



Project Title: Public Libraries and the Internet: Study Results and Findings
Investigator(s): Dr. Charles R. McClure
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U.S. Public libraries began interacting with and using the Internet in the early 1990s. Since 1994, there have been eight studies conducted that track the level of involvement, key issues, trends, and other aspects of public library Internet use. The studies explored issues such as:

- Public library Internet connectivity;
- Public Internet access workstation availability;
- Internet connectivity bandwidth;
- Internet-based service and resource availability (e.g., databases, training, digital reference);
- User training provision;
- Costs and issues associated with Internet connectivity (e.g., funding for technology infrastructure, e-rate, maintenance and upgrades of technology, staff skills requirements); and
- Community impacts and benefits to Internet access.

As the context of public library Internet connectivity changes, so too does the nature of the survey. The study continues to produce, however, important longitudinal data regarding the level of public library involvement with and use of the Internet.

The previous survey studies also included case studies which explored successfully networked public libraries (SNPL). In particular, the case studies explored:

- Visions of success: To better define what a SNPL is based on the experience of the State Libraries and the SNPLs visited. To develop a preliminary national check list and catalog that better defines a SNPL by infrastructure needed, network services offered within the library and network services offered remotely via the library's web site.
- Snapshots of success: To provide snapshots of the strategies used by the libraries visited to become SNPLs. Can these SNPLs' experience assist other public libraries?
- Measures that matter: To identify measures that the SNPLs visited found helpful when managing and valuing networked resources and services.



- **Advocacy:** To identify strategies used by SNPLs when advocating locally for continued public library and networked services' support.
- **Sustainable Funding:** To better understand the current state of SNPLs' efforts to obtain sustainable funding for networked services. What types of support do SNPLs need? Have public libraries found ways to generate new, sustaining revenue due to their success in providing network services to their communities?
- **Role of external partners:** To better understand the role of external partners in supporting SNPLs with particular attention focused on the role of State Libraries. Are there types of support that are being offered or ought to be offered at the local, state or national levels to assist public libraries in becoming successfully networked?
- **Issues:** To summarize the key issues currently being faced by the SNPLs visited.
- **Next steps:** To identify the next steps that the SNPLs visited plan.

Together, the survey and case site data provide substantial information regarding public library Internet connectivity and the issues associated with maintaining and enhancing public library public access computing and Internet services.

ALA Survey