technology services and secure the tools to present their material to policy makers.
- **Statewide Evaluation:** The Colorado State Library developed an online reporting tool to evaluate their BTOP Bridging Colorado's Great Digital Divide and hired a part-time grant manager to evaluate and promote the results through a variety of means including reports, a website, webinars and an online newsletter.
- **Study of Strategies and Feasibility for Increasing Technology and Internet Access:** Leveraging grant money, the Montana State Library in conjunction with Montana State University conducted a research study titled "Understanding Cost-Effective Strategies for Increasing Technology and Internet Access in Montana Public Libraries", between April 2012 - August 2012.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Evaluation and Results section of Appendix D.

Advocacy and Storytelling

Qualitative and quantitative assessment of patron impact lays a strong foundation for advocacy. A step beyond evaluation and gathering results, advocacy represents efforts to develop a compelling case for support and expand the pool of champions for library needs. An advocacy plan helps library staff effectively tell the digital literacy story to the right audience, at the right time, and in the right way, allowing libraries to make lasting impressions and strengthen relationships.

State library agencies play a critical advocacy role and can support local libraries with their advocacy efforts in the following ways:

- Local advocacy templates and resources
- Production of statewide advocacy videos and social media
- Trustee outreach and education toolkit
- City/county manager education toolkit
- Partner agency outreach and education
- Meetings with state leaders on broadband adoption and digital literacy

NTIA Broadband Adoption Toolkit (June 2013): http://www2.ntia.doc.gov/files/toolkit_042913.pdf

Provided below are some state library promising practices in supporting advocacy and storytelling for digital literacy:

- **Statewide Technology Conference:** Nebraska Library Commission organized a two-day Technology Planning Summer Camp that addressed library technology planning topics for public libraries in 2011 and 2012.
- **Public Access Technology Benchmark Program:** Pennsylvania is participating in a national pilot of the Edge Benchmarks, which provide libraries with tools for assessing their use of technology, management of technology and community engagement.
- **Impact Video Project:** Montana State Library produced three videos spotlighting the role of libraries in their communities.

For a full description of these promising practices, please see the Advocacy and Storytelling section of Appendix D.

Step 5: Scan the Landscape for Digital Literacy Resources

Objective: Consider initiatives, projects, and funding sources at both the state and national levels that could be leveraged by the state library.

State library agencies play a valuable role in connecting local libraries with relevant statewide and national resources. As part of the planning process, it's important to conduct a landscape analysis to find initiatives, projects, partners, and funding sources that could address the digital literacy needs of libraries and their communities. Knowledge of these resources will help the state library better assess the feasibility and level of effort required to pursue various digital literacy support ideas. This analysis will also surface alignment or gaps between the goals and priorities of the state library agency and other organizations at the state and national levels.

COSLA Guide to National Projects

To assist with national research, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) created a reference guide that provides basic information about national projects associated with digital inclusion, digital literacy, and broadband adoption. Each project profile features a summary followed by project details and reference information. An overview chart captures the focus areas for each project to make it easy to find areas of interest. You can access the reference guide here: COSLA Guide to National Projects.[1] COSLA intends to update the guide on a regular basis to provide the latest information on projects profiled, as well as any new projects that emerge at the national level.

NTIA Resources

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) provides online access to several relevant planning resources. The first resource is the Broadband Adoption Toolkit which shares best practices and tools for broadband adoption and digital literacy projects. NTIA also maintains the National Broadband Map, a public database of information on broadband Internet availability in the United States. Each state, territory and the District of Columbia collected the data from broadband providers or other data sources with updates provided every six months. The resulting database includes searchable records showing where broadband Internet service is available, the technology used to provide the service, the maximum advertised speeds of the service, and the names of the service providers. Through the State Broadband Initiative, NTIA also funded statewide planning activities and targeted programs to facilitate the integration of broadband and information technology into state and local economies. Information about each state's broadband website and maps of statewide broadband availability are also posted to the NTIA site.

Building Digitally Inclusive Communities

Digital literacy is connected under the larger umbrella of digital inclusion and it can be helpful to look to digital inclusion efforts that support the development of digital literacy. One powerful resource that has been released by IMLS is the Building Digital Communities: A Framework for Action which is designed to help support communities in their digital inclusion efforts. Using this framework as a guide, WebJunction is conducting a pilot project that supports and documents the work of participating communities to increase the access and use of digital technologies.

1. COSLA Guide to National Projects: http://www.cosla.org/documents/NationalProjectGuide.pdf

Step 6: Prioritize Support Ideas for Further Exploration

Objective: Narrow down the brainstormed list of possibilities into a smaller set for further research and exploration.

After brainstorming a wide range of ideas for possible state library supports, it's time to narrow the list down to a small set of ideas for further consideration. The state library should use a prioritization exercise with agreed-upon criteria for assessing each idea. It's also valuable to obtain input from key stakeholders to inform the prioritization process. Additional research and exploration of the most promising support ideas will enable more informed decision-making about specific state library investments to advance digital literacy.

Prioritization Criteria

The state library should consider a range of prioritization criteria and choose the critical few that are most pertinent to their situation and values. Provided below are sample criteria based on our experience working with partner state libraries.

- **Value:** how well the idea meets local library needs and desires based on the needs assessment.
- **Impact:** the potential significance of outcomes or community benefit that could be achieved from implementing the idea.
- **Alignment:** how well the idea aligns with the goals and priorities of the state library as well as other state government agencies.
- **Level of effort:** how much effort will likely be required in terms of staff capacity, resources and advocacy. This will vary based on the state environment and potential leverage of statewide and national resources.
- **Urgency:** how well the state library can respond with a support solution within the needed timeframe given other priorities and the level of effort required.
- **Feasibility:** how likely the idea can be implemented given current capacity, and economic and political realities.

At this point in the planning process, the state library might want to reaffirm or adjust its overall goals and priorities for digital literacy based on insights gained from planning research and reflection. This will help ensure that the state library selects ideas that are strategically aligned. Provided below are various examples of goals to get you started.

- 100% of public libraries offer digital literacy training through scheduled classes or one-on-one assistance.
- Increase the number of library patrons that participate in training classes or one-on-one coaching sessions by 20%.
- Lower the cost of providing access to online training offerings by 20%.
- Raise the average confidence level of library staff to provide digital literacy training and coaching.
- Increase coordination and collaboration between local libraries and other community organizations.

Prioritization Exercise

A prioritization exercise should then be undertaken to apply the selected criteria to the list of brainstormed support ideas. In the planning meetings with our partner state libraries, we used a dot voting exercise to quickly determine which ideas were most important to further consider. All of the support ideas were captured on flip chart paper which was hung around the room. Each meeting participant received a specific number of dots, such as 10 total, to stick next to the ideas they thought best met the full set of criteria. Participants could allocate one or more dots to a specific idea to reflect their view of its priority level.

Once all the dots were placed by ideas, the group stepped back and saw a visual picture of their joint priorities. A discussion followed about the results, surfacing the reasons why some ideas were prioritized by many, while others only had one or two votes. In some cases, we discovered that some ideas needed certain conditions to be true before prioritizing, even though they were of high value or potential impact. In other words, too much was still unknown to make a clear prioritization choice. Based on the dot votes and the group discussion, participants created a short list of support ideas.

Informed Investment Decisions

Before making decisions about specific investments of state library resources, it's important to more fully define and assess high priority support ideas. This should include a deeper landscape scan of existing resources, potential funding streams, and opportunities to partner or coordinate efforts. This step can benefit greatly from the input of a variety of stakeholders, resulting in a more viable design for a specific project or investment. Stakeholders can also help broaden your landscape scan with their knowledge of related resources and potential partners.

After conducting this additional research and engaging with stakeholders, the state library should reapply the prioritization criteria to the more fully defined support ideas. This process will help the state library make more informed and rigorous decisions about specific investments to support local libraries. The information gathered will help those investments get off to a faster and more successful start, advancing digital literacy within communities.

WebJunction's vision is to be the place where the library profession gathers to build the knowledge, skills and support we need to power relevant, vibrant libraries. Our mission is to promote learning for all library staff by providing affordable online learning communities.

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The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Through grant making, policy development and research, IMLS helps communities and individuals thrive through broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage and lifelong learning.