



## Using Libraries to Bridge the “Digital Divide”

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## Inclusive Libraries Initiative – Partners

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- Northeast Community Board for Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD)
- Athabasca University
- Eight libraries in Northeast Alberta
- Northern Lights Library System



## Inclusive Libraries Initiative -- Participating Libraries

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- St. Paul
- Westlock
- Barrhead
- Athabasca
- Lac la Biche
- Bonnyville
- Whitecourt
- Cold Lake



## Local public libraries provide . . .

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- Access to information
- Access to information and community technology (ICT)
- Natural supports for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Capacity as an inclusive community information resource to support marginalized patrons



## Marginalized patrons include . . .

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- People with disabilities
- Recent immigrants and those for whom ESL
- Aboriginal people
- People living in poverty



## Marginalized people lack . . .

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- computer equipment
- Internet connectivity
- basic computer skills
- reading ability



## Enhanced access to ICT

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helps marginalized people. . .

- Get more and better information
- Increase social network
- Overcome barriers to formal and informal e-learning
- Bridge the "digital divide" that prevents them from full inclusion in our knowledge-based society



## Digital Divide

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"inequalities in access to the Internet, extent of use, knowledge of search strategies, quality of technical connections and social support, ability to evaluate quality of information ..."

(DiMaggio et al., 2001)

## Digital Divide is created by

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- Income and educational level
- Geography
- Race and ethnicity
- Gender
- Age
- Non-English speaking
- Disability (“2nd Digital Divide”)

## Inclusive Libraries Initiative

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- Assistive technology
- Individualized support
- Community-based promotion strategies





## Elements of the Project

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- Resource and readiness analysis
- Web site – “*Building an Inclusive Library*” (<http://www.inclusivelibraries.com>)
- “Top-down” Approach
  - Liaison with Library Boards
  - Letter of Agreement



## Elements of the Project

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- Assistive Workstations
- Community-based events – e.g., Pizza night orientations, “E-mail Monday,” computer classes
- Training and development for
  - Librarians, library staff
  - Board members
  - Support workers

## Elements of the Project

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- Design and word mark  
“Everybody's @ the Library”
- Promotional materials
  - Posters and buttons
  - Design for web site



## Assistive Workstations

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## Assistive Workstation Components

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- Adjustable hydraulic table (to accommodate wheelchair users)
- computer, standard mouse and keyboard
- 19" flat-screen monitor
- Speakers and headphones

## Input Devices

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- two assistive keyboards (one with large keys and one with extra-large coloured keys)



## Input Devices

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- Trackball



## Input Devices

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- Joystick (foam ball, flip switch)



## Input Devices

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- “Big buddy” buttons



## Software

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- Read & Write Gold (Texthelp)  
text-to-speech and word prediction functions
- WordQ  
easy to use text-to-speech function (English and French versions)
- Zoomtext  
magnification and text-to-speech functions



## Outcomes

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- Greater ICT use in general
- Greater ICT use by individuals with developmental disabilities
- More use of ICT by existing patrons with disabilities.
- More new patrons with disabilities



## Contact

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