

# NEW MEXICO STATE LIBRARY

## **Presentation to the Science Technology and Telecommunications Interim Committee September 2, 2009**

### **Why public libraries need broadband:**

Public libraries are often the only choice for Internet access by community members and are essential for accessing educational, entrepreneurial and employment resources. This is evidenced by:

- Nearly all school districts report that teachers assign homework requiring Internet use.
- Employers require job applications be filed online.
- Unemployed citizens turn to the Internet to search and apply for jobs.
- Government agencies require individuals to go online for critical services and resources.

Information delivery is changing and information packets are growing larger:

- Many social functions now rely on streaming media.
- A single library patron watching a high-definition video will consume nearly all of a 1.5 Mbps connection, leaving patrons using the library's other computers with intermittent or no access to email or other Web applications.
- Inadequate bandwidth limits a library's ability to provide new services, such as interactive online homework help or videoconferencing.

### **How are libraries doing?**

#### **U.S. Libraries**

- Almost 60 percent of public libraries were unable to meet bandwidth demands during peak hours of use.
- Seventy percent of the libraries were their community's only free public source of Internet access.

- One in five libraries report connection speeds less than 1.5 Mbps (T1).
- About one-third of rural libraries have connection speeds less than 1.5 Mbps, compared with 7.1 percent of urban libraries and 16 percent of suburban public libraries.

**New Mexico Libraries:**

New Mexico has 92 public library systems with 119 physical library locations and three State Library bookmobiles to serve more than 1.9 million residents. New Mexico’s public libraries are organized as municipal government libraries (66%), Tribal libraries (20%), or non-profit libraries (14%). Internet connection speeds for the libraries are shown below:

<u>2008-2009</u>	<u>New Mexico</u>	<u>U.S.</u>
< 1.5 Mbps	32%	22%
1.5 Mbps	25%	25.5%
>1.5 Mbps	43%	44.5%
Total operating expenditures/capita	\$28.38	\$34.95

**Future needs of New Mexico libraries:**

Public libraries must be connected to a robust fiber network that allows them to become true community computer centers with capabilities to support each community’s needs for job searches and career development, small business creation and development, school homework and research, and access to online education, training and e-government resources using free public terminals. A “fiber to the library” solution is a cost-effective one that will offer almost unlimited capacity for decades and is often less expensive to operate than other technologies. In some areas of the state, where the cost to bring broadband to every residential customer is prohibitive, underserved and unserved citizens may be well-served by access to public libraries acting as community computer centers.

**What is New Mexico’s plan for meeting this need?**

In 2008, the annual *Speed Matters* study of the state’s download and upload speeds ranked New Mexico as 29<sup>th</sup>; in 2009, New Mexico had fallen to 40<sup>th</sup>.<sup>1</sup> This shows that other states are upgrading their telecommunications infrastructure at a dramatically faster pace than

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.speedmatters.org/content/2009report>

**New Mexico. In 2008, the Governor’s office began the State Broadband Initiative to provide a coordinated statewide approach for all broadband stimulus applications as well as to develop a phased effort to bring the state “broadband to all.” The State Library participated in the planning sessions of the Initiative and understands that the Initiative considers public libraries to be an integral component of achieving a well-networked citizenry and supports stimulus grants that help public libraries meet this goal.**

**The State Library worked with public libraries on two stimulus broadband grants. The first, filed in August, is called “Fast Forward New Mexico.” This grant will stimulate demand for broadband by providing broadband awareness events and training at public and tribal libraries to increase the skills of citizens using the Internet. In addition, the grant will create a centralized website and on-line catalog to support current and future trainings and host a NM Broadband Conference. Through these activities, the project will raise public awareness of the benefits of Internet access and stimulate further demand for consumer broadband services. Increased public demand for broadband will help drive, or recover, investment in infrastructure. The grant, which requests \$2 million, will be implemented by a partnership that includes: New Mexico State Library, University of New Mexico, Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship and 1<sup>st</sup> Mile Institute.**

**The second grant, to be filed in December, will strengthen the computer capabilities of all public libraries in the state by upgrading their equipment and software, as well as support the libraries by creating a technology support cooperative, whose services will be available to all libraries who wish to use them, and hiring an e-rate consultant to help libraries prepare their applications for federal subsidies available for recurring telecommunications charges.**

### **Request to the Science, Technology and Telecommunications Committee**

**The State Library, and all 92 public libraries in New Mexico, would like to ask that the Committee write a letter of support for the federal grant to strengthen the computer capabilities of all public libraries to be submitted in December. Thank you.**