**Minneapolis’ quilt of digital inequality**

While Minnesota and the Twin Cities metro area often rank highly in national measurements of technological access, the digital map of Minneapolis looks like a patchwork quilt of digital inequality.

On the state level, the digital divide is being addressed by increasing rural broadband, the expansion of technological resources at libraries and more.

**“**The divide has gotten much finer” and is more “shades of gray,” said Jennifer Nelson, director of State Library Services for the Minnesota Department of Education. “The gaps are narrowing but getting deeper.”

And despite increased connectivity overall, Minneapolis has some deep technological chasms cut along racial and socioeconomic lines, according to the Minneapolis Community Technology Survey, which the city has used the last few years to track the technology use of its residents.

Only 6 percent of whites lack online connectivity in their homes, compared to about 24 percent of black people and 10 percent of other minority survey respondents. Neighborhood clusters like North, Central and Downtown Minneapolis saw exponentially more households lacking Internet connectivity and computers than elsewhere in the city.

Minneapolis does offer free Wi-Fi through USI Wireless at more than 100 hotspots scattered throughout the city and paid service everywhere else that households can use. But citywide, only 28 percent of respondents said they used wireless Internet through USI or other services at home as of 2014.

And while more people have cellphones with mobile Internet, those lacking a mobile phone with a connection still averaged about 26 percent among Northside neighborhood groups.

The Minneapolis Public Library has Internet-connected computers along with other resources and digital gaps have attention on the state and city level who are working to put technology at people’s fingertips.

But beyond just not owning computers or Internet access, some don’t view them as a necessity. Those without college degrees tended to place lesser value on computer and Internet access, while older residents and those making below $50,000 per year usually didn’t own connected digital devices. More than a third of the unemployed looking for work don’t own computers.

“What we’re talking about is getting everyone to the starting line,” said Danna McKenzie, executive director of Minnesota DEED, which has sought to reduce technological disparities across the state. “We’re worried that a jobseeker has an email address and knows how to use it.”

In the survey’s three years, digital connectivity improved and shifted overall across the city – and dramatically in some neighborhood clusters -- but racial, educational and income disparities persisted in North and Central Minneapolis.