



*A visitor gets one-on-one computing assistance from the Chicago Public Library's "Cyber Navigator" program.*

### By the Numbers

- One in six adults (or about 36 million) in the U.S. have **low literacy skills**.
- Nearly one-third of adults have **weak numeracy skills**.
- One-third of low-skilled adults are **immigrants**.
- Thirty-five percent of black adults, 43% of Hispanic adults, and 10% of white adults have **low literacy skills**.
- Two-thirds of low-skilled adults are **over the age of 35**.
- Two-thirds of young (16-25) low-skilled adults are **men**.
- Most (63%) low-skilled adults in the U.S. are **employed**.
- Low-skilled U.S. adults are more likely to have **poor health** than adults with the highest skills.
- U.S. adults with high school or lower level of education **score lower in problem solving** in technology-rich environments than adults with similar level of education in other countries.

### How Library Programs Benefit Adults

- Libraries provide learning opportunities for adults who are no longer part of the K-12 educational system, including adults who face economic and other challenges.
- Libraries offer classes that help low-skilled adults to build their reading and math skills. This is important, because adults' cognitive skills continue to develop after they leave formal education (Reder, 2009).
- Libraries provide English classes and help immigrants prepare to become citizens.
- Libraries have computer labs where young adults can get information about finding a job as well as developing their digital literacy and other skills.
- Librarians help adults to find information about healthcare.
- Libraries offer computer classes as well as self-directed tutorials that adults can use onsite or at home to build their digital literacy skills and awareness.

### Recent Grants from IMLS Help

- Libraries and community partners develop service plans and programs for adult English literacy, digital literacy, and job training. (Free Library Foundation; Providence Public Library)
- Libraries offer General Equivalency Diploma (GED) institutes to help better prepare instructors who teach youths and adults who struggle with preparing for the GED exam. (District of Columbia Public Library)
- Libraries and library associations come together to create action steps for accessible, effective, and innovative adult literacy programs, services, and resources. (Onondaga County Public Library)
- Libraries help adults to earn GEDs, improve their language abilities, and increase their digital literacy skills. (Portland State University, Millar Library)
- Librarians share resources, tools, and best practices that help adults become digitally literate and support adults in sharing their knowledge and skills with other learners. ([www.digitallearn.org](http://www.digitallearn.org), American Library Association)

## IMLS Partnership with OCTAE

IMLS and the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE) at the U.S. Department of Education are working together to help libraries and federally-funded adult education programs enhance skills, literacy, employability, and quality of life for low-skilled Americans. IMLS and OCTAE share resources, disseminate information about adult education-library partnerships, and provide training opportunities for library staff. Current activities include: increasing awareness about resources and training (see <http://LINC.ed.gov>); developing literacy tutorials and guides; and collaborating with various associations and nonprofits to identify and disseminate examples of partnership activities the public adult education system and libraries are taking at the state and local levels.

## Examples of Model Projects

### Portland State University, Millar Library – Using the Learner Web to Enhance Library-Community Collaboration on Adult Literacy

- Created Learning Plans for adult learners addressing GED preparation, English language learning, citizenship, workforce development, digital literacy, and other needs
- Served learners over a broad continuum of skill levels, ranging from digital literacy learners on one end to postsecondary students on the other end
- Successful models of community collaboration have been demonstrated, linking libraries, education, and social services.
- Regions served include California, District of Columbia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin.

### Las Vegas Clark County Library District – Open Doors: A Las Vegas-Clark County Library District Literacy Partnership with KLVX

- Used classroom and computer lab instruction and broadcasts on top-rated station for Hispanic family viewing in Las Vegas

- Supported critical literacy learning among both adults and their children

*Las Vegas Clark County Library District is a 2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service winner. In response to the recession, the library district restructured and reset their services to work with other community agencies and help adults find jobs and get help with food and housing. The library experienced unprecedented growth in public technology use and material checkouts.*

### Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) and Multnomah County Library (MCL) – Beyond Fact

- Engaged adults in reading and discussion-based learning to promote science literacy
- Involved diverse audiences in informed discussion and dialogue focused on science topics and relevant social, ethical, political, or philosophical issues
- Attracted new adult audiences beyond those currently reached by the current programs of either OMSI or MCL
- Increased knowledge in the informal education community of effective practices to engage adults with relevant, potentially controversial topics

## References

- Reder, S. (2009). "The Development of Literacy and Numeracy in Adult Life." In S. Reder & J. Bynner, *Tracking Adult Literacy and Numeracy: Findings from Longitudinal Research* (pp. 59–84). New York, NY: Routledge.
- OECD (2013). *Time for the U.S. to Reskill?: What the Survey of Adult Skills Says*. OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264204904-en>

## About the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's 123,000 libraries and 17,500 museums. Through grant making, policy development, and research, we help communities and individuals thrive through broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong learning. To learn more about IMLS, please visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).