EXPLORING MINNESOTA’S DIGITAL DIVIDE

BEFORE WE BEGIN: WHERE ARE WE COMING FROM?
- What does Technology represent to you?

CONSIDERING OTHER PERSPECTIVES
- If you are a 45-year old Mexican immigrant mother of two high school students, who does not own (and has never owned) a computer, what might Technology represent to you?

CONSTRUCTING UNDERSTANDING
- Answer the questions with what you know currently.
- Leave space to revise or add to your answers at the end of the afternoon.

IN THE 90S AND EARLY 2000S:
- “Digital Divide” described a clear division between those who had access to the Internet and those who did not.

TODAY IT’S MESSIER.
- Haves
- Have Nots
- Sorta Haves
- Have Nots
**Layers of Internet Equality**

- **Peak access**
- **Literacy**
- **Limits**
- **Obstacles to Effective Use**
- **No Access**

**Obstacles to Effective Use**

Most Minnesotans (91%) have some access to the Internet (mainly at home, work, or a library). However, they may encounter significant obstacles to using their Internet connection to fully participate in the activities that matter to them. They may have a slow connection, old computers, or spotty cell phone connectivity; websites may be blocked (e.g. at work or school); time limits may be imposed; hours may be limited; they may be barred from using the Internet for personal reasons at work, or there may be little or no technical assistance available should something go wrong.

**Digital Literacy Limits**

Other Minnesotans have full, unrestricted Internet access but lack the Digital Literacy skills to use it effectively. Their use of the Internet may be “shallow” – mainly email and search. They may fail to take full advantage of opportunities for online learning, social networking, creative expression, citizenship, entrepreneurship, etc. As parents, they may feel underprepared to guide their children’s use of Internet technologies. Children may use the Internet solely for entertainment, neglecting the educational opportunities it could afford them.

**Peak Access**

Many Minnesotans have full, unrestricted Internet access and the skills and knowledge to use it effectively. Their use of the Internet is rich and meaningful, contributing to their personal and professional lives. Making this level of access available to all Minnesotans is the goal.

**Internet Access (Anywhere)**

2010 Data*:
- 91% of Minnesotans access the Internet

**BUT:**
- Only 61% of Minnesotans earning less than $15,000 a year and 73% of Minnesotans earning $15,000 to $25,000 a year access the Internet

**Exploring the Data**

- Beyond low-income: Who are the “haves” and “have nots” in Minnesota today?
- www.connectmn.org/survey-results/residential
**Most likely to be among the “Have Nots”**

- Seniors
- Non-native speakers of English
- Rural residents
- Adults with less than a high school education
- Low-income adults
- Adults with disabilities

**Why not subscribe to broadband Internet?**

Minnesota:
- Lack of (perceived) relevance

Nationwide:
- Cost

**The Rise of Mobile**

Youth of all groups, plus many minority groups historically impacted by the Digital Divide are adopting mobile Internet at a rapid pace:
- Low-income adults
- African Americans
- Hispanic Americans

**The Rise of Mobile**

Nationwide, 31% of cell Internet users say they mostly go online with their phone
- About one third of these adults have no other Internet access

**Is your content mobile-friendly?**

"If your organization’s information is not available on a small screen, it’s not available at all to people who rely on their mobile phones for access. That’s likely to be young people, people with lower household incomes, and recent immigrants."

- Susannah Fox, *The Power of Mobile*, 2010

**Mobile is closing the divide, but**

- Mobile isn’t a full replacement for computer Internet access.
- Try doing this on your phone:
  - Job or college application
  - FAFSA application
  - Online courses
MOBILE FOR OUTREACH & EDUCATION

- Example: www.text4baby.org
- Sends free health-related text messages to expecting mothers and mothers of new babies.
- Demonstrated changes in behavior such as fewer missed doctor appointments or immunizations and better communication with doctors.

MOBILE HAS HUGE POTENTIAL:

- TABLE BRAINSTORM
- What could you do with text messaging in your program?

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN ADDRESSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE?

Secretary of Education Arne Duncan on the “Opportunity Gap”

ACCESS BUT WITH OBSTACLES:

- TYPICAL FOR SCHOOLS
- Arizona State University
- Professor James Paul Gee on the obstacles to digital inclusion in schools:

THINK – PAIR – SHARE

- To what extent are Minneapolis Public Schools the “places of opportunity” that Secretary Duncan describes?
- What obstacles or barriers to digital inclusion or digital literacy instruction do you see in your setting or confronting your clients?
- What steps can we take to address the fear problem that Professor Gee talks about?

THE WIDENING USAGE GAP

- Broadband users do more:
  - An average of 7 activities/day vs. 3 for dial-up users
- Mobile users do more:
  - Mobile Internet users are more likely to create & share content
**Usage Gap = Skills Gap**
- Those who do more become more technologically proficient, improving their skills more rapidly
- Those with no access or limited access fall farther behind

**Education is Key**
- Increasing access is crucial but not sufficient to close the Digital Divide.
- Digital literacy instruction for both children and parents is necessary to close the knowledge & skills gap.

**Where can adults get training?**
- Federal BTOP (Broadband Technology Opportunities) Grants are creating online and F2F programming throughout MN.
  - http://mnliteracy.org/services/learner-web
- “Every Community Online” free online training: http://www.connectmn.org/every-community-online
- Call, Text or Search the Adult Literacy Hotline to find classes: http://mnliteracy.org/hotline

**Computers & Connections for Low-Income Families**
- Comcast Internet Essentials: www.internetessentials.com
- Century Link Internet Basics: www.centurylink.com/home/internethbasics
- PCs for People: www.pcsforpeople.com
- Free Geek: freegeektwincities.org

**References**
- ConnectMN.org
- Edutopia.org
  - http://www.edutopia.org/digital-divide-technology-access-inclusion
- PBS.org – “Digital Nation”
  - http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/
- PewInternet.org