

Panelist Resources

Texas Opportunity Online Broadband Summit

November 18 – 19, 2009

Larry Justiss, Tom Green Public Library

Libraries may use partnerships in a variety of ways to support broadband activities. Partnering with community organizations and agencies by organizing, leading, or otherwise participating in a variety of community activities enhances the libraries' status. It will also help to keep you abreast of community interests and its varied activities. This knowledge and interest will usually find its way back to the ears of your funders. The greatest economic impact is found by partnering with your funders and their related agencies. In our case a direct partnership with the County of Tom Green, the Adult Probation Department, Juvenile Justice Center, and remote JP's offices has proven to be a "win-win" proposition for all. That partnership is greatly financially enhanced when the federal government, through E-Rate, is considered a key partner.

The library is the community technology center for the community. Individuals with and without computers use the library for high-speed access that is otherwise unavailable to them. This allows for the use of a variety of technologies that are only viable with a speedy broadband connection.

It is my belief that libraries are unique agencies within our communities. They are not merely warehouses for books and other materials but rather gathering places for those in need of information, recreation, and social interaction. I find it hard to imagine a society that all have equal access to these materials without regard to cost. Libraries will continue to serve their purpose for many years to come even though technologies will continue to evolve and change.

The library collection will continue to change from print to electronic as the web matures.

Denise Milton, Jasper Public Library

What interesting services is your library offering with broadband?

Broadband has allowed patrons to access employment applications and testing sites which are necessary to enter the workforce. Our speed was too low to allow many applications and tests to be accessed prior to broadband. Downloading files to personal devices has also been greatly impacted. An example of this is printer application repair files downloaded at the library and then used by patrons at home to fix their home equipment. The largest impact that offering broadband has allowed is the introduction of a suite of twelve laptop computers to the library, doubling the number of public access computers available. Initially, the laptops are being used as a training tool for peer-to-peer-training among seniors. Eventually, the laptops will be checked out in the library to patrons. Without broadband, the ability to drive the twelve-station computer lab and the twelve laptops would have been impossible.

How have you seen broadband impact the services at your library?

Streaming video has become a viable tool at the library for patrons. There is much higher use of all technology services at the library. Wireless service, even during regularly closed hours, has greatly increased and often there are people in the lot in the early morning hours using the service.

What resources (websites, blogs, publications, etc.) do you look to in order to stay current with Web 2.0 applications?

In this small setting, DeWayne Brown, Technology Coordinator for Houston Area Library System is our main source of current technology applications. Also, the Houston Area Library System's listserv of Directors is invaluable in asking other small libraries which direction they are taking. Web Junction is also a wonderful source of information. Current local news sources such as newspaper and radio are also used.

How do you see library services changing or expanding as Internet connectivity continues to grow?

We are seeing higher usage and a greater number of users that may not currently be technologically savvy that need to access e-government information or just have a desire to "come into the technology world." We are having a greater number of distance learners as patrons and businesses and companies are requiring more online skills and interaction with potential employees via computers rather than face-to-face. Example of sites that are needed by non-savvy users include places like IRS, Department of Transportation-driver's license renewal, FEMA etc. The impact of this will be a need for staff that are technologically capable and able to easily step into the informal role of teacher.

What do you see on the horizon with regard to broadband applications and services? What can libraries expect?

As you provide greater access and speed, patrons will request and demand even more. In the instant access world that we live in today, the more libraries offer the more patrons want and expect. Examples include the downloading of larger and larger files as more and more media at higher and higher quality are available.

Mercedes Franks, Nacogdoches Public Library

How can libraries use broadband to offer emergency response services?

- *Have library staff available to help people complete FEMA forms, contact friends and family, apply for Red Cross assistance.*
- *Up-to-the minute news can be relayed to any evacuees.*
- *Work with your city's emergency management to register evacuees if you're providing shelter facilities in your community.*

How have you seen broadband impact the services at your library?

- *We were able to register people into the shelters. The shelter registration was online. As soon as families came in, we assigned them to a shelter location. When one shelter reached 80% capacity, we knew it was time to alert the shelter managers so they could open the next shelter.*
- *We were able to relay information during the hurricane to emergency management.*
- *With the downturn in the economy:*
 - *We help people complete their initial unemployment applications as well as their biweekly payment requests.*
 - *We help people look for and apply for jobs.*
- *People take online courses and use our free Internet access.*
- *The demand for free computer classes has increased, especially in the more advanced programs such as Excel and Publisher.*
- *We get lots of middle school and high school students coming to the library to complete their homework.*
- *We have had several immigrants use our Internet to apply for the various immigration forms.*
- *We are able to offer free tax preparation assistance to low-income individuals because we have Wi-Fi connectivity.*

What resources (websites, blogs, publications, etc.) do you look to in order to stay current with Web 2.0 applications?

- *Websites, especially Web Atlas*
- *Library journals*
- *Information from library meetings (TLA, or system meetings)*
- *Colleagues*

How do you see library services changing or expanding as Internet connectivity continues to grow?

- *We will have to use more social networks to get information out about the library*
- *The technology gap will increase as more innovations are made. The library will be even more popular.*
- *The sophistication of computer classes offered will have to increase.*

What do you see on the horizon with regard to emergency response services? What can libraries expect?

- *Hopefully emergency management planners will remember to utilize the library in their planning. We can help register people into the shelters, help with FEMA forms, and provide entertainment or news for evacuees.*
- *They should remember to make sure that the library's Internet is protected during the event of an emergency. In our case, the T-1 is a backup for the city's Internet. We are also a shelter so we have a generator.*
- *As a result of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina, the library helped develop the community services website.*

Dr. Phil Turner, North Texas University

How can libraries use broadband to offer distance learning opportunities?

The need for continuing professional training for all library staff continues to grow. This need is driven by rapid developments in the use of technology in the organization, access, and delivery of information and the accompanying evolution of policies and practices to deal with these developments. The two chief sources of training – conference sessions and on-site presentations by outside experts – are becoming increasingly non-viable. Conference attendance is often restricted to a small percentage of the overall staff and the cost of bringing in trainers is often prohibitive. In addition, it is often very difficult to provide “front-line” staff with extended time away from the desk to attend conferences or even in-house training sessions. Web-based training to the desktop provides an opportunity for tailored, just-in-time learning that is cost efficient and can be effective.

Broadband connectivity also provides the opportunity for libraries to serve as an important source of training for patrons. The need for job retraining and workforce preparation has never been higher. There are many resources available online to assist in resume writing, skills analysis, and career counseling.

How have you seen broadband impact the services at your library?

I am not employed in a library but have been involved in the design, creation, delivery, and evaluation of online training to libraries that have been utilized by more than 25,000 librarians and support staff. I have seen the impact of providing opportunities for the entire library staff to access quality online training at their desktop. The access to training has especially empowered and enabled the support staff as many of them have had few, if any, opportunities to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

What resources (websites, blogs, publications, etc.) do you look to in order to stay current with Web 2.0 applications?

- *Sarah Houghton-Jan's "Librarian in Black" blog: <http://librarianinblack.net/librarianinblack/>*
- *The Horizon Project Main Page with links to annual reports and reports in progress: http://horizon.nmc.org/wiki/Main_Page*
- *Wired Magazine website: <http://www.wired.com/>*
- *For beginners who want to catch up a bit, there's the wonderful self-guided tutorials from the Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County at: <http://plcmcl2-things.blogspot.com/>*

- Michael Stephens' "Web 2.0 and Libraries: Best Practices for Social Software" Library Technology Reports, Volume 42(4), July/August, 2006.

How do you see library services changing or expanding as Internet connectivity continues to grow?

Libraries are rapidly changing from a direct provider of information and knowledge to an intermediary between the patron and the information/knowledge. Libraries will increasingly need to serve the role of trainer to enable patrons to access and utilize the virtually limitless amount of content available online.

What do you see on the horizon with regard to distance learning opportunities? What can libraries expect?

High-speed connectivity to the library brings with it enormous potential for high-quality cost-effective continuing education to all library staff. This potential will not be met if these technologies are used only to provide the least expensive method for training, i.e., non-facilitated asynchronous online training. Ideally, there will be a linking of local leadership and coordination with centralized high-quality content and expertise. Each library staff member will be a member of a community of practice in which experiences can be shared and learning reinforced. Emerging technologies provide the opportunity for these communities of practice to have both local and virtual members.

For patrons, libraries can serve as a critical source of "just-in-time" workforce related learning opportunities to those who cannot access this learning at home or at work. As the baby boomer generation enters retirement, there will be a significant demand for information on health-related issues, hobbies, volunteering, and other topics relevant to this group.

In summary, e-learning has expanded rapidly and has evolved from mimicking the traditional classroom into a social-based learning tool that takes advantage of the ubiquitous nature of the medium. The public library can play a key role, through access and training, in making this powerful tool available to everyone, not just those on one side of the digital divide.

Karen Vargas, National Network of Libraries of Medicine

How can libraries use broadband to offer e-health opportunities?

E-health is a term that covers a broad range of ways that the Internet can be used to assist with health information delivery or even healthcare delivery. Public libraries are using e-health when they assist their customers to find health information on the Internet. Libraries can use broadband to increase the opportunities and ease by which their patrons find the information they need. Broadband at public libraries allows access to encyclopedias, videos, tutorials, screencasts, real-time chats with physicians, online support groups, patient health information, self-check tools, personal health records, and other multimedia health tools. Libraries can help their patrons with e-health by teaching them to use computers and the Internet, presenting programs on health topics that include sessions on finding safe, reliable information on the Internet, and even taking broadband laptops on the road, thereby increasing access to e-health information via traveling librarians who bring the Internet with them to the point of need.

How have you seen broadband impact the services at your library?

I work in a health sciences library that serves as the library for Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, as well as the library for the institutions of the Texas Medical Center. We serve health professionals, allied health professionals, students and patients. The medical profession is interested in having access to the most recent information. High-speed broadband is the only way to provide that access to the 90,000 or so people who work in the Texas Medical Center. People want to be able to get the information where they are at the moment — whether it is in the computer in their office or their smart phone that they have with them while they are talking to their patient. In our library we have very few actual books, and almost our entire materials budget is spent on databases for the Texas Medical Center. We send our librarians to train people throughout the Medical Center to use the

databases, we create online screencast tutorials, we provide chat reference, and we occasionally embed a librarian with a laptop in a hospital setting to increase access to librarians' research skills at the immediate time that they are needed.

What resources (websites, blogs, publications, etc.) do you look to in order to stay current with Web 2.0 applications?

I love getting ALA's American Libraries Direct in my e-mail once a week. Their Tech Talk section helps me to stay in touch with 2.0 things for librarians. Also, each of the regional offices of the National Network of Libraries of Medicine has a blog. Their tech postings are very useful for Web 2.0 applications that affect health issues. Here is a page listing all of them in one place: <http://nnlm.gov/news/>. In addition, the KraftyLibrarian blog <http://kraftylibrarian.com/> by Michelle Kraft and David Rothman's blog <http://davidrothman.net/> are great places to stay up on the latest medical librarian issues, including Web 2.0 applications.

How do you see library services changing or expanding as Internet connectivity continues to grow?

I think the emphasis will be shifting to access to information where it is wanted or needed. Expectations that people can have information they want immediately wherever they are will inform the ways that librarians will provide information. However, librarians need to be leaders in protecting the right to share information through the library even if the publishers and content providers want to prevent sharing. Librarians will need to stay in tune with the latest in technology to keep people from turning to other resources.

What do you see on the horizon with regard to e-health opportunities? What can libraries expect?

I see two big e-health opportunities on the horizon. The first one is just catching hold in the world of e-health: online Personal Health Records. Online Personal Health Records are health records that are created by individuals using technology provided by a number of organizations. These Personal Health Records gather a person's health and medical history from many sources, such as pharmacy and hospitals records, and make this information accessible online to those who are allowed to have access. It is also possible to tie health issues within the record to reliable sources of health information online. The technology for these health records is provided by many organizations, from insurance companies to Google. While having all of your health information in one place is a fantastic opportunity for patients, there are many issues involved with Personal Health Records that librarians should be aware of to better assist their patrons. A good place to find more information on Personal Health Records is the MedlinePlus Personal Health Records page: <http://www.medlineplus.gov/personalmedicalrecords/>. A great opportunity for public libraries would be to have public programs on Personal Health Records and invite speakers from pharmacies and other organizations to talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the PHR.

The other e-health opportunity I see is much broader. A new group of users will soon be flooding libraries: tech savvy seniors looking for health information. The first of the Baby Boomers will be reaching the age of 65 in 2011, and while they know how to use the Internet, they are also bringing along all of the health conditions that affect us as we age. Here are some things to look forward to: by 2030 the proportion of the US population aged 65 and older will double to about 71 million older adults. Right now as many as 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's Disease — the number of people with AD doubles for every 5-year interval beyond age 65, and the current life expectancy of Americans is about 78 years. Also, as we age we have visual and cognitive changes affecting how we receive information. The Boomers will know how to use computers and smart phones, have high expectations of what librarians should offer, and will outstrip all other age groups in their search for health information on the Internet (they already do, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project). This creates an enormous opportunity for librarians to demonstrate their importance in this information age by actively looking for ways to assist this generation in finding and evaluating health information in whatever format necessary. A quote I heard once from a Boomer librarian describing this exciting generation sums up the

change in the way librarians will need to approach this group of older adults: "We were active in the 60s, we will be active in our 60s." You might want to start getting ready now!