

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mister Chairman. I'm Ann Joslin, State Librarian and director of the Idaho Commission for Libraries, a state agency established in 1901.

I appreciate the time to give you an overview of Commission activities this past year, and to highlight our support for K-12 education.

-  Libraries provide a wide range of resources and services to support the life skills needed to live, learn, grow, govern, work, and play in the 21st century.
-  Our mission is to help Idaho libraries build the capacity to better serve their clientele, and we do that in a variety of ways.
 -  We maintain a library of current online resources at LiLI.org available to Idahoans at a huge savings through our statewide contracts.
 -  We provide professional development opportunities – virtual, online, and in-person - for library staff.
 -  We develop, pilot, and scale library programs that serve all age groups and a wide range of needs.
 - Few Idaho libraries have the resources to create this depth and breadth of programming on their own.
 -  Our staff does the research & development, then packages the programs with public information and staff training  so local library staff can customize and implement them for their own communities.
-  We continue to leverage national and state initiatives that support our mission and require only moderate resources on our part.
 -  One example is “Smart Investing @ your Library” – a 2-year grant project bringing financial literacy resources and workshops to 9 public libraries in south central Idaho.
 -  Partners include the College of Southern Idaho, Idaho Financial Literacy Coalition, Department of Finance, and a number of local organizations.
 -  The curriculum from U of I Extension covers topics such as refinancing a mortgage, saving for college, getting out of debt, and identity theft.

- 📄 Another example is the new Idaho Afterschool Network.
 - Led by the Mountain States Group, newly re-named Jannus, we join the University of Idaho 4-H, Department of Education, Boise Parks & Recreation, Department of Health & Welfare, and Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health as partners.
 - With a 3-year grant from CS Mott Foundation, the partners are creating a networking structure to connect all of Idaho’s afterschool programs, to ensure that youth in Idaho have access to high quality out-of-school time programs.

📄 We also conduct periodic surveys to assess libraries’ needs. Last fall we surveyed public libraries on the state of their broadband access. 125 library locations responded, an 86.8% response rate. Key findings include that:

📄 Our public libraries have increased their Internet bandwidth over the past 5 years – thanks in large part to our “online @ your library” grant and matching funds from the 📄 Gates Foundation - but still fall far short of the new FCC definition of broadband and national targets for public libraries.

📄 We also found that monthly Internet costs vary widely, with an average of \$59.13 per Mbps per month, ranging from \$0.22 to \$453.02 per Mbps per month.

- Idaho residential BB deployment significantly lags the national average, particularly in rural areas. Our public libraries play a big role in filling that gap;

📄 70% report they are the only source of free broadband in their communities, and they are providing a wide range of digital information and services to their residents.

📄 As a result, we continue to explore ways to meet the growing need for adequate, affordable broadband in our public libraries, including supplemental funding, testing use of TV whitespace, and tapping into 4G networks.

📄 IDAHO LEARNS

We enthusiastically embrace the Governor’s theme in the state of the state address: Idaho learns. 📄 After all, school, public, and academic libraries are all about learning - life-long learning from cradle to grave.

📄 Rapid changes in technology touch every aspect of our lives – and they are shifting expectations and expanding roles for Idaho’s libraries.

- The increasing proliferation of digital information and services presents both challenges and opportunities for librarians to define how they may best contribute to society in the digital age.
- 📖 Librarians are being asked for much more complex interactions – not “what’s the height of the Empire State Building?” but how to do a job interview via Skype, or what to do when Google gives you 30,001 hits.
- While our librarians and library services are evolving in the context of the digital age, this evolution is not universally recognized by local, state, or national policy makers.

Here are examples of how Idahoans learn through their libraries.

EARLY LITERACY

The obvious place to start is with 📖 early literacy. As the Governor stated:

“Reading at grade level by the end of third grade is a major foundation for a student’s education. [It enables their success in every other subject area.] We absolutely must prepare our students by doing more to achieve this critical benchmark. Anything less is simply unacceptable.”

- 📖 Read to Me, our early and family literacy program has - for 18 years - provided an array of program elements 📖 for public and school libraries and their local partners to adapt to meet their specific early literacy needs.
- With our long track record in early literacy, we support the Governor’s call for education partners to develop a comprehensive plan for improving literacy, and we want to be at the table to contribute to that work.
- 📖 A current focus of RTM is increasing access to books for young children who are unlikely to have books at home.
 - Research shows that when kids have access to books, they read them. The more they read, the more proficient they become, and all aspects of literacy improve.
 - 📖 In addition, access to books is critical to help reduce “the summer slide” when some children lose up to 3 months of the reading skills they gained during the school year.
- 📖 Unfortunately, our Elementary School Library Study showed that most school districts have inadequate or non-existent budgets to provide quality books for their students to read - either at school or to take home.
 - 62% reported annual book budgets of under \$1,000.

- 28% had budgets of under \$100 – which, at an average price of \$19, would purchase a maximum of 5 new books a year - for the entire elementary school.

Furthermore, with 50% of Idaho school children qualifying for free or reduced lunch, many are not likely to have age-appropriate reading material at home either.

- Without convenient access to reading materials, many Idaho children don't have the opportunity to become proficient readers.

We're increasing access to 📖 books for young children and helping them learn through RTM MINI-GRANTS.

We began offering small grants to elementary school libraries for books for K-2nd graders in FY13.

- In the first 2 years of the grant program, we received 156 applications totaling \$599,000. With only \$100,000 each year, we could fund only 1/3 of the requests (52).

📖 For the current year, the Legislature approved a 1-time increase of \$100,000. We received 80 applications totaling \$314,000, so could fund only 49 of them.

📖 All grant funds must be spent on books, with at least 40% on non-fiction to help introduce K-2nd graders to STEAM concepts – science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

📖 The school library must allow kids to check out the books to take home.

- Providing access to hundreds of age-appropriate quality books through school libraries – the school's vocabulary vault - is one of THE MOST cost-effective strategies to increase literacy skills.

📖 And grant reports show that the kids, their parents, and the teachers are all delighted with the new books. Librarians reported that:

- "Teacher use of library resources has soared."
- "Most of [the books] are hardly ever here as they go back out before I can even get them put away."
- "Our biggest success so far is the excitement of the students. They love that they have so many choices and get to take books home."

📖 Because of the dire need for quality books in elementary school libraries, we requested, and the Governor has recommended, making this year's 1-time increase be made permanent for a total of \$200,000 annually.

Yet another way we're getting more books into the hands of young children is through SUMMER READING OUTREACH PROGRAMS - to help minimize the summer slide.

- 📖 Participation has been well over 90,000 children each of the past two years through both in-house library programs and off-site outreach programs.
- 📖 For example, this year, in partnership with the Idaho FoodBank and Department of Education, we expanded "Literacy in the Park" to more public libraries around the state, and coordinated 10 VISTA Summer Associates to staff the weekly activities in the parks.

A third way we're extending RTM and increasing access to books for young children is through

- 📖 a 3-year Grade Level Reading grant, "Books to Go."
 - This project makes it easy for busy parents to pick up books along with their kids on the way home from work.
 - 📖 A total of 75 libraries and over 200 partner sites throughout the state have participated to date.
 - 📖 We've sent 391 bins with over 43,000 high-quality books to libraries for over 7,000 children.
 - 📖 As a result, 86% of 1,300 participating parents reported an increase in the amount of reading done in their homes.
 - 📖 Ongoing RTM program evaluations document that our partnerships with public and school libraries are both effective and efficient in delivering early literacy services to families.
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TWEENS & TEENS

- 📖 An increasing number of Idaho teens and tweens are learning through public and school libraries by participating in a variety of library programs, such as Teen Tech Week, Teen Read Week, and Letters About Literature.
- 📖 Our MakeIt @ the Library project is developing maker spaces in libraries, with a focus on expanding their teen programming in STEAM.
- 📖 To date, we've provided teams from 11 public libraries with state-of-the-art robotics, e-textiles, 3-D printers, and engineering resources—along with extensive training to ensure the tools were successfully integrated into library programming.
- 📖 Eight more public and 2 school libraries just joined the cohort and teams are attending training this week at the Commission - 📖 focusing on understanding the maker culture and design thinking, skills in basic circuitry, coding, and electronic textiles.

- Later trainings will focus on robotics, 3-D design and 3-D printing.
 - In addition, four of our original pilot libraries will share knowledge gained over the past two years through hands-on training workshops with schools, afterschool centers, and other local organizations.
-  The Director of the Institute of Museum & Library Services, recently called Idaho's makerspace project . . . a leading example of how states can support innovative STEAM programming. . .

While “Makelt @ the Library” focuses on teens, participating libraries are finding that their makerspaces are attracting entire families to come and create together – from sewing and needle point to robotics, soldering, and other STEAM projects.

-  The Boundary County Library District is one example of how makerspaces are creating a ripple effect in Idaho communities.
- The library is developing a community-centered and -supported Fab Lab, one of an international network of Fab Labs affiliated with the MIT Center for Bits & Atoms.
-  They are planning 4 components: a learning lab, a digital lab for computer-assisted design, a physical lab with 3-D printers and other tools, and a digital media lab for creating music and videos – all open for use by the public.

IDAHO WORKERS

-  Idaho workers are learning through their public libraries, which support workforce development in a variety of ways, many dependent on adequate broadband:
- Free access to computers and the Internet to research job opportunities, produce resumes, and apply for jobs online,
-  Access to LearningExpress Library for practice tests for certifications and college entrance exams, and to online classes to build specific skills, and
-  Virtual access to Dept of Labor services without driving 40 miles 1-way to a 1-Stop.
-  We look forward to strengthening the role libraries play in workforce development as we work with DOL and other partners to plan for implementation of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act passed by Congress last year.

IRP COMMUNITY REVIEWS

- 📄 Idaho communities are learning that their public libraries – we have 144 of them - are valuable community resources for formal and informal learning, and are contributing to local sustainability.
 - 📄 The Community Reviews conducted by the Idaho Rural Partnership document that value. Last year IRP conducted a meta-analysis of 26 community reviews.
 - 📄 Out of 67 community values across all of the reviews, fire protection ranked as most valued, with an average score of 4.01. Second in importance, right behind fire protection with an average score of 3.99, was the quality of the public library.
 - 📄 IRP's meta-analysis shows that public libraries are contributing to rural sustainability by helping meet needs that are common across many rural communities.
 - From Aberdeen and American Falls, Gooding and Jerome, Kamiah and Kooskia, and from Emmett to Soda Springs, Idahoans recognize the considerable value a public library brings to their rural community in the digital age.
 - 📄 An example of the expanding roles of public libraries is East Bonner County Library District.
 - Its success has resulted in the Library District purchasing property adjacent to the library in Sandpoint that will enable them to have permanent space for maker projects and to further expand their programming for the community.
 - 📄 The library director told us:

“We had no idea that people involved with car injector clubs, quilters, sheet metal contractors, and retired teachers . . . would be volunteering to help the younger segment of the community learn about their areas of interest and expertise. . . . They want to give kids . . . an edge up to stay here and be part of our community long-term.”

 - With contributions like these, it's no wonder Idaho communities value their libraries so highly.
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CLOSING

Last year I came across this thought-provoking quote by Eric Hoffer, and I find it even more relevant today:

 “In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.”

Idaho libraries traditionally and in the 21st century are all about learning.

 [a library is a place . . . slide] Questions?

 Introduce Staci Shaw, RTM Project Coordinator, to talk about Summer Reading Loss

 Thank you
