ALAAmericanLibraryAssociation

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Ms. Yufanyi Nshom
Office of Workforce Investment
U.S. Department of Labor
200 Constitution Avenue NW, Suite C-4510
Washington, DC 20210

Submitted via email: DigLiteracyRFI@dol.gov

Dear Ms. Nshom:

The American Library Association (ALA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Department of Labor's (with other federal agencies) Request for Information on digital literacy and resilience. The ALA is the foremost national organization providing resources to inspire library and information professionals to transform their communities through essential programs and services. For more than 140 years, ALA has been the trusted voice and advocate for our nation's 123,000 academic, public, school, government, and special libraries.

Our response provides extensive examples of key themes and the ways libraries of all types and in communities of all sizes advance digital equity and foster resilience. Libraries are essential digital literacy stakeholders, with a proven record of ensuring technology access in un- and underserved communities, encouraging adoption of digital and new technology, promoting digital literacy upskilling and confidence, and collaborating widely to connect everyone – job seekers, entrepreneurs, students, and seniors — to the support they need to achieve their goals and participate in their communities.

Over the last several decades libraries and library workers have specialized in learning about new technologies and have played the role of bridges – teaching others how to take advantage of these tools, as well as providing access to them.[1] Because of their broad reach, high-quality resources, and collaborative ethos, libraries are a natural fit for engaging communities in digital literacy and digital inclusion. Libraries are welcoming, interdisciplinary, and accessible spaces for everyone.

Libraries have a strong track record of partnering at the national, state, and local level with other actors in the digital inclusion landscape including government, industry (Google, Microsoft, AT&T, etc.), and community organizations. Library professionals work to: (1) provide internet access both at the library and through connected devices for those who lack home broadband (2) spur home adoption by increasing awareness of and confidence in using online resources and services and accessing subsidies and discounts, and (3) support digital literacy opportunities that empower lifelong learning, entrepreneurship, job retraining, and widespread use of emerging applications and devices.

At the same time, libraries are frequently not recognized as eligible training providers in federal and state programs. Too often, knowledgeable library professionals are not engaged early enough in program development to effectively guide plans and ensure adequate support for new demands. Research conducted as an input to the National Broadband Plan more than a decade ago still resonates today relative to competing demands on libraries, and a lack of government attention and investment as

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demands grow: "Libraries have been shifting resources to accommodate the ever-growing demand for online services, but governments have generally not recognized or funded this expansion of service" and "Cost shifting onto community organizations needs to be met with additional funding of those organizations. Government agencies, school systems, and large employers increasingly privilege web-based access to many basic services, including job and benefits applications***. Because many of the constituents for these services have limited Internet access and/or limited Internet proficiency, these measures often shift human and technical support costs onto libraries and other community organizations that do provide access, in-person help, and training***. Fuller funding of these intermediaries is the best means of assuring a meaningful broadband safety net and a stronger pathway to adoption in these communities."[2]

Before we respond to the RFI's specific questions, we want to emphasize several overarching points:

1. Digital literacy and resilience are of urgent importance to adults and youth across their full lifespans and careers. Digital skills building is not a "one and done" activity that will be completed at the end of a person's K-12 education or a single job-training course. The ALA also notes that basic literacy is foundational, and information literacy is contextual for systemically addressing digital resilience. These elements must be explicitly addressed in policy and practice. We urge DOL to take an expansive view of digital literacy that includes the information literacy skills needed to review, assess, and effectively use information. Future federal government investments in this area should be guided by the principle that digital skills and information literacy should be incorporated at every stage of education and workforce development.

2. DOL should capitalize on the momentum of organizations that already have expertise and infrastructure in building digital skills with diverse populations and modalities and have earned the trust of key populations. Library staff in K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and public libraries (as well as other community-based organizations and adult education providers) are well positioned to offer valuable expertise and reach. It is far easier to help these organizations expand their technical capacity (either independently or through collaborations with partners) than it is to attempt to build this hard-earned social capital from scratch via new organizations or providers with no history of serving target communities. Digital skill development via libraries should be explicitly included as an allowable cost in DOL discretionary grant programs for workforce training. This strategy will yield a maximum return on investment of the federal taxpayer dollar.

3. Digital skills are dramatically more relevant and powerful when interwoven with other skills. As educators know well, contextualizing a new skill within the real-world context that a person will be using the skill is a highly effective teaching and learning modality. Learners are energized and motivated when they see a clear connection to their daily activities and their greater aspirations.

4. In a fast-changing field, investing in the fundamentals has the most reliable rate of return. DOL cannot and should not attempt to "pick winners" among particular vendors or software. Rather, DOL should focus its investments on processes and tools that the field will need for many years to come. These should include: A) identifying and implementing opportunities to integrate digital skills throughout federal agency policy guidance and discretionary grant priorities; B) developing and validating additional digital skills assessments; C) researching and documenting promising practices for identifying in-demand digital skills and designing programs that help learners build those skills; D)creating and disseminating professional development resources; E) convening stakeholders for technical assistance and peer

learning opportunities; and F) ensuring the broad dissemination of federally funded research and resources across the full panoply of workforce, education, and digital inclusion stakeholders.

Keeping these points in mind, below we have responded to a selection of DOL's specific questions related to Current Trends in Digital Literacy, Challenges and Barriers to Digital Literacy, Digital Equity and Inclusion, Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration, Federal Investments in Digital Literacy, and Digital Literacy & K-12 Public Education System.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit these comments. Questions about this submission can be directed to ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Deputy Director Megan Janicki (mjanicki@alawash.org) and/or ALA Public Policy & Advocacy Deputy Director Larra Clark (lclark@alawash.org).

1. Current Trends in Digital Literacy

Please share how actors in the workforce development system, including education entities, libraries, community organizations, businesses or industry associations, and union or worker organizations, are currently engaged in digital literacy in the following areas:

(a) Assessing digital resilience for adult and youth learners?

The overall field is very early in its ability to define and understand the concept of digital resilience, much less assess it. There is a great deal of room for growth in helping educators, workforce professionals, and policymakers make a "leap of imagination" to understand why digital resilience is important, how it can be fostered, and how it can be assessed. The federal government has a vital role in facilitating this leap. A key task for DOL is to ensure that educators and workforce professionals have the tools they need to design digital skill-building opportunities that support both specific skill development and broader resilience.

There are, however, many tools for assessing specific skills and immediate and interim outcomes for learners. The Public Library Association (PLA), a division of ALA, offers Project Outcome, which freely provides public libraries simple surveys on essential library services and programs. Project Outcome helps libraries measure four key patron outcomes—knowledge, confidence, application, and awareness—in eight key library service areas, including digital learning, job skills, and economic development programs.[3] Other similar tools include Northstar Digital Literacy, as well as other online assessments as part of online training through LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, or similar.

(b) Addressing digital literacy skill demands or skills mismatches for adult and youth workers seeking employment or training services?

Library staff regularly see mismatches in skills for adults and youth, which can range widely. The most common and consistent, however, is the need for basic digital skills. As the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies note in their comments, workplace skills training programs often assume a basic level of digital literacy that job seekers may not possess. Applicants who lack those basic skills will not be considered for those positions or training programs. As such, there is a critical need for training that addresses baseline knowledge, so that patrons can acquire the basic skills they need to access existing training programs or online resources. Public libraries are one of the only places where this type of basic skills training is available free of charge.

Ongoing need for basic digital skills building

Overall, 88.3% of public libraries offer digital literacy training, with a particular focus on foundational skills, including general computer (82%), software (76%) and internet (83%) use.[4] Libraries meet learners where they are across age and diverse backgrounds.

Training may be offered informally at the point of need, one-on-one by appointment, via online resources, via drop-in learning labs, and through formal classes. Libraries provide these resources based on funding, staffing capacity, and local demand. Learners may use multiple modalities over the course of their learning journey to meet specific needs at specific times and practice/reinforce skills. There is no "one size fits all."

These basic skills are essential building blocks for workforce readiness and success. Job applicants and employees need email addresses and basic computer and internet navigation skills to access job information, online portals, HR documents, and application materials.

In New Jersey, twelve public libraries run the Access Navigators Program provides a cohort of skilled trainers that rotate among 12 libraries to provide individualized assistance to persons seeking employment, job training, or digital competence. The program provides training in computer-based applications; assistance with resumes and job searching; electronic learning aids, and resources to teach and enhance digital literacy skills.

Access Navigators, and other library digital literacy programs, support basic digital literacy including getting on the internet, setting up email accounts, using smartphones, using a mouse, and using software such as Microsoft Word. Many libraries, such as the Russell County Public Library (KY) and the Massanutten Regional Library (VA), use "Book a Librarian" support to schedule one-to-one appointments for digital literacy support. This allows dedicated time for staff to support patrons with customized digital literacy support.

Many libraries also offer digital skill building through online programs such as DigitalLearn[5] or Northstar Digital Literacy[6]. Northstar Digital Literacy is a program that assess computer and internet skills, provides specific instruction for skills that need improvement, and offers certification through proctored assessments for each skill that needs improving.

About 42% of public libraries offer formal classes.[7] Multnomah County Library, Oregon, offers workshops in multiple languages, including English, Chinese, and Russian, where residents can learn basic digital skills like how to use the internet and basic email to use online tools to build and market their business.

Queens Public Library in New York provides the course English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) that will help customers build the language skills they need to have a successful career. In these courses, participants learn how to create resumes, interview, increase their comfort communicating at work, make suggestions, communicate better with supervisors and peers, and prepare presentations and reports. Once participants complete the ESOL for Healthcare course, the libraries help connect students who have completed our English language course in health care with reputable home care agencies.

Libraries located in K-12 schools, community colleges, and colleges and universities also work to address skills gaps, particularly with students. Schools within the school district of Collier County (Florida), for instance, serve primarily rural, migrant, and immigrant students. Many students do not have internet access or computers at home, so the district designed programs to provide these. Once those services were in place, many of the district's school librarians noticed that the students, families, and caregivers

did not have needed digital skills. In addition to the technical support the school librarians and district provided to these students and families, the librarians stepped in to help students strengthen their digital skills. As student confidence grows, school librarians and instructional resource teachers provide opportunities for students to explore their interests through classes, makerlabs, and hands-on activities focusing on coding, robotics, and circuitry.

Information literacy

Digital literacy must build on basic literacy and extend beyond technical skills to include critical thinking, problem-solving, and a mindset of lifelong learning. Libraries of all types build these skills through information literacy, which teaches how to find, evaluate, use, and create information to effectively achieve their personal, social, occupational, and education goals. These skills are vital when evaluating information found online, identifying credible sources, protecting confidential information, and avoiding scams.

In Buxton, Maine, the Bonny Eagle Middle School Library staff work with social studies teachers to teach students about using the internet and databases, including evaluating websites for quality and bias and being able to spot disinformation and phishing.

In Connecticut, the Naugatuck Valley Community College, a Hispanic Serving Institution, and Waterbury Public High School librarians partnered to develop and deliver an information literacy instruction program for high school students to ensure they had the skills needed to be successful when entering college. This is part of a larger program that is preparing students for success in post-secondary education. The program is made possible by the GEAR UP grant from the U.S. Department of Education, which supports programs that "increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education."

Even for those with digital skills, it can be hard to identify if information online is credible. With the rise of misinformation, librarians are at the forefront of building skills so users are informed, engaged, and think critically about the information they consume and create online. Academic libraries embed information literacy into course curricula.

One such example is San Antonio College Library in Texas, which created the program [Fearless Learning](#) empowering first-time-in-college students. The program supports the "first-year experiences in and out of the classroom that help them develop integrated reading, writing, and research skills needed to succeed as information literate citizens, both academically and professionally" using the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education from the Association of College and Research Libraries.[8] The librarians and faculty work together to help students develop student's information literacy skills in their first year of schooling to set them up for success during their college careers and beyond.

This year the Institute of Museum and Library Services will convene an [interagency taskforce](#) and facilitate the development of a portal of resources bridging information literacy research and practice to advance information literacy within communities. The Information Literacy Taskforce shall take steps necessary to coordinate and promote information literacy efforts across departments and agencies throughout the Federal government and with libraries and museums at the State and local level, including promoting partnerships among Federal, State, and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and private enterprises. Further, appropriated federal funding shall support pilot grant programs and evaluation to test implementation of tools and community resources developed by the Taskforce.[9]

DOL should work in concert with IMLS and the Taskforce and ensure that the workforce development system thinks of digital literacy in the most expansive way—that participants gain the skills not only to access and use technology but also to understand and evaluate the information they encounter. Information literacy skills, a defined term in [Federal law](#) – "the ability to find, retrieve, understand, evaluate, analyze, discern the reliability and accuracy of, and effectively use information (which encompasses spoken and broadcast words and videos, printed materials, and digital content, data, and images)" – should be promoted in concert with digital literacy skills.

Specialized supports for job seekers

Additionally, library staff provide support in creating resumes and cover letters. Through the Library of Virginia, for instance, Virginia public libraries have access to Brainfuses' JobNow and VetNow, which feature live career coaching, computer skills tutoring, test prep, and resume review. Libraries offer one-to-one support in building resumes, conducting job searches, and applying to jobs online. The Bristol Public Library (VA) leverages their dedicated Jones Workforce Development Center to provide career and digital literacy development. They offer specialized digital literacy classes for career development twice weekly. Bristol Library staff stresses the importance of offering specialized digital literacy programming as they notice shrinking industrial sectors in the area and growing service sectors.

The Mary H. Weir Public Library (WV) leverages partnerships with the West Virginia Northern Community College and Goodwill. The community college computer students serve as interns at the library as part of their coursework. The college interns provide assistance to the staff and public regarding hardware and software. Goodwill sends employment skills trainers to the library to train patrons on job skills using the library's resources, including business software.

Libraries also provide asynchronous support opportunities for their communities. Bullitt County Public Library (KY), job seekers receive a packet of information about online job boards, resume writing, and key word searches. The Kinsman Free Public Library (OH) created a YouTube channel of video resources for job seekers supporting digital literacy.

Advanced technology training

Beyond the basics, many libraries offer advanced technology training, such as coding or web marketing workshops and programs. In Florida, the Broward County Library, for example, offered classes to aspiring and existing entrepreneurs to learn about web-based marketing and design, and developing websites and applications as part of their programming for aspiring tech entrepreneurs. In another example, the Cobb County Public Library, in Georgia, has offered a Girls Who Code Club for several years to promote IT learning and advanced skill building necessary for future college and career. [Michigan State University Libraries](#) offers workshops on advanced digital skills like VR, statistical software, book design using MS Word, and more.

Libraries support both seniors in the workforce, as well as young people preparing for college and careers with the tools, they need to be successful. As staff at the City of Virginia Beach Library noted in an informal ALA survey, "young adults [often] lack basic technology troubleshooting and MS Office skills. Everything for them has always been plug and play or preformatted, i.e., Google Docs." On the other hand, older adults who are retraining or upskilling in the workforce may need support with using a smartphone or tablet, searching the internet, or completing online forms.

Chicago Public Library provides YOUmedia spaces for teens. With an emphasis on digital media and the maker movement, teens engage in projects across a variety of core content areas, including graphic design, photography, video, music, 2D/3D design, STEM, and hands-on making. YOUmedia connects

young adults, books, media, skilled staff, and community partners in dynamic spaces designed to inspire collaboration and creativity. Teens are encouraged to create rather than consume and learn based on self-interest through intergenerational and peer collaborations. The library acts as a node on a teen's pathway to lifelong learning and connects teens to other learning opportunities that will lead to skill-building as well as college and career development.

Many libraries provide access to training programs and other important digital resources, such as Career Online High School (COHS), in which students can prepare for and earn their high school diploma; COHS also has workforce certification options. Libraries around the country leverage this resource and support adult learners in completing this essential education and training. Libraries also have test preparation materials and databases and support GED testing. The Trimble County (KY) Public Library, in partnership with local adult education programs, provides hotspots and Chromebooks for checkout so adult learners can prepare for their exams, as well as space to complete exams.

(c) Upskilling employees in the workforce, including incorporating digital skills instruction and integrating digital technologies into occupational skills training?

Libraries of all types offer access to technologies such as 3D printers, makerspaces, and other equipment with staff to orient and teach essential skills for their use. In Independence, Kansas, a community of 9,000 people, the public library has a partnership with the Fab Lab at Independence Community College. The library offers a laser engraver, 3D printer, a large format printer, and a recording studio. Aspiring entrepreneurs, makers, and others can learn how to use the equipment at the library. Should they need more advanced equipment or training, the library can refer them to the Fab Lab to further their work. Access to this equipment in the library, as well as instruction in using it, allows community members to engage with the new technologies before investing in their own resources. With the partnership with the Fab Lab, it also creates a pathway for many to continue working with advanced manufacturing and digital fabrication tools for learning academic and vocational skills.

Library systems such as the Richland Library (SC) offer their own fabrication studios with 3D printers, recording equipment, advanced software for editing and designing, sewing machines, a woodworking studio, and a fully equipped teaching kitchen. Community members can attend training, check out equipment, and use designated space at the library to build skills, engage with technology, and work on their businesses.

Several public libraries have added a range of simulators that allow patrons to gain "hands-on" experience. Through its Center for Innovation, the Fayetteville (AR) Public Library seeks to exemplify digital literacy and workforce development by offering free access to a range of technologies that run the gamut from workforce simulation and virtual reality to audio/video production & editing. The simulation lab includes the FAA-approved Redbird SD flight simulator, which allows for real-world instruction and practice in 30 different aircraft; truck simulator that can be configured into various types of large trucks and transmissions; CAT (Caterpillar) Hydraulic Excavator that provides curriculum and multiple machine applications build with CAT operators to teach the same techniques as found on real-world worksites; and a forklift simulator with VR headset.

Through Nevada Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED), and in partnership with the Nevada State Library, Archives and Public Records (NSLAPR) the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) and other stakeholders, a $13.8 million federal grant is being leveraged to reimagine a more efficient and effective way to get Nevadans back to work in meaningful middle-wage STEAM careers. The **S**upporting and **A**dvancing **N**evada's **D**islocated **I**ndividuals (**SANDI)** project:

- uses virtual reality and 3D digital content to teach labor market literacy and provide training
- decodes prior work experience to assign college credit and/or competency badges
- trains public library staff to serve as career navigators within Nevada's workforce community of practice to seamlessly further the reach of career services and connect community residents to career navigation, training and job placement focused on the talent needed to advance Nevada's resilient industries

Virtual reality content enables individuals to "see" and experience tasks, key skills, and abilities of in-demand STEAM careers so they can evaluate job interest and aptitude. If a user feels well-suited to begin a program of study, they can enroll in training that leads to short-term stackable, nationally recognized STEAM credentials of value.

Through strategic partnerships and mutual support, libraries' equipment, space, and technologies can be leveraged to support occupational skills training.

(d) Identifying in-demand digital literacy skills and/or skills most relevant for the local labor market? Are industry or occupation-specific skills being identified?

Libraries are continuously improving programs through formal and informal channels for feedback and community input. Libraries conduct needs assessments and speak with community members and workforce partners about their needs, the types of jobs they are looking for – or offering – and the relevant skills needed. With formalized structures to integrate libraries into the workforce development and support ecosystem, library staff benefit from increased awareness and use of labor market information and can further tailor services to the most relevant skills. For example, a library in coastal Maine with a tourist-based industry will have library services targeted at that market, whereas a library in a farm community in Nebraska will have library services tailored to that specific market.

(f) Developing/piloting innovative strategies and promising practices or projects to support digital resilience amongst learners?

Adults learn best when using digital tools to accomplish a specific goal; creating learning opportunities that are immediately applicable and relevant supports engagement and success. Libraries meet community members where they are and frequently offer one-on-one tech help.

The Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) developed a program for street vendors in the city who wanted to learn about setting up their business, and in many cases, also developing critical English language skills to engage with customers. Applicable digital literacy skills were also critical to business success, including setting up email, navigating websites, and conducting online banking and vending. Working with Cell-Ed, a platform for delivering mobile learning units, LAPL created micro-lessons that vendors could do completely on a mobile phone[10]. Lessons included basic internet skills as well as a Business, Sales, and Vending Pathway.

These micro-learning modules grew out of LAPL's "Successful Street Vending initiative", in which the library piloted ways to support the growing street vending community. The library assessed the needs of aspiring and existing street vendors and formed an advisory group of vendors to ensure that digital learning modules were tailored to the needs of the community. The Cell-Ed units are directly applicable to street vendors as they set up and conduct their business and engage with customers and city regulations. In this way, the learned digital literacy skills are timely and relevant.

Organizations that have a robust understanding of the assets and expertise that learners bring to the table are well-positioned to foster digital resilience, because they are already accustomed to designing programs and services that help people springboard from the skills they *have* to the new skills they *need*.

(g) What are some examples of promising practices in the field of digital skills training?

Libraries of all sizes provide one-to-one digital skills training and navigation support. Common requests are for support using the patron's own device, be it a laptop, smartphone, or tablet. One-to-one time can be structured around the patron's goals and at a pace that is comfortable for them. The as-needed nature of this kind of support allows flexibility, as well.

The Public Library Association's DigitalLearn initiative exhibits another promising practice: combining asynchronous digital skills-building online modules with workshop training resources to enable library staff (and others) to teach in a group setting more easily and effectively. Originally funded by IMLS in 2012, DigitalLearn has grown to a collection of more than 30 self-directed video-based tutorials with narration, typically 6 to 22 minutes long, and written at an elementary to middle school reading level. Topics include basic search, how to use Windows 10 or Mac OS 11, how to identify and avoid online scams, and more. Learners can watch an entire course or a specific module, depending on their needs.

Complementing the self-directed courses are tools for live training on over 80 topics, including course planning documents, activity sheets and practice files, template slide presentations, and handouts – everything a facilitator will need to teach a course on a specific digital skill. The workshop materials were created in response to libraries' requests for access to high-quality, accessible, current digital literacy content and training resources that would position public librarians to help their communities. These tools allow libraries (and other organizations) of all sizes and locations to offer training more easily to meet their communities' digital skills needs.

In an informal ALA survey, respondents commonly cited the library's friendly, low-barrier atmosphere as a reason for success in fostering digital literacy skills. As the Maine Balsam Libraries Consortium said, the "library becomes the place to go for 'there are no dumb questions about technology.'" Similarly, the Arizona State Library noted, "fear of failure or being rushed to understand technology can be major barriers for learners. Knowing that friendly, stable help and tutoring are available acts as a great encouragement. Librarians help people navigate out of "fixed mindsets" about technology, shifting from "I'm no good at computers" or "computers hate me" to "that's okay, we're all learning – let's see if we can figure this out together." Community support and inclusiveness greatly aid resilience.

Similarly, libraries build trust with low-barrier points of entry. To participate in library programming, patrons need only provide minimum personal information. This practice creates opportunities for equity and access and removes barriers to accessing classes or intimidating people.

Many examples of libraries aiding job seekers and/or small business owners with digital literacy can be found in the Libraries Lead with Digital Skills[11] state briefs, an initiative of the Public Library Association supported by Google. Twenty-one states are featured in these briefs with numerous examples of digital skills support in libraries for workforce readiness and upskilling.

The South Dakota State Library shared guidance with library workers about offering supportive digital literacy programming in the state:

"There are almost limitless possibilities on what digital literacy services a library could provide. As technology changes and grows, those possibilities also change and grow! These are just a few examples to help you start thinking about the types of digital literacy services a library could provide:

- Providing parent resources and a program on safe online communication skills for kids.
- Providing resources and a program on how to change privacy settings on websites and platforms, such as social media (ex: Facebook, Instagram).
- Hosting a workshop about appropriate online behavior and etiquette.
- Providing resources and a program on popular online scams and how to stay safe online.
- Teaching a program on how to search and/or do research online or through databases.
- Establishing a coding club - check out SDSL's coding club information to set up coding clubs for grades 3 - 12.
- Teaching a program on basic computer, device, and software use.
- These are just a handful of ways to incorporate digital literacy services into your library. Digital literacy services can also come in many forms - programs, workshops, handouts, and more."[12]

(j) Which library systems and museums do you consider to be exemplars in teaching digital skills? What promising practices do these institutions utilize to serve the public?

Libraries around the country offer locally relevant and responsive digital skills training. Below, we highlight just a few exemplars:

Digital Me

One example comes from Tooele Public Library (UT). The library has had an intentional focus on supporting its patrons' digital skill-building for more than a decade but has recently expanded this work using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that support two part-time staff members. Key aspects of its Digital Me program include:

- Small classes to ensure that there are no "wallflowers" among learners, and participants can be hands-on at all times.
- A focus on "changing the story that people have about themselves in relation to being part of this technological world," and building digital confidence, not just competence. Library staff emphasize the importance of giving people experiences to change their ingrained story about themselves and technology.
- Timely turn-around; making sure that people are able to start a class in their interest area within 30 days of their first phone call to the library. If there are not enough learners to launch a particular class, individuals get matched with a 1-on-1 tech tutor.
- A baseline curriculum (containing 40+ classes) that serves as a framework for most learners, plus the option for learners who want to focus on a different topic to work independently with a tutor.
- Using peer learner stories (such as highlighting senior citizen participants) to reassure and encourage tentative or hesitant community members to enroll in classes.
- Recognizing that the "pain point" around technology skills for many individuals is the disconnection they face rather than a specific technical skill per se, and designing classes that help learners to form those connections (e.g., a senior citizen learning how to text his

grandchildren; a local tribal member who felt such momentum from a single computer class that they immediately signed up for high-school equivalency classes).

- Honoring the expertise learners already have, as in the case of a formerly incarcerated woman who was successfully running a business with two locations, and simply needed to build the digital skills necessary to transfer her payroll system from a paper notebook into a software tool.

The library has also adapted some techniques from the research literature on social development strategy. In particular, having identified that recognition is important for learners, they designed a whimsical but mature (not childish) series of buttons for Digital Me participants to earn, which have been wildly popular. Each button reinforces the idea that people are developing a new aspect to their identity (alchemist, time ninja, architect) related to the digital skill they have acquired.

Library staff attribute the program's success in part to the fact that library leadership encourages a "growth mindset" rather than a "fixed mindset" when it comes to innovation and supports iterative experimentation and learning by staff.

Digital Literacy Across Rhode Island

The Digital Literacy Across Rhode Island program is a partnership of the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services and Providence Public Library, funded by IMLS and ARPA funding.

Scaling from a program model offered by Providence Public Library to more than a dozen library systems across the state, this project offered digital literacy resources and programming to hundreds of individuals. Participants received basic and advanced digital literacy at over a dozen libraries and community partner organizations between one-on-one virtual and in-person meetings and structured classes. From using messaging and social media to connect with friends and family, to resume building and learning to use a keyboard to be able to take the GED, many Rhode Islanders gained skills and confidence to be digital citizens. Patrons received support with digital health resources, public assistance and economic relief, education and employment resources, community programs and services, and well-being and social interaction. 2800 participants were served across the 18 months of the initiative. 350 NorthStar certifications and badges were earned. Career coaching also was offered in the learning lounges.

One participant developed the foundational digital skills required to take the GED test. After learning that the GED test was no longer offered on paper, she realized she would need to learn how to use the computer, keyboard, and mouse and went to the library to practice these skills and prepare for the GED. Another participant passed 15 NorthStar assessments and went on to complete the Microsoft Office Specialist program offered by PPL in partnership with Roger Williams University. She completed the requirements for Certified Microsoft Office Specialist for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. She's since been hired by the library as a digital literacy instructor.

Digital Navigators

Through an IMLS award, the Urban Libraries Council (ULC) and National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) piloted a digital navigators program at Salt Lake City Public Library. Digital Navigators are individuals who are positioned to provide phone-based support to community members for issues related to the full spectrum of digital needs, including home connectivity, tech support, skill building and device access. Salt Lake City found enormous success with the digital navigators model, and the IMLS has received numerous applications from libraries to fund this model in other locations.

Digital navigation programs are led by public libraries (ex: St. Paul and Salt Lake City) and state libraries (ex: Connect Arizona), community organizations (ex: Philadelphia and Charlotte), community colleges (ex: Sitting Bull), adult education and training groups (ex: Literacy Minnesota and JVS Boston), as well as schools and local governments (ex: Chicago Connected). They are embedded in the wider context of digital inclusion, digital equity, and economic development work and are interconnected with local digital inclusion ecosystems

Workforce and Small Business Development library case studies

The IMLS-funded workforce study, _Public Libraries' Role in Workforce and Small Business Development_,[13] found that "one of the more critical services public libraries provide is supporting digital literacy through basic computer access, one-on-one assistance, or specialized workshops." One of the 10 library case studies, St. Joe's County Public Library (IN), found one-on-one technology assistance to be the most effective delivery method. Although St. Joe's previously provided more frequent workshops, it found most patrons wanted real-time help while they were experiencing a problem rather than waiting for scheduled classes. Additionally, at least four of the ten case study libraries have recently received grant funding to support the development of digital navigators. The scope of the role varies slightly across libraries but, in all cases, digital navigators provide customized digital literacy and skills training, support accessing technology, and internet connectivity.

An additional IMLS library case study participant, Memphis Public Libraries (TN) has been highlighted nationally for its innovations. Memphis Public Libraries JobLINC Career Center has been serving the Memphis community since 1990 and provides career platforms for job postings, access to technology and online serving. The JobLINC Career Center is located at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, but MPL also brings its career services to those who lack transportation or computers through the JobLINC's Mobile Career Center. The Mobile Career Center is a 38-foot bus equipped with specialized staff, internet access, laptops, and digital resources. The Mobile Career Center meets community members where they are and allows for increased community engagement and awareness of career services the library offers.

In terms of promising practices, "successful formal classes are also often topical." For example, libraries might teach basic computer skills in a class where the participants learn to clip coupons and teach Internet search skills by planning for a trip. At the Bangor (ME) Public Library, for example, 'Facebook for Seniors' is geared toward connecting older adults with family and friends so that seniors are not isolated. These classes are staffed with trained instructors who can provide the additional necessary support for people trying a new technology. Reluctant users are often encouraged to adopt broadband-enabled technology after experiencing these personally relevant interactions at their libraries."[14]

2. Challenges and Barriers to Digital Literacy

(a) What barriers are individuals (adult and youth workers/learners) experiencing in accessing digital tools and/or training?

For many households around the country, access to broadband remains a challenge for financial and logistical reasons. Libraries are critical to closing the digital divide and ensuring that everyone has the access they need. In 2019, nearly 54 million Americans accessed the internet in public places, and public libraries alone hosted nearly 224 million public internet use sessions.[15] The "homework gap" for many students, particularly in low-income households, has been well-documented. K-12 school, public and higher-education libraries are an important community resource in accessing high-speed internet.

Libraries promote home adoption, offering internet-enabled devices and hotspot lending, as well as raising awareness about and supporting enrollment in federal programs such as the Affordable Connectivity Program, but more resources are needed to reach un- and underserved communities with reliable internet connection and the necessary technology and tools.

Language barriers also can impact workers' and learners' ability to build and grow their digital skills. Many libraries are offering one-on-one digital skills coaching and workshops in languages other than English. In addition to digital skills workshops. [Queens Public Library](#) offers a variety of classes to help build English language learners' proficiency with English including courses for learning English for everyday life and work.

People with disabilities may also experience barriers in accessing digital tools and training. According to a 2021 Pew survey, 62% of adults with a disability say they own a desktop or laptop computer, compared with 81% of those without a disability. Locations that provide digital skills coaching and training will need to provide specialized hardware and software to support users who have disabilities. In addition, online tools used to learn and build digital competencies will need to be ADA-compliant to ensure that all users can fully participate in the online program.

Digital skills building exists within a larger literacy ecosystem. It is hard to build digital literacy skills when a learner lacks basic literacy skills. Community networks need to have structures in place to address underlying systemic issues like low literacy to ensure learners can fully participate in the learning opportunities available to them. Many libraries offer programs to help build literacy skills in their community for all levels.

For instance, the Glenview Public Library (IL) offers adult classes to improve their reading and writing skills. Programs like these build basic literacy skills so that their residents can build the skills they need to support themselves and their families and more fully participate in society.

Digital literacy is an ever-evolving target and even the most tech-savvy must keep their skills up to date. Technology is constantly changing, and residents need to stay abreast of these changes to stay connected, adapt and use new devices, platforms, and services. Libraries promote their digital literacy offerings through many outreach channels in the community, in the library, and online, but access to the information is continually a challenge; many patrons are not aware of the tools and training available to them at the library or other organizations.

(b) What challenges are instructors and/or training providers facing when seeking to deliver digital literacy instruction and training to learners and/or workers?

Libraries and other leading organizations are weaving digital skills training and transferable digital skills training programming. However, there is not enough professional development support for program providers and instructors on *how* to go about doing this. Instructors need to continually build their own digital skills, as pedagogy.

Developing contextualized or integrated models of digital skills training can be slightly more time-consuming and complex, given that they rely on educators' back-and-forth collaboration with employer partners rather than simply purchasing an off-the-shelf curriculum. For this reason, it is especially

important that policymakers invest in the technical assistance, support, and professional development that education and workforce providers need to develop these well-rounded models.

(d) What resources are most needed by educators and training providers to address the challenges in providing digital skills training to individuals?

The most valuable and urgent resource needed is funding. Ongoing, predictable investment can ensure that there is a sustainable system for meeting individuals' digital skill development needs now and as they change in the future. In particular, digital skill development via libraries should be explicitly included as an allowable cost in every DOL discretionary grant program for workforce training – such as dislocated worker grants, migrant and seasonal farmworker programs, the Senior Community Service Employment Program, JobCorps, etc. Libraries span all communities, all labor contexts, all demographic groups—and provide services that are cost-effective, leveraging existing library buildings, technology, staff, information resources, and community reputation.

Libraries often lack funding to update their equipment and technology; they need time and training to learn the devices and build confidence in demonstrating these to patrons; and limited staffing constrains programming and outreach efforts. Many communities are not aware of the digital literacy offerings of the library or understand how they would be beneficial to their lives.

DOL should also invest in developing high-quality tools for digital skills assessment and related data collection. A widespread lack of good assessments is hampering skill-building efforts today, and lack of high-quality data is hampering policymakers and providers' ability to identify and respond to racial equity gaps, specific digital skill needs, and other aspects of digital literacy and resilience.

(f) What challenges or barriers are local entities facing when attempting to use new or existing funding to support digital literacy training for learners?

Many libraries are unaware of funding opportunities that are available to them – especially federal initiatives. Other libraries feel that they do not have the capacity to seek grants and other funding resources, which may require time-consuming applications. The barriers are especially formidable for smaller libraries.

Unfortunately, many public funding sources also lag behind in explicitly calling out digital skills as eligible for coverage. This is occurring both at the federal level and at the state level. In many cases, no legislative change would be needed; it is simply a matter of affirming that existing statutory or other authorizing language allows for the use of funds to build digital skills.

Among the enormous range of federal policies that could be used to support digital skills are the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Titles I & II; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T); Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Susan Harwood Grants; Community Services Block Grants; Community Development Block Grants; Office of Refugee Resettlement grants; and Perkins Career and Technical Education funding.

3. Digital Equity and Inclusion

(a) What additional resources are needed for workers of all backgrounds to access and succeed in digital literacy upskilling/training opportunities?

A recent report by the National Skills Coalition [2021] stated that "nearly one-third (31 percent) of workers lack digital skills. This number includes the 13 percent of overall workers who have no digital skills and another 18 percent who have limited skills. An additional 35 percent have achieved a baseline level of proficiency."[16] These findings illustrate that access to affordable, reliable internet service is insufficient. Access to foundational and occupational-specific skills as well as reskilling is necessary to close the digital divide and achieve digital equity at work'.[17]

Libraries support digital equity and inclusion readily, with 123,000 locations around the country offering free resources, access to information, and programming. Libraries can be leveraged to build digital skills with intentional collaboration and planning. Libraries may offer space for co-location or for partners to provide programs and services. They also provide an array of technology and resources to anyone in the community – most essentially internet-enabled public computers, but also printers, hotspots and Chromebooks for checkout, specialized hardware and software to support users who have disabilities, makerlabs and more. Libraries need secure funding and community support to continue to offer vital services, including equitable and inclusive access and training.

(b) How can programs ensure underserved and/or marginalized populations are adequately targeted for digital literacy training opportunities?

Libraries excel in providing access to marginalized and underserved communities with locations conveniently located to public transportation and transportation arteries. Libraries are already in these communities, providing service, and are highly trusted. With public computers and free access to help and resources, libraries have tools to assist individuals and close the digital divide. Targeted programs would do well to partner with libraries, who can offer promotional support, meeting space, equipment, and an easy on-ramp for individuals to enroll in programming.

ALA agrees with the National Skills Coalition that many underserved community members already are keenly interested in this topic. Policymakers should focus on how to ensure that organizations that already have earned the trust of underserved populations are appropriately resourced to address digital skill-building needs. Federal agencies can and should incentivize collaboration among workforce training providers and other community-based organizations. These organizations should be integrally involved through planning, creation, and implementation of digital skills programs.

(e) How should the Institute of Museum and Library Services better encourage digital skills development in libraries and museums?

IMLS has funded a variety of innovative digital literacy initiatives, including the Digital Literacy Rhode Island program noted above, a pilot Digital Navigators program in Salt Lake City, and the *Public Libraries' Role in Workforce and Small Business Development* research. These projects allow libraries to pilot promising models and share their impact and lessons learned with the library field, scaling the impact around the country. Further timely, relevant funding support ensures that innovations continue, and libraries provide continued equity in access to building essential 21st century digital skills and ensuring career-ready citizenry.

IMLS already promotes digital skills programs and services in libraries and museums. However, IMLS can extend and strengthen collaboration with federal agencies like the departments of Labor and Education, as well as the Department of Commerce, to increase and improve information sharing and effective practices related to digital skills development. These sister agencies also should reach out and leverage IMLS expertise and assets in this space to the greatest degree possible. IMLS also has the power to convene libraries (and other stakeholders) to share and amplify best practices, as well as to collect and

disseminate these via reports. With documented reports on their work, libraries can more effectively communicate the transformative and integral role of libraries in workforce and economic development, education, and 21st century skill building.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

(a) How are the most successful partnerships structured? Are there required partners?

Successful partnerships leverage the expertise and input of businesses, community-based organizations, training providers, and labor to create and implement workforce training programs. Libraries are exemplary community partners and should be considered essential (and funded) collaborators in digital literacy and equity efforts. The DOL formally acknowledged libraries as important workforce partners in 2010 with a Training and Employment Notice which encouraged workforce agencies to partner with public libraries to extend their career and employment services, known as One-Stop Career Centers, to job seekers and unemployed workers to extend their career and employment services, known as One-Stop Career Centers, to job seekers and unemployed workers. Among the highlighted benefits One-Stops receive from this partnership are the longer library hours (beyond One-Stop office hours), better access and assistance, and the ability for parents to work on their job search while children are engaged in productive activities."[18]

Library provision of digital skills training is a key asset to the workforce ecosystem. Libraries offer a natural starting point for many seeking services with few barriers to access. As the *Public Libraries' Role in Workforce and Small Business Development* research states: "Stakeholders from both libraries and community workforce development service providers [note] the need for individuals to have an established baseline of digital competency to participate in services through more traditional workforce development providers. These agencies often refer individuals who seek these services to the library for foundational support in understanding how to use a computer, establish an email address, and use basic online platforms and standard software applications, such as Microsoft Office."[19] To ensure strong collaboration, libraries and potential partners should meet and provide overviews of their services and offerings. This orientation will streamline services and create better understanding for referrals. Asset mapping and other scans will aid in collaboration as well.

5. Federal Investments in Digital Literacy

(a) Which existing federal programs/federal funding sources are being utilized to support digital resilience?

States and localities have used a variety of federal funding sources to support digital resilience. Recently, states have drawn on federal legislation such as the American Rescue Plan Act, CARES, and other recovery sources to develop their workforce with digital skills. Many states also use their limited WIOA funds or federal discretionary grants such as American Apprenticeship Grants, to support digital skills training.

IMLS is the leading source of federal funding to support libraries' digital resilience efforts, including professional development for library staff, through both Library Service Technology Act (LSTA) grants to states and competitive grants. With temporary pandemic relief and recovery funding provided through the CARES Act and ARPA, IMLS distributed new investments in digital equity to state and local libraries.

For example, the Pikes Peak Library District Foundation (CO), received IMLS funding through ARPA to develop digital skill training for adults. The project is intended to foster digital resilience and build

transferable skills equipping participants to participate in work, education, and civic life.[20] Through the Innovative Digital Literacies project funded by LSTA Grants to States, Humboldt State University, Humboldt County Library, and Arcata Chamber of Commerce worked together to increase access to technology among students and other community members, and support lifelong learning, digital literacy, and job-seeking in rural Humboldt County.[21]

(b) Is additional federal funding needed for states/local governments to facilitate better services to the public?

Yes. Existing workforce development and education statutes have failed to keep up with the fast-changing world of digital upskilling and reskilling. Without a broad-based federal strategy, the leading organizations and programs on digital resilience will remain isolated examples.

Interviews conducted by National Skills Coalition with business and education leaders show that even successful local programs lack sustainability as they cobble together patchwork funding from a range of ill-defined sources, often struggling to prioritize digital skills among a myriad of other demands. The new Congress, WIOA reauthorization, and the Biden administration's commitment to racial equity all offer strong opportunities to create dedicated, sustained funding for digital resilience.

(c) What types of technical assistance and resources would be most valuable to build digital resilience capacity?

Libraries foster digital resilience by the nature of meeting patrons where they are and creating a welcoming space to engage with technology. One of the biggest barriers to presenting a new tech skill for library workers is the time spent developing training materials and assessment. Sharing effective practices and customizable training materials would add capacity for library staff.

6. Digital Literacy and K-12 Public Education System

School librarians are essential leaders in digital literacy in their schools. Certified school librarians teach digital literacy which is defined in the RFI as "the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information" across the curriculum. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National Standards integrate digital literacy throughout and are a basis for the school librarians' work with learners including students, teachers and other educators, administrators, parents, and community members. School librarians teach how to appropriately apply information technology to learning tasks. For a successful K-12 approach for digital skills and competency attainment, it is critical to actively involve school librarians.

It is often said that school librarians teach students *how* to learn. The *AASL National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and Libraries* (2018) emphasize teaching inquiry, critical thinking, creation, collaboration, communication, and ethical participation rather than isolated training on a specific tool. Students are then able to adapt to new technologies and build their digital resilience.

Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) is a competitive grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Education and is the only federal program dedicated to supporting school libraries and the critical digital literacy work of school librarians. Grants support literacy materials for young children and training for the most-in-need school districts. IAL grants provide targeted literacy support for high-needs school districts.

For example, the Iditarod Area School District (AK), a 2021 IAL grant recipient, proposes to build capacity to improve students' academic performance and preparation for economic participation and success,

through the implementation of the Iditarod Trail project. The project will improve and expand seven school/community libraries/media centers; expand literacy-building activities by updating technology and extending hours for working families; implement an updated curriculum to raise student reading levels; and improve Reading and English/Language Arts instruction. The project aims to increase digital literacy for all participants as part of the library updates. The project includes professional development, research-based reading program and is supported by a professional librarian. The school district serves very small and low-income communities; as a result, school libraries are the community libraries as a result proposed improvements form this project will impact entire families. One specific aim of the project is to develop an educated workforce within each community to ensure that the unique cultures have the resources to survive, and students can earn a living wage. The IAL program allows for use of technology. In one public notice the Department of Education stated, "IAL funding are best positioned, in coordination with school libraries, to determine the needs of their students and acquire appropriate materials in response to those needs, which may include books and literacy-focused technology." An additional IAL grant example is the award given to Ypsilanti, MI Community Schools. Their priorities for the grant include using LEAP, Literacy Excellence Accelerates Performance, which will improve delivery of services and literacy-focused professional development which will support print and technology media. LEAP will improve educator ability to utilize technology and digital media in literacy instruction. Technology-based streaming resources will ensure students can access content.

(a) What are the digital skills necessary to be considered digitally literate today? In the future?

The *AASL National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and Libraries* (2018) codify digital skills necessary to be considered "digitally literate". The Learner Standards provide a framework of learner competencies anchored by six Shared Foundations—Inquire, Include, Collaborate, Curate, Explore, and Engage—highlighting the standards' core educational concepts. Digital literacy is woven into each Shared Foundation for school librarians to teach students and collaborate with other educators. This way, digital literacy becomes an integral part of each content area rather than a stand-alone skill. Teachers, administrators, parents, and others are also learners. Therefore, school librarians work with the entire community to support digital literacy and digital resilience for lifelong learning.

School librarians teach learners to have the capacity to change and grow, explore, curate, and adapt in an ever-changing digital and information landscape. Critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation to identify opinion, bias, and false or inaccurate information enable students to effectively use local, national, and global sources. School librarians teach the ethical use of information, to respect copyright, intellectual property, and creative commons that translates as technology evolves.

(b) Which K-12 and community college/postsecondary education systems do you consider to be exemplars in teaching digital skills to adult learners, youth learners, and/or families/caregivers? Why?

The ALA/AASL/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) School Librarian Preparation Standards (2019)[22] apply to programs that prepare candidates to develop and manage library and information services in a PreK-12 setting. School library preparation programs that follow these standards will ensure that certified school librarians will be prepared to teach information (digital) literacy and technology-enabled learning. Thus, all school library preparation programs following these standards are exemplars in preparing educators to teach digital skills to PreK-12 grade learners.

Some K-12 exemplar programs include:

AASL National School Libraries of the Year

[Recent winners](#) include Calvert County Schools in Prince Frederick, Maryland; Mesquite Independent School District in Mesquite, Texas; High School District 214, Arlington Heights, Illinois. Each of these school districts were highlighted for their use of the AASL Standards which include digital/information literacy.

New York State Information Fluency Continuum

The [New York Information Fluency Continuum](#) provides a continuum of information literacy and inquiry skills that are essential for all students across all grade levels to learn. From the About this Project letter: "school librarians and educators prepare each one of our students to develop the skills and agency to be both critical consumers and creators of information as they navigate and succeed in their academic and personal lives."

Ithaca College's Project Look Sharp

[Project Look Sharp](#) - a media literacy initiative at Ithaca College received a 2-year grant for the initiative ML2: Librarians as Media Literacy Leaders in New York Public Schools. The initiative aimed to scale up the work of Project Look Sharp to enable the integration of critical thinking and media literacy in schools across New York State through the leadership of K-12 public school librarians. Project Look Sharp leaders at Ithaca College are looking to partner with AASL on an IMLS grant to investigate scaling this initiative to a national level.

Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) Civil Online Reasoning

[Civic Online Reasoning](#) (COR) is an AASL Best Digital Tool for Teaching and Learning. Certified school librarians use the lessons and resources provided by SHEG to support them in teaching digital literacy. An important concept is teaching online lateral reading.

SHEG has been impressed by the work of teachers and school librarians in the Lincoln (Nebraska) Public Schools and Indian Prairie School Districts. Sarah McGrew and Joel Breakstone from SHEG referenced LPS and IPSD in this [article](#) and [sidebar](#).

(c) How should the Department of Education better encourage digital skills education in the K-12, community colleges, and adult education settings?

The Department of Education could better encourage digital skills education by putting more emphasis on the vital role of certified school librarians to lead, support, and teach all forms of literacy including digital literacy in K-12 schools.

Here are some articles supporting the leadership of school librarians in leading digital literacy efforts:

- [https://www.iste.org/explore/empowered-learner/librarians-are-key-educations-digital-transformation](#)
- [https://www.learningforjustice.org/podcasts/the-mind-online/librarians-digital-literacy-experts](#)
- [https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/libraries/article/74535-school-librarians-are-teaching-digital-citizenship.html](#)
- [https://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/MartinRoberts_JF15.pdf](#)
- [https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-school-librarian-your-ultimate-digital-resource](#)

As part of this, the US Department of Education should employ a school librarian advisor and should fund state-level school library coordinator positions to ensure the expertise of school librarians is included in the federal, state, and local work on digital literacy.

Some additional methods to put emphasis on the role of certified school librarians in teaching digital literacy:

- Encourage administrator and educator preparation programs to include training on the importance of collaborating with certified school librarians to best support teaching and learning and integrating digital literacy skills throughout the curriculum.
- Encourage State Departments of Education to employ a state-level school library advisor Share best practices from states that emphasize the essential role of the school librarian in Information (Digital) Literacy such as the [New Jersey Information Literacy Law](#)[23] which includes certified school librarians (also called School Library Media Specialists) in New Jersey in developing the state-wide standards for information literacy and the Empire State (NY) Information Fluency Continuum[24] which provides a guide for school librarians (and other educators) to develop students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 essential information and inquiry skills (digital literacy).

(d) What are some recommended strategies to ensure digital skills education evolves alongside society's technological advances?

School librarians have long been the first adopters and technology innovators in their schools. School librarians are change agents and support their school community with new tools, resources, and forms of information when they become available. They teach the skills of inquiry, critical thinking, and adaptability rather than specific tools. A certified school librarian in each school enables digital skills education to evolve alongside technology advances. However, access to school librarians is not equitable and available to all students[25]. Thus, a strategy would be to advocate for equitable access to school librarians for all students.

In the Mary Jackson STEAM Dual Language Elementary School Library (CA), digital literacy skills begin in elementary school. Students learn how to use the online catalog when their classes come into the library with their school-assigned Chromebooks. They learn to use online encyclopedias and fold in conversations about what trustworthy resources are; the difference between "fiction" and "nonfiction"; how to use the Dewey system, etc. The library staff are piloting a new way to search the online catalog by purchasing a tablet that students can walk around the library with, allowing them to search the catalog and go directly to a shelf with the book information and call number in hand. Students should begin digital literacy by learning search tools in a safe and scaffolded environment.

The development of digital literacy skills is integral to overall learning. It is critical that all students have access to accurate information and digital literacy in their formative years. School libraries and school librarians provide these foundational digital literacy skills and ensure that all students have access to information. If young people have poorly developed digital literacy and information skills, it will permeate every aspect of their education and place them at a disadvantage in the larger school curriculum. Also, there is limited time to integrate digital literacy into specific subjects. This is where the school library thrives, serving as an overarching function to develop students' digital literacy skills.

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[8] Association of College and Research Librarians, Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

[9] See FY22 Consolidated Appropriations Act (page 142) and Senate FY23 LHHS Appropriations Report (p.303)

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