**Minneapolis’ quilt of digital inequality**

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

Across the state, “the [digital] 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,” she said.

And Minneapolis still sees some deep technological chasms cut along racial and socioeconomic lines. 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 respondents to the Minneapolis Community Technology Survey, which the city has used since 2012 to track the technology use of its residents.

Neighborhood clusters in North, Central and Downtown Minneapolis saw exponentially higher prevalence of households lacking Internet connectivity and computers. Use of Wi-Fi, which is publicly available in various places throughout the city, only increased about 5 percent between 2012 and 2014.

More and more people have cellphones with mobile Internet, but those lacking connection through their phones still ranged between 13 percent and 31 percent on the Northside.

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 more often 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 about when 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.