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

National Network  State Network  Business Leaders  Grassroots/Workers
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:
Millions of jobseekers are looking to reskill or upskill.
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.
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
- Moderate or complex computer skills needed for current job: 38%
- Straightforward computer skills needed for current job: 62%

Among Workers with Limited Digital Skills
- Moderate or complex computer skills needed for current job: 43%
- Straightforward computer skills needed for current job: 57%
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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Scope</th>
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</table>
| 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?

- No Demand: 2%
- Low Demand: 10%
- Medium Demand: 59%
- High Demand: 29%

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?

- More Funding: 92%
- Staff Training: 89%
- Additional Staff: 84%
- Assistance with data collection and program evaluations: 73%
- Assistance with program development: 70%
- Other (Please specify): 8%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Scope</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>293 Public Library Websites, including both independent locations and county systems</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time frame: July – October 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>3 Roundtable Sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coverage: 50 librarians and library staff</td>
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</table>
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
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

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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
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.
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

- Library public technology access and referrals to workforce agency
- Digital/employment skills training and programming; episodic coordination with workforce partners; some specialized resources
- Ongoing partnerships, asset mapping, co-development; consistent programs; some dedicated staffing; more specialized resources; promotion
“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/performancemeasurement

• 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

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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:

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

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