Residents in Ward 7 and Ward 8, seniors, older and African-American women, and residents with a disability are disproportionately likely to identify the library as their main source of information.

Digital Citizenship

Prepare residents for life online.

Support digital citizenship by providing technology and internet access and training.

Life’s activities are moving quickly and inexorably online. Seeking an answer to a simple question, evaluating the veracity of a news source, applying for a job or health benefits, and interacting with a child’s teacher are all examples of activities that require proficiency with technology and a broader understanding of how technology is changing the world. Users of public libraries are increasingly turning to libraries not only for access to technology but also for opportunities to develop their online skills. This is especially true for vulnerable populations, like some job seekers, seniors and formerly incarcerated men and women (or returning citizens), who have limited access to or knowledge of technology.

With more than 1,000 connected computers, DCPL is the District’s leading provider of free, high-speed internet access. In the Library’s survey, disproportionate numbers of residents in Wards 7 and 8, seniors and residents with disabilities identify the library as their main source of information. Residents of Ward 8, African-American and Latino residents, as well as residents with young children, are more likely to cite access to computers and technology as a priority. And when asked what residents wished the library offered, African-American residents were much more likely than white residents to point to faster, more reliable internet access and more computers.
Ensure residents have the skills to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Increase technology trainings to include digital literacy, emerging technologies and digital readiness.

The Library provides a diverse array of technology services focused on workforce development, information literacy and science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM). Hundreds of classes take place every year.

The Library will increase opportunities for technology training and assistance at neighborhood libraries and further customize trainings by branch. Courses will cover the broad spectrum of digital citizenship and include related topics such as privacy protection and digital etiquette. Digital literacy with a special emphasis on job readiness will be stressed in areas of the District with high unemployment. The Library will conduct an analysis of existing library programming and examine training opportunities offered by others in the community. This will help the Library design comprehensive technology training that responds to community needs.

To meet the challenge of providing customized and varied technology training and assistance, the Library will review and revamp service delivery and staff skills. As part of the Library’s assessment of digital training across the library system, DCPL will examine its staff training needs. The Library will train staff to provide formal, scheduled digital literacy training for groups and on-demand one-on-one training for residents who need individualized help improving their digital literacy skills.

Expand workforce development opportunities through digital assessments and computer and skills certifications.

The Library’s computer trainings are a critical lifeline for users who need technology skills to apply or qualify for jobs that require technology proficiency. DCPL will expand its workforce development offerings to include online digital literacy assessments and corresponding training to help residents build their skills and broaden their career options. Assessments will analyze residents’ readiness to complete the online GED exam and future coursework. The Library will help users navigate and complete coursework for their desired career objectives, and users will earn credentials that certify their mastery of in-demand skills to better qualify them for 21st-century jobs.

In addition, the Library will partner with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education to offer Microsoft Office Specialist industry-standard certifications in software applications such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint and other advanced credentials.

In Wards 5, 7 and 8, where, on average, close to three in 10 residents live in poverty, the average home broadband adoption rate is less than 65 percent.

Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013, as cited by Connect.DC, Building the Bridge, 2015.
More than 160,000 D.C. residents lack internet service at home.

Expand access to technology and the internet in the communities that need it most.

Better align the Library’s technology offerings with community demand.

Libraries across the country are witnessing dramatic changes in how users engage with their technology offerings. Currently, DCPL has 1,000 public access computers at library locations across D.C. Users are able to print, scan and copy documents at all locations. In addition, the Library’s public, free Wi-Fi connects a rapidly growing number of devices to the Library’s wireless network.

The Library will conduct an audit of its technology and how it’s used so that the Library can better meet residents’ needs. At every location, DCPL will assess the gaps between current offerings and neighborhood demand to improve technology and internet offerings and infrastructure.

Pilot a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot lending program.

More than 160,000 D.C. residents lack internet service at home. The majority of these residents are low-income or unemployed individuals who cannot afford broadband services, which prevents them from learning new skills, applying for jobs and taking advantage of other opportunities that come with access to high-speed internet.

In order to provide D.C. residents internet access in neighborhoods where internet adoption is the lowest, DCPL is implementing a mobile Wi-Fi initiative in the Deanwood and Congress Heights neighborhoods, two areas with the lowest broadband adoption rates in D.C. Participants can check out a mobile Wi-Fi device or hotspot and a laptop to use at home from the Deanwood and Parklands-Turner libraries, allowing them to develop job skills, apply for jobs and complete homework. The Library will encourage participants to use its online services such as downloadable books, online classes and streaming music or videos. DCPL will monitor and evaluate the success of the program to determine the potential for expansion.

DCPL recognizes that while a Wi-Fi lending program provides some relief to residents in need of internet service, it does not solve the larger access problem. The Library’s goal is to be a leading advocate for increased access to technology and information wherever is most convenient for D.C. residents, whether in a library facility or elsewhere.