

# Developing Digital Equity through Community Assessment & Planning

an overview on how libraries can assist with  
technology access for all community members



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# Workshop Overview

- 1. What, How and Why libraries foster digital equity**
- 2. Identifying library system capacity – challenges and strengths**
- 3. Assessment and planning tools**
- 4. Listening to member library approaches (panel discussion)**

# Why is digital equity important to your library?

**Enter into your chat box using 3-5 words,  
“Why is digital equity important for your library?”**



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# What libraries do to foster digital equity

*Libraries are places of information. When most people think "library" they think books. And while that is certainly true, these days books take different shapes, such as e-books and audio books. More than just books, libraries are places of information, offering people free access to a wealth of information that they often can't find elsewhere...the library is a center of community for millions of people.* (ilovelibraries – supporting one of our nation’s most important resources, <http://www.ilovelibraries.org/what-libraries-do>, American Library Association, 2018).



# How libraries foster digital equity

*“With 100% of public libraries offering public access to the Internet, public libraries are a vital community link to the Internet, technology, and information. Public libraries are also essential providers of E-government, employment, and educational services and resources.”* (Digital Inclusion Survey,

<https://digitalinclusion.umd.edu/content/new-digital-inclusion-survey-issue-briefs-available> , University of Maryland, 2015).



# How libraries foster digital equity

*“Public libraries are often the only free option for computer and Internet access in communities, and they are able to fill workforce development gaps by offering career services that are tailored to community needs and local economic demand.”* (Public Libraries: A Community’s Connection for Career Services,

[http://heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/Public\\_Libraries\\_Career\\_Services\\_Report.pdf](http://heldrich.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/products/uploads/Public_Libraries_Career_Services_Report.pdf) , Rutgers University, 2019).



# How libraries foster digital equity

*“Libraries are mobilizing for the economic fallout associated with COVID-19 such as facilitating unemployment insurance enrollment, referrals to food banks, and other services for immediate needs. Library staff are also thinking longer term about how shelter-in-place orders could expand telework in the future.”*

(Public Libraries and the Workforce, <https://www.frbatlanta.org/cweo/workforce-currents/2020/07/08/public-libraries-and-the-workforce> , Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, July 2020).



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# Why libraries foster digital equity

*“Libraries bring together people of diverse, and even clashing perspectives to seek common ground. Today the library is being seen as a movement. Not a place, but a community-wide effort to improve the lives of community members through knowledge.”* (Library as Movement, <https://davidlankes.org/library-as-movement/>, Victoria Libraries Planning Summit, R. David Lankes, 2019).

[Powerful Idea – Golden Rule, Simon Sinek](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

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# What prevents your library from fostering digital equity?

**Enter into your chat box using 3-5 words,  
“What prevents your library from fostering digital equity?”**



# Library System Capacity - Challenges

- ❑ 3 of 48 (6%) libraries employ an onsite IT technician
- ❑ 2 of 48 (4%) libraries contract for onsite IT services through 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Vendor
- ❑ 18 of 48 (36%) libraries offer some form of digital literacy classes
- ❑ 7 of 48 (15%) libraries do not offer video conferencing to patrons
- ❑ **5 of 48 (10%) libraries have some documented IT Plan**

# Library System Capacity - Strengths

- ❑ 42 of 44 (95%) libraries have an Internet Usage Policy
- ❑ 298 total public access computers across system
- ❑ 44 of 48 (92%) libraries offer 100x100Mbps broadband
- ❑ 48 of 48 (100%) libraries offer WiFi Internet connections
- ❑ 48 of 48 (100%) libraries offer Copy/Scanning/Fax services

# Community Assessment

Engagement Level	Low	Low/Medium	Medium/High	High	High
Tools	Online/Print Survey	Bulletin Board	Street Interviews (Ask Exercise)	Focus Groups	Sit Down Interviews
Results	<p>Basic feedback from library users and some non-users about current as well as desired services</p> <p>Engagement level is low due to no interpersonal interaction and feedback lacks clarity</p>	<p>Basic feedback from library users about current as well as desired services</p> <p>Engagement level is moderate because of no direct human connection. But feedback can provide some clarity through patron storytelling</p>	<p>Deeper level feedback from community members about community aspirations and/or role of library in community</p> <p>Engagement level can be high if enough interviews are conducted with diverse stakeholders</p>	<p>Comprehensive feedback from community members about community aspirations and/or role of library in community</p> <p>Engagement level is high when done with diverse stakeholders</p>	<p>Personal feedback with the opportunity to bring diverse &amp; non-traditional stakeholders to share information</p> <p>High level of engagement through intimate conversation</p>

# Community Assessment

- Surveys, interviews and focus groups
- User-driven data
  - PC Reservation Software - Envisionware
  - Meraki WiFi Data
  - BLUEcloud Analytics
  - Overdrive and E-content Usage
  - Website – Google Analytics



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# Sample Community Technology Needs Survey

Simple method of collecting data from library users about existing and potential Library Technology Services.

- Distribute at circulation or reference desks
- Setup as Google Form on website and social media pages
- Establish as splash page on public computers
- Circulate at in-person programs or outreach events



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# Sample Library Technology Plan

2-3 page document that considers Community Assessment practices and documents next 2-4 years of how the library will address community digital needs. Plan incorporates:

- Equipment or Inventory Schedule
- List of Technology-Enabled Resources
- Training for Staff and Patrons
- Funding Commitments
- Policy Review Schedule



# Listening to Member Library Approaches

**Deb Brimmer**, Technology Director  
Chemung County Library District

**Pauline Emery**, Director  
Southeast Steuben County Library





# Additional Reading & Events

## **2020 Public Library Association Technology Survey**

<https://www.ala.org/pla/sites/ala.org.pla/files/content/data/PLA-2020-Technology-Survey-Summary-Report.pdf>

## **National Digital Inclusion Alliance**

<https://www.digitalinclusion.org/>

## **Public Libraries and Digital Inclusion Report**

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350075500\\_Public\\_Libraries\\_and\\_Digital\\_Inclusion\\_Research\\_Report](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350075500_Public_Libraries_and_Digital_Inclusion_Research_Report)

## **Digital Equity Portal Webinar hosted by NYS Library**

[Click here to register for this event.](#)



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# Contact Information:

**Please contact STLS to setup a virtual or in-person visit regarding  
Strategic Planning.**

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