**Is there a Digital divide in this country? How can we address these inequalities if they exist?**

Rubric –

• Answer the question and backup your position using examples and references. Essay will be minimum 400 words and a maximum 500 words. 6 points

• Spelling and grammar. 1 points

• There were a minimum of four unique reference sites (textbook can be used and counts for one reference) to backup your information. 3 points

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Digital divide refers to “inequalities between individuals, households, and other groups of different demographic and socioeconomic levels in access to information and communication technologies and in the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use the information gained from connecting” (see Resource 1). Based on this definition, statistics show that there is undoubtedly a digital divide in the United States. The most prevalent of these statistics seems to be the difference based off income. One survey conducted in 2016, compared the technology adoption between Americans with an income greater than or equal to $100K, to those with an income less than or equal to $30K. The surveyed technology included smartphones, desktop/laptop computers, home broadband, and tablet computers. Each survey showed about a 40% difference in favor of those with higher income, that is, those with the higher income are 40% more likely to have these technologies (see Resource 2).

Before a solution can be provided, it’s important to understand the extent of the problem. In short, those with digital technology have a greater advantage over those who don’t when it comes to modern day education, business, and other endeavors. An academic challenge sponsored by SoulPancake and Sprint provides a great example (see Resource 3 – ‘Homework Gap’). In this challenge two teams were separated by a curtain and each team was given a set of tools. Team A was given laptop computers and tablets and Team B was given a few books including an encyclopedia. The advantage of Team A was made very clear with each new question. While this single example doesn’t provide an all-encompassing point of argument, it is sufficient to indicate that those with better tools will generally have a greater advantage.

How can the digital divide be addressed? There are already a great variety of avenues available to those who do not have the means of acquiring and/or maintaining digital devices or services at home. Public and school libraries often provide free computer use. Many government and privately-owned facilities provide open internet access through Wi-Fi. These are great advancements; however, it is my opinion that the greatest changes need to take place at an individual level. Life isn’t fair, and inevitably some individuals will need to work harder than others to compete with those with advantage. Looking back at the statistics from Resource 2, a low-income individual may need to sacrifice time and convenience by going to the public library to complete a task which a higher-income individual might complete at home. This might mean purchasing a low-end PC laptop for $300 rather than a MacBook Pro for $2000. Hopefully, in time, the sacrifices of the low-income individual will pay off and they will be able to acquire the means to provide digital technology and services for themselves and future family.

Resources:

1. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_divide_in_the_United_States>
2. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/22/digital-divide-persists-even-as-lower-income-americans-make-gains-in-tech-adoption/>
3. <https://youtu.be/yqkAlwGsxwE?t=76>
4. <https://www.creditdonkey.com/average-internet-bill.html>
5. https://www.cnet.com/pictures/chains-with-the-best-free-wifi-ranked/7/