

Draft Resolution on the Role of Libraries to Combat the Digital Divide

Background

A digital divide is an economic and social inequity with regard to access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) [1].

The digital divide is fundamentally a socio-economic issue that effects communities nationally. There are different aspects to the digital divide, but it is sufficient to state that it is no longer practical to leverage the full capabilities and thus enjoy the full benefits of contemporary society if one cannot engage with services and capabilities that are increasingly, and at times exclusively, provided in a digital fashion across the Internet.

Today, 34 million Americans lack an affordable and reliable broadband connection. Of these, 19.4 million live in rural areas. This digital divide means they are unable to take advantage of economic, health and educational opportunities that exist for others. What is true nationally is also true in Connecticut. The emphasis on closing the digital divide often centers on providing broadband to every home. While this helpful, it does not automatically address the fact that network connectivity is only one element required for full true access. Underserved portions of our communities often lack the equipment, software, and expertise to effectively utilize digitally provided services and information.

Resolution

WHEREAS there are services and information that are either best or exclusively provided through digital means.

WHEREAS individuals require access to, and effective use of, digitally provided services and information in order to participate fully in our communities and to leverage the benefits thereof.

WHEREAS underserved parts of our communities are often not well equipped to develop independently the equipment, capabilities, and expertise to fully leverage available digital resources.

WHEREAS state public libraries have stable and high performing networking, equipment, software and capabilities that facilitate access to, and use of, digitally provided services and information.

WHEREAS state public libraries have staff with expertise in research, information, pedagogy, and the use of library equipment, software, and capabilities

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WHEREAS state public libraries have the mission to provide access to systems, services, information, and capabilities to enrich the lives of their respective communities by empowering citizens' personal, educational, and professional growth.

WHEREAS state public libraries are optimally located in our communities throughout the State of Connecticut.

BE IT RESOLVED that the CET strongly endorses the role of public libraries as one solution amongst a constellation of solutions that can ameliorate the digital divide across the state by assisting individuals in underserved communities to develop the rich set of skills and knowledge that will allow them to identify, access, understand, assess, leverage, and extend digital services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the CET advocates the development of a comprehensive statewide plan to provide public libraries with equipment, software, and infrastructure to leverage their location, expertise, and mission as a key approach to facilitate access to digital capabilities and education in digital literacy for overlooked members of our communities throughout Connecticut.

[1] – Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_divide