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Digital Literacy and Libraries: Insights from a Tutor-Facilitated Learning Model

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https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/onlinenorthwest/2013/Presentations/7

Digital Literacy & Libraries

Insights from a Tutor-Facilitated Learning Model

Kimberly Pendell, Social Sciences Librarian, Portland State University
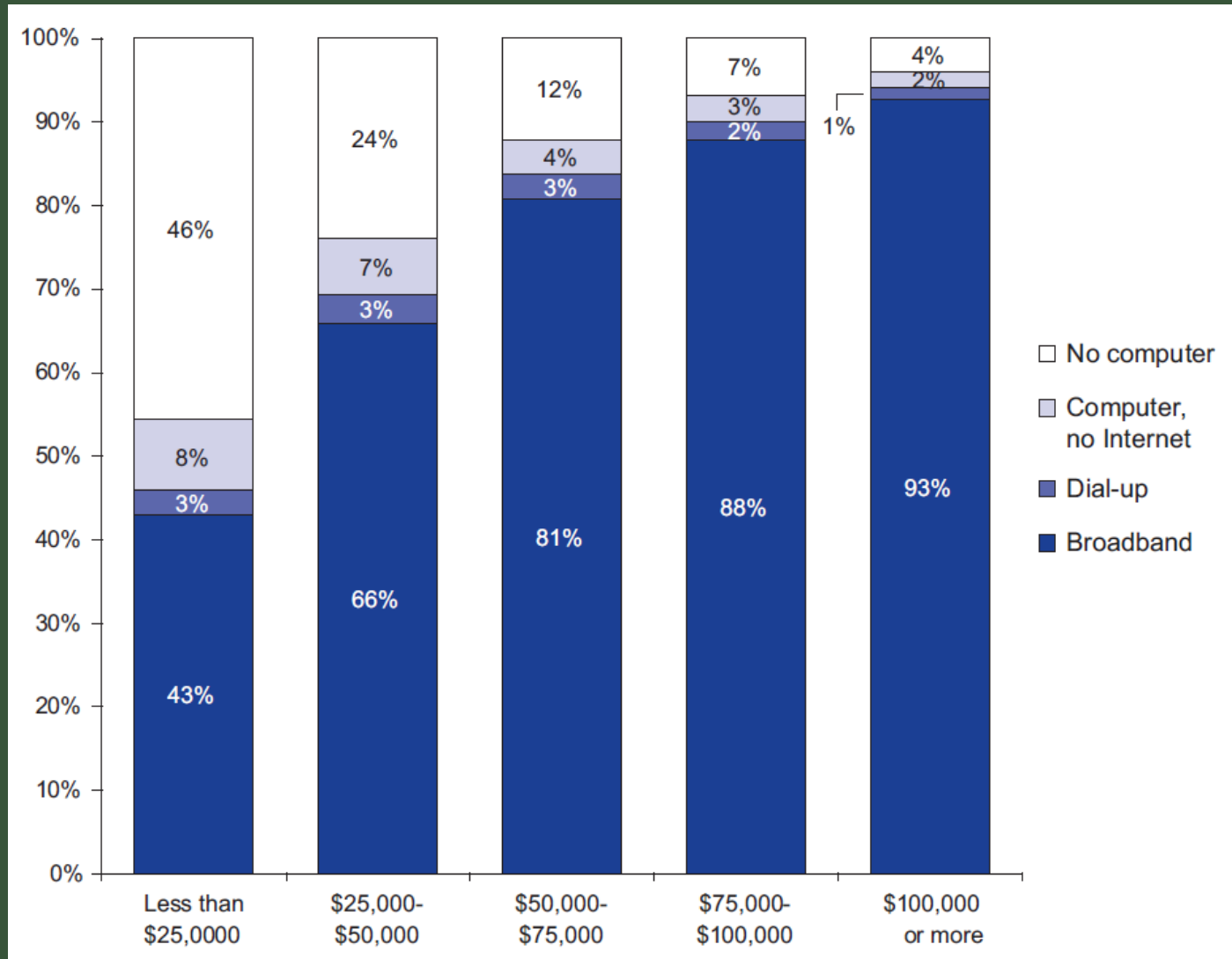Elizabeth Withers, PhD Candidate in Sociology, Portland State University

Introduction

Outline

- Digital literacy overview
- Research background
- Research design
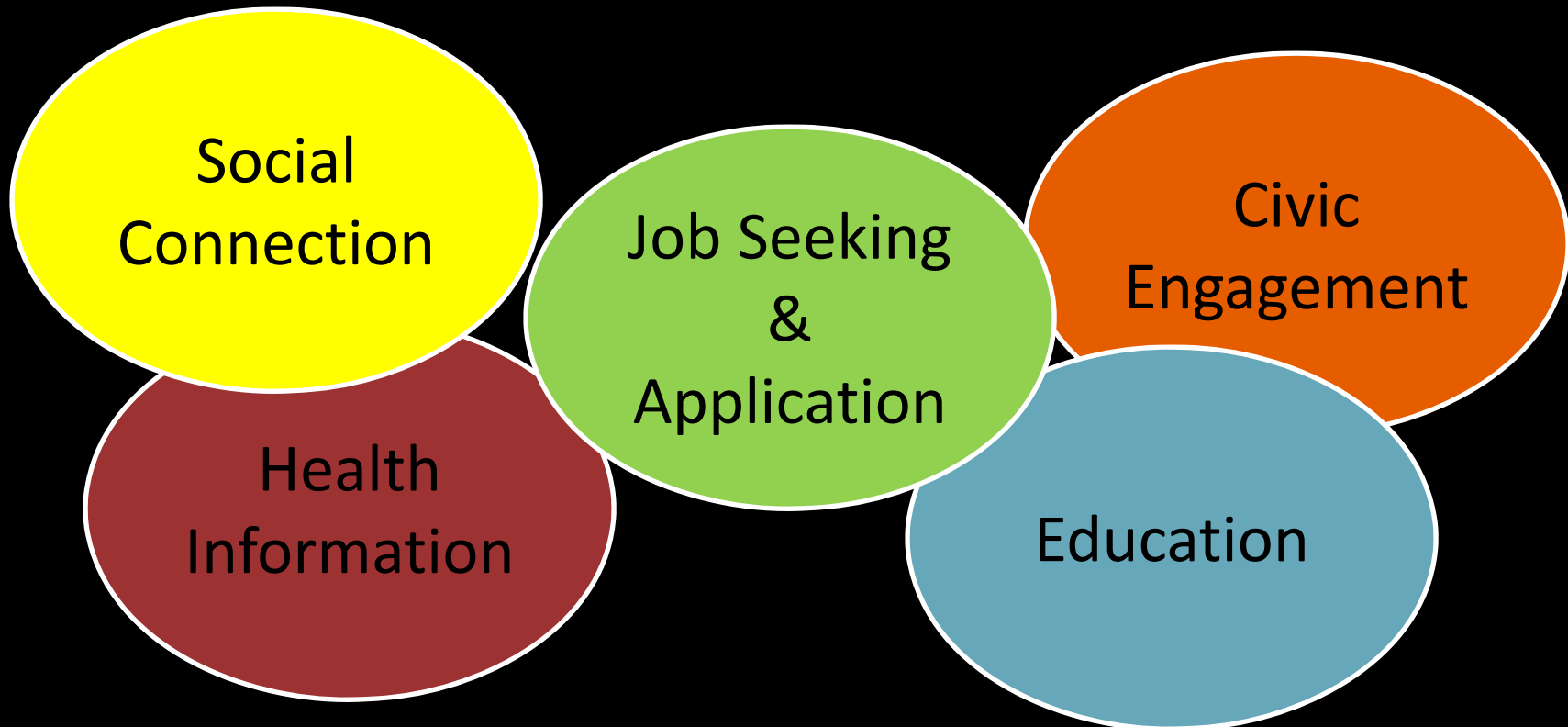- Preliminary insights
- Implications
- What's next?

Computer and Internet Use by Household Income, 2010 [1]

Digital Literacy and Inclusion

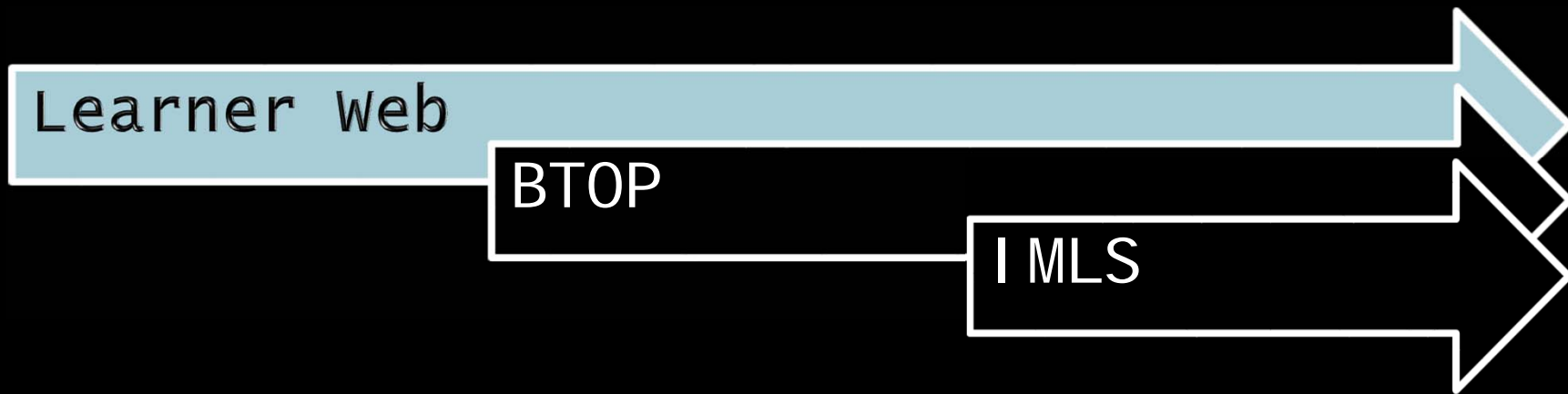- Digital literacy definition [2]

Social Connection

Job Seeking & Application

Civic Engagement

Health Information

Education

- Digital inclusion policy

Research Background

Learner Web

Learner Web

- Online learning platform developed at PSU
- Designed to assist adult learners with specific learning objectives
- The System is organized around Learning Plans
  - a set of steps structured to help learners achieve an identified goal

- Web-based software system that is implemented regionally
- Content is matched with online and community based resources
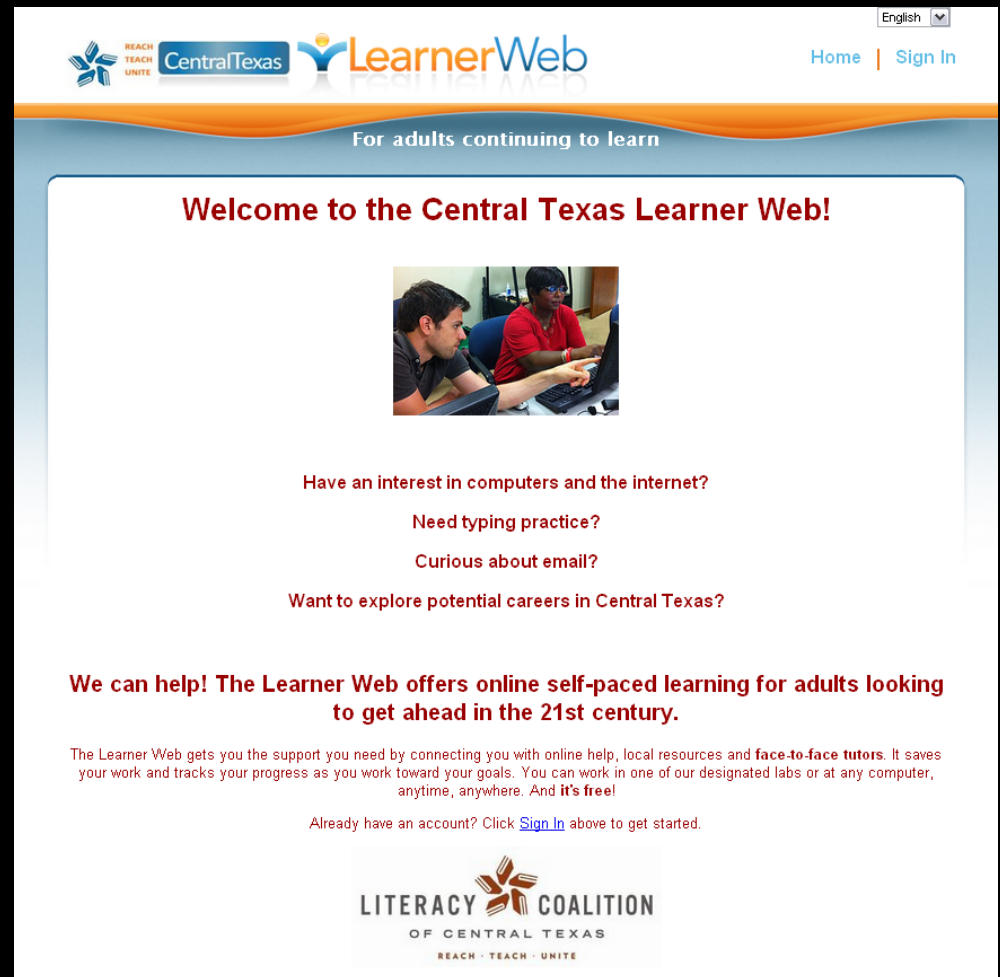
BTOP & PSU
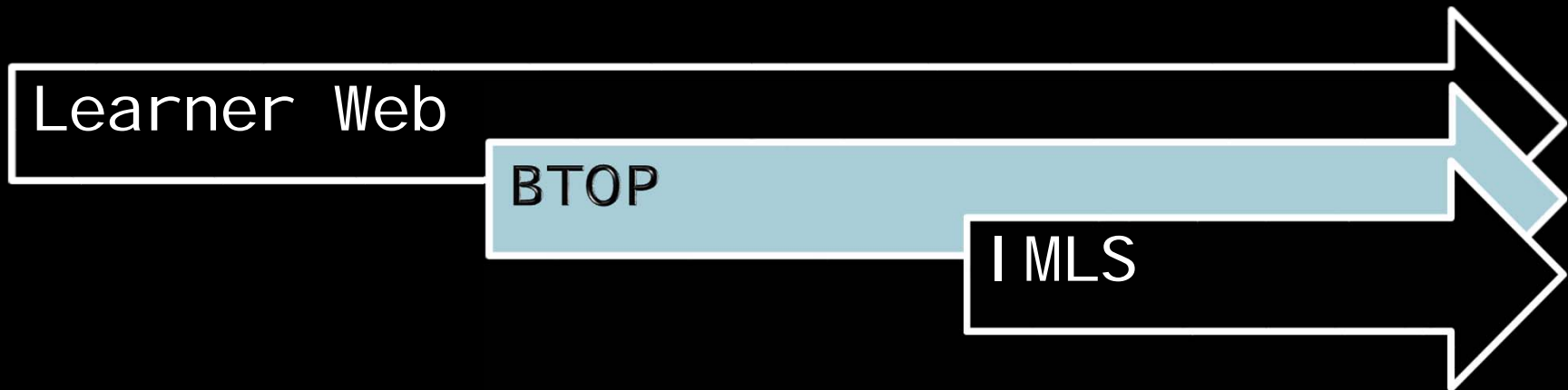
BTOP & PSU

- Portland State University has partnered with six coalitions: Minnesota, New York, Central and South Texas, New Orleans, Louisiana and Richmond, California.
  - Each of the partner coalitions working with underserved and high-need adults to complete <u>Learner Web</u> self-paced digital literacy Learning Plans tailored to individual needs.
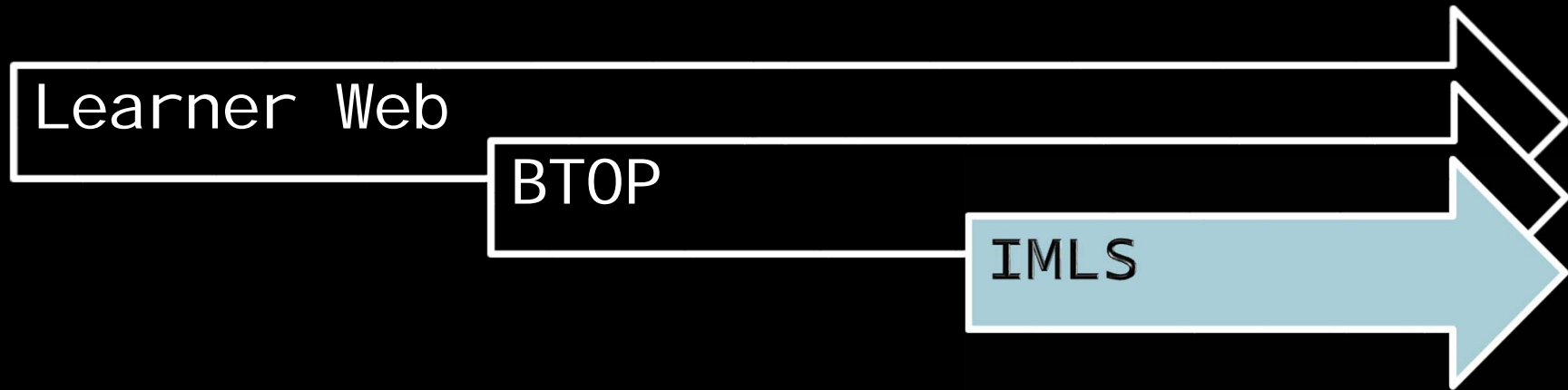
Learner Web & BTOP

- Self-paced learning plans
  - *digital literacy*
  - *broadband consumer education*
  - *introduction to career pathways*
- Content customized by partners in six regions: locally contextualized yet globally connected

IMLS Research

Learner Web

BTOP

IMLS

IMLS Research: Digital Literacy Acquisition

- Purpose of Research: Provide information about
  - Effective <u>learning and teaching strategies</u> for improving digital literacy among diverse economically vulnerable, under-served, and high-need adult populations.
  - The self-paced and tutor facilitated <u>learning process</u>

The Learning Model

- Self-paced learning in public computer labs
  - Fits some learners better than synchronized classes where everyone must progress at same pace
- Support from technology *and* tutors
  - Tutors trained by and familiar with technology
- Content customized to learners
  - Language
  - Background knowledge, skills, and interests

Research Design

IMLS Research Design

- Quantitative
  - LearnerWeb system data collected and analyzed for all three years of BTOP

- Qualitative
  - Fieldwork round 1: Stakeholder & tutor interviews, lab observation
  - Fieldwork round 2: Learner interviews, case studies, lab observation

Central Texas Fieldwork

- Austin Public Library
- Workforce Center
- Gonzales, TX Learning & Career Center

Preliminary Insights

Insights: Program Implementation

- Literacy Coalition of Central Texas
  - Volunteer coordinator
  - Hotline
  - Located in partner organization labs
  - Lab models vary

Insights: Learners

- Variety of motivations and skills
- Looking for a comfortable place to learn
- Engaging content and flexible structure
- Learner/Tutor relationship

"So, a lot of times I have someone come in panicky because they went to a job interview and they were asked about Excel and they don't—you know. So they need computer skills for the job now and especially if it's someone in their 40s or 50s who didn't get computers at school, then that's a special kind of learner because it's someone who wants advanced skills but needs basic skills…"

"…When she first came and did Internet research for example, she wanted directed lessons. She would be willing to look up an address and find a driving route, but she did not want to look up medical symptoms or job descriptions. She was very very wary, she thought the Internet was a dangerous place and now that she's relaxed, now she's willing to go out more on her own."

"We have had a mom who was absolutely determined—well her husband's boss had told her that her boy should go to A&M… she came to me and we did a bunch of the LearnerWeb…Internet research kinds of things. And that boy did end up going to A&M, but she looked at a ton of other college sites…I loved the point when she realized that when she saw the little arrow that there was a video she could click. It just was like—it just opened the world for her and then it became a choice as to where that boy applied to school."

Insights: Tutors

- Tutors employ a variety of teaching strategies
- Patience and encouragement, ability to relate to the learning process are key
- Tutor/learner relationship
- Tutoring is also a learning opportunity

"I used to try and sit with people too much. I used to be so available that one-- students were trying to please me and opposed to themselves and also they wouldn't roam around as much on their own, you know, they wanted more direction if I was right there by them."

"I think it's very good to reveal yourself learning…Like today when …I had so much trouble figuring out—where is that [browser] plug-in? In the past I would have put an out of order sign on that computer and just dealt with it later…. But now I think it's useful for the tutorees to see me banging around."

"He came fairly consistently to the workforce center for a couple of months or so and came in one morning and he said 'I'm not here to take the class I just want to let you know that I can't come any more I have a job, but I wanted to say thank you for helping me with this' and that just was really crazy to me that someone took the time to come at 8 o'clock in the morning just to say, 'I can't come any more, but thank you' which I was just like 'Wow, that totally made my day'."

Implications

Practical Implications

- Recruitment
  - Computer skills hotline
  - Scheduled time for new learners
- Successful volunteer tutors
  - Volunteer Coordinator
  - Tutor recognition
- Advantages of Learner Web platform
- Labs and computers
  - Access and maintenance

What's Next?

What Next?

- Research on tutor-facilitated self-paced digital literacy acquisition continues
- Research Applications Committee
- Connect2Compete/EveryoneOn
- ALA Digital Literacy Task Force recommendations

Questions?

Thank You!

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References

1. Economics and Statistics Administration, National Telecommunications and Information Administration (2011). *Exploring the Digital Nation: Computer and Internet Use at Home*. Retrieved from: http://www.ntia.doc.gov/files/ntia/publications/exploring_the_digital_nation_computer_and_internet_use_at_home_11092011.pdf

2. Digital Literacy Task Force. (2013). *Digital literacy, libraries, and public policy: Report of the Office for Information Technology Policy's Digital Literacy Task Force*. Retrieved from: http://www.districtdispatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/2012_OITP_digilitreport_1_22_13.pdf