Libraries and Literacy in the 21st Century — Summary
April 2010

Leveraging the People’s University

More than just assets that are under-funded, Pennsylvania’s academic and public libraries are under-leveraged in the Commonwealth’s efforts to solve our state’s biggest problems. The common theme among most of these problems is illiteracy. A few facts:

Basic Literacy

- 13% of Pennsylvanians do not have the basic literacy skills needed to read a newspaper or a brochure. This percentage has not changed since 1992.
- Nearly 9 out of 10 juveniles in the court system are functionally illiterate.
- 50% of the nation’s unemployed youth age 16-21 are functional illiterates with virtually no prospects of obtaining good jobs.

Information Literacy

- Senior citizens are the fastest growing group of Internet users. They are also the most vulnerable to Internet fraud.
- 3 out of 4 job seekers now use the Internet to seek employment, in part because this is the only way to apply for many job opportunities.
- Despite significant growth in availability of broadband access to the Internet in U.S. homes, more than 25% of Americans do not have such access.

Civic Literacy

- Good readers make good citizens. Literary readers are more than twice as likely as non-readers to volunteer or do charity work.
- Only 50% of the state’s registered voters voted in the 2006 gubernatorial election.
- 84% of proficient adult readers voted in the 2000 presidential election compared with 53% of below-basic readers.

Health Literacy

- 70% of the health information on the Internet is inaccurate or misleading.
- Nearly half of all Pennsylvanians have difficulty understanding and using health information. 46% of Americans can’t understand prescription medicine labels.
- Nothing – not age, income, employment status, education, race or ethnicity affect health status more than literacy skills.

Economic and Financial Literacy

- 2 out of 5 adults give themselves a grade of C, D or F on their knowledge of personal finance.
- 2 out of 5 employers find high school graduates “deficient” in reading.
- Good readers generally have more financially rewarding jobs. Proficient readers are 2.5 times as likely as basic readers to be earning $850 or more a week.
Pennsylvania's libraries — the People's University — can vitally and effectively prepare Pennsylvanians to compete and face the challenges of the 21st Century.

For a relatively small state investment, the power of libraries to help Pennsylvanians achieve literacy in five core areas as well as support downtown, Main Street and neighborhood revitalization can be realized. Thus, the Pennsylvania Library Association recommends that a Literacy for the 21st Century initiative be launched. This initiative redefines the library's role within the context of five essential literacies that Pennsylvanians must attain in order to succeed in the 21st Century as citizens, parents, students, employers, employees, and consumers.

**Literacy for the 21st Century**

1. **Basic Literacy** — Through strong print, digital and online literacy collections, links to practice GED tests, eCourses and computer skills tutorials, plus library-based literacy programs for both children and adults, libraries can help Pennsylvania achieve one of the highest literacy rates in the country, a trained and skilled workforce, a growing tax base, economy and population.

2. **Information Literacy** — Through state-of-the-art library computer labs that have broadband Internet capability and trained tutors to assist citizens of all ages, libraries can help Pennsylvanians learn how to use online resources and current technology to improve their education, to enhance their job skills and to participate fully in a digital society.

3. **Civic Literacy** — Through regional program partnerships and public forums, plus strong collections of fiction and nonfiction print, audio, video and digital materials that reflect society's historic and contemporary issues, public policies and events, libraries can help citizens participate knowledgably and effectively in their community.

4. **Health Literacy** — Through community-based health care partnerships and programs, plus by providing easily available and reliable collections such as online journals, reports and streaming videos, libraries can help citizens actively manage their own and their family's well-being, making them effective partners with their health care providers and reducing costs.

5. **Economic and Financial Literacy** — Through strong print, digital and online career, educational, financial and legal collections, as well as community-based programs and workshops, libraries can help individuals and businesses exercise financial discipline and contribute to their community's economic vitality.
Statewide Initiative Benefits All Citizens

The 21st Century Literacy Initiative will be supported by statewide library programs that are high-tech, high-touch and high-yield.

High-Tech Initiatives

Over the past decade, the speed that information has migrated to the Internet is outpaced only by the speed that misinformation has migrated to the Internet. Thus, the expertise of Pennsylvania’s information and technology library professionals will be used to develop a statewide Pennsylvania Information Network, a virtual library that includes downloadable resources and carefully selected commercial online databases that provide citizens, parents, students, employers, employees, and consumers with a wealth of reliable, easy-to-find information. The virtual library will be available through a free statewide “eCard” that will make library services available to every citizen for the first time in Pennsylvania history.

High-Touch Initiatives

Building on the library’s role as community commons, a “third place”, where people find opportunities to interact and connect with others, high-tech initiatives will be balanced by enhanced library facilities that will revitalize and re-energize Pennsylvania’s downtowns, main streets and neighborhoods. There, Pennsylvania’s citizens will find librarians to help them with updated and expanded collections and improved access to public computing so that job seekers, small business entrepreneurs and others can use the library as their “office” or business incubator. Older communities will see renewed activity with libraries serving as a town center or anchor that generates significant traffic and activity. Community-based partnerships and public forums will engage and educate citizens on a variety of issues and topics.

High-Yield Initiatives

Building on libraries’ rich tradition of collaboration and efficient operations, both high-tech and high-touch initiatives will leverage economies of scale by using statewide buying power to improve access to digital and physical materials located in the state’s 1300+ libraries.

A uniform automated library management system will link academic and public library collections together, making it easy for the public to locate, request and receive material through an expanded statewide physical and digital delivery system.

Regional Literacy Development Zones will provide information technology support and develop partnerships with state and non-profit agencies, enabling them to use the Pennsylvania Information Network as a tool to improve outcomes for their clients.
Find Out More

Building on and expanding the traditional role of the library as the People’s University will require a relatively small investment that will yield impressive statewide results. To discuss these initiatives, funding model ideas and the investment required to make this vision a reality, contact Glenn Miller, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Library Association, 717.766.7663, glenn@palibraries.org.

“The library stands for hope, for learning, for progress, for literacy, for self-improvement and for civic engagement. The library is a symbol of opportunity, citizenship, equality, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, and hence, is a symbol for democracy itself. It is a critical component in the free exchange of information, which is at the heart of our democracy” — Vartan Gregorian, President Carnegie Corporation
Pennsylvania Library Association
Libraries and 21st Century Literacies
How We Get There – Implementation Priorities
May 13, 2010 — Draft

Overview
The Pennsylvania Library Association recognizes that delivering on the promise of Libraries and
21st Century Literacies will not be achieved overnight, or even in a single year. Achieving
these ambitious goals will take time, and the time to start is NOW.

PaLA recommends that a multi-year strategy be adopted, with the following initial priorities:

Organizational Priorities
PaLA must immediately organize its activities and infrastructure to make the Libraries & 21st
Century Literacies Initiative its top priority. PaLA must:

1. Identify and modify its existing bylaws, organizational structure and unit activities to
   fully embrace and support the 21st Century Literacies Initiative as its top priority.
2. Create a PaLA staff position to support Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Initiative
   implementation.
3. Obtain supplementary funding commitments from the library community and its
   organizational partners to fund PaLA's Libraries & 21st Century Literacies costs for a
   minimum of 3 years.
4. Appoint a small and agile PaLA Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Coordinating
   Cabinet of library leaders and special counsel, such as lobbying, media relations, and
   funding allies that is empowered to lead and coordinate the association's Libraries &
   21st Century Literacies Initiative activities.
5. Create a Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Advisory Board of thoughtful and
   influential individuals and organizational partners that will meet at least twice a year to
   advise, support and advocate for the Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Initiative.

Communications Priorities
PaLA must immediately begin to educate the library community and its allies about the 21st
Century Literacies Initiative, encouraging the library community to adopt and use 21st Century
Literacies Initiative materials with local library boards, friends and advocates. PaLA must:

1. Develop branded Libraries & 21st Century Literacies materials and tools (both print
   and online) that can be adapted and used to educate and engage a variety of
   audiences including — PaLA members, local library boards and friends, policy makers,
   news media, foundations, corporate partners; etc.
2. Educate and empower key library constituencies and partners to use 21st Century
   Literacies materials — such as Commonwealth Libraries, Pennsylvania Citizens for
   Better Libraries, the Governor's Advisory Council on Library Development, District
   Library Centers, Association of Pennsylvania Public Library Systems, Pennsylvania
   Academic Library Consortium, Keystone Library network, Pennsylvania Community
   College Library Consortium, etc.
Public Opinion Leader Priorities
PaLA must immediately begin to identify and engage public, private and non-profit organizations that share similar 21st Century Literacies interests for the purpose of advocacy, program development, funding and collaboration. PaLA must:

1. Identify, engage and recruit potential regional foundation partners regarding the 21st Century Literacies Initiative.
2. Identify, engage and recruit special interest professional associations or organizations that are interested in achieving the objectives of each literacy area.
4. Identify, engage and collaborate with businesses and corporations that are interested in each of the five literacy areas.

Public Policy-Maker Priorities
PaLA must immediately begin to identify and implement ways and means to obtain executive and legislative branch support for 21st Century Literacies initiatives. Following the election of a new Governor in 2010, PaLA must:

1. Obtain support from the next Governor’s administration through close involvement with the next Governor’s transition team, policy director, and appropriate cabinet secretaries (especially those for Education, Health, Community and Economic Development, Public Welfare, Banking, Labor and Industry, and Aging).
2. Form a General Assembly Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Caucus that will champion PaLA’s Initiative.
3. Identify and work closely with key legislative partners, such as the County Commissioners’ Association of Pennsylvania.

Long-Range Objectives

Funding
Once the policy delegation for 21st Century Literacies is in place, a new funding strategy must be adopted that leverages the role libraries can play to help citizens improve 21st Century Literacies. PaLA recommends the following funding priorities:

- First priority should be given to statewide 21st Century Literacies Initiatives which are both far-reaching in their effectiveness in meeting Literacies Initiative goals and in delivering immediate cost savings for public and academic libraries.
- Second priority should be given to establishing funding for capital improvements to libraries.
- Third priority should be given to boosting support for local library services either in the earliest year possible.
**Library Code**

Beginning with the first year of PaLA's 21st Century Literacies initiative, the 50-year-old Pennsylvania Library Code will need a dramatic overhaul to:

- Eliminate archaic and out-of-date language as well as library standards that are not related to literacy objectives.
- Establish flexible and responsive methods that establish literacy-related funding, standards and outcomes.

**Proposed Budget**

Supplementary funding will need to be obtained from PaLA members and partners to initiate and sustain this project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Budget Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>PaLA Staff</td>
<td>$85,000</td>
<td>Include salary and benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing &amp; Education</td>
<td>$85,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$170,000</td>
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**Initial Timeline**

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<tr>
<th>Proposed Tasks</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Board Reviews Task Force Progress to date</td>
<td>May 13 - afternoon</td>
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<td>3. Propose structural changes in library cooperation in the legislative framework and ILS as economic equalizer</td>
<td>June Steering committee meeting</td>
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<td>4. How does the infrastructure change</td>
<td>June Steering committee meeting</td>
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<td>5. Update finance document – diagrams of structure (that include school libraries)</td>
<td>June Steering committee meeting</td>
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<td>6. Update executive summary</td>
<td>June Steering committee meeting</td>
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<td>7. Cabinet leaders brief Prior’s Advisory Council</td>
<td>June 8</td>
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<td>8. Cabinet leaders brief Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries</td>
<td>June 11</td>
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<td>9. Develop PaLA position description</td>
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<td>10. Identify lead internal partners and request supplementary funding to support PaLA initiative</td>
<td>Summer 2010</td>
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<td>11. Brief Past Presidents</td>
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<td>12. Talk to HSLC about branding Project</td>
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<td>14. NextGen Task Force meets to review finance/implementation</td>
<td>August</td>
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<td>15. Continue to collaborate with and seek out possible literacy initiatives</td>
<td>Summer-Fall 2010</td>
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**Proposed Tasks**

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<tr>
<th>Proposed Tasks</th>
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<tr>
<td>corporate partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Cabinet leaders brief district library center administrators, consultants and system administrators in August Leadership Conference</td>
<td>October 2010</td>
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<td>17. Consider holding statewide regional meetings with Chapters to brief members on the plan</td>
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<td>18. Cabinet leaders brief academic librarians</td>
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<td>19. Reach out to PSLA for approval</td>
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<td>20. Reach out to CCAP County Governance Committee for formal endorsement (CCAP Conferences Fall – Hershey; Spring – Harrisburg; August annual conference moves around state)</td>
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<td>21. Update PaLA membership at October conference</td>
<td>October 2010</td>
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<td>23. Cabinet leaders and NextGen Task Force members develop opportunities to educate PaLA members throughout the state</td>
<td>Fall 2010 – Winter 2011</td>
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<td>25. Create Libraries and Literacies Caucus</td>
<td>Early 2011</td>
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<td>26. Task Force leaders brief regional foundation organizations</td>
<td>Early 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>27. Brief editorial boards</td>
<td>2011</td>
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**Preliminary Steps Already Underway**

To test and refine its recommendations and ideas, the NextGen Library Advocacy Task Force has taken some preliminary steps in the following areas:

**Organizational Priorities**

1. Two library systems, Cumru-based Council Library System, and James V. Brown Library (Lycoming County) have made initial one-year commitments of $5000 each toward the funding of a PaLA staff position that is dedicated to implementing the Libraries & 21st Century Literacies Initiative.

2. PaLA President Margie Steen has committed to seeking additional funding for this position from other libraries throughout Pennsylvania.

**Communications Priorities**

1. As these concepts were developed, the NextGen Library Advocacy Task Force has sought feedback and comment regarding proposed Literacies Initiatives from Commonwealth Libraries, district library center administrators and consultants, system administrators, academic librarians.

2. The Task Force has also obtained feedback and comments from its lobbying and public relations counsel regarding proposed Literacies Initiatives.
Public Opinion Leader Priorities

1. PaLA has begun testing Literacies Initiative concepts with two possible corporate partners: Pfizer, Inc. and Ahold USA (Giant and Martin’s grocery stores) and has received favorable comment and interest in partnerships.

Public Policy-Maker Priorities

1. Prior to the May 2010 primary, representatives from PaLA and the NextGen Library Advocacy Task Force have had positive meetings with four gubernatorial candidates. Literacies Initiative concepts were tested with these individuals and received favorable reception.

2. At meetings with gubernatorial candidates, PaLA has formally requested that it be part of transition team planning.


4. PaLA officials have started meeting with representatives from the County Commissioners’ Association of Pennsylvania to discuss county government role in providing library services.