



**NATIONAL
SKILLS
COALITION**

Every worker. Every industry.
A strong economy.

Libraries and Workforce Development

Advocating for Your Services and Your Patrons

Jessica Cardott and
Amanda Bergson-Shilcock
March 30, 2021



TODAY'S CONVERSATION

- ▶ Covid-19: An “Aha!” moment for policymakers and workforce advocates on digital inclusion
- ▶ Libraries: A powerful partner for reskilling and upskilling
- ▶ Federal policies: New resources for libraries to expand workforce services
- ▶ New research: What we're learning about libraries & workforce development
- ▶ Advocacy opportunities: How you can speak up

But first...



A LITTLE ABOUT NSC



Jessica Cardott
*Senior National
Network Manager*



**Amanda
Bergson-Shilcock**
Senior Fellow



OUR VISION

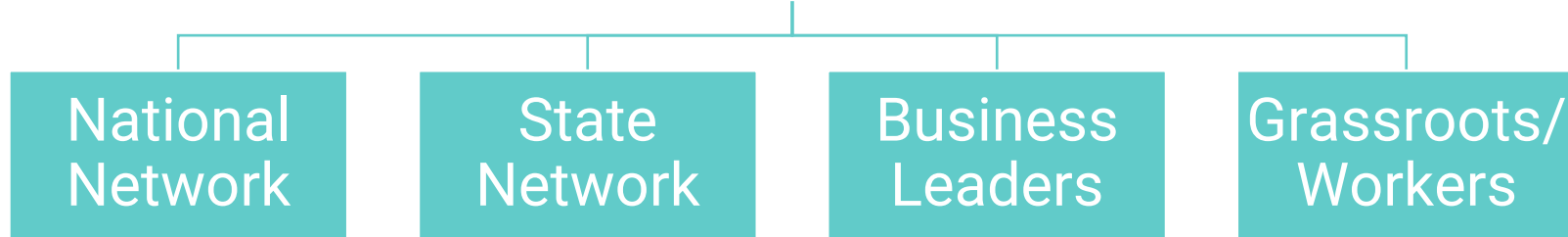
- ▶ Jobs that require skills training are the backbone of our economy.
- ▶ National Skills Coalition fights for a national commitment to inclusive, high-quality skills training so that more people have access to a better life, and more local businesses see sustained growth.



OUR NETWORKS



NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION





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COVID-19 SPARKS AN AHA! MOMENT

**The pandemic
has brought
home a new
reality:**



Everyone
needs digital
skills.





Libraries have long been leaders in digital inclusion.



**Now the challenge is to
meet the moment:**

Photo credit: Honeygrow/Kyle Huff



Millions of jobseekers are looking to reskill or upskill.





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POLL #1:

**Does your library provide any workforce
development services to patrons?**



Libraries are vital partners in connecting people to learning and work.



Federal policies can bring in welcome new funding to support workforce development services



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POLL #2: **What is your level of familiarity with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)?**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)





American Apprenticeship Grants



SNAP Employment & Training





Community Development Block Grants

American Rescue Plan





To win a seat at the table, libraries should lead with their strengths.



Workforce and education providers need partners who bring **expertise and community connections**

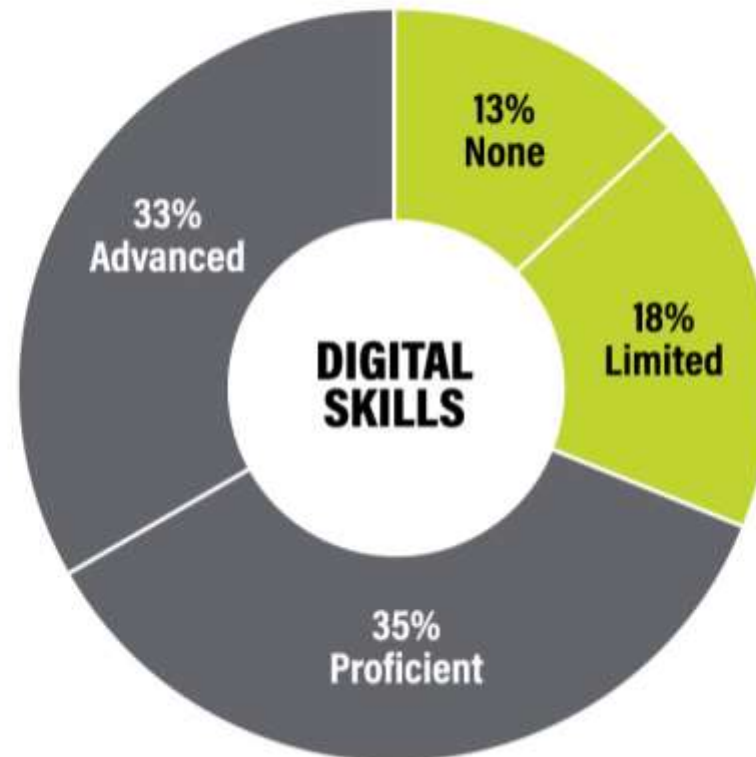


Digital literacy is an urgent need:

DIGITAL SKILL GAPS ARE A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM



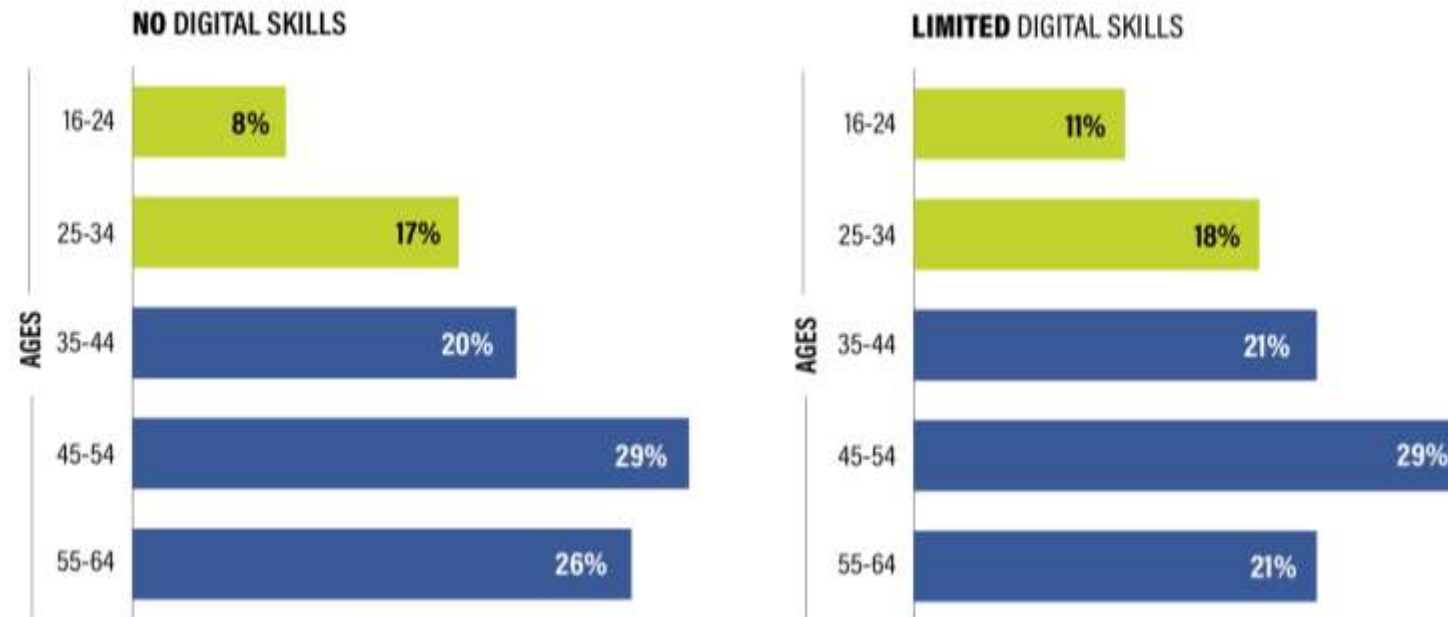
Nearly one-third of America's workers lack digital skills





THE RETIREMENT CALENDAR WILL NOT SOLVE THIS PROBLEM

Younger workers are not immune to digital skill gaps

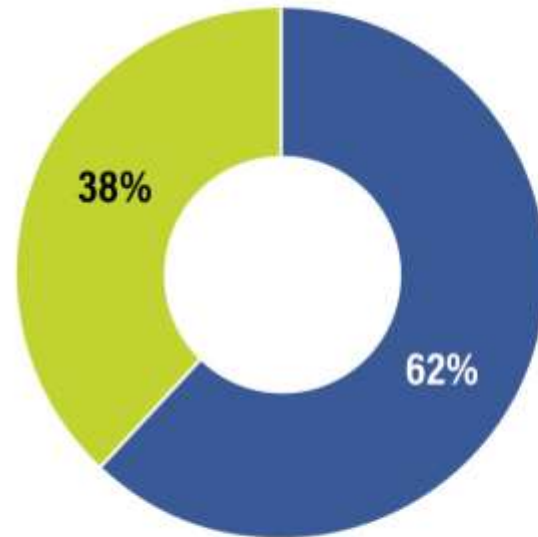


WORKERS STRUGGLE TO COVER FOR THEIR SKILL GAPS

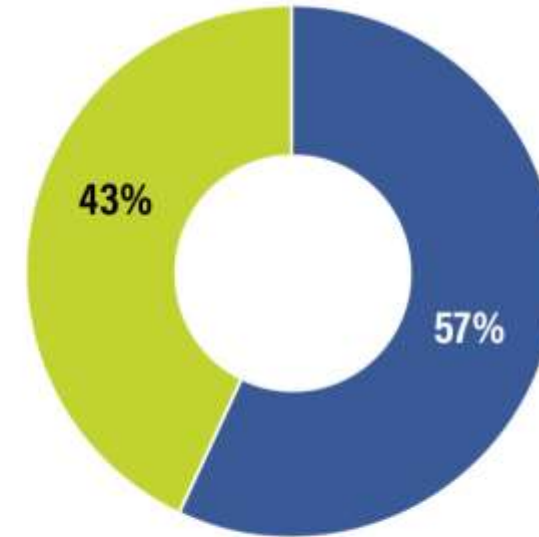


Many workers who lack digital literacy have jobs that require substantive computer skills

Among Workers with **No** Digital Skills



Among Workers with **Limited** Digital Skills



■ Moderate or complex computer skills needed for current job

■ Straightforward computer skills needed for current job

Due to structural racism, workers of color face disproportionate skill gaps.



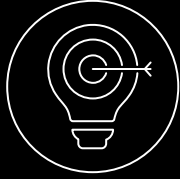
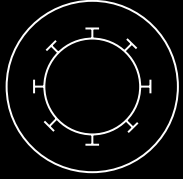
Libraries can help close racial equity gaps.





Many workers of color seeking reskilling/upskilling *already* know and trust their library.

Photo credit: Flickr user UNH Manchester



Lessons from Public Libraries & Strategically Virtual Services

Who We Are



Stephanie Holcomb
Research Project Coordinator
Research and Evaluation



Liana Volpe
Research Project Coordinator
Technical Assistance



National Study of Public Libraries

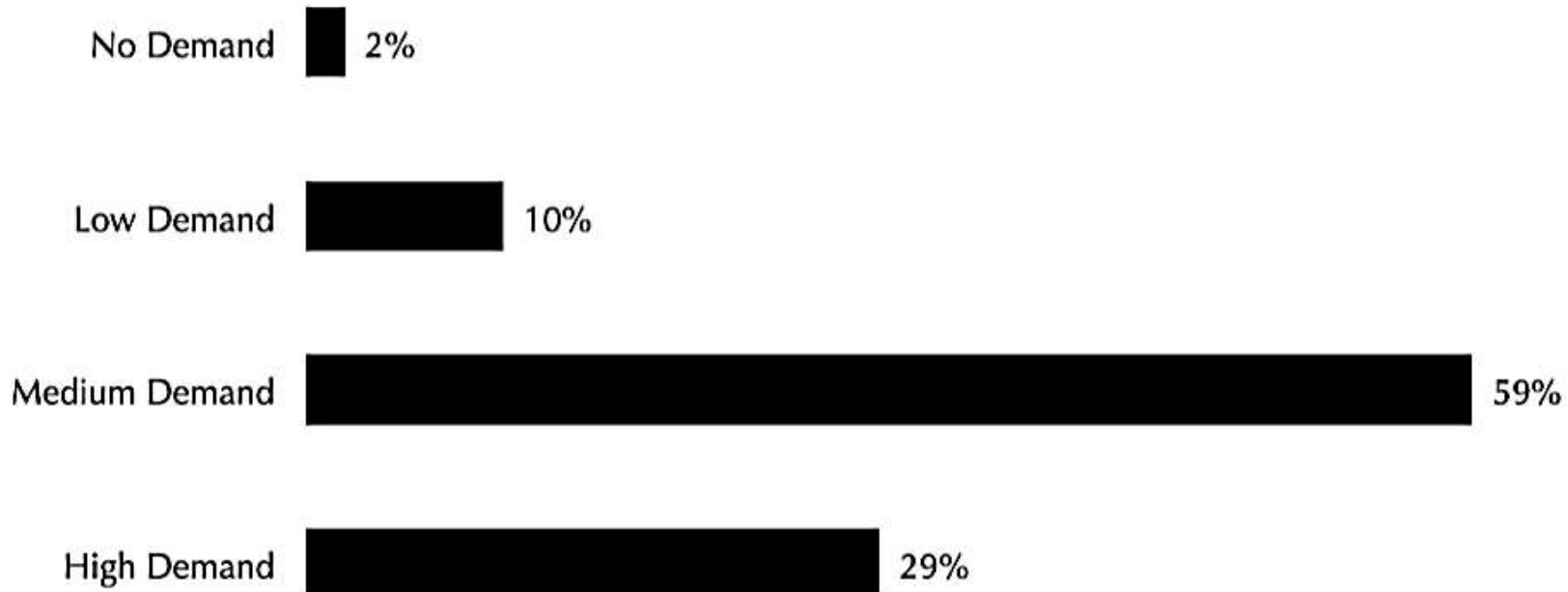
Method	Scope
Literature Review	Websites Program Materials Annual Reports
Survey	Target: Sent to 150 State Library Staff (3 per state) Response Rate: 55/150= 37% Coverage: 35 states
Interviews	Target: Contacted 60 local libraries Response Rate: 22/60= 37% Coverage: 21 states

What Career Services Do Libraries Offer?

- Classes
- Online Job Search Support
- Resume Development
- Job Application Assistance
- Literacy Programs
- Test Preparation
- Cover Letter Development



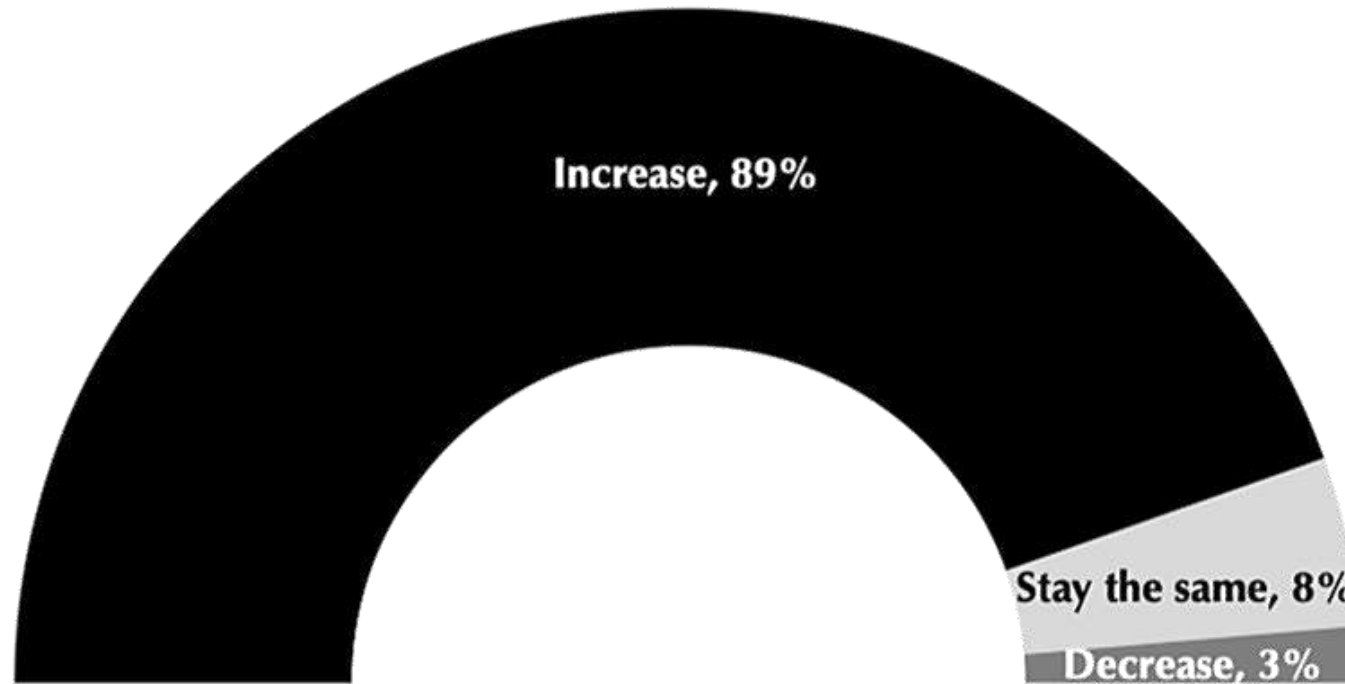
Question: How would you describe the current demand for career services?



Source: 2018 Career Services at Public Library Study, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development



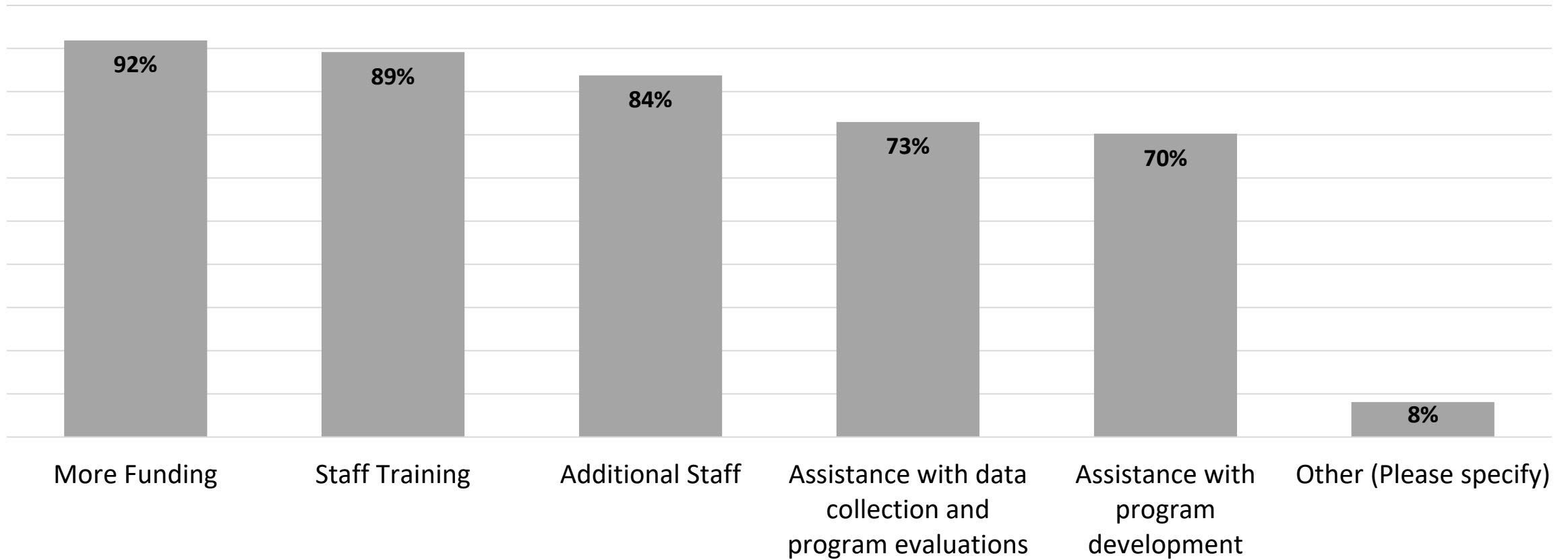
Question: Do you think the role of public libraries in career services will increase, decrease, or stay the same?



Source: 2018 Career Services at Public Library Study, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

Library Challenges

What type of additional resources would better support library career services in your state?



Source: 2018 Career Services at Public Library Study, John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development



Strengths of Library Systems in Provision of Career Services

Flexibility to respond to community needs

Convenient, welcoming, and responsive nature of public libraries make them the first stop for job seekers

Historical involvement in this area

“Residents know us”

Longer operating hours

Computer technology and high-speed internet access

Meeting spaces



A Review of New Jersey Public Libraries' Virtual Services

Method	Scope
Literature Review	293 Public Library Websites, including both independent locations and county systems Time frame: July – October 2020
Interviews	3 Roundtable Sessions Coverage: 50 librarians and library staff



State of Virtual Library Services in New Jersey

Significant adaptations to operate in a virtual environment

Job seeker resources and job search programming are sparse

Programming focuses -- recreation, wellness, resource and community connections, and the digital divide

Little sharing of assets across libraries within the same county, operating in virtual and physical siloes

Disparity of resources, programming, and protocols between libraries leading to customer confusion

Communication of services to the public can be unclear

Acknowledging the Complex Challenges of an Economic Recession



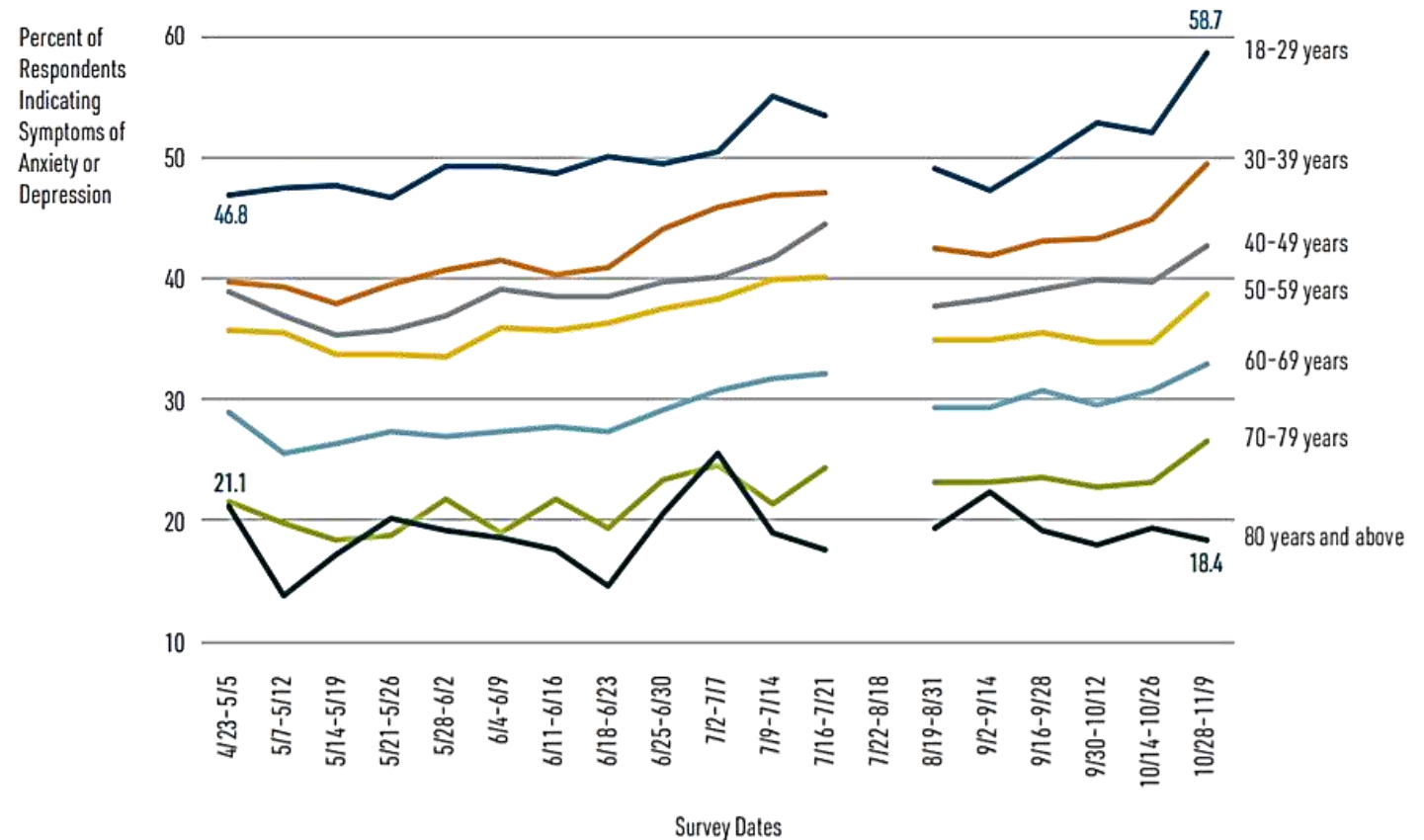
Communities of Care

“Communities of Care promote mental health and wellbeing through community-level prevention solutions, such as fostering social connections, improving the built environment, and increasing access to economic opportunity.”

–The Prevention Institute

Why it’s important during the COVID recovery:

Figure 1: Experiences of Symptoms of Anxiety or Depression by Age Group



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey, 2020

Note: Surveys were not conducted during the period of July 22 to August 18, 2020.



Operationalizing Virtual Communities of Care: Theory



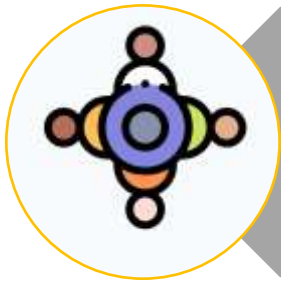
Integrate trauma-informed care practices in service delivery

- Services that address the needs of the whole person
- Supportive learning environment



Create opportunities for social connection

- Group motivation, affirmation, and accountability
- Listening as a core community value

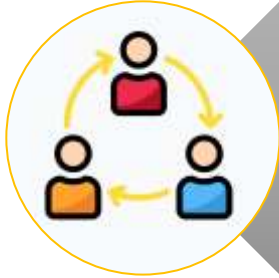


Foster community diversity and inclusivity

- Community codes of conduct
- Individual value acknowledgement



Operationalizing Virtual Communities of Care: Practice



Host group career coaching sessions

- Share and Support model
- “Work Search Buddies” model
- Open office hours



Curate information to narrow job seeker’s attention to effective resources

- Set of localized community-specific resources and tools
- Career and job search presentations with expert presenters



Expand services to address the social and emotional components of job search

- Wellness check system
- Acquire a wellness bot to assist customers 24/7



Contact Information

Stephanie Holcomb

Research Project Coordinator

John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce
Development

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

stephanie.holcomb@ejb.rutgers.edu

Liana Volpe

Research Project Coordinator

John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce
Development

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

liana.volpe@ejb.rutgers.edu

For more information on the our work:

Read the more on the briefs

[*Public Libraries: A Community's Connection for Career Services, Building Communities of Care in Workforce Development Programs A Review of New Jersey Public Libraries' Virtual Services*](#)

For more on [*Suddenly Virtual*](#) and [*Strategically Virtual*](#)



PublicLibrary
ASSOCIATION

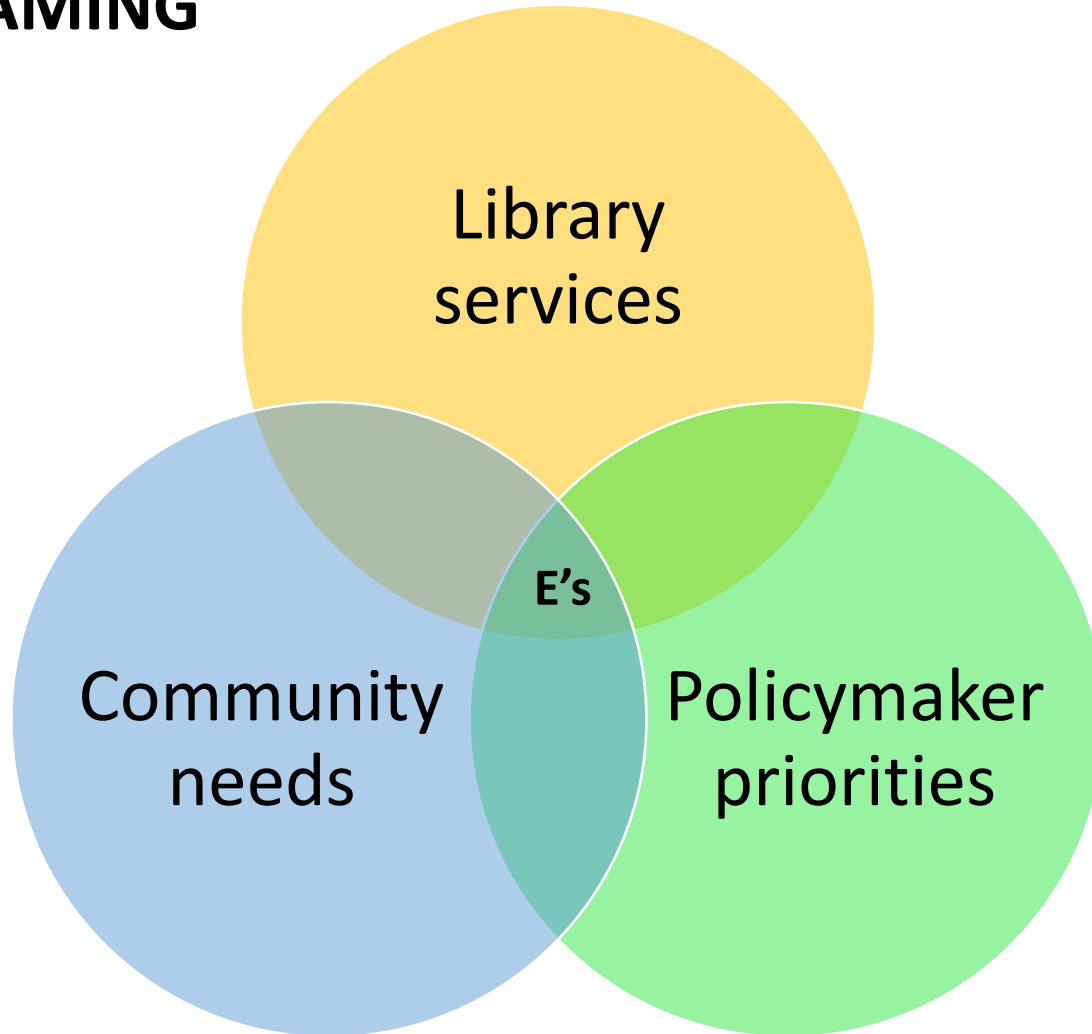
Libraries & Workforce Development

Connecting the Dots...

About ALA and PLA

- The mission of the American Library Association is to provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.
- The Public Library Association enhances the development and effectiveness of public library staff and public library services.

FRAMING



At the intersection of what libraries **DO**, what communities **NEED**, and what policymakers **PRIORITIZE** is "[The E's of Libraries](#)[®]"

- *Employment*
- Education
- Entrepreneurship
- Equity
- Empowerment

ALA policy advocacy

- [Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act](#)
- [Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)
- [American Rescue Plan Act](#)
- [Build America's Libraries Act](#)

*Don't tell them what you want to say.
Tell them what they need to know.*

Local Library Workforce Assets

- Reach: 17,000 public library locations
- Expertise and Diverse Resources: staff, collections, training, and credentials
- Flexible & Sustainable Collaboration: trusted networks

[America's Libraries: Essential Partners in Workforce & Career Services](#)

Local Library Workforce-Related Services

- Technology access for job search, exploration, and skills building
- Dedicated meeting and learning spaces
- Knowledgeable staff referrals
- Diverse digital learning resources
- Adult literacy and high-school equivalency prep
- English-Language Learning and citizenship classes

Local Library Workforce-Related Services

- Employment-related classes, e.g., resume writing, interview skills, job search
- Test prep, proctoring and resources for in-demand credentials and badging
- One-on-one digital training, career coaching and counseling
- Job fairs, outreach, and peer support for job seekers
- Targeted programs, including youth development, returning Americans, and women/minority entrepreneurship

Spectrum of Library-Workforce Collaboration



“Not everyone is eligible for a WIOA dollar, but everyone is eligible for a (library) dollar.”

--Lacey Miller, Pikes Peak Library District (CO)

“The library can be a great career exploration tool, particularly if a job applicant is unsure where to start or if they are not eligible for training. ‘Try a free course at the library before you enroll in a program that costs money.’ ”

--Tasha Baker, Pikes Peak Workforce Center

Recap

- Library technology access and digital skills building ARE workforce services
- Diverse adult learners, job seekers and career changers NEED libraries to proactively engage and promote workforce services
- BUT we are not alone in this work, and our patrons, our libraries, and our partners benefit when we strengthen connections in our networks
- Library staff KNOW how to do this work—Affordable Care Act, 2020 Census, food insecurity, opioid epidemic...
- NOW is the time—economic recovery is top of mind

Action Items

- Review and document all the ways your library supports workforce development and career services
- Reach out to local workforce and training partners to discuss respective assets and possible gaps
- Communicate and promote library resources and capabilities widely—invite your patrons to ask you about employment and career resources
- **DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S "PERFECT"!**
- Assess and continuously improve programs and services
- Share your successes with your elected leaders at all levels, city and county agencies, media, state chapters, state libraries, and ALA.

Resources

- ALA Workforce Innovation policy advocacy landing page: www.ala.org/advocacy/workforce
- PLA digital literacy resources and projects: www.ala.org/pla/initiatives/digitalliteracy
- Project Outcome assessment tools and case studies: www.ala.org/pla/data/performance measurement
- [LibsWork](#) information sharing of state and public libraries (enter libswork as the list name and provide email address to join)
- My contact: Larra Clark, lclark@ala.org

**Now is the time to
advocate!**





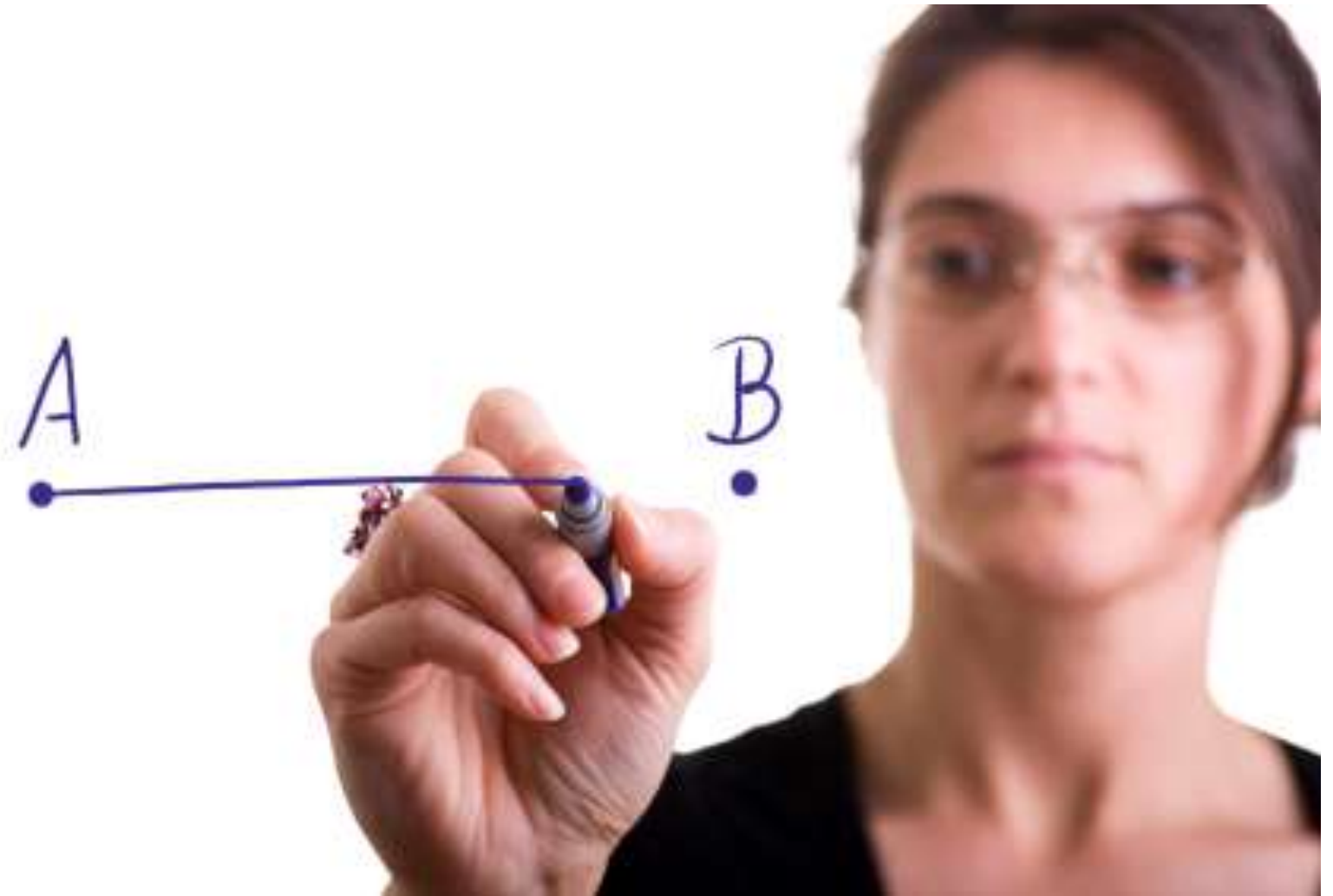
At the local level:
**Ensure your local
workforce board knows
your capacity**





At the state level:

**Connect the dots
for your
governor's office
about libraries and
new ARP funds.**





At the federal level:

**Tell your Congressperson
that new infrastructure
spending must include
investments in workforce
development.**





At every level:

Data makes you credible, **stories** make you memorable.



**Time for your
questions!**





Wait!
Before you go, a
quick 5-question
evaluation





CONTACT INFORMATION

Jessica Cardott

jessicac@nationalskillscoalition.org

Amanda Bergson-Shilcock

215-285-2860 (mobile)

amandabs@nationalskillscoalition.org

The New Landscape of Digital Literacy

How workers' uneven digital skills affect economic mobility and business competitiveness, and what policymakers can do about it.



**Full charts and graphs in this data report:
<https://tinyurl.com/NewLandscapeDL>**

WHAT'S WORKING TO BUILD DIGITAL SKILLS FOR THE WORKPLACE:



More details in the full report:
www.tinyurl.com/BoostingDL

- ▶ **Partnerships** between educational institutions and employers
- ▶ **Contextualized** and integrated learning
- ▶ **Rapid prototyping** of new programs



OTHER NSC PUBLICATIONS

- ▶ [Applying a Racial Equity Lens to Digital Literacy](#) (6-page fact sheet)
- ▶ [Digital Skills for an Equitable Recovery](#) (report with federal policy recommendations)
- ▶ [10 State Policy Recommendations](#) for Digital Inclusion
- ▶ [Digital Skills for a Digital Age](#) (transition memo for Biden-Harris administration)
- ▶ [What is “rapid prototyping”](#) and how does it help workers develop digital literacy? (blog post)

Applying a racial equity lens to digital literacy
How workers of color are affected by digital skill gaps

DIGITAL SKILLS SERIES

American jobs are undergoing massive technological transformation, with even entry-level workers now expected to use all manner of digital devices and equipment. Examples include restaurant workers being trained in food safety using virtual reality goggles, home health aides using tablet computers to report patient information, retail clerks using smartphone apps to process returned items, and manufacturing workers using augmented reality to assemble parts.

To succeed in this rapidly transforming environment, workers need broad-based digital problem-solving skills that equip them to learn a wide variety of today's technologies and navigate continued changes in the future. This **digital literacy** includes both the capacity to use technology and the cognitive skills necessary to navigate it successfully.

But a startling one-third of American workers lack these vital digital skills. This lack of skills has wide-ranging consequences, hampering workers' own economic mobility and security, while also holding back the productivity and economic competitiveness of the U.S. companies that employ them.

Workers of color are disproportionately affected by digital skill gaps compared to their white peers, in large part due to structural factors that are the product of longstanding inequities in American society, such as income and wealth gaps and uneven access to high-quality K-12 education. Historically, public policy decisions played a key role in forming racial inequities in educational attainment, employment, and wages among American workers. Policies also have helped create the systems that shape access and outcomes in postsecondary education and training for people of color. Therefore, public policies must now be an integral part of the solution to addressing digital skill gaps for workers of color.

This fact sheet draws on U.S. data from a respected international assessment known as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Survey of Adult Skills, or PIAAC.¹ The data shows that 13 percent of currently employed American workers ages 16-64 have no digital skills, and an additional 13 percent have very limited skills. Another one-third (36 percent)

Have questions or want to learn about specific examples? Contact National Skills Coalition for details at info@nationalskillscoalition.org

www.nationalskillscoalition.org

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HALF OF BLACK WORKERS NEED DIGITAL SKILLS

Skill Level	Percentage
No digital skills	13%
Very limited skills	17%
Basic skills	25%
Intermediate skills	19%
Advanced skills	17%

MORE THAN HALF OF LATINO WORKERS NEED DIGITAL SKILLS

Skill Level	Percentage
No digital skills	17%
Very limited skills	26%
Basic skills	24%
Intermediate skills	19%
Advanced skills	14%