

TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

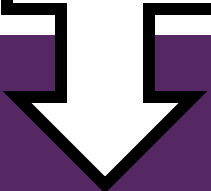
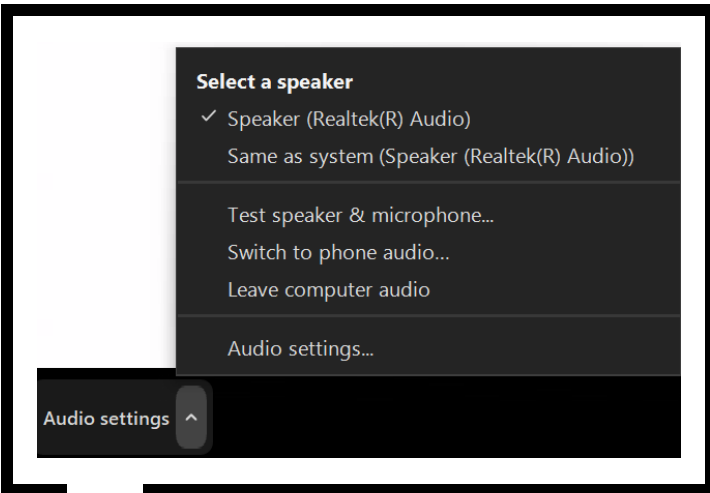
Results from PLA's 2023 Annual Survey

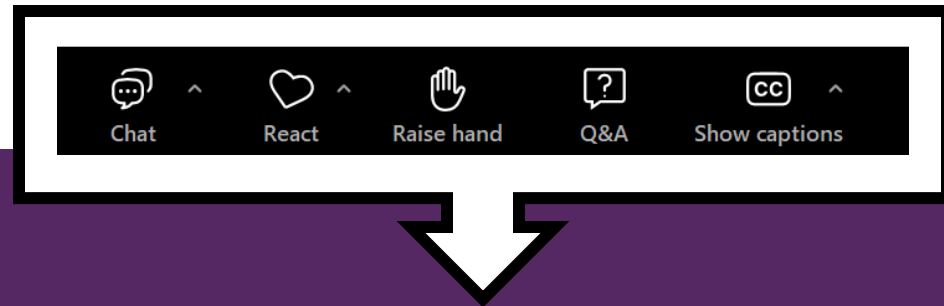
PLA webinar
July 29, 2024

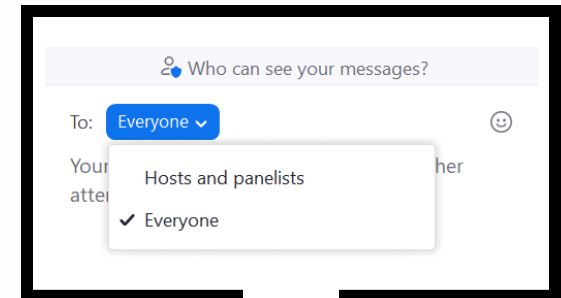


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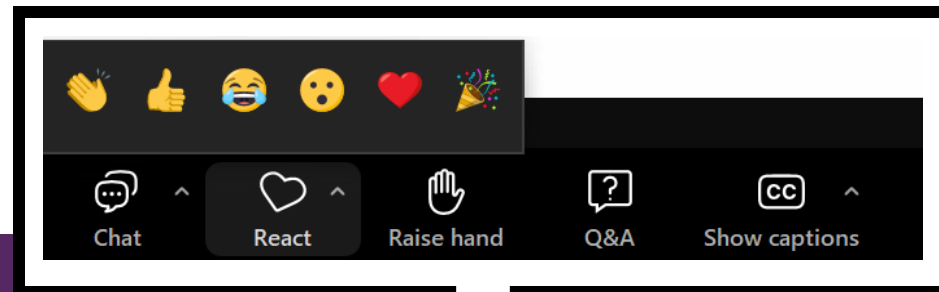




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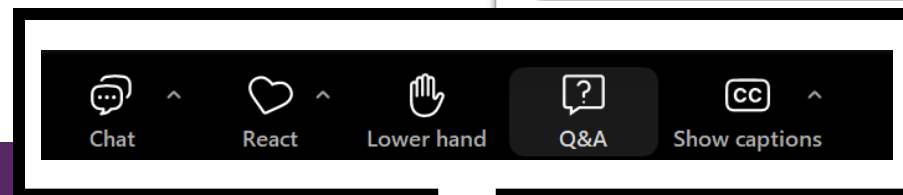
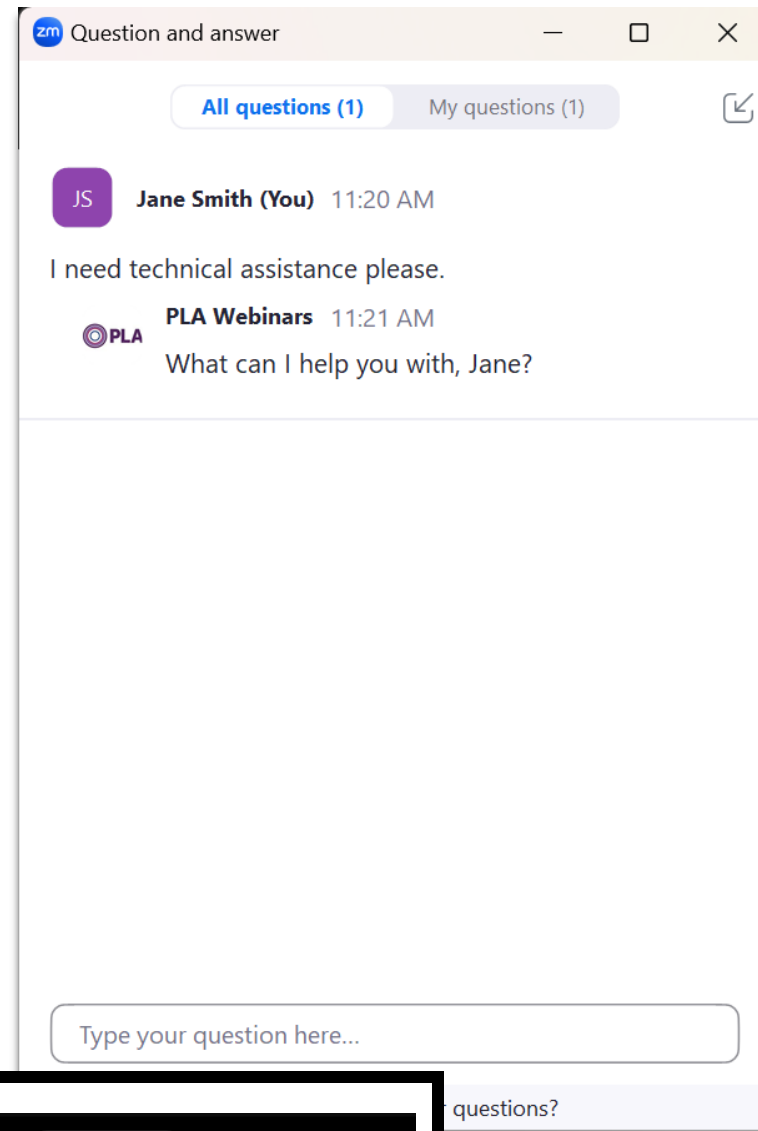
To: Everyone

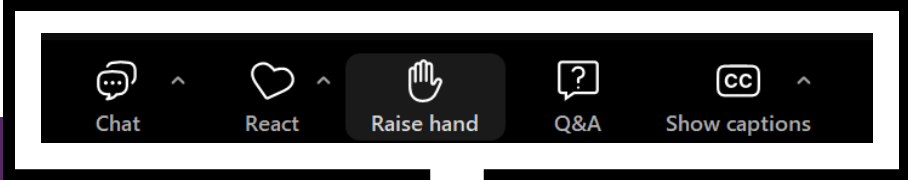
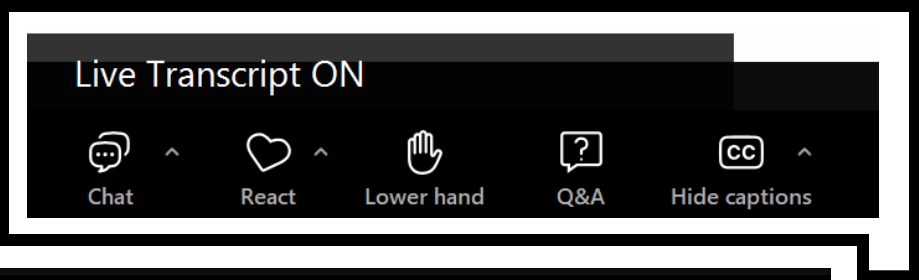
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TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES:

Results from PLA's 2023 Annual Survey

PLA webinar
July 30, 2024



Presenters



Jerianne Thompson

Co-chair, PLA
Measurement,
Evaluation &
Assessment Committee

Director, Tualatin Public
Library, OR



Sara Goek

Project Manager, Data
and Research

Public Library
Association



Katina Jones

Program Manager,
Evaluation and
Assessment

Public Library
Association



Agenda

- About the Technology Survey
- 2023 Survey Results
- Taking Action
- Q&A

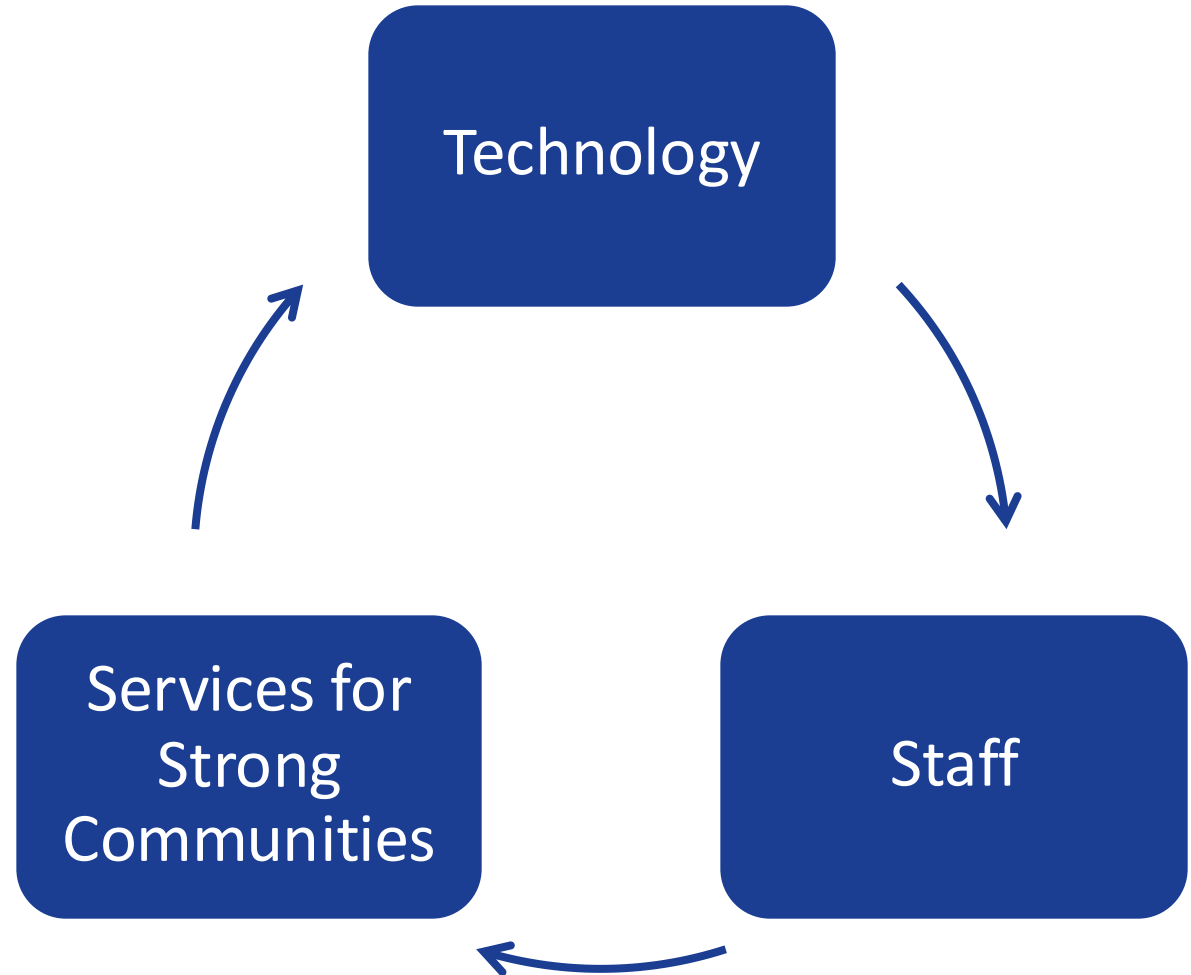
TECHNOLOGY SURVEY

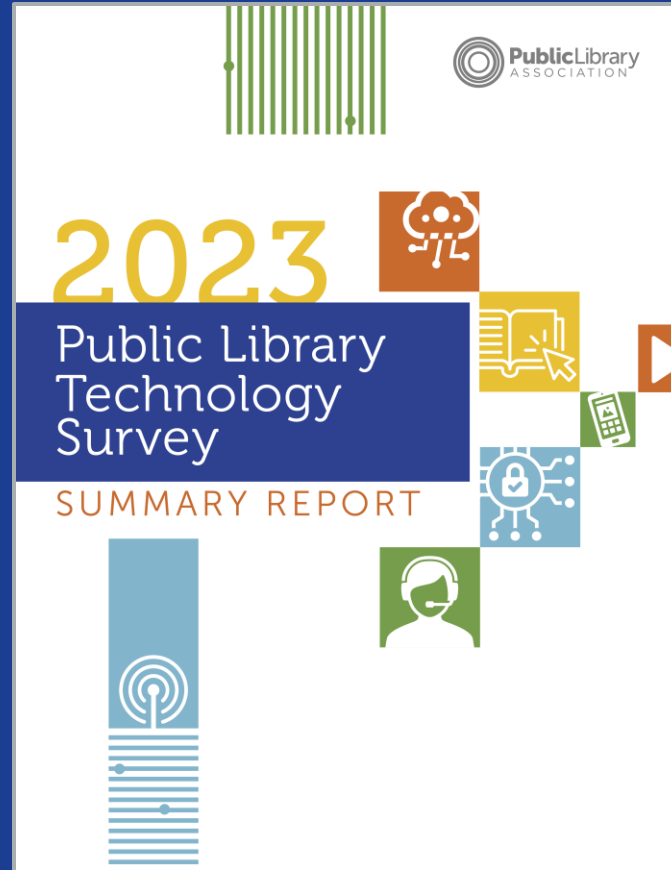
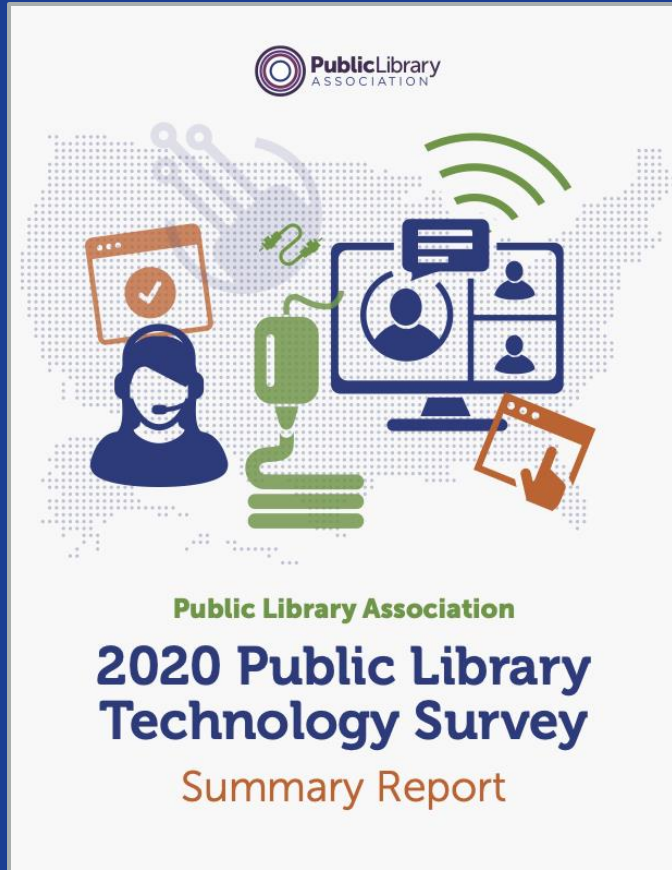
Jerianne Thompson



PLA Annual Topical Surveys

Rotation of three surveys that complement other existing data collection efforts in the library field





2023 report now available!

<https://www.ala.org/pla/data/plasurveys>

2023 Technology Survey



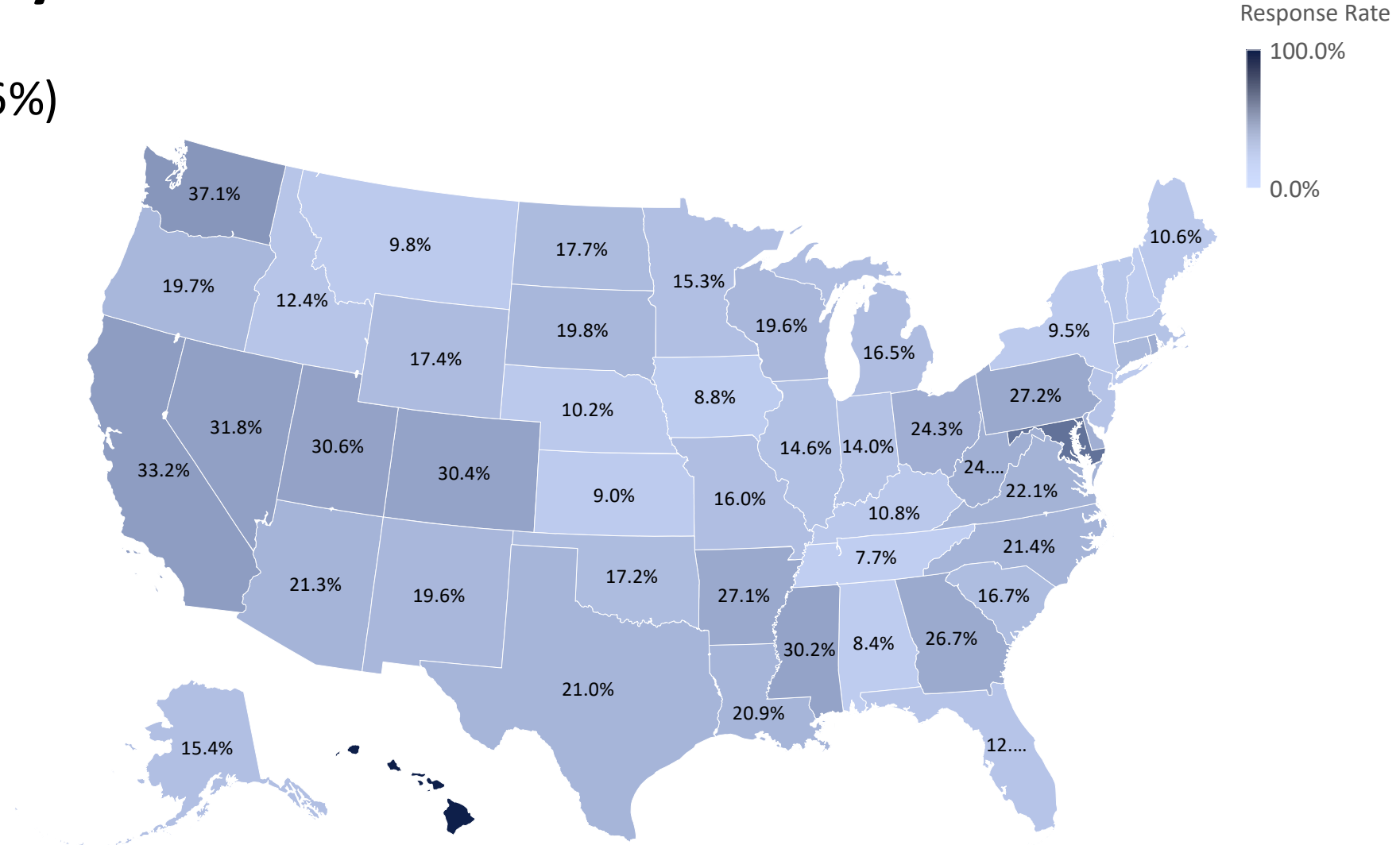
- All U.S. public libraries (administrative entities) were invited to participate via librarybenchmark.org in fall 2023
- Final response rate of **16.4%** (1,511 participants)

Response Rates by State

1st place: Maryland (56%)

2nd place: Washington (37.1%)

3rd place: California (33.2%)





Data for Advocacy & Planning


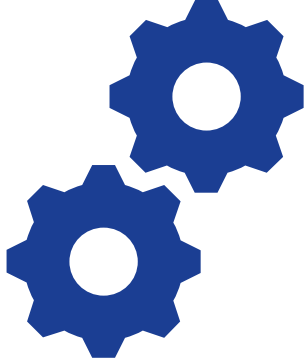



- **National:** Inform policymakers and media and secure additional funding for libraries.
- **State:** Understand what your libraries already offer, what they need, and how the state can make strategic investments to support them.
- **Local:** Understand how the library compares to its peers and use that information to make the case for additional resources, programs, or services to keep the library's services up to date and relevant to community needs.

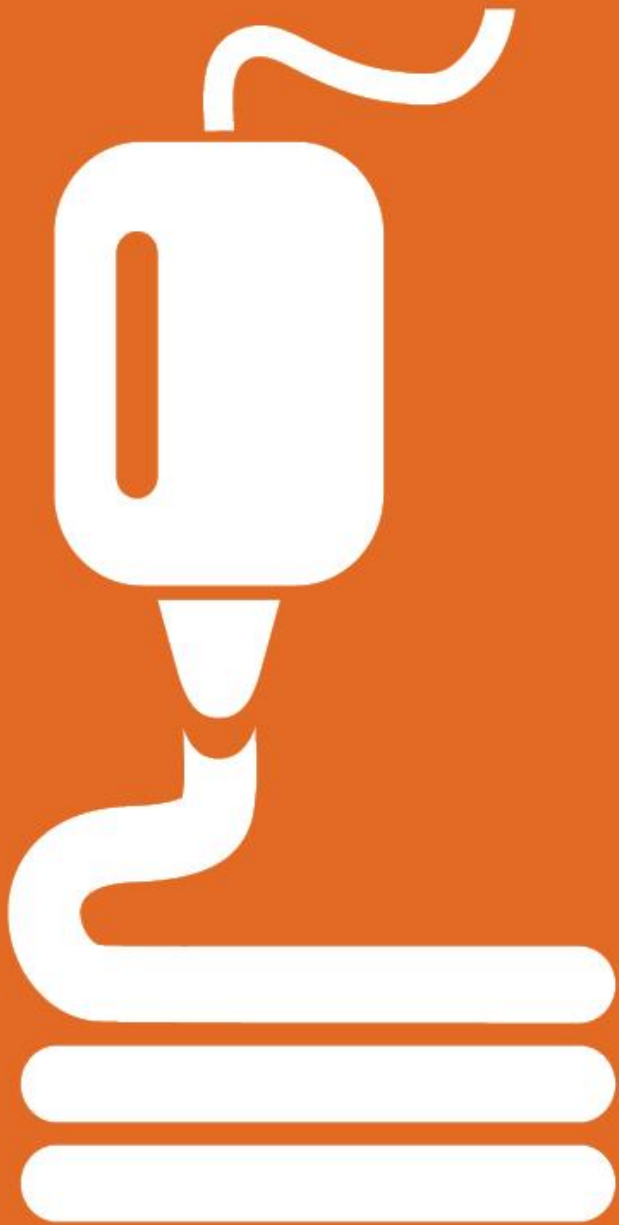
2023 SURVEY RESULTS

Sara Goek

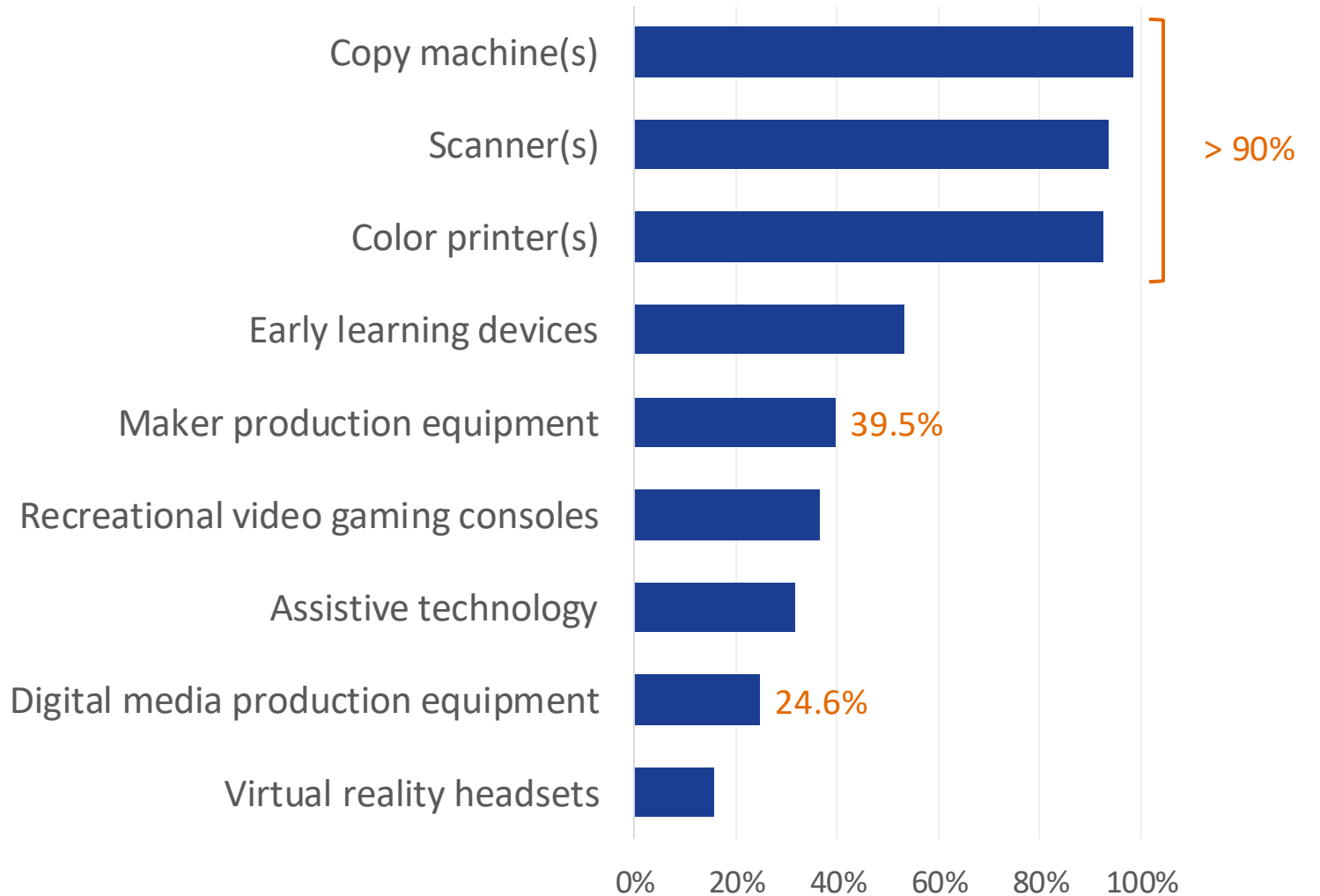


Key Findings

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| <p>Almost half (47%) of libraries offer hotspots for checkout</p> | <p>A quarter of libraries have digital media production equipment and a third have maker equipment</p> | <p>95% of public libraries offer some kind of formal or informal digital literacy training</p> | <p>95% of libraries offer e-books and/or e-audio books and 58% offer streaming and downloadable media</p> | <p>Subscription costs or payment terms are the top factor influencing libraries' ability to offer digital content</p> |



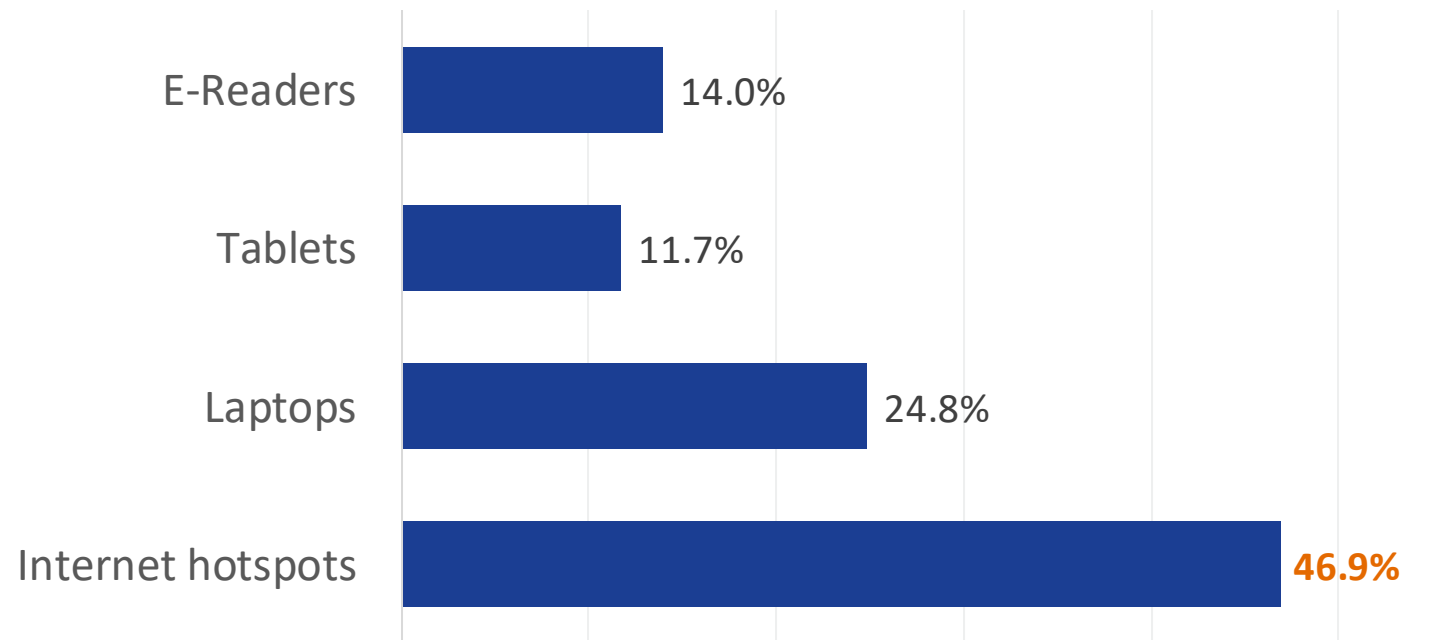
On-Site Technology





Technology Lending

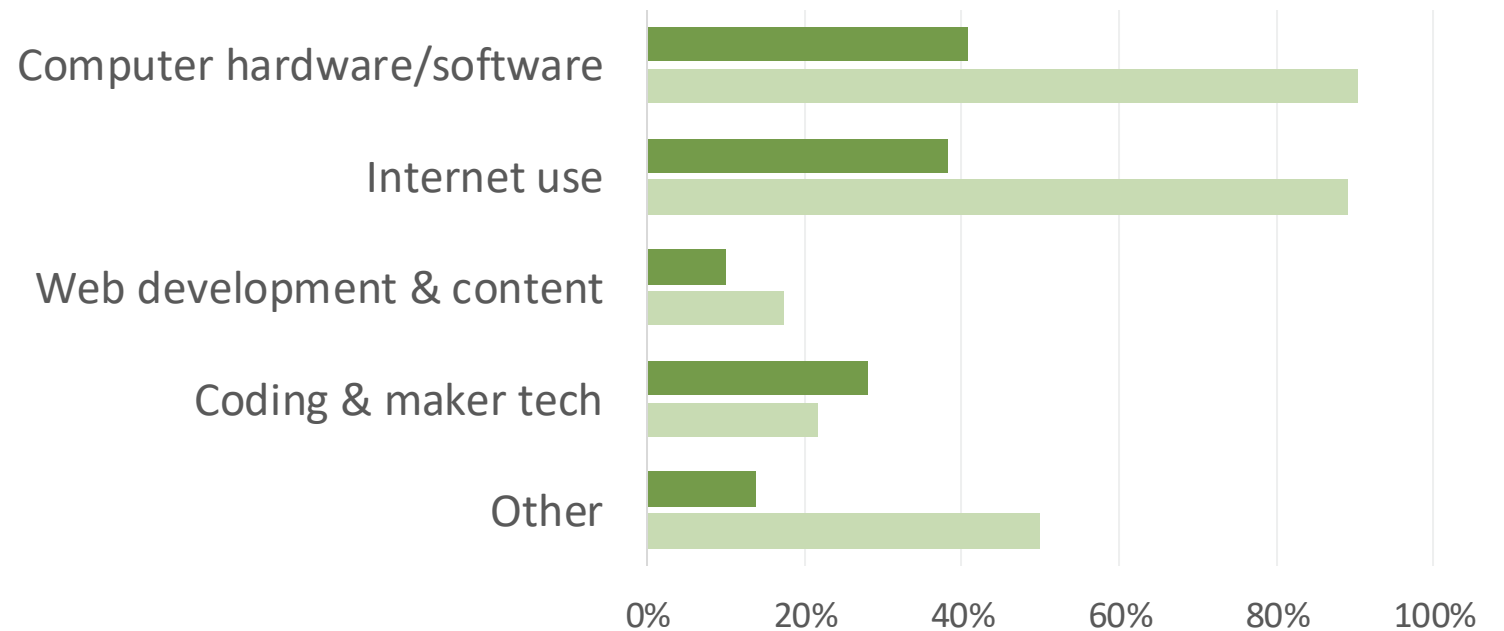
Almost half of public libraries offered **internet hotspots** for checkout in 2023, compared to one-third in 2020.





Digital Literacy

95.3% of all public libraries offered **formal** and/or **informal** of digital literacy programming or training in 2023.



Infrastructure

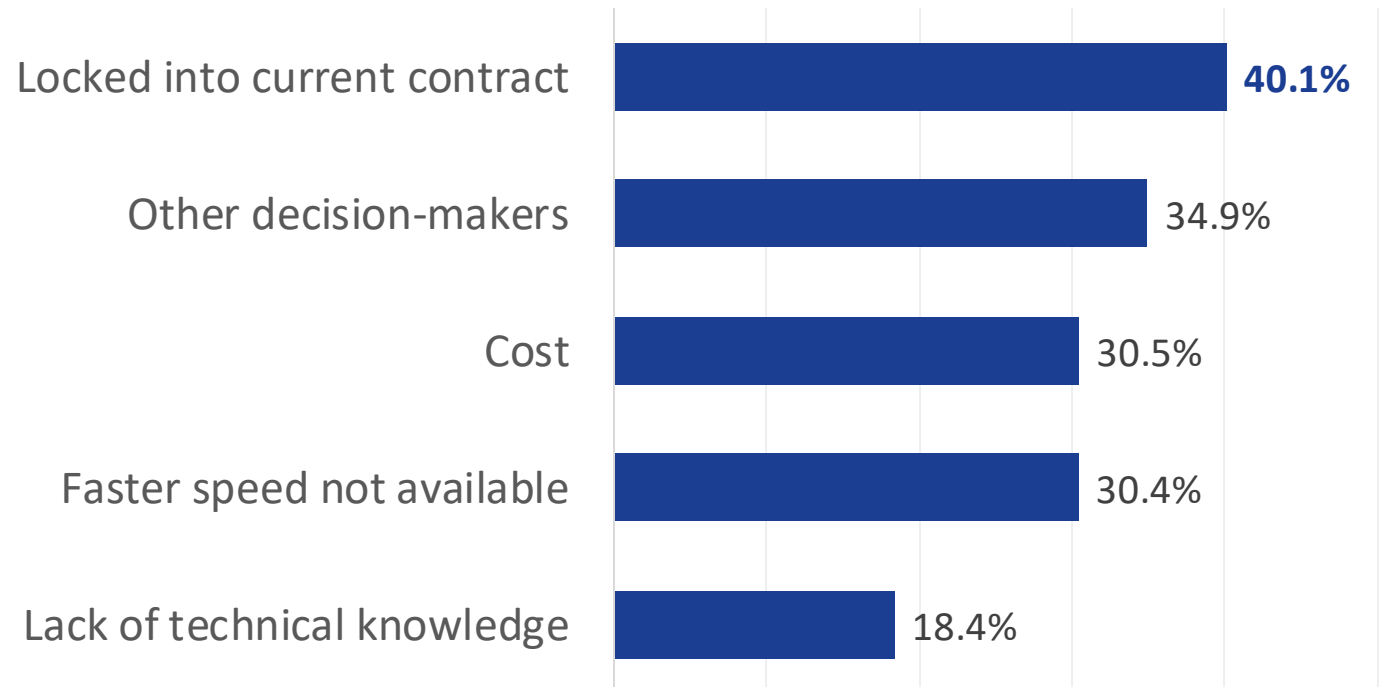
As of March 2024, the FCC definition of broadband is a minimum speed of 100 Mbps download and 20 Mbps upload.



28.4% of libraries subscribe to internet connections that do not meet that federal standard for broadband.

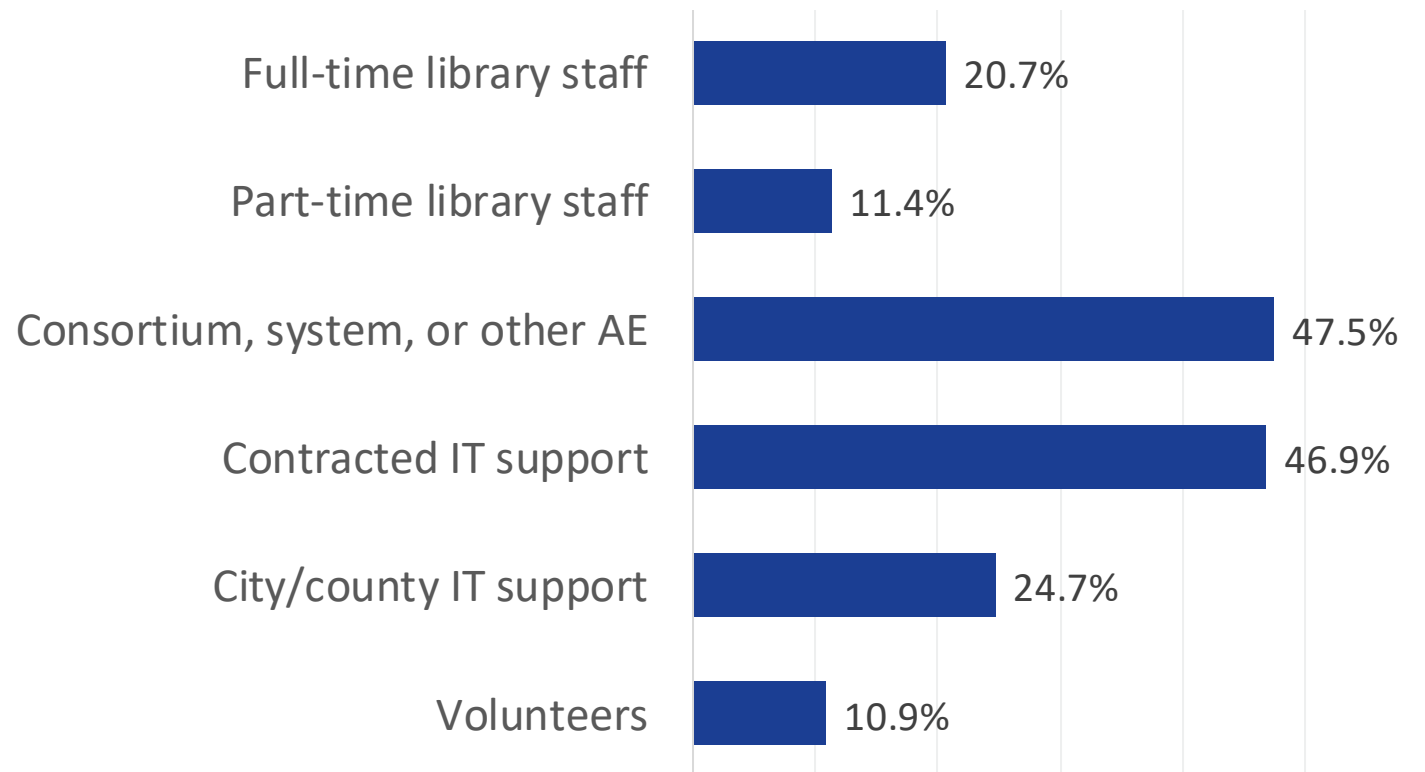
Bandwidth

40.8% of libraries upgraded their bandwidth in the last two years. Factors affecting libraries' ability to increase broadband connectivity:



IT Support Staff

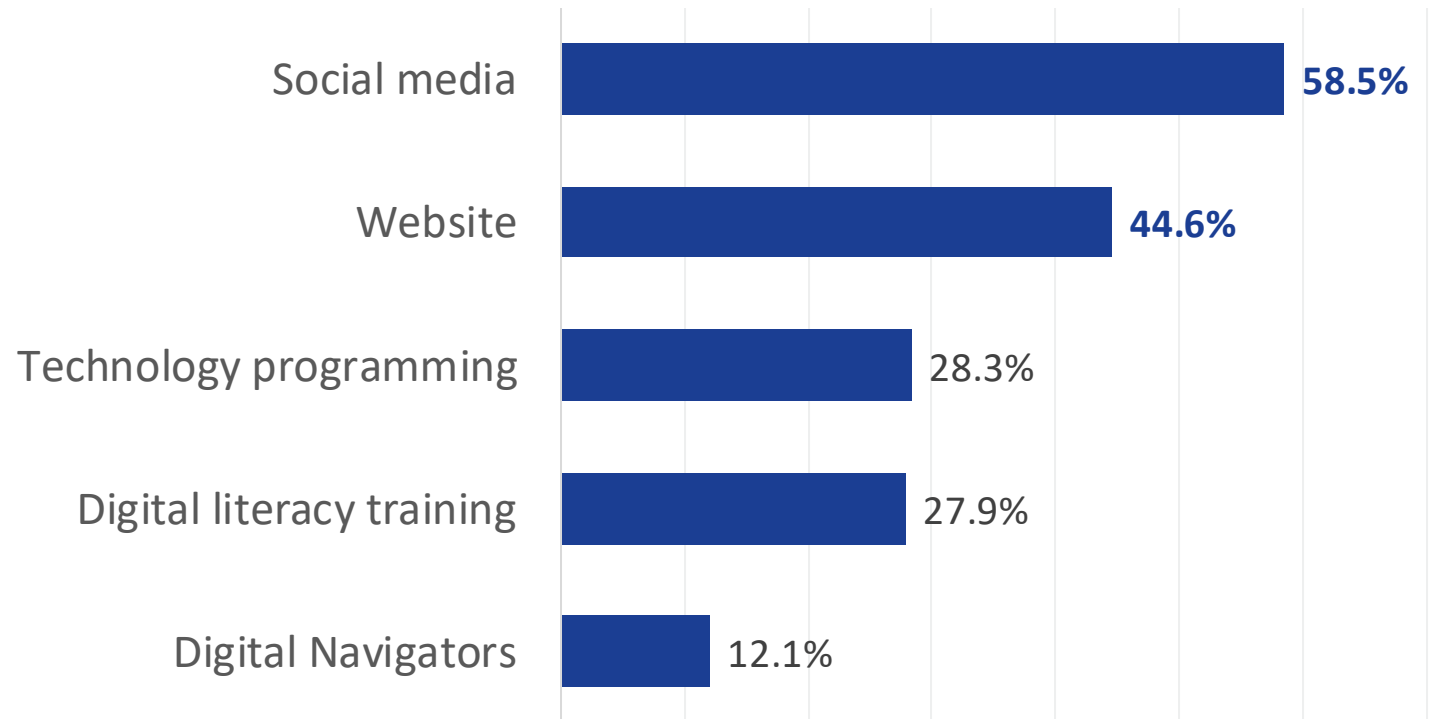
Only 3.3% of libraries have no IT support staff of any type





Staff Roles

More than half of public libraries have staff dedicated to **social media** and almost half have staff for **website** development.



Emerging Trends and Challenges

New tech and trends

- AI
- Virtual reality
- Content creation and maker technologies
- Partnerships and grant funds

Challenges

- Limited staff capacity
- Insufficient funding or resources
- Reaching underserved populations
- Lack of staff expertise or training
- Technological and spatial barriers

TAKING ACTION

Katina Jones





Results for Action: Hotspot Lending

46.9% of public libraries circulate internet hotspots for offsite use by patrons.



Results for Action:

Hotspot Lending

Why it matters:

- 8.8% of all households have no internet subscription
 - *24.7% with annual incomes >\$20,000 are without a subscription*
- Fixed broadband not deployed to 7% of the population
 - *people in rural and Tribal areas more likely to lack broadband*

Resources:

- “How to Hotspot” Guide
- “Hotspot Playbook”
- Federal Funding for Digital Equity Initiatives



Results for Action: **Upskilling Staff**

27% of respondents identify staff training and keeping up with technology as a challenge.



Results for Action:

Upskilling Staff

In Practice:

- State Library Administrative Agencies prioritize professional development and training
- Local partnerships with national organizations to provide patron training

Resources:

- DigitalLearn
- *Applied Digital Skills or Skill Forward*



Spotlight: **Digital Navigators**

29.7% of libraries report that they offer a digital navigator program

Resources:

- National Digital Inclusion Alliance
- Urban Libraries Council



Spotlight: Digital Navigators

“...customers needed to feel safe, not judged; to be seen and not rushed; and to feel help is abundant, not scarce.”
Columbus Metropolitan Library

“People want help in the moment and that need cannot always be met...”
Manchester-by-the-Sea PL

“Developing a relationship of trust through repeated appointments is the key to unlocking patrons’ eagerness to learn and explore.”
Smyth County Public Library



Spotlight: **Data in Action**

Congress and Other Legislators

- *IMLS and local relief funds*
- *LSTA and WIOA reauthorization*

Federal Agencies and Policymakers

- *E-rate: Learn Without Limits, hotspots, cybersecurity*
- *Libraries vital to digital equity work*

National and Local Media

NEXT STEPS



2023 Technology Survey: Act Now

- Are you engaged with your state's digital equity planning?
<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/broadband>
- What **free** digital skills training tools are you offering patrons or staff?
<https://digitallearn.org> | <https://partnerships.edx.org/verizon>
<https://grow.google/applied-digital-skills/>
- What do you know about the current state of internet access in your community?
- Who are your partners or potential funders to support your community's technology needs?



LIBRARY METRICS AND TRENDS

The newest tool for data-driven planning
and advocacy in libraries

librarybenchmark.org

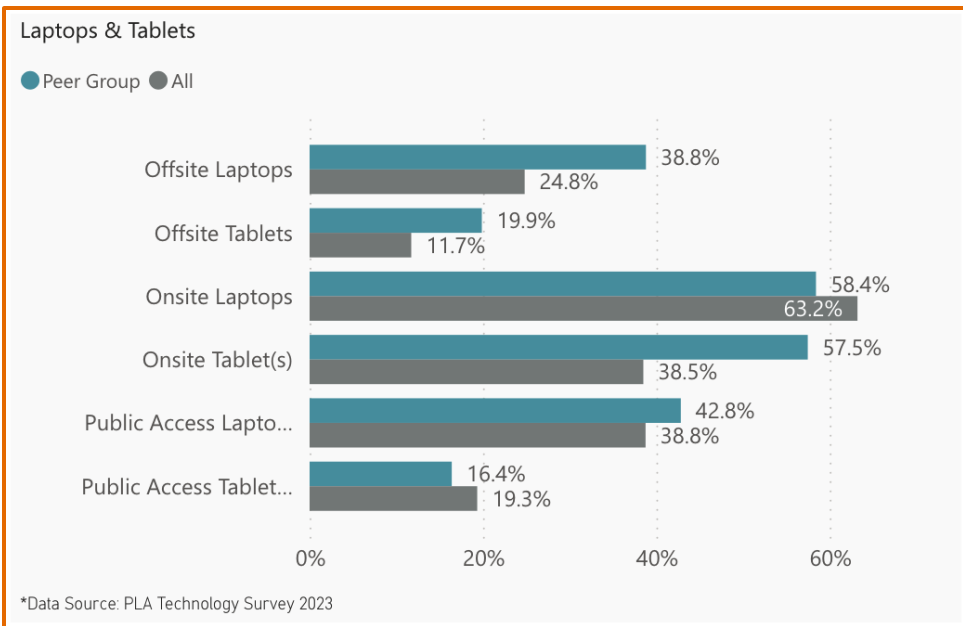
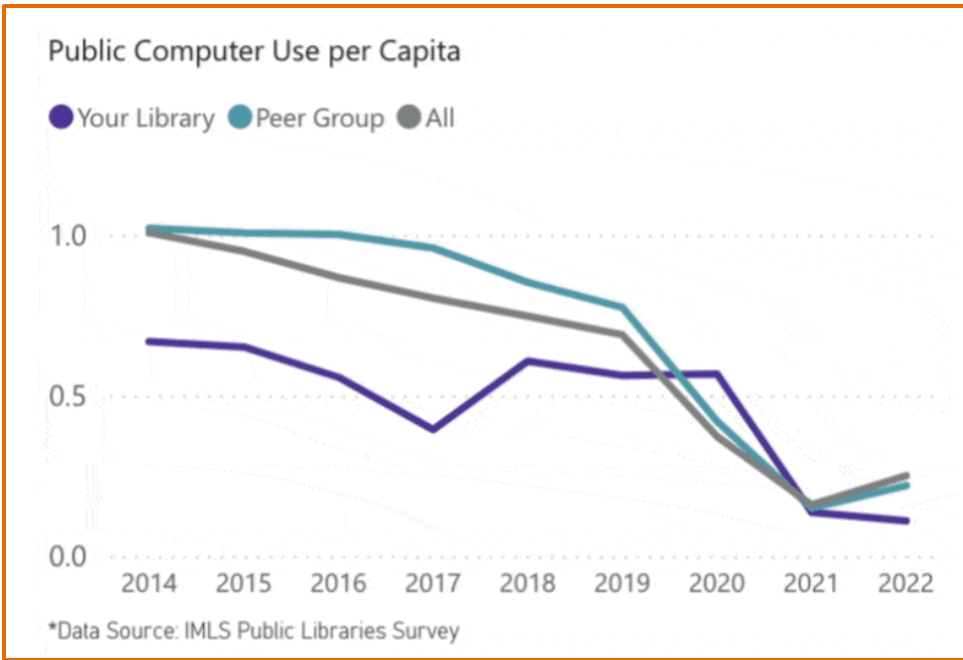


Email: plabenchmark@ala.org

Benchmark: Library Metrics and Trends

Data available includes:

- PLA annual topical surveys
- IMLS Public Libraries Survey
- Census Bureau's American Community Survey
- Public Library Data Service (historic data)



Exploring Results

What does the digital divide look like in my community and how does the library address **technology** needs?

Census data →

Percentage of households with broadband

Percentage of households with computers

IMLS PLS data →

Library computers and Wi-Fi

Library devices for checkout

PLA data →

Technology training

Does the library's **staffing** align with community needs?

Population

Ages: children, teens, adults, senior citizens

Library visits

Program attendance

FTE per capita

Numbers of staff

Staff roles

2024 Staff Survey

- Survey **opens in September** and closes in mid-December
- Printed invitation mailed to the library director and email invitations sent to Benchmark contacts
- Find it on the “Surveys” page in your library’s Benchmark account at librarybenchmark.org
- Need help? Email plabenchmark@ala.org

THANK YOU!

Questions? Email plabenchmark@ala.org

