

***Without a Net: Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide*, by Jessamyn C. West. Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 258 pp, \$40.00, ISBN 978-1598844535**

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Computer skills are not a luxury. Across the United States, tax forms, unemployment assistance, and other vital government services are increasingly available only online. Despite its ubiquity, many American adults do not use the Internet at all. In the ambitious book *Without a Net: Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide*, Jessamyn West explains why this digital divide exists and what libraries can do to bridge the gap.

West begins by describing her twenty years of experience teaching technology to novices. She contextualizes the needs of her patrons in rural Vermont with longitudinal data about nationwide technological adoption. Others have analyzed the digital divide in specific philosophical, political, and sociological contexts, but West focuses on what librarians need to know to provide excellent services to technology-averse patrons. West's analysis provides an excellent groundwork for library advocacy as it relates to technological literacy.

The centerpiece of the text is a toolbox of technological pedagogy for librarians. West identifies the characteristics and motivations of library-teachers, technology novices, and technology companies. Subsequent chapters address various types of computer skills, from using a mouse to surfing the Internet. West clearly identifies discrete skills, explains their context, suggests concrete teaching techniques, and illustrates each section with examples from her own experience. Online tools and resources are referenced throughout, with a helpful appendix organized by topic. In addition, West has compiled a companion website with an annotated bibliography, a list of web resources, and links to her own handouts and presentations.

As with any printed book about digital topics, the data and references are already dated. Readers should be aware that a few of the web-based tools West refers to have undergone significant changes or disappeared completely (Google, Google Labs). More recent data from Pew Research Center, the U.S. Census Bureau, and other government agencies should be consulted by those considering advocacy. The book's companion website includes links to facilitate further research.

West's tone is chatty and accessible, though the casual language occasionally impedes clarity. The text lacks focus – tangents are frequent and lengthy – but clear chapter headings and a solid index are helpful reference tools. Academic and special librarians may prefer to consult library science textbooks or scholarly articles for pedagogy advice tailored to their needs.

This book is an essential text for public librarians, especially new librarians and those who did not receive training in pedagogy during library school. Librarians that work with technology novices or underserved populations will benefit from West's simple explanations of complex technologies. The book may also help tech-savvy librarians and digital natives relate to and design services for technology-averse patrons. For the technology-averse librarians among us, the book can serve as a primer. The text will truly help librarians bridge the digital divide, leaving neither librarian nor patron without a net.