

## Libraries and Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century as citizens, parents, students, employers employees, and consumers.

### **Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 knowledgeably 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.

\*doesn't just apply to public lib. ones

also include academic & school lib.

## Statewide Initiative Benefits All Citizens

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

### 1. *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.

### 2. *High-Touch Initiatives* \*Steph Weaver

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.

### 3. *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.

making districts into multi-county regions

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## 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](mailto: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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative its top priority. PaLA must:

1. Identify and modify its **existing bylaws, organizational structure and all activities** to fully embrace and support the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative as its top priority.
2. Create a **PaLA staff position** to support Libraries & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative implementation.
3. Obtain **supplementary funding commitments from the library community and its organizational partners** to fund PaLA's Libraries & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies costs for a minimum of 3 years.
4. Appoint a small and agile **PaLA Libraries & 21<sup>st</sup> 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 & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative activities.
5. Create a **Libraries & 21<sup>st</sup> 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 & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative.

### **Communications Priorities**

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

1. Develop branded **Libraries & 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.
3. Brief **editorial boards** of major newspapers regarding the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative.
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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 & 21<sup>st</sup> 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 direction for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies is in place, a **new funding strategy** must be adopted that leverages the role libraries can play to help citizens improve 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies. PaLA recommends the following funding priorities:

- First priority should be given to **statewide 21<sup>st</sup> 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:

Preliminary Budget Year 1	Amount	Comments
Expenses		
PaLA Staff	\$85,000	Includes salary and benefits
Marketing & Education Materials	\$85,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$170,000</b>	

### Initial Timeline

Proposed Tasks	Time
1. Board Reviews Task Force Progress to date	May 13 - afternoon
2. Connect NextGen to PA Library Code – Review high points of Code	June Steering committee meeting
3. Bring up school library cooperation in the narrative – library and ILS as economic equalizer	June Steering committee meeting
4. How does the infrastructure change	June Steering committee meeting
5. Update finance document – diagrams of structure (that include school libraries)	June Steering committee meeting
6. Update executive summary	June Steering committee meeting
7. Cabinet leaders brief Governor's Advisory Council	June 8
8. Cabinet leaders brief Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries	June 11
9. Develop PaLA position description	
10. Identify lead internal partners and request supplementary funding to support PaLA initiative	Summer 2010
11. Brief Past Presidents	
12. Talk to HSLC about branding Project	
13. Appoint Libraries & 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Coordinating Cabinet	Summer 2010
14. NextGen Task Force meets to review finance/implementation	August
15. Continue to collaborate with and seek out possible literacy	Summer-Fall 2010

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

### **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, Cummerbund County 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 & 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies Initiative.
2. PaLA President Margie Stern 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.
3. PaLA's lobbying counsel strongly endorses the idea of forming 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies and Libraries Caucus.
4. PaLA officials have started meeting with representatives from the County Commissioners' Association of Pennsylvania to discuss county government's role in providing library services.

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