

BROADBAND HEARING INTRO

Speakers: Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Susan Hildreth, Tom Wheeler,
Tom Power

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>> RICHARD REYES-GAVILAN: Good morning and welcome to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library. My name is Richard Reyes-Gavilan and I am the Executive Director of the District of Columbia Public Library.

It is my honor to welcome you all to the library this morning to join our distinguished guests for this important public hearing on the evolving and growing need for broadband access in America's libraries.

So libraries have been talking for years about bridging the digital divide and I think that phrase has been around as long as I have been working in libraries which is about twenty years now if not longer.

I have to admit something, that about seven or eight years ago, I started getting kind of tired of this phrase, the digital divide. My feeling was that the issue was increasingly less about bridging the digital divide and more about bridging the digital skills divide. In other words, it was less about providing access and more about providing the literacy necessary once access was attained.

I'll also admit that I was wrong. In many ways the digital divide is as big as it's ever been and that is really because so much of the world has moved exclusively online and those of us who haven't are really at increasing risk.

So seven or eight years ago, you could apply for most jobs without being online. You can't do that today. Seven or eight years ago you could easily communicate with your child's teacher without being online. You can't do that as easily today.

Seven or eight years ago, you could apply for health insurance without being online. Seven or eight years ago, you

could take the high school equivalency examination without being online. None of this is possible now without reliable high speed access and public libraries remain the very best option to level the playing field.

I know that's true because of the incredible success that the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program has had across the country here and at my previous job with the Brooklyn Public Library. Just amazing, amazing things, making great strides, not only improving the infrastructure to support public computing but addressing that digital skills divide that I was mentioning as well.

But BTOP is over and many of us are wondering how do we build on the incredible success of that program and where is the additional funding going to come from?

So I should take a moment on the other end of the digital literacy spectrum to talk to you a bit about the room in which we're sitting.

This is our digital commons, a space that opened up last summer. In addition to providing basic internet access, it provides access to an increasingly sophisticated set of tools like the Adobe Creative Suite and the Espresso Book Printing Machine that require even faster connectivity.

This room really is the true embodiment of public libraries serving the broad continuum of adult learning needs across the city, but it wasn't cheap. It cost somewhere around \$3 million or \$4 million. How can we build more of them because we know the need is there? So I'm hoping that our panel will talk a little bit about some of this stuff.

Anyway, it is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you Susan Hildreth, the Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Susan really has done I think so much in her tenure to elevate libraries in the public consciousness and we all owe her a really amazing debt of gratitude and will be sorry to see her go. But Susan, please. Thank you.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Alright. I'd ask our gentlemen, the two Toms, if you wouldn't mind joining me here on the stage. Good morning everyone.

Excuse me.

Well it is so wonderful to be here.

I got some water. No, I'm okay. I'm alright. I think I'm okay. I have to talk quite a bit and I'll be drinking in between and it's just water, trust me. It's just water.

So first of all, welcome everyone. This event is being recorded and will be made available to the public so everybody keep that in mind as we have our exciting dialog here.

It is my pleasure to convene the Institute of Museum and Library Services Hearing on Libraries and Broadband and I am doubly excited because we're having this great event during national library week. Hooray library week. Woohoo.

And of course I want to thank our host, the DC Public Library. We couldn't have a better venue for this event than the digital commons where connecting, connectivity, and learning come alive. Just take a look over there. This building just opened up and this place is packed with people using these resources. So this is what it's all about.

The issue we are discussing today is of great importance to the millions of Americans who use broadband at the nation's 17,000 public libraries as well as those who use broadband at home to access library resources.

Every day children, teens, and adults use broadband at their local library to further their education, find workforce and health information, seek digital literacy training, and much more.

So today I am very proud to be joined by members of the National Museum and Library Services Board and they are with me here on the podium.

Charles Benton of Illinois, Christie Brandau of Iowa, Carla Hayden of Maryland, and Winston Tabb of Maryland.

The board provides policy advice to ILMS.

We are also fortunate to have another board member in the audience, John Coppola who comes from the museum side of the house and I see some museum faces out there so hi museums. We love you too.

We are also honored to have David Ferriero with us, the Archivist of the United States, and we also have - there he is. Hello, David, and he's got a lot of content that guy does. And we're excited to have the past President of the American Library Association here today, Maureen Sullivan. So thank you for being with us today.

This is really the first time that ILMS has used its statutory authority to advise the president, congress, and the other federal agencies on libraries, museums, and information services and also to hold public hearings.

This authority was provided to ILMS during the 2010 reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act which incorporated into the ILMS law, responsibilities that were previously held by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science.

We chose this moment to use this new authority because this is a moment full of potential. We are encouraged that Tom Wheeler, the Federal Communications Commission Chairman, is working actively to modernize the E-Rate, an importance source of telecommunications discounts for libraries and schools.

And considering the analysis of FCC data that ILMS just released yesterday, this moment is perhaps of even greater importance than many of us may have realized. Our analysis shows that a total of 15,551 individual libraries have used the discounts provided by the E-Rate.

Now this actual number varies from year to year. However, in looking at eleven years' worth of data that we had, we found that the annual participation rate ranged from 67% to 73% of all of the libraries in the US. So we are taking advantage of this program.

The E-Rate was created seventeen years ago when the first overhaul of the Telecommunications Act in sixty-two years was passed in 1996. This is the same year that the Museum and Library Services Act was first enacted, creating ILMS and in a move that recognized the importance of technology in the library world, changed the Library and Services Construction Act and some people do miss that but we moved onto the Library Services and Technology Act, LSTA.

Through LSTA, ILMS supports statewide initiatives and national priorities to help public, academic, college, tribal,

and school libraries serve the public, especially targeting library services to individuals with geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic - sorry, folks - socioeconomic backgrounds.

We help diverse people. To individuals with disabilities, individuals with limited functional literacy, or information skills, and from its creation, ILMS has recognized the importance of a connected society and the library's unique leadership role as a hub for our digital world.

We are again at a crucial moment where the intersection of emerging technologies in delivering broadband services and the needs of library professionals and library customers meet.

I would like to note for the record that the National Broadband Plan issued four years ago recommended affordable access to at least one gigabit per second broadband service to anchor institutions, including libraries, a very laudable goal.

The FCC, through its recent efforts to modernize the E-Rate program, the president's own Connect Ed initiative, and the recent grants through the Broadband Technology Opportunities, the BTOP program, demonstrate a national commitment and sense of urgency around high speed internet delivery and the opportunity for innovation that access provides for our communities.

Public access to technology and to content is dependent on high speed internet delivery. We know that one third of all Americans, one hundred million people, have not adopted broadband high speed internet at home for a variety of reasons and we also know that nineteen million do not have access at all.

This has a dramatic impact on the capacity of public libraries to serve those left out of the benefits of full participation in a digital world.

The recent economic recession bears this out. As millions of Americans flocked to public libraries to access workforce development and information on economic opportunities, our libraries continued their well-established role as community anchors.

We know that America's job seekers headed to their trusted institutions during this challenging time, often relying on the library's internet connection to search for work or sharpen their skills.

We also know that more than 80% of the fortune 500 companies today require online job applications. To realistically succeed in today's society, you need the internet. There can be no doubt that the speed of internet connections matter and are critical to making good on delivering the services and information our communities need.

As a federal agency with a public service mission, IMLS has a unique vantage point. We are here to better understand how to best serve the public interest. We are not here to support one path forward but instead to provide an opportunity for a public hearing to examine a variety of points of view. And we look forward to hearing from our great lineup of panelists representing rural, tribal, and urban perspectives.

We will examine the broad public benefits of library broadband, analyze data on broadband use at public libraries, and hear about solutions that will bring high speed internet access to libraries.

So thank you very much and we'll now begin with a wonderful welcome by FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler. It gives me great pleasure to introduce the current FCC Chairman, Thomas Wheeler, who has graciously taken time to start things off for us this morning. We appreciate that so much.

For over three decades, Chairman Wheeler has been involved with new telecommunications networks and services, experiencing the revolution in telecommunications as a policy expert, an advocate, and a businessman.

As an entrepreneur, he started or helped start multiple companies, offering innovative cable, wireless, and video communications services.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, Chairman Wheeler has made it clear that he understand the importance and role of libraries. With his vast and diverse background on telecommunications and emerging technological issues, we are very fortunate to have him here with us today.

Please welcome Tom Wheeler.

>> TOM WHEELER: Thank you very much, Susan, and to the members of the board. Nice to see you all here. This is something very important and congratulations to - to the

Institute of Library and Museum Services for convening and for having this idea to help get this message out.

You know, Susan and everybody, there are - I am privileged to share the podium today with my friend Tom Power from the White House who has been a leading pusher, advocate for the kinds of changes that we have to be making to make sure that we're bringing the E-Rate program into the 21st Century.

And I am also joined by a couple of my colleagues who are intimately involved in this, Jonathan Chambers and Daniel Alvares (ph), and when you look for fingerprints on what the FCC is doing in terms of E-Rate reform, you'll find Jon and Dan's fingerprints all over it.

But there are also two other very important people in this audience and I think that their presence here today creates a construct for how we can discuss things.

Chairman Reed Hundt. I have the august responsibility of following in Reed's footsteps as Chairman of the FCC. And while there are many names that inevitably get attached to the E-Rate program, the present at the creation seminal name associated with that is - is Reed Hundt. There would be no E-Rate program without Reed Hundt and that is just a factual statement.

The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, is also here and as Susan said, he's got more goodies in his house down on Pennsylvania Avenue than any place else and - and over the years I have been privileged to - to hang around a lot of those goodies and hang around David.

He is a library guy to begin with, folks. He was stolen from the New York Public Library where he was running that great institution but what he has done at the National Archives is to open up the National Archives and so much of that concept of opening up means digitization.

And I want to give you a personal example of why what Reed and David have enabled can be transformative. I wrote a couple of books on the Civil War and the most recent was about Abraham Lincoln's use of the telegraph.

Thank goodness at the National Archives there sits Abraham Lincoln's handwritten telegrams. The Spielberg movie was a fabulous movie but they got the telegraph office scene wrong. Lincoln did not dictate his telegrams. He wrote them out in

longhand and thank God he did and thank God they are saved at the National Archives because it becomes a one degree of separation.

When you hold in your white gloved hand the piece of paper that Abraham Lincoln wrote on, there is one degree of separation that you feel from Abraham Lincoln and that is a privilege that a few researchers like I was privileged to have get.

But what David has done is to digitize all of those documents, not only the telegrams but the other great holdings of the National Archives so that there is one click between someone who wants to explore and Abraham Lincoln.

It used to be when I started my research on Lincoln's telegrams, I was using the microfilm copies of his telegrams and I'd get this, you know. Look at Susan -

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Oh yeah.

>> TOM WHEELER: Is going, oh, we all know that. You'd get this canister and you'd sit down at this clunky machine and you would go through each microfilm picture one by one. Now thanks to David, you can click and it is there.

So because people like David Ferriero digitize the product, the information, and because people like Reed Hundt made that digitized information available, that is why the work that we're talking about here today in terms of the importance of libraries is so incredibly key to - to what gets done because you know, as we're seeing in this room here, we're moving from stacks of books to online centers.

The library has always been the on ramp to the world of information and ideas and now that on ramp is at gigabit speeds. But you know, as you all know and as I am seeing as I travel across the country, libraries are playing a more and more and more important role in our communities as was pointed out earlier.

It is where Americans without computers go to get online. It's where students after school go to get online. It's where Americans go to apply for their VA benefits or apply for their healthcare or apply for their job.

And it's where librarians end up being the guide at the side as people make these kinds of digital explorations.

As a history buff of course I have always been interested in the role that Andrew Carnegie played in the library history of America. And one of the things that everybody always thinks, Andrew Carnegie, steel.

Andrew Carnegie was first a network guy. Andrew Carnegie started as a telegraph operator for the Pennsylvania Railroad and as a matter of fact, he was brought here during the Civil War and was responsible for stringing the telegraph line that went out towards Manassas. He didn't make it to Manassas before the battle but what we know - what Abraham Lincoln knew about what was going on at the Battle of First Manassas was as a result of Andrew Carnegie's work.

So it is appropriate that we're talking about libraries, about Carnegie's contribution in making libraries what they were in the 19th Century, and we come back to networks and that is why E-Rate modernization is so important.

You know, the program that we have is called the Schools and Libraries Program. We need to also start calling it the Libraries and Schools Program to make sure that we recognize and emphasize the important contribution of each of those institutions.

So what are we doing?

We are moving from supporting 20th Century technology to 21st Century high speed broadband technology. It's a reallocation of resources. Reallocations of resources are never easy and never pleasant but they're essential if we're to keep pushing forward.

We're moving to broadband to the person at the library. It's not just the external connection but it's how do you get using Wi-Fi to the individual in the library.

We're bringing the application and administrative process into the 21st Century as well by using the same kind of broadband tools and we're focusing on fiscal responsibility.

The key is not just more money although if more money is warranted, we will deal with that. But the key is money well spent by encouraging consortia, by creating longer support periods so you can have longer contracts with lower rates, and by establishing a system of reference pricing so that people know what is fair price, because we don't expect librarians to

be telecom experts and to be able to go out there and haggle with telecom companies. So how do we help in that regard? And also to have limited pilot programs that test new approaches that could benefit all.

So Susan, we're really grateful to you and to IMLS for launching this dialog today. The timing is perfect. Our public notice is out now and we will shortly be releasing our plan for 2015 and forward. There is an incredible distinguished list of participants that you have lined up today. But I want to just return before I sit down, I want to return to the historical roots here for a second.

Andrew Carnegie built 2,500 libraries in a public/private partnership in the 19th Century. He defined information access for millions and millions of people for over a century. We stand on the precipice of being able to have the same kind of seminal impact on the flow of information and ideas in the 21st Century. That is why the work that you all are doing is so important. That's why the reform and modernization of the E-Rate program is so essential. And that's why today's hearing and the kinds of topics that you're going to explore are so helpful to those of us who are trying to work on just how do we seize on this incredible moment of historic significance.

Thank you for all that you are doing.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Thank you. Oh, thank you so much, Chairman Wheeler. That was inspiring and I just have to say that I know librarians don't particularly want to haggle with telecom folks but we haggle with everything that we do and we do a pretty good job. So librarians out here, are we pretty good hagglers?

Woohoo.

Alright, just to set the record straight.

Also, we're excited to have Chris Jowaisas coming to speak soon from the Gates Foundation and I have to say, the Gates Foundation when I talk about Andrew Carnegie, and I often talk about Andrew Carnegie when I speak, I also characterize Bill and Melinda Gates and the Gates Foundation as our 21st Century Andrew Carnegie. So libraries have been very lucky to have these wonderful public/private partnerships over the years.

So I am now very pleased to introduce Thomas Power, the Chief of Staff of the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration who is currently on detail to the Office of Science and Technology Policy at the White House as Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Telecommunications.

Mr. Power provides managerial and policy support for a wide range of agency activities including internet policy making spectrum and recovery act broadband grants program and was one of the first individuals who really encouraged us to get - to have this hearing and make it happen.

So welcome, Tom.

>> TOM POWER: Susan. Thank you, Susan. Good morning everybody and thank you, board. Thank you IMLS for having this - for having this hearing. It's a real thrill to share the dais with Chairman Wheeler. I think he is one of my favorite - maybe my favorite policy person in DC. He is doing such a great job - well, second favorite. I do work in the White House.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Oh yeah.

>> TOM POWER: You never know who's watching.

>> SUSAN HILDRETH: Broadcast live.

>> TOM POWER: So you know, we're really trying to help here through the Connect Ed program and the E-Rate program and Chairman Wheeler has identified some of the ways forward.