**Closing the Digital Divide**

From handfuls of city blocks connected with fiberoptic Internet to neighborhoods where nearly a quarter of residents don’t have any home Internet, Minneapolis’ digital map looks like a patchwork of technological inequality, mirroring trends seen throughout Minnesota and the nation as a whole.

Minnesota’s digital divide persists and threatens to deepen, despite success in recent years to close existing gaps. The state is rated above average in the nation for computer ownership and Internet access, with the highest adoption rates in the five-state region. Yet racial, socioeconomic and regional inequalities still exist and, according to experts, could get worse with upcoming technological shifts.

How the divide has closed rapidly

Minnesota as the techno connected bastion of the five-state area

Minnesota is above average in the nation for computer ownership and internet access and the highest adoption rates in the five-state region.

The gap between Boomers and Millennials the greatest tech gap of all time

Yet there are some have-nots still

New definition of mobile is now 25-megabits per second or higher instead of 10 up and down as previously defined

Only 6% of whites don’t have any Internet access at home, compared to 24% of African Americans and 10% of other races/multiracial or Hispanic respondents.

Only 65% of unemployed respondents looking for work have a computer with Internet at home.

Too many residents do not feel very comfortable finding and applying for jobs online

There are still significant gaps in high-speed internet access in rural Minnesota

Mobile adoption lags

Minnesota’s mobile adoption among African-Americans slightly declined between 2010 and 2013, even has it nearly doubled from 31 percent to 56 percent among Hispanics and 14 percent to 34 percent among low-income residents.

Fiberoptic pokes along

Minnesota is ranked 31st in adoption of fiber-optic Internet with only 16.5 percent of the population covered.

Municipal wi-fi steady but struggling

USI Wireless’ original goal for 2012 was 30,000 subscribers, but it only managed 27,000 by 2014.

Another chasm on the horizon: IOT, 3D Printing, Cybersecurity, Coding literacy

Residents do not feel they know enough to deal with cyber security issues

Final thoughts and quote

**McKenzie**

Danna McKenzie, executive director of Minnesota DEED

“What we’re talking about is getting everyone to the starting line,” said Danna McKenzie, executive director of Minnesota DEED.

“We’re worried about when a jobseeker has an email address and knows how to use it,“ McKenzie said.

**Amin**

Massoud Amin, executive director of the University of Minnesota’s Technology Leadership Institute

“It’s improving,” Amin said. “If we look at where the gaps are, those are some good, positive trends.”

“Technology leads,” Amin said. “Policy follows.”

“It’s a very new breed of duck,” Amin said.

“We can do better across the nation, and in a progressive, forward-looking state like Minnesota,” said Massoud Amin, executive director of the University of Minnesota’s Technology Leadership Institute.

Amin: The thoroughfares are bigger. But the range of services have substantially increased. The digital divide exists but it is more on how to enable the same access that larger more affluent pockets have for those who have less.

**Nelson**

Jennifer Nelson, director of State Library Services for the Minnesota Department of Education

Every public library has at least one public computer and internet access.

“The divide has gotten much finer”, it’s more “shades of gray,” if you will.

“The gaps are narrowing but getting deeper.”

“One of the hallmarks of a library is if people need help they don’t get turned away. “

**Doll**

Otto Doll, chief information officer for the City of Minneapolis

A few specific answers:

• Yes, we have the raw data that could be used for responses by neighborhood.

• Trends and story line:

◦ Mapping to show the changes over time would be fabulous.

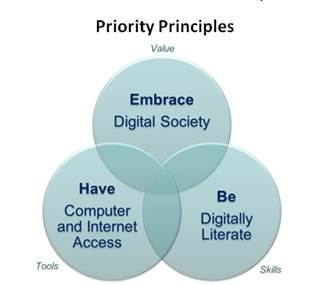
◦ I think illustrating the data using the key challenge points below would be good; these are the challenges we have called out in our summary reports and by Ward. Showing data on a map by income, race, age and education would be very interesting.

◦ Organize the data around the key principles of Tools/Access, Skills/Literacy and Value/Embracing Digital Society.

◦ Could also build on what we have for the User/Non-User Profiles, and how we have organized the box-plot data into the categories of View of Digital Society, Tools, Literacy, Information Consumption, and Engagement. I think these categorizations provide for broader analysis of the data and would be great to see on a map and compared over time.

◦ Mobile (Smartphone/Tablet) compared to Desktop/Laptop with Internet at home, and looking at the power differences of the tools for engagement, creation, work and education needs, job seeking, economic development etc. (advantages/disadvantages of having cell phone only as your Internet at home)

◦ Value and priority: how is the value of and type of digital access and literacy changing as technology, education, the economy and workforce demands continue to change? What is important for a community to track?



Access to Tools: People need affordable and reliable computers and broadband Internet access. Access opens up a world of possibilities and allows full participation in our society.

Digital Literacy: Beyond having access to technology, people need to understand digital technologies and how to use them effectively to achieve their educational, economic, civic, and social goals.

Value: To embrace the digital society, people must see the benefits to their life. The City is stronger, the more its residents take advantage of computing and the vast sea of knowledge the Internet offers.

Key Challenge Points from the Survey

Ø The data on access and use of technology points to a digital equity gap along the lines of income, race, age and education.

Ø Overall, too many residents do not feel very comfortable finding and applying for jobs online; only 65% of unemployed respondents looking for work have a computer with Internet at home.

Ø Residents are not comfortable attaining education online and are not often accessing health information.

Ø While households with children agree to the importance of computers and Internet access at home, there is a 16% gap between whites and people of color in access within households with children.

Ø The Internet is not being used often by residents to find community resources, engage in civic activities or communicate with government.

Ø Residents do not feel they know enough to deal with cyber security issues.