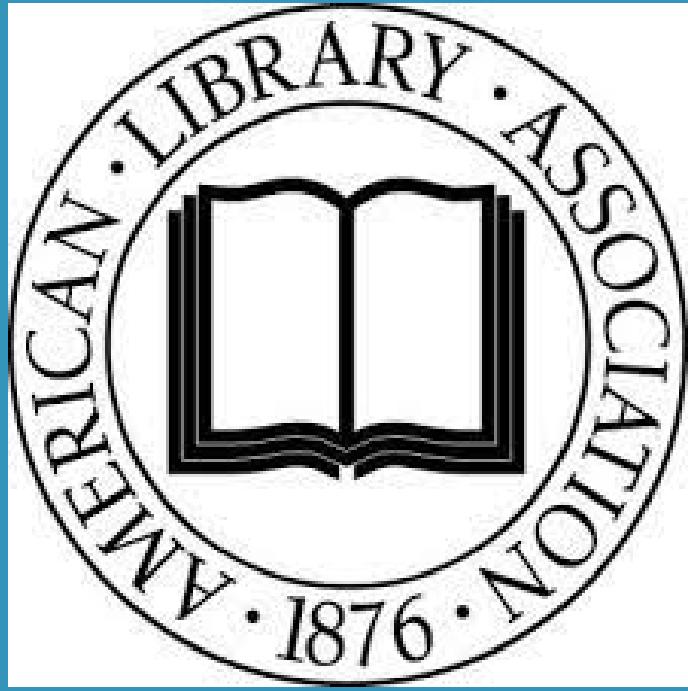




Out of the Loop: Information Poverty and what We Can Do to Widen Information Inclusion

Tracie D. Hall, Executive Director
American Library Association



ACCESS FOR ALL

Founded in 1876, the mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order **to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.**



A Timely Pledge

The American Library's Twelve Core Values

- Access
- Confidentiality/Privacy
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Education/Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom
- Sustainability
- The Public Good
- Preservation
- Professionalism
- Service
- Social Responsibility

A survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago for the Data Foundation collected in April and May 2020 demonstrate that:

- Despite the economic stimulus effort, respondents in 17% of households in April and 16% in May reported they would not be able to pay for an unexpected \$400 expense.
- **Respondents in approximately 27% of households worried about having enough food over the past month, and 22% of households reported not being able to afford to buy more food when it runs out.**
- Both “worry about” and “experience with” food insecurity were higher for respondents without a high school diploma (53% worry, 47% experience), with household incomes less than \$30,000 (47%, 41%), and in households with children (36%, 32%) compared to respondents with more education, higher incomes, and no children.
- During April and May 2020, 57% of those in households earning more than \$125,000 per year reported working remotely, Only 19% of those in households earning less than \$60,000 per year reported having this ability.

The pandemic has revealed that the educational and income divide is a matter of life and death

Connected Race, Income, and Connectivity Divides

A Deutsche Bank study reports on digital resource gaps that those working in libraries and information services have long noted

- Blacks and Latinos are 10 years behind Whites in levels of broadband access and almost 4 times more Blacks have poor Tech connectivity than Whites.
- Poor access to connectivity and work-from-home jobs caused minorities little choice but to venture out of home. Black people left their homes 135% more than White people during the lockdown peak in April.

More than half of Blacks and Latinos could be under-prepared for 86% of jobs by 2045.

If this digital racial gap is not addressed, in one generation alone, digitization could render the country's minorities into an unemployment abyss.

We are at a point in our digital evolution where the **three most critical** quality of life indicators:

Access to Education, Access to Employment, and Access to Public Health

rely on consistent and reliable digital access and sophisticated digital navigation skills.

Key Points

- The Cost of Being Out of the Loop
- Information as an Economic Mobility, Public Health, and Social Justice Issue
- The Third Great Wave of Information Services
- The Fight Against Information Poverty
- A New Call to Action



- In urban and rural communities across this country, the coronavirus has had **disproportional impacts along the lines of race and income**, with **Blacks, Latinos and Indigenous and low-income residents of all races** becoming infected and dying at higher rates than their peers.



"One of the largest gaps – made even more significant in this pandemic – is the digital divide." Gov. J.B. Pritzker

- Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic there has been an observed and tested **correlation between inequitable health outcomes and access to technology**.
- Recent studies have shown that people with the most limited reading and digital literacy have **shorter life spans overall**

Information access as a Social Justice & Public Health Issue

The surprising link between Covid-19 deaths and internet access
The case for treating internet access as a health necessity.
By Keren Landman | Mar 16, 2022, 4:35pm EDT

Digital Inclusion is Literally a Matter of Life and Death

We are talking Information 911

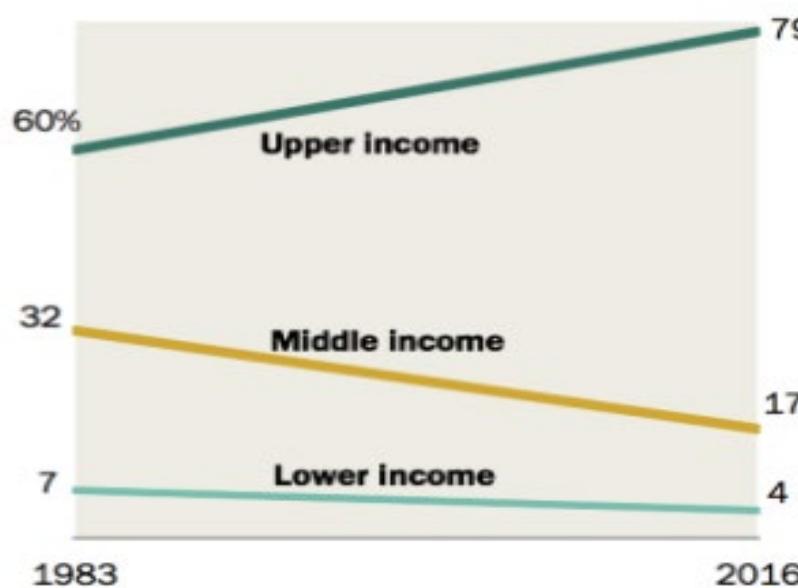
Table 1

COVID-19 outcomes in U.S. counties with different levels of Internet access.

% No Internet	# of counties	COVID-19 cases per 100,000 people	COVID-19 deaths per 100,000 people	Full vaccine series per 100 people
0-10%	236	20,192	161	62.7
11-20%	1401	21,975	288	52.2
21-30%	1096	22,412	381	44.9
31-40%	297	22,526	412	44.9
>40%	78	22,881	458	49.7

From HealthPlace. 2022

Share of U.S. aggregate wealth



- Information Poverty and Public Health Outcomes Persist because Wealth Gaps Persist and Vice Versa

Racial disparities in the Black and Hispanic poverty rates persisted in 2020

U.S. poverty rates in 2020 according to the official poverty measure (OPM) and the supplemental poverty measure (SPM), by race and ethnicity

■ OPM rate ■ SPM rate

Black, non-Hispanic



Hispanic



White, non-Hispanic



Overall





- Information poverty is further defined by the **lack of visible access points to critical information** and the absence of well-coordinated and appropriately scaled **information infrastructure**.
- Poverty is compounded when people do not have access to one of three things: **financial capital, education, or connections to information or social networks**.

What is Information Poverty?

- “Information Poverty’ has been described as a “situation in which individuals and communities, within a given context, do not have the requisite skills, abilities or material means to obtain efficient access to information, interpret it and apply it appropriately.”

-- Johannes Britz

Why targeting “generational poverty”
is so important right now



Situational poverty can be caused by a loss of employment, divorce, severe health problems, even environmental disaster.

Generational poverty occurs when at least **two generations of a family** have been born into poverty. Causes may include persistently low levels of educational and employment access, geographic isolation, high incarceration, ongoing food and housing instability.

Head of household income remains the biggest predictor of individual lifetime income attainment. Education and employment access have proven the most effective disrupters

Making the Connection between Information Access and Life Outcomes



“Access to the internet is the civil rights issue of the 21st century.”

- Congressman John Lewis

- In urban and rural communities, the coronavirus has had **disproportional impacts per race and income**, with Blacks, Latinos and Indigenous residents infected and dying at higher rates
- According to the Pew Research Center, only 66% of African Americans and 61% of Hispanics/Latinos nationally are connected to broadband at home, compared to 79% of white

Redlining is “the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor.” --Encyclopedia of Chicago.

Information redlining is the systematic denial of equitable access to information, information services, and information retrieval methods.

**“Digital Access is
the New Pencil”**



Dr. Miguel Cardona,
US Secretary of Education

Shared Urgency



Advancing Digital Equity for All:

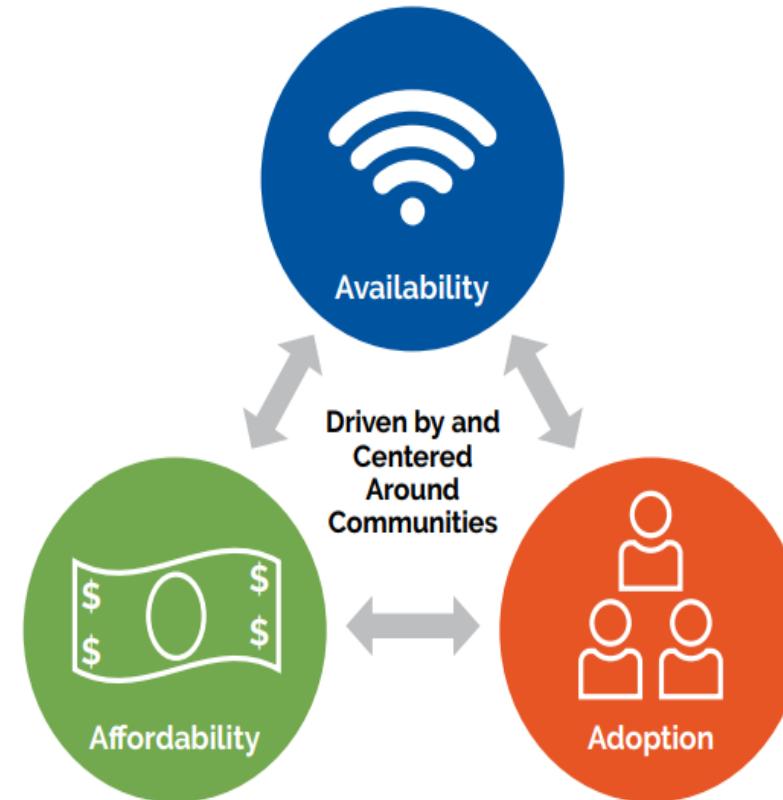
Community-Based Recommendations for Developing Effective Digital Equity Plans to Close the Digital Divide and Enable Technology-Empowered Learning

September 2022

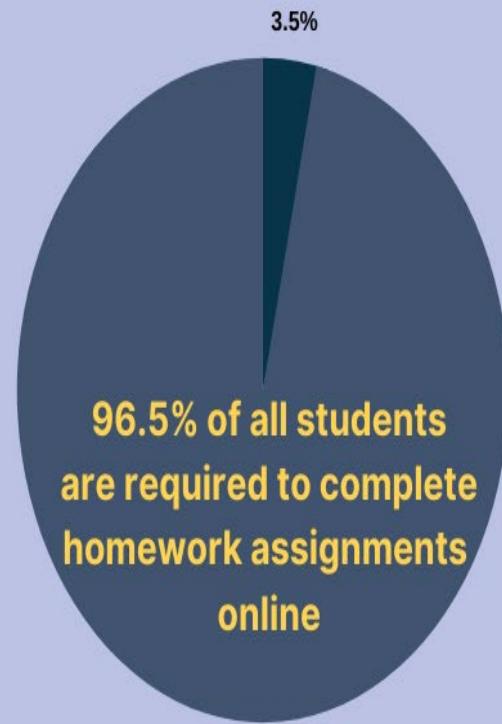
US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
<http://tech.ed.gov>



As demonstrated by the current state of digital equity, access to reliable, high-speed broadband and technology tools for learning is a multifaceted challenge. The broader challenge of access can be viewed through three distinct, although not mutually exclusive, components—**availability, affordability, and adoption**. To advance digital equity, all three components must be addressed individually and in connection with one another. Learners, families/caregivers, and their communities need to have high-speed broadband service and technology tools for learning ubiquitously **available** to them, that service and those devices need to be **affordable** long-term, and information, technical support, and skill development opportunities must be accessible to ensure **adoption**. Building the necessary physical infrastructure alone, although a critical step, will not resolve the unique challenges faced by learners, families/caregivers, and communities. Leaders must, in parallel, ensure access is sustainably affordable and provide adoption support.



Gaps in Digital Inclusion for Students **AND** Teachers

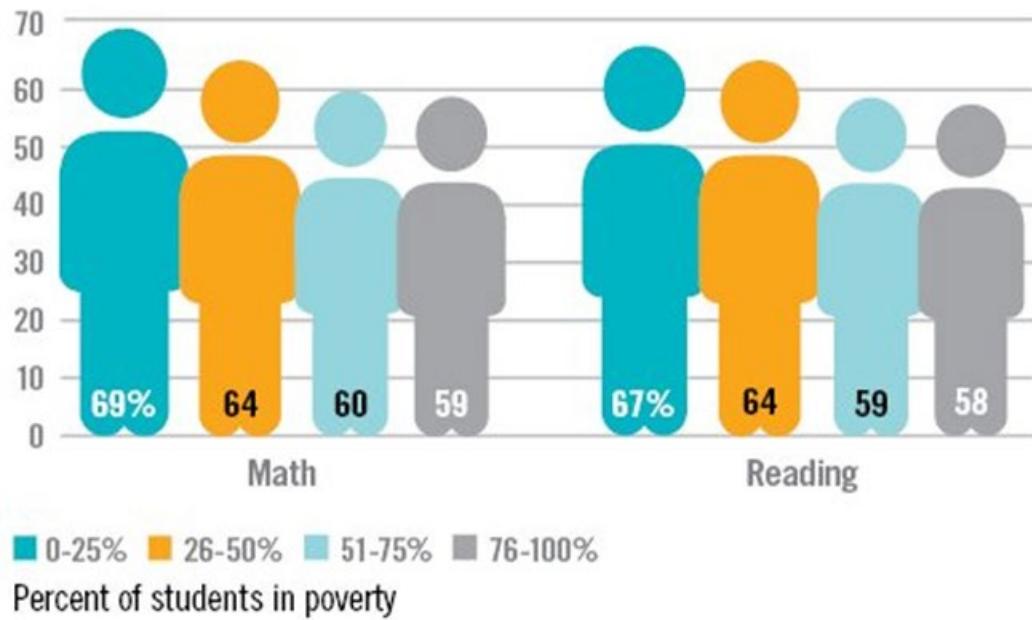


Yet **1 in 5 Americans**
are disconnected and unable to
participate in the digital environment

Teacher Technology Training Lags in High-Poverty Schools

The digital divide isn't just about access to hardware and high-speed internet. Students in high-poverty schools are less likely than their counterparts in wealthier schools to have teachers receiving training in how to integrate technology into their classroom instruction, according to a new Education Week Research Center analysis.

Share of 4th grade math and reading students with teachers receiving training on integration of technology into instruction in past two years



SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2015

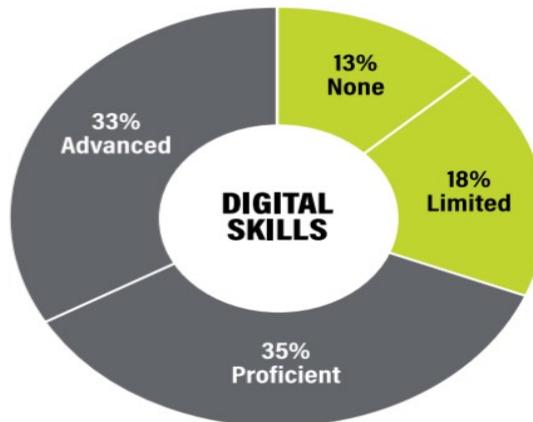
The New Landscape of Digital Literacy

How workers' uneven digital skills affect economic mobility and business competitiveness, and what policymakers can do about it.

BY AMANDA BERGSON-SHILCOCK
MAY 2020

NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION
Every worker. Every industry. A strong economy.

NEARLY ONE-THIRD OF AMERICA'S WORKERS LACK DIGITAL SKILLS



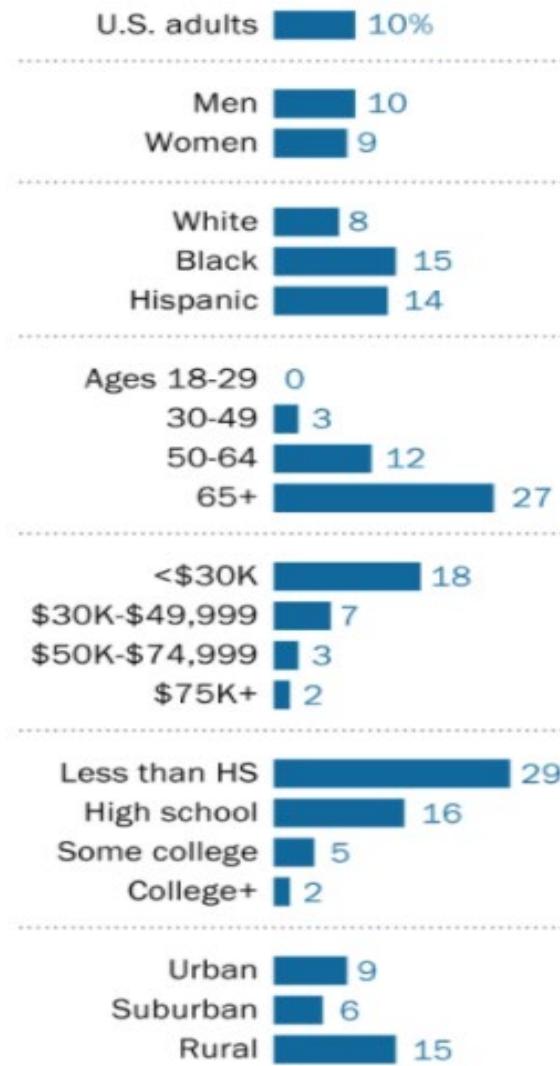
Currently employed US workers ages 16-64.
Source: OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) 2012-14.

Link Adult Reading Literacy, Digital Literacy and Socio-Economic Mobility

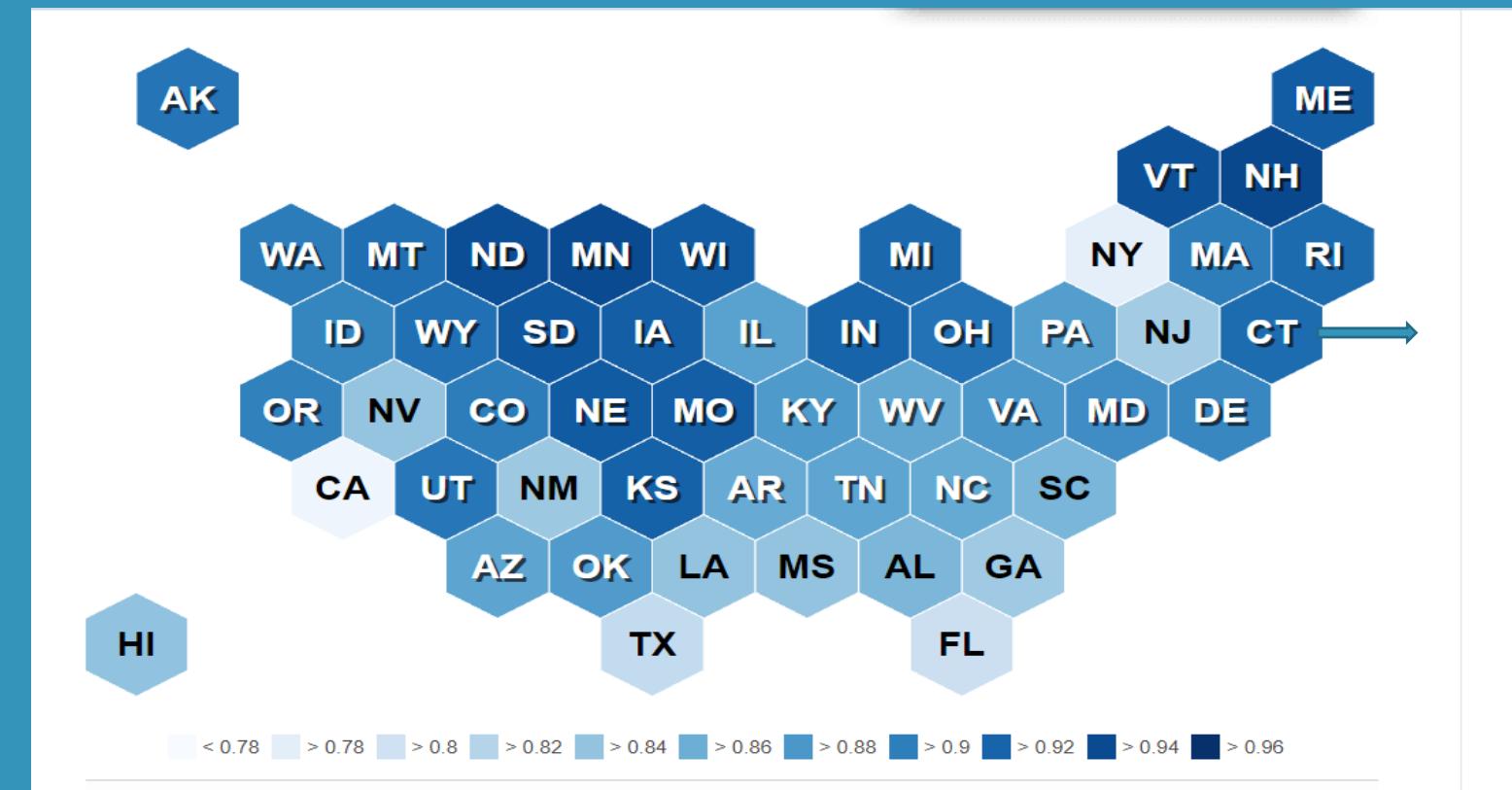
- At least 21% of adults in the United States (about 43 million) are considered functionally illiterate category -- National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).
- More than one-third of workers in some sectors have few or no digital skills. This includes construction, retail, wholesale, and auto repair, where 37% of workers have limited or no digital skills; hospitality (36%); manufacturing (35%); and administrative and support services (35%).
- At least 10% of Americans don't use the internet. Why, and who are they?
- This necessitates a focus, not just on information access on information application.

Who's not online in 2019?

% of U.S. adults who say they do not use the internet



A Long Row to Hoe: Adult Literacy, Digital Access and Economic Mobility

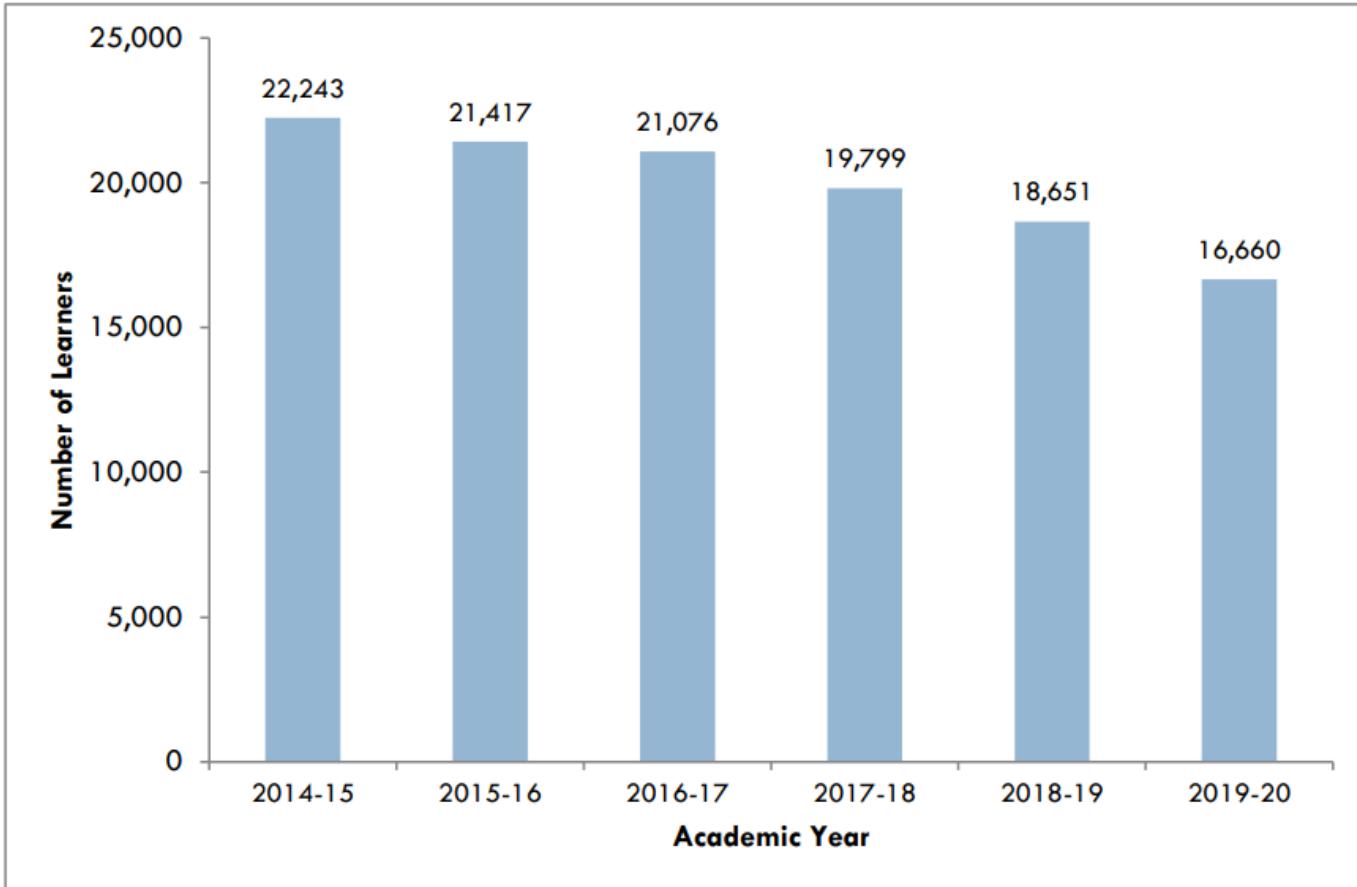


Literacy is a multigenerational issue. Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72% chance of being at the lowest reading level.

“Adults with low literacy skills are left out of the critical communication chain...”

Connecting the dots here at home. How can information equity and literacy support meet current need?

Figure 5: Adult Education Enrollment

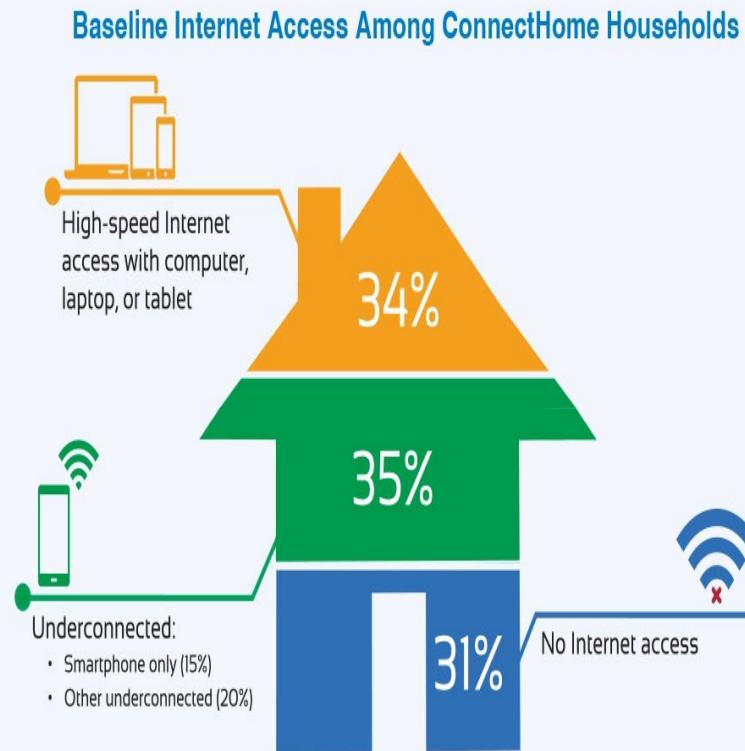


The Plan for Digital Inclusion Must Include a Broader Literacy Plan

In an op-ed in Hartford Courant, ERN CT State Director Amy Dowell noted,

“For a state with Connecticut’s resources, reputation for great schools, and one of the best-educated workforces, our literacy struggles should be an embarrassing wake-up call. It doesn’t have to be this way, and we know what works. A state-led literacy effort, implemented with fidelity, will make Connecticut students more successful, more secure, and poised to lead our economy.”

Libraries can play a role that no other institution in the public realm can. If they get the resources and supports needed



Libraries are the largest providers of public internet access and digital/reading instruction

- Today **98.9% of all public libraries offer free public access to computers and the Internet**—a growth of more than 400 percent since 1996, when just one in four libraries did.
- Millions of Americans use computers in public libraries to access government services, research health information, enroll in distance-learning classes, and start small businesses.
- Nearly one-third of Americans age 14 or older—**roughly 77 million people**—used a public library computer or wireless network to access the Internet in the past year, according to a national report released today.
- More than 85 percent of libraries say they are not able to meet demand for computers at certain times during the day.

- Gates Foundation Study

It is an almost universal finding in studies investigating human information behaviour that people choose other people as their preferred source of information.

--Catherine Johnson

The Librarian as Mediator: A Significant Change in the Educational Role of Librarians

Donna Roe and David Moody

The face of academic librarianship is changing. While much attention has been focused on the impact of new technologies, new sources of information, and new ways of management, perhaps the most significant change is in the faces across the desk.

Students in higher education are becoming more multicultural, their needs and demands shifting their personal backgrounds and values diversifying. Today multiculturalism includes such factors as race, national origin, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, physical and mental enablement, and socioeconomic status. No longer is the typical college student male, fresh out of high school, and of Anglo/European American heritage.

The numbers of students from diverse ethnic and cultural heritages are steadily growing. In this paper the term "minorities" will be used to describe those people not of "white" (Anglo/European American) background. However, a phrase such as "diverse cultures" better represents the broad spectrum of individuals described: Asian/Eastern Mediterranean/Semitic American, African American, Asian American, First Nation/Indigenous/

Native American, Hispanic, Latino, Mexican, Puerto Rican and a full complement of other international students.

The Changing Minority Student Population

From 1990-1995, total enrollment in institutions of higher education increased by 3.21%. However, in this time period, the actual number of Anglo/European American enrollees decreased by almost four percent, while enrollment from diverse groups rose nearly 30%. Overall, the percentage of those diverse groups rose steadily by about 1% a year, from 23% to 28%.¹

Should this trend continue through the year 2020, the percentage of academic students from diverse groups would stand at 53%, outnumbering those from Anglo/European American backgrounds. Examination of population projections from the United States Census Bureau show a persistent decrease for whites is indeed likely to continue. In 1995, 75.26% of the population of this country was of Anglo/European American background; by 2020, this is expected to shrink to 67%. In 2020, it is projected that the increase in the minority



- Shift to teaching (Latin meaning), co-navigating, and coaching throughout the user experience.
- What must we begin to do differently? What must we do that we have never done before?
- What must we stop doing?
- What do we need to learn to keep up?

Navigation: the act of finding a way from one place to another

Co-Navigation: the act of actively helping someone find their way from one place to another

What if everyone in every community where there was need had access to Digital Navigators?

BRIDGEPORT LIBRARY AVAILABLE AT ALL BPL LOCATIONS!

DIGITAL NAVIGATORS

AVAILABLE TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WITH TECHNOLOGY



BRANCH LOCATIONS

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(203) 937-7400

Black Rock Branch
2705 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
(203) 937-7624

East Side Branch
1114 East Main Street
Bridgeport, CT 06608
(203) 937-7634

North Branch
1015 Madison Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06604
(203) 937-7401

Westfield Branch
751 Central Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06607
(203) 937-7628

Broadway Branch
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Opening soon!

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A DIGITAL NAVIGATOR TODAY!

DIGITAL NAVIGATOR PROGRAM



Don't get left behind in
an increasingly digital
world!

The library will provide a
laptop and a hotspot (internet
access from home) as well as
one-on-one tutoring to help
you become a digital citizen.

No experience necessary!

Schedule your appointment today!
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West Haven Library



Public Library of New London

NEED HELP WITH
YOUR RESUME?
our Digital Navigator
is here for you!

TUESDAY,
DEC 6TH @ 2PM

registration is required due to
limited spaces!

for event registration
or by appointment

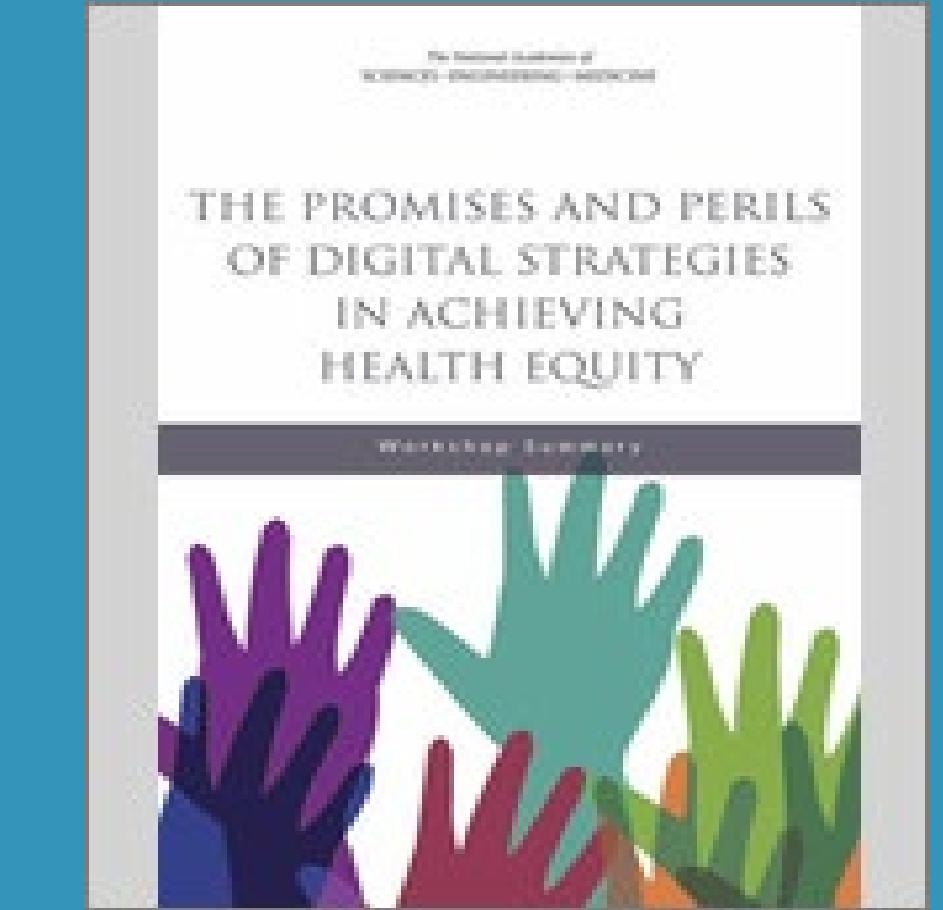


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How Connecticut is Leading the Way

The tremendous expansion in the use of technology provides many opportunities to work with communities to reduce health disparities. (Nilsen, Wisdom)

Mobile technologies have a unique potential to reduce disparities because of their extensive use in racial and ethnic minority communities. (Nilsen, Wisdom)



“Globally, more people own a mobile phone than own a toothbrush”

- Kimberlydawn Wisdom, senior vice president of community health and equity and chief wellness and diversity officer in the Henry Ford Health System

What if Social and Public Health departments funded libraries to make Information Specialists and Digital Navigators available to the public?

Forecasters are predicting the prolonged impacts of this pandemic will be inconsistent educational access for youth and young adults and unemployment for adults whose skillsets do not allow them to transition to the new digital work environment.

The Third Great Wave of Information Services



If the **first great** wave of library and information services was in the late 18th through early 20th century to pull the public towards reading literacy, and **the second wave** in the latter 20th century to help to introduce technological literacy into the populace, then the next and **third great wave** of library and information science **will be to “exteriorize” library and information services and close the digital literacy and data access gap.**

Three Ways that ALA is Fighting For Information Equity:

- The call for universal broadband. Alongside access to food, housing, social services, and medical care, access to broadband should be considered a determinant of individual and community viability, and, like the right to read, a human right.
- The call for rapid diversification of the LIS field. In the US more than 80% of librarians are white. The profession's inability to reflect its diverse user base limits its credibility. Expand library workforce diversity and equitably promote people of color to decision-making positions within the field.
- The call for additional funding to broaden library and information access. What if every low-income family was matched with an information navigator? Think of the return on impact investment in such a program could yield.



Thank You!

thall@ala.org