

# Public Libraries, Digital Literacy, and Public Policy: An International Discussion Panel

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# Agenda for Today

- Set context
- Share experiences from a two-year exploration into digital literacy at the intersection of library practice and national public policy
- Hear from you
- Questions and discussion

# ALA Washington Office



Mission: research, education, advocacy, lobbying

- Office of Government Relations (OGR)
- Office for Information Technology Policy (OITP)

# Libraries in the U.S.

119,987 libraries in the U.S.

- Public Libraries = 8,951 (16,400 outlets)
- Academic Libraries = 3,689
- School Libraries = 98,460
- Also: Special Libraries, Armed Forces Libraries, and Government Libraries
- Librarians: 166,000+

# U.S. Policy Background

- What is driving the broadband policy agenda in the U.S., and where does digital literacy come into play?
  - Economic development and global competition
  - Essential life tasks move online (only)
  - Ubiquitous home broadband



# Opening the Policy Window

- What is access?
  - The answer depends on who you ask and effects who is responsible for solving the problem
- Policy window opens
  - American Recovery & Reinvestment Act
  - National Broadband Plan
- A new vision for library services

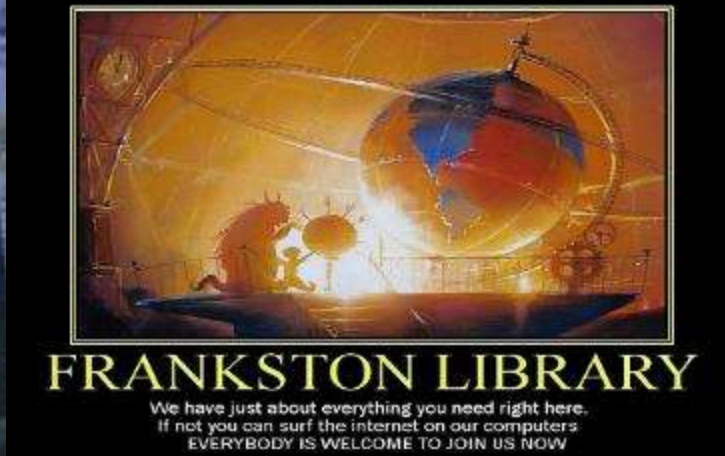


# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Libraries

- Library relevance in Internet age
- Move from “stuff” to “services”
- Digital literacy as a constant for libraries—dealing with different formats and devices
- Contemplation—from information gathering to information synthesis
- Move from “consumption” to “creation”



# U.S. Libraries Today & Why We Care About Broadband





# Turning Policy into Opportunity: Setting the Stage

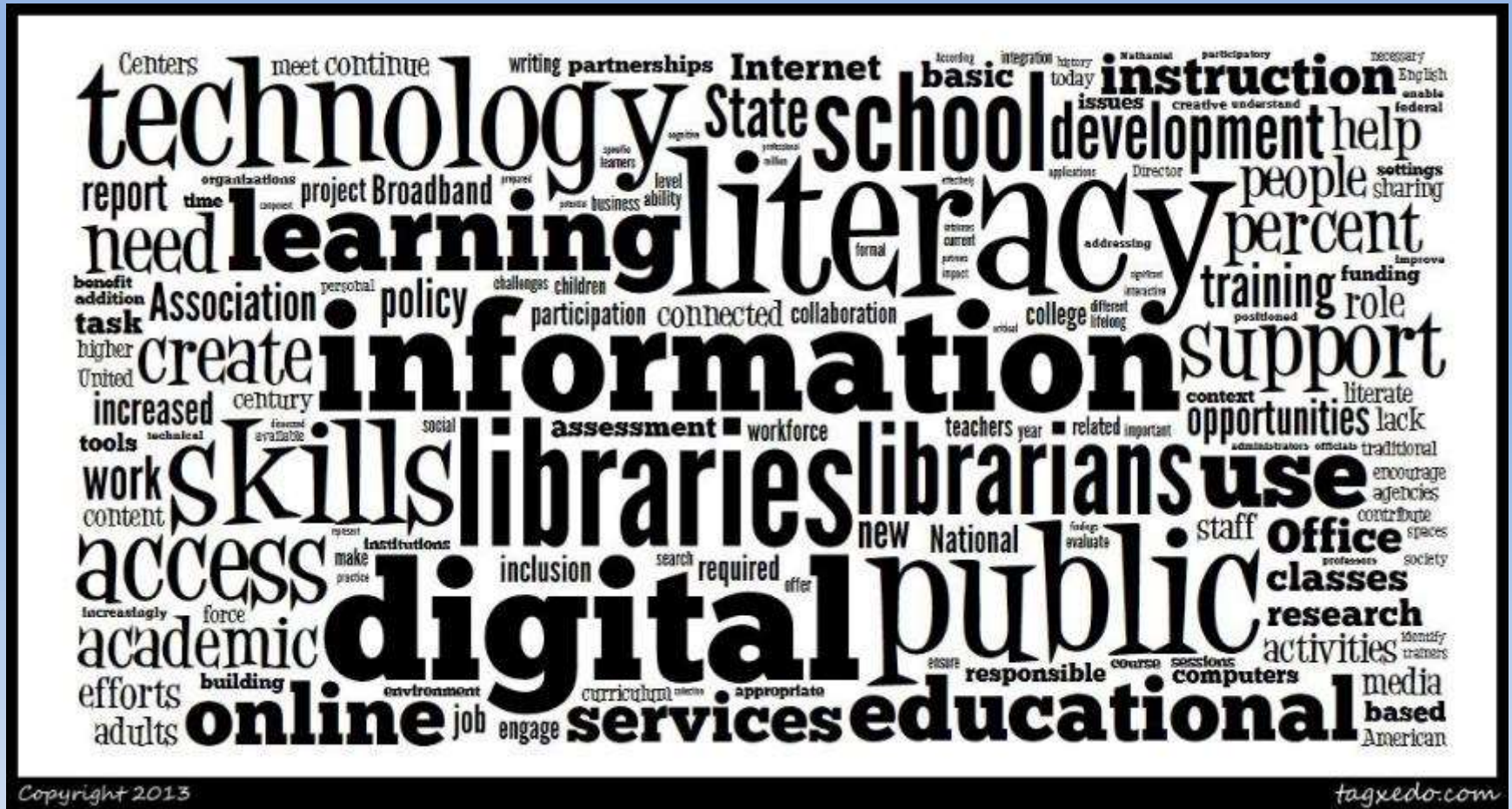
- Testing our assumptions about libraries
- Demonstrating that libraries are a key partner for successful digital literacy programs
- Building a task force of library experts



# **Libraries and Digital Literacy: ALA Assumptions**

- Digital literacy is vital to ensuring equal opportunity in a knowledge economy
- Libraries are best positioned to support digital literacy training
- Libraries need additional resources to meet demand for digital literacy training

# What is Digital Literacy?



# Libraries & Digital Literacy

Digital Literacy is the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information.

\*It requires both cognitive and technical skills

(American Library Association Digital Literacy Taskforce, 2011)

# Library “triple play”

- Physical locations with tech infrastructure
- Staffed by informational professionals
- Robust and diverse electronic content



# Digital Literacy Best Practices

- Informal and formal training and learning opportunities are both valuable
- Digital literacy training is most effective in context
- Adequate staffing, staff expertise and adequate public computers are leading barriers for expanding technology services
- Increased importance of partners, outreach and mobile labs

# Overall Lessons Learned

- Libraries have similar values about digital literacy, but significant differences in execution make generalizations difficult
- Together, libraries work across the “lifespan” of an individual
- Lifelong learning—for library *staff*, as well as patrons
- Diverse populations demand diverse solutions



# Task Force Recommendations

- **Recommendation I:** Increase Investment in Digital Literacy
- **Recommendation II:** Develop and Sustain Robust Partnerships and Collaborations
- **Recommendation III:** Strengthen and Expand Research and Assessment
- **Recommendation IV:** Increase Access to Digital Literacy Programming

# What do you think?



# Digital Literacy Resources

- Digital Literacy.gov  
<http://www.digitalliteracy.gov/>
- Digital Learn.org <http://digitalllearn.org/>
- NTIA Broadband Adoption Toolkit  
<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/press-release/2013/ntia-broadband-adoption-toolkit-shares-best-practices-across-us>

# Research Resources

- Strover, Sharon, Flamm, Kenneth, and Sang, Yoonmo, [\*Public Computing Centers: Beyond 'Public' and 'Computing'\*](#) (August 15, 2013). TPRC 41: The 41st Research Conference on Communication, Information and Internet Policy. Available, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2241173>.
- Dailey, Dharma, Bryne, Amelia, Powell, Alison, Joe, Karaganis, and Jaewon Chung, [\*Broadband Adoption in Low-Income Communities\*](#) (2010). Social Science Research Council. Available <http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/broadband-adoption-in-low-income-communities/>.
- Hobbs, Renee, [\*Digital and Media Literacy: A Plan of Action\*](#) (2010). The Aspen Institute. Available <http://www.knightcomm.org/digital-and-media-literacy-a-plan-of-action/>.
- The report of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy (2009). [\*Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age\*](#). Available <http://www.knightcomm.org/read-the-report-and-comment/>.

# Resources from ALA

- Task Force Report

[http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2012\\_OITP\\_digilitreport\\_1\\_22\\_13.pdf](http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2012_OITP_digilitreport_1_22_13.pdf)

- Task Force Recommendations

[http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2013\\_dltf\\_recommendations.pdf](http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/2013_dltf_recommendations.pdf)

National Conversations on Digital Literacy

<http://www.districtdispatch.org/digilit13/>

# More Resources from ALA

- U.S. Public Libraries and BTOP Report

<http://www.districtdispatch.org/2013/05/libraries-and-btop-strengthen-communities/>

- Digital Literacy and Public Policy through the Library Lens

<http://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mpr/vol22/iss1/27/>

- ALA filing with the Federal Communications Commission on digital literacy (2012)

[http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/ala\\_comments4\\_2\\_2012.pdf](http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/ala_comments4_2_2012.pdf)

- ALA's literacy advocacy

<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/literacy>

# Contact Us

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- News from ALA “District Dispatch”  
<http://www.districtdispatch.org/>

