



# EMPO ERMENT AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

**F**rom getting an education and securing employment to filing taxes and staying in touch with family, broadband access, adoption and use are increasingly essential to every aspect of life. Yet 33 million U.S. households do not use the internet at home, and nearly twice that number have low levels of digital readiness. Low-income families, ru

of the benefits of broadband, affordability, and lack of digital literacy. America's libraries—120,000 strong—are essential to addressing these gaps and realizing the vision of universal broadband adoption and ability to use.

The leading responsibility for the digital divide of awareness, job retraining, and widespread use of emerging applications and devices. Decision makers at the White House, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, the U.S. Congress, and other public and private entities should look to libraries as critical players to make broadband work for everyone.

Libraries work in our communities to: (1) spur home adoption by increasing awareness of and confidence in using online resources and services, (2) provide internet access at the library for those who lack home broadband, and (3) support digital learning

## **Promoting widespread broadband adoption**

Libraries boost digital skills and provide broad-ranging services to patrons beyond free access to the internet. Library professionals train people on digital skills, which boosts users' confidence and makes the internet more relevant to their lives. Nearly 90% of libraries offer digital literacy training, and a significant majority support training related to using new technology devices (62%), safe online practices (57%), and social media use (56%).

Libraries also help to make the case for broadband adoption. Through myriad programs and outreach, libraries increase awareness of the benefits and advantages afforded by new technologies. Also, the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries advocate for efforts like the recent Lifeline modernization to apply subsidies to broadband costs for low-income Americans.

## **Leveraging high-speed broadband**

From videoconferencing to hackathons to 3D printers, today's libraries empower people to create, collaborate, and learn new digital skills. People also use libraries to access vital services and information online—do schoolwork, file their taxes, research health concerns, and explore our world. Many of these services are now only available online. Affordable high-speed broadband is essential to provide modern library services, and yet it is not available to all libraries at speeds they need or costs they can afford.

Affordable, high-speed (i.e., gigabit speeds and higher) connectivity has been a game changer for Ohio's Cuyahoga County Public Library (CCPL). Before its upgrade, internet usage at multiple branches was so high that CCPL had to schedule digital trainings and programming when they knew public internet access would be low—there was not enough bandwidth to do both at the same time. Now, most of CCPL's 50



# ABOUT AMERICA'S LIBRARIES

The 120,000 libraries across the United States are a powerful force in addressing public policy priorities. Libraries advance Education, Employment, Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, and Engagement for Everyone, Everywhere—The E's of Libraries®.

Libraries serve America's cities, towns, counties, and states; on school and college campuses; on military bases; in hospitals, government agencies, corporations, and other institutions. Library professionals provide diverse programs, services and resources tailored to community needs.

The American Library Association (ALA) is the oldest and largest library association in the world, with more than 58,000 members. The ALA Annual Conference, held in June, typically attracts over 20,000 participants. ALA maintains a Washington Office to engage federal and national decision makers and influencers.

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