

State Library of Iowa Takes Steps to Better Meet Iowa's Digital Needs

State Library to give Iowa's 544 public libraries the tools to ensure Iowa's communities have the technology they need to succeed

WASHINGTON – It is often assumed that everyone has access to technology, including computers and the internet. The reality is this is not true and thousands of people in Iowa, particularly people with lower incomes and those in rural communities who are routinely underserved, do not have access to basic technological needs to help them succeed in school or the workforce. Knowing Iowa's public libraries must think beyond books and incorporate technology into their programs and services, the State Library of Iowa is leading an effort to help all Iowa's libraries advance digital literacy and access in their communities to better support education, workforce and economic priorities.

The State Library of Iowa has joined Edge, a groundbreaking tool developed by the Washington, DC-based Urban Libraries Council to help libraries assess their technology, communicate its impact, and plan for the future. Edge is based on 11 national benchmarks that gauge community value, stakeholder engagement, and organizational management. Through the state library's subscription, all 544 of Iowa's public library systems will have free access to Edge.

"The State Library of Iowa is working to make sure that all people – regardless of geographic location or socio-economic status – have access to technology to succeed in school, employment searches, and the workforce," said Urban Libraries Council President and CEO Susan Benton. "Iowa's libraries change the lives of people who wouldn't otherwise have the basic tools to succeed."

Libraries are places people go to for free access to the internet and computers. They are – and always have been – gateways to the universe of information and ideas that enable people to learn and succeed. Edge ensures library technology is everything it needs to be to meet the goals and aspirations of the people and communities libraries serve.

As the primary technology gateway for people, libraries support local economies and build stronger communities. Edge creates the ability to evaluate libraries' technology services compared to those of libraries of similar size across the country. It provides libraries with quantifiable data to develop strategic plans, budget allocations, and compelling evidence of technology service needs.

“Through the use of Edge, libraries in Iowa are better equipped to create a technology environment that fits the needs of the communities they serve, opening new doors to the chronically underserved,” added Benton.

About Urban Libraries Council

Urban Libraries Council (ULC), founded in 1971, is the voice for public libraries and the force that inspires them to evolve. ULC creates the tools, techniques, and ideas to make ongoing improvements and upgrades in services and technology. ULC also speaks loudly and clearly about the value public libraries bring to communities, and secures funding for research that results in the development of new programs and services. And by serving as a forum for library leadership, ULC produces innovative ideas and best practices that ensure community impact.