Presented by

Dr. Audrey Barbakoff, EdD, MLIS
Community Engagement and Economic
Development Manager, Library Outreach,
Programs, and Services,
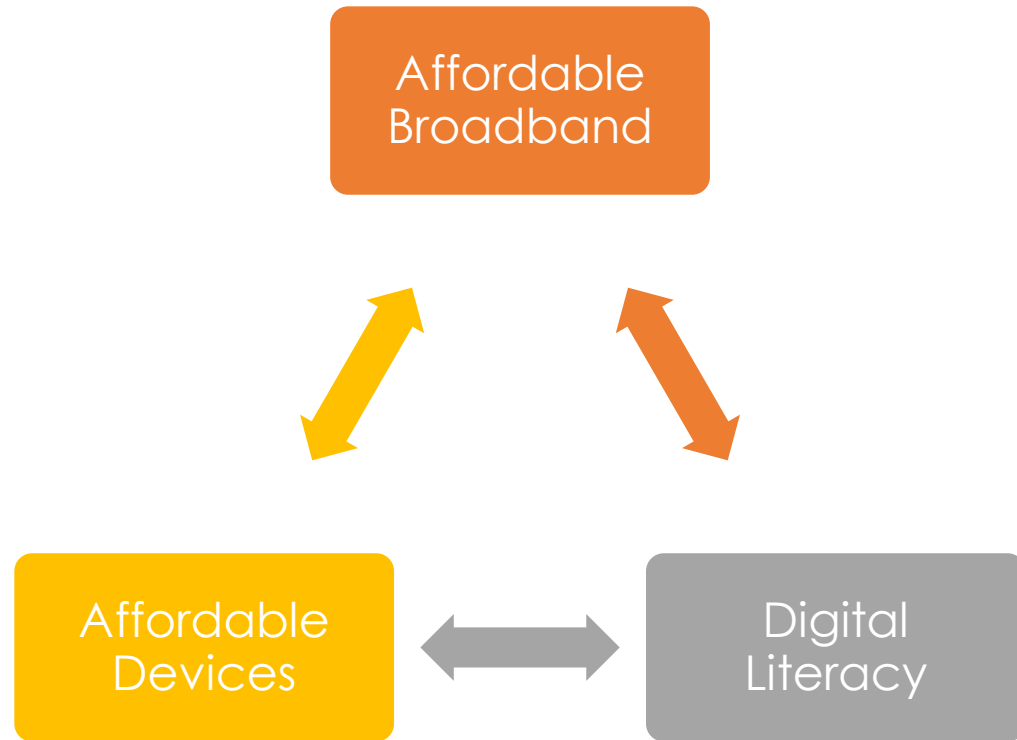King County Library System (WA)

Growing Digital Equity Through Community Partnerships

Audrey Barbakoff, EdD, MLIS

Presented for WebJunction

February 3, 2022

What is Digital Equity? How is it achieved?

Affordable Broadband

Affordable Devices

Digital Literacy

"**Digital Equity** is a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy."

"**Digital Inclusion** refers to the activities necessary to ensure that all individuals and communities, including the most disadvantaged, have access to and use of Information and Communication Technologies"

Source: National Digital Inclusion Alliance

Equity is the goal. Inclusion is how we reach it.

But I was an English major!

That's ok, because…

The library's role is
- Supportive access to information
- Access to technology & space
- Referrals to community resources
- A safe, welcoming place to ask questions
- All the things you already do best!

The library's role isn't
- Knowing how to solve every tech problem
- Being the "help desk"
- Terrifying

Don't Go it Alone
Partners help you…

- Understand community context and aspirations

- Reach and build trust with new communities

- Evaluate success

- Take an asset-based perspective: those closest to an issue are best equipped to address it

- Pool resources and expertise

Pictured: Unnamed staff / volunteers from Kent Hope

Digital Bridge

What it is: Hotspots and laptops loaned to partner organizations for use by their clients

Partners: Orgs serving prioritized populations (people experiencing homelessness, seniors, LEP entrepreneurs)

Community Aspiration: Staying connected with library buildings closed or less accessible

Pictured: KCLS Older Adults Specialist Wendy Pender (L), patron Kaye B. (R)

Circulating Technology Nuts & Bolts

- Original equipment procured through grant funds

- Engaged partners with existing trust in communities of focus

- Inventory tracking happening internally; items not in public catalog or reservable by individuals

- Partners help provide impact metrics and stories, supporting future funding applications

Digital Navigators

What it is: Appointments with trained staff for technology reference questions and broadband/device access support

Partners: National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), other local library systems

Community Aspiration:
People can afford and confidently access the Internet to achieve their personal goals

Digital Navigator Nuts & Bolts

- DNs are existing library staff with additional training

- Appointments by phone or online (currently no in-person due to COVID)

- Utilized our existing software for appointments and workflows

- Evaluation tools: intake form, patron and staff eval forms

- Lots of freely available support now – toolkit, webinars, etc.

base station

Community Wireless Network

What it is: Community owned and operated high-speed wireless Internet connection. An antenna is mounted on the roof of a library.

Partners: Local Connectivity Lab, Black Brilliance Research, University of Washington

Community Aspiration: Affordable WiFi; increased community sufficiency and autonomy

Image Source: Local Connectivity Lab

Community Wireless Nuts & Bolts

- Partners approached the library

- Result of engaging in community-based coalitions and projects

- Partners train digital stewards to maintain network

- Library's role: roof access, promotion, digital literacy programs. No tech knowledge required.

- Learn more: *Community Networks in Seattle: A Call to Action* by Esther Jang (Medium, 2020)

TeleConnect

What it is: A virtual meeting service. Provides a height-adjustable iPad, a study room, and staff support.

Partners: University of Washington Medicine, other health and social service providers

Community Aspiration: access telehealth and video meetings without barriers

Pictured: KCLS librarians Laurie Finlayson ("patient") and Maria Arcorace ("doctor")

TeleConnect Nuts & Bolts

- iPads and stands initially funded by grant

- Pilot partner helped select equipment, develop workflow

- Appointments are made by partner clinics, not individuals

- Uses our existing meeting room reservation software

- We *never, ever* interact with anyone's personal health information

How to Start: Understand Community Aspirations

- Join coalitions

- Contact community organizations

- Connect with local government

- Do your research

- Learn from in-library use of technology and questions

How to Build: Co-Development

- It's not about us! Give power back to communities

- Avoid saviorism with an asset-based perspective

- Embrace uncertainty about the final product

- Know that what you're making is desirable and useful

- The process is the product. Programs end, but relationships grow.

Learn More

Audrey Barbakoff

audrey.barbakoff@gmail.com

the-bookaneer.com

Coming soon: *Twelve Steps to a Community-Led Library*
(ALA Editions, fall 2022)

Consulting services available