Technology: *Or, What's New Today?*

One way or another, a public library director is involved in the planning, development, design, application, and integration of technologies within the library and information environment, the impact of emerging technologies on library service, and the effect of automated technologies on people. So, now it's out there. To assist public libraries in bringing digital inclusion, equity, and inclusion to their communities, here is a set of resources they may find handy.

Digital Inclusion

By supporting digital inclusion, the Idaho Commission for Libraries assists Idaho libraries and Idahoans in having access to information and communication technology vital for life in the 21st century.

What is digital inclusion? Terms such as the digital divide and the homework gap are often used to describe the disparity separating those with access to the internet and devices from those without such access; however, these terms do not always capture the complexities of our digital age. The National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA) defines **Digital Inclusion** as "the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This includes five elements:

1. Affordable, robust broadband internet service;
2. Internet-enabled devices that meet the needs of the user;
3. Access to digital literacy training;
4. Quality technical support; and
5. Applications and online content designed to enable and encourage self-sufficiency, participation, and collaboration."

What is digital equity? By addressing the five elements of Digital Inclusion, we work toward achieving Digital Equity, defined by NDIA as "a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy, and economy. Digital Equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services."

What is digital literacy? As one of the five elements of Digital Inclusion, training related to Digital Literacy is fundamental. The [American Library Association's (ALA) Digital Literacy Task Force](#) defines Digital Literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."

Libraries can help their communities achieve digital equity through:

- **Broadband Internet Service**

  - **Circulating mobile hotspots**: https://libraries.idaho.gov/broadband/circulating-mobile-hotspots/

  - **E-rate and EOR for Internet**: https://libraries.idaho.gov/grants-funding/e-rate-broadband/

  - **Idaho Public Library Wi-Fi Map**: http://form.jotform.com/210915041369149

- **Internet-Enabled Devices**

  - **ICfL grant opportunities**: https://libraries.idaho.gov/grants-funding/monetary-grants/

  - **Idaho statewide contracts**: https://purchasing.idaho.gov/statewide-contracts/

  - **TechSoup's refurbished computers**: https://www.techsoup.org/refurbished-computers

- **Digital Literacy Training**

  - **DigitalLearn.org**, a project of the Public Library Association, funded through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), to create an online hub for digital literacy support and training.

  - **The ICfL's Niche Academy**, an online learning platform built for libraries with interactive tutorials on a variety of topics.

  - **Techboomers.com**, a free educational website that teaches older adults and other inexperienced internet users basic computer skills sufficient to access websites that can improve their quality of life.

- **Technical Support**

- o **The Broadband Toolkit Improvement Program** (**BTIP**) provides a toolkit and improvement plan developed specifically for small, rural, and tribal libraries with limited information technology (IT) support and resources to help them better understand their library's broadband connection and services.

- o **The ICfL's Library Technology Consultant** is available to help Idaho libraries of all types, but especially public libraries, with issues relating to any technology.

- o **Tech-Talk Newsletter**, a weekly, technology-focused e-newsletter for non-techies delivered to your inbox and available to any and all Idaho library staff members.

- **Online Content**

  - o The ICfL's **eBranch in a Box** project, is an initiative to assist Idaho libraries in having a web presence, which is defined as having a vital website that is an extension of the library, providing information about or access to library services: http://ebranch.lili.org/.

  - o The Idaho Digital E-Book Alliance (IDEA) is a statewide partnership among the Idaho Commission for Libraries, public libraries, and school libraries with the goal of expanding access while reducing barriers to digital e-books and e-audio content via OverDrive: https://libraries.idaho.gov/idea/.

  - o **Libraries Linking Idaho** (**LiLI.org**) is the gateway for Idaho residents for free access to online tools for their educational, business, and recreational needs: https://lili.org/.

STEM and STEAM at the Idaho Commission for Libraries

- **Make It At the Library** is a project designed to support the creation of makerspaces in Idaho libraries and encourage the delivery of library services to digital users "where they live." The ICfL will provide the necessary materials and trainings to implement creative, STEAM-based programming for all ages. The project will:

- Provide library staff with tools and skills to encourage college and career-ready opportunities in their libraries.

- Assist libraries in developing events and services to keep their communities engaged with the emerging trends in information access.

- Train library staff to facilitate 21st-century skill learning.

- **STEAM** stands for *Science Technology Engineering, Arts, and Math*. The acronym is used to refer to those areas of study which are encompassed by a wide range of sciences. The last decade has seen an increase in STEAM education and programming at all levels. The ICfL provides STEAM resources for:

  - Early Learners (ages 0 through 8 years): https://libraries.idaho.gov//stem/steam-learning-resources/early-learners/

  - Tweens and Teens (ages 9 through 19 years): https://libraries.idaho.gov//stem/steam-resources-for-teens-and-tweens/

- The Idaho STEM Action Center provides funds to the Idaho Commission for Libraries (ICfL) to award up to 66 public, school, or academic libraries **Summer STEM Grants** of up to $500 each to help pay for materials or presenters to support STEM outreach efforts during the summer. The ICfL also provides a toolkit for learning activities, a branded yard sign, and other resources. The **Summer STEM from Your Library** program has three primary goals:

  - To increase access to fun, engaging, hands-on STEM activities for underserved youth beyond the normal library programming efforts,

  - To increase children's access to books over the summer months,

  - To increase the number of children who minimize learning loss during the summer.