MOZILLA WEB LITERACY SKILLS FOR LIBRARY STAFF

As the communities we serve continue to evolve, a new generation is being introduced to Toledo Lucas County Public Library (TLCPL). The way people read, research, and consume information and media has changed drastically over the last two decades. **To stay vital and dynamic, the library continues to find new ways of meeting the public needs with expanded services and platforms that make learning and creating accessible and fun.** The Web Literacy Skills for Library Staff project helps move TLCPL closer to two of the key focus areas from the [Library's five-year strategic plan](#): *supporting essential literacies* (for our staff and communities) and *fostering a culture of innovation and leadership within the Library*.

VISION AND GOALS

In developing our new strategic plan, we heard from many people who reinforced the value of the Library as a primary resource for information, ideas, entertainment, and self-improvement. The **priorities of the Web Literacy Skills for Library Staff Project match key points in our strategic plan around digital literacy, education, workforce development, and civic engagement.** Perhaps most important, the Library's strategic plan demands that TLCPL will "invest in the ongoing development of our staff through a range of creative professional development opportunities."

To that end, **we are committed to narrowing the digital divide in our communities through connectivity (wifi and public access computers) and digital literacy training**. According to the Federal Communications Commission, while 95% of households with income of $150,000 or more have high-speed broadband at home 40% of those with incomes of less than $25,000 do not have broadband access. For many of these individuals, TLCPL is their sole source of access to the Internet and to computers for conducting all types of personal business.

According to the US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Toledo's poverty rate in 2013 was 28.2% and the per capita income dropped from $19,349 to $18,800. This means that over a quarter of the public we serve is in dire need of the Library to be experts in what we do. They rely heavily on us for not only obtaining jobs and careers, but also continuing growth which is one reason we offer proctoring for free. We have countless testimonials from customers attributing their career growth and success directly to the Library. On top of this, Lucas County (with its varied urban and rural geography) was recently identified as one of eleven counties eligible to receive funding through the [StrikeForce Initiative for Rural Growth and Opportunity](#).

We appreciate that digital literacy is the 4th basic foundational skill and that — just as our communities turn to us for traditional literacy skills — so, too, do they expect Library staff to be able to help them develop the appropriate technology literacies.

Writing for the web can be a difficult transition for library staff to grasp (and others, to be sure). Short, concise, and clear directions that should be bullet points often turn into paragraphs or pages. While this is a habit can be instilled through decades of professional practice, we are actively working to incorporate new writing styles into our daily communication. As we build communities of practice around web literacy and other initiatives, it is not helpful to the our internal community and external stakeholders if they have to read 3 pages of information to get an answer that could have

been summarized in a few points. **TLCPL is ready for change, but we could use direction on how to create curriculum and help instill those practices.**

Evaluating and synthesizing information traditionally or for the web is an important skill for any Librarian. We aim to provide exemplary customer service not only in what we communicate, but also in how we communicate. Being able to power search and navigate through search results and synthesize information quickly allows our customer service to exceed the users' expectations. While we may be good at using our current tools, it is always a new struggle introducing a new application or resource. The learning curve may be higher, but also the perception of change is a challenge and **with this training we hope to make people feel more comfortable about making mistakes and giving them the confidence to try something new**.

The Library is a connector to information. **Participating in this project aligns with our practice of sharing and contributing information openly not only with the public and other libraries, but with internal staff.** We use our intranet as a means of sharing best practices by encouraging all staff, librarians and clerks, to create shared documents for troubleshooting and workarounds. This seems minor but in reality we are building a healthy online community practicing the skills of creating and publishing content in a secure environment. Additionally, Ohio public librarians are a strongly connected professional cohort, and we will naturally help advance the pilot project into the next phases via our professional networks.

Getting online and managing devices is just a fraction of the skills needed to be a web-literate citizen in today's world. On top of the normal computer questions and applications, we also invest over $1.4 million in over 75 databases we provide to the public for free as research tools. These research tools all have different formats and requirements, so navigating them can be challenging and time consuming. We analyzed just our business-related databases alone and over 51,474 times people asked for assistance.

READINESS AND CAPACITY

TLCPL provides an ideal environment for a pilot site for this Web Literacy project. TLCPL staff includes two labor unions; one clerical and one professional. Both work incredibly well together, and we continue to explore how and where we draw the lines between the roles and responsibilities of clerical staff and Librarians. With the understanding that customer service is more important than following a prescribed role, we think the web literacy training would benefit the entire staff, and we look forward to engaging Librarians and clerical staff alongside each other.

Additionally, TLCPL serves diverse communities reflecting a wide range of socio-economic statuses. While the above figures paint a clear picture of the poverty affecting the central city, the surrounding cities in Lucas County reflect very different information and technology needs. This training would help us **enhance and advance the programs and services we provide to *all* the communities we serve.**

The Library has both the training experience and technological infrastructure to serve as a successful pilot site. TLCPL conservatively calculates that it provided computer skills and digital literacy instruction to 6,813 individuals during 2015. This number includes 4,690 who received

instruction through our Mobile Technology Center, 1,315 individuals who participated in computer skills classes at Kent branch library, 788 customers who received one-to-one assistance using two dedicated job-search computers at Main Library's Job Search Center, and 20 individuals who received one-on-one training in Main Library's Audio/Visual department. In addition, librarians at all facilities help individual customers every day learn to navigate online spaces and digital devices.

In addition to supporting over 800 computers throughout the system, the Library recently used a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the State Library to build a set of laptops to create a mobile computing lab. TLCPL also has 11 mobile iPad kits circulating throughout the system that Librarians will be using for outreach and training for community members of all ages. The Library has a bandwidth connection from Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN) 500mb and a local supplier as a backup.

The Library's creative and practical approach to continuous learning at the Library lends itself well to hosting this pilot. TLCPL currently has one full-time training coordinator. Her work is never done, and it makes it difficult for her to give the appropriate resources to hit outliers that are either technology pros or other staff that need basic web literacy training. To bridge that gap, TLCPL has been **modeling communities of practice, where individuals learn and teach each other in an informal environment normally on the job**.

These communities of practice have been developed around our Make U initiatives — an umbrella the Library uses to describe our makerspace activities. A byproduct of the communities' of practice work is building a shared knowledge base housed on the Library's intranet. This has been specifically vital for the 3D printing community of practice where the group has adapted to two different models of 3D printers, CAD software packages, and training manuals not made for users but a service technician. Through the communities of practice, TLCPL has established a habit and expectation that when you take online course for E-Learning or attend a conference a summary should be shared not only among your location staff, but also to the wider audience of professionals in the organization. This also applies to cross-county Library training. As part of a collaborative effort with the public library in Cuyahoga County, two children's librarians have been trained in ways that digital technology can be incorporated into children's programming. They will soon train other Library personnel to use the techniques they learned.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

To implement a web literacy community of practice systemwide, TLCPL wants to ensure we have the correct infrastructure in place to build on the web literacy framework that Mozilla has developed. A key component to the information is the ability to work through it in real-time. We estimate that $6,000 would go towards a device sandbox which would include laptops, tablets, digital cameras, and other technology components.

These devices would additionally be used for a skillshare day among 40-60 library staff that are not part of the pilot for an intensive half-day training session. This day would continue the idea of a community of practice where as a culture we share and contribute information and knowledge openly. The approximate cost would be $4,000 for substitutes to free up staff time, refreshments, and room requirements.