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**Bridging the digital divide:
libraries providing access for all?**

**How and Why Public Libraries Can,
Should and Do Facilitate the Use of the Internet
by the Homeless: A Look at the Programs,
Barriers and Political Climate**

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ABSTRACT

The use of the Internet by library patrons in public libraries has risen rapidly. Bertot et al. (2006) report that as of 2006, 98.9% of U.S. public library branches were connected to the Internet and 98.4% of these offered public Internet access. The number of homeless in the United States and other countries has also increased, with numbers ranging from an estimated 334,744 sheltered homeless on an average day in the United States to between 200,000 and 300,000 in Canada. When including the "hidden homeless" this number rises to as high as 800,000 in Great Britain. Public libraries can and do provide comfortable and safe daily environments for many of the homeless. In addition, these libraries can support and encourage the efforts of the homeless to use the Internet to find and apply for jobs, to stay connected to friends and family, to create websites and blogs, to do homework, and to do research on such topics as health and housing. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of the public library in providing Internet access to the homeless. Four research questions are posed: 1. How and why do the homeless use the Internet; 2. What are the barriers to this access; 3. How can public libraries facilitate the use of the Internet by the homeless; and, 4. How does the political climate affect the use of the Internet by the homeless.

KEYWORDS: Public libraries; Internet Access; Poor People's Library Policy; Homeless; Library and Information Science; LIS Education.

1. BACKGROUND

A brief visit to most public libraries in the U.S. will demonstrate the popularity of the Internet, as library users line up to use computer terminals to check their email, shop online, look for or apply for jobs, update their social networking sites, seek medical or business information and a myriad of other tasks. Children, too, are enthusiastic users of the Internet, as they do research for homework, play online games and keep in touch with their friends. In addition, "an emerging and increasingly significant service that public libraries provide involves e-government – that is, access to, use of, and instruction related to federal, state, and local government information, forms, and services" (Bertot, McClure, Wright, et al., 2008). In fact, as McClure and Jaeger (2008) point out, the Internet is more significant to libraries than has been any technology since the book - changing social roles, expectations, and impacts of libraries in the eyes of

patrons, communities and governments.

The extent of the impact of the Internet is thoughtfully examined in "The American Library Association Office for Information Technology Policy Public Library Connectivity Project" (Weingarten et al., 2007). Basing their study on the idea that "public libraries in the United States have become crucial instruments for public participation in the global knowledge network" ("Problem Statement and Overview," p.1), the authors outline the many ways library patrons use the Internet. They emphasize the importance of Internet access for poor and minority communities and stress that a high-speed connection is critical for many of the functions that are being performed. The role of the public library is well defined by the following statement:

It is important in considering this broader definition of access to consider dimensions of support beyond simply access to technology. The library is usually the only place in the community where people can get free access to (1) computers; (2) connectivity to the Internet; and (3) someone to help them use it. That is, libraries provide reference and navigation services that guide users to the credible and usable information they need. Many offer training on computer and information navigation skills. Public libraries are also beginning to put important community information and local cultural resources on their sites, so they are a source of information and content as well as an access point. ("Libraries Serve Increasingly Critical Roles in the Knowledge Society", p.3)

Some users of the Internet and other library services are people without permanent homes. This group, described as "homeless", "street people" or even "houseless" - as one poet called himself - has been the source of conflicting views, misunderstandings, programs and policies among librarians and library users. The library literature that addresses issues related to this topic cover a range, from putting the homeless in the same category as problem patrons to advocating for more programs and partnerships. The feelings can be intense. A *Library Journal* piece about a mentally ill homeless man with a strong odor quotes the librarian as saying: "The library is not a shelter nor is it a social agency"(James, 1993). Others take a different approach, pointing out, as Julie Murphy (1999) puts it: "Homeless people can be smelly and mentally disturbed, but...non-homeless people can also be

smelly and mentally disturbed.” In keeping with this approach, some libraries, like the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., library in San Jose, California, have partnered with local agencies to provide such offerings as computer classes and storytimes at local shelters, and have actively encouraged the homeless population to attend library programs, including computer classes, résumé workshops, literacy classes and more (Collins, Howard, & Miraflor, 2009). This proactive approach to meeting the needs of the homeless exemplifies the American Library Association’s (ALA) commitment to serving all patrons. As is stated in the ALA Policy 61, “Library Services for the Poor”: “The American Library Association promotes equal access to information for all persons, and recognizes the urgent need to respond to the increasing number of poor children, adults, and families in America... it is crucial that libraries recognize their role in enabling poor people to participate fully in a democratic society, by utilizing a wide variety of available resources and strategies.”

What is perhaps most surprising about the use of the Internet by the homeless is the critical part it can play in their lives. The stereotypes of this group are certainly challenged by people like Charles Pitts who lives under a bridge and has accounts on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, in addition to the Internet forum he runs on Yahoo. Or “aspiring computer programmer” Paul Weston, who is working on a computer program while living in a homeless shelter (Dvorak, 2009). In addition, there are homeless online forums, like the San Francisco Homeless Resource, which offer links to resources like the Employment Development Department (EDD) Career Link, the local legal association and a site that provides information about health care for homeless veterans. These are only a few examples of ways the homeless have embraced this popular and increasingly essential technology.

2. THE HOMELESS POPULATION AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries provide a quiet, clean, comfortable and safe place for adults, teens and children alike, whether or not they have a permanent place to live. In fact, there is no way for a public librarian to be able to distinguish those who are homeless from those who aren’t, unless the information is volunteered. A basic tenet of librarianship is privacy and this extends to gathering personal information about library patrons, including whether or not they have a permanent address. As a library administrator pointed out, library staff can *think* they know who is homeless but there is no way to know for sure - “they may be making judgments

which aren’t necessarily accurate” (personal communication, 2009). Despite the widespread public opinion that those who are homeless look and act a particular way, the facts don’t support this. In an interview with library professionals, one librarian described a well-dressed professional-looking woman who quietly read the *Wall Street Journal* at the library. It was only through private conversations with the woman that the librarian knew she was homeless.

Another way library staff members may discover the living arrangements of a library patron is if that patron either gets a library card or wants to use the Internet. Most public libraries require a form of identification and a reliable address for library patrons who want to check out library materials and, in some cases, for those who want to use the Internet. Some urban libraries will accept the use of a shelter address but they may restrict the library card in some way, usually by limiting the number of materials that can be checked out. An urban southeastern U.S. library instituted this restriction after discovering that library patrons who use the shelter address checked out 48% of lost media items. This kind of special policy is at odds with the public library’s commitment to equal access for all library users and is an ongoing struggle for librarians, as they balance the information needs of the majority, the accountability of using public funds, and the social responsibility of serving everyone. One librarian described this challenge well, as she talked about having background information on library users who may have special needs. Although gathering and retaining this information goes against the training of public librarians, it can sometimes make it possible for the librarians to provide appropriate and much-needed services. The example she gave was of a man who lost his library privileges. He had been recently released from prison, he wasn’t taking his medications, and he behaved inappropriately in the public restroom. After a certain amount of time passed, he was allowed to return to the library, because the library staff had an understanding of his situation and his needs. The librarian pointed out the disparity between the expectation of privacy and the need for the librarians to understand this particular situation so they could best serve this one library patron.

Hodgetts, Stolte, Chamberlain et al. (2008) look at the effects of public libraries on the lives of homeless men, who identify “the library as a space for safety and social participation” (Abstract). Their article reiterates information gathered from library administrators, who commented on how much networking the homeless seemed to be doing at the library. In particular, like other library patrons,

homeless people use social networking sites, including online dating services and chat rooms. One interviewee relayed an anecdote about a homeless man who was in tears because someone had just broken up with him on an Internet dating site.

Most of the programs, services and materials offered by public libraries are appropriate for everyone, whether or not they have a permanent residence. For families with children, there are storytimes, homework centers, teen groups, sing-alongs, craft programs, books, CDs, DVDs, computers and more. In addition, for adults there are employment resources, literacy classes, educational and recreational programs, as well as computers and Internet access. All librarians interviewed stressed that the programs they offered were not geared toward any particular group, including the homeless, but were instead open to everyone. This approach is typical of public libraries and falls in line with their mission of equal access for all. As one interviewee commented, her library system provides services to the homeless but only in the context of providing service to everyone (personal communication, 2009).

However, it is interesting to note that some libraries are beginning to consider community collaborations that specifically serve the homeless. The San Jose program previously mentioned is an example of the kind of outreach that could be initiated by libraries or other agencies in collaboration with libraries (Collins et al., 2009). This approach fits well with the current popular trend in libraries toward what has been referred to by some as “community building” (McCook, 2000). This concept includes working collaboratively toward a shared vision that will enhance and improve a community. McCook looks at community building as an essential part of the role libraries can and do play in their local areas. She points out that although libraries contribute to the welfare of the community, “libraries, like schools, are generally viewed as community services that are passive participants rather than proactive partners in broad visioning initiatives” (2000, p.14).

This dichotomy is at the heart of the challenges public libraries face as they try to serve the needs of all their patrons. As the economy continues to force more and more people out of their homes and jobs, public libraries have become de facto shelters, community hubs, and job resource and computer training centers, while continuing to provide the same programs, services and materials. Yet they aren’t given adequate funding, support or acknowledgement of the critical importance of their contributions. They aren’t invited to participate in the civic planning that is geared toward the amelioration of community issues and as a consequence they are stretched thin as they struggle to find a way to

continue their work. Because of this lack of support, librarians may resist providing targeted programs, such as Internet classes at homeless shelters, for their homeless patrons.

For these librarians, the topic of homelessness may be less a matter of outreach and more a matter of what one librarian interviewed called “in-reach” (personal communication, 2009) - dealing with issues as they come up at the library. As she put it, this is done “partly for our own good, partly to help.” An example she gave was that due to “major drug and alcohol use in the restrooms,” the restrooms are now kept locked and the key must be requested. While this kind of coping may be all that’s possible when libraries have limited funds and no voice in the community discussion of homelessness, it does little to address the actual problems.

There *are* public libraries that have taken a more active role in addressing the needs of their low-income and homeless patrons. In her book *Poor People and Library Services*, Karen Venturella (1998) describes several of these. As she says: “Some programs focus on referral, some programs bring books to shelters, some provide job assistance and referral...” (p.32). One example Venturella gives is a “Libraries for the Future proposal for public libraries to play a supportive role in providing preventive health care information and referral services for homeless women, families and children” (p.32). Venturella is passionate in her conviction that libraries have the power to change lives, affirming that librarians should be involved in improving their communities, especially by forging coalitions. As she says: “It is my personal and professional belief that libraries and librarians, whether working in a building called a library or in the street or through a neighborhood coalition or community group, need to address the poverty that pervades society” (p.33).

3. BARRIERS

Every day there are exceptions to rules in public libraries - fines are not collected, reference books are allowed to leave the library, lost items are not paid for - because public libraries must be able to see beyond their rules and regulations and consider the individuals they serve. These adjustments must be made for everyone, including those without permanent addresses or access to health services or ways to maintain their personal hygiene. However, which rules are bent and who benefits from this rule bending is inconsistent and appears to be weighted in favor of those who are considered more socially acceptable. Sandy Berman has pointed out consistently and vehemently that public libraries need to take a closer look at how their policies and

attitudes act as barriers to service for those who are poor or homeless. In his foreword to Venturella's book *Poor People and Library Services* (1998), Berman says:

The simple truth is that poor people do not enjoy the same access to library resources and information that people with adequate incomes do...It is a lie to talk about "free public libraries" and "equality of service" when large parts of the population can't afford to get to the library, can't afford video and other fees, can't afford fines..." (p.3)

Besides fines and fees, other barriers to access for homeless library patrons include odor and bag policies. Odor policies allow library staff to ask library patrons with strong odors to leave the library until they no longer have an offensive smell. It has been pointed out by library employees that this policy applies to people who use large amounts of perfume as well as those who may not have access to showers or baths. But the reality is that people with resources can go home and take a shower, while those who are living on the street probably can't. The library administrators who were interviewed stressed that policies like these are applied to everyone equally, but there may be an underlying message. An example of this is the Houston Public Library's revised library regulations, which disallow bathing, sleeping and shaving in the city's facilities, as well as having strong odor: "Patrons with offensive body hygiene that constitutes a nuisance to others will not be allowed inside the library." As the article points out, some Houston citizens considered these revisions "a veiled attempt at prohibiting homeless people from using the libraries" ("Houston News," April 27, 2005).

Bag policies are similar. Many public libraries have instituted policies prohibiting library patrons from bringing in large or multiple bags. According to one library interviewee, this is a safety policy, in case of sudden evacuation of the building. Unfortunately, this rule means that people who are homeless and who have to carry their possessions with them at all times can't take advantage of the resources the library offers and keep track of their belongings at the same time. Both of these issues - odor and baggage - are excellent examples of the kinds of policies Berman opposes and the complex challenges libraries face in providing library service to the homeless.

Another barrier to library use by people who are homeless is discomfort with using a library. Low literacy skills and the embarrassment that may come along with it can make the public library seem like an

intimidating place. This holds true for first-time library users, too. This barrier exists for anyone, of course, but it can be a considerable hindrance for those who need specific information that may help them improve their lives, such as literacy classes, job training, local social services, food pantries, and health resources. Outreach by public libraries to shelters, social services offices and other appropriate locations could help overcome this barrier. In some cases, providing the service directly at this alternate location may be the ideal.

4. INTERNET USE

Historically, when a public library is mentioned, people immediately think of reading and books. But with the advent of computers and the Internet, public libraries are able to offer a powerful tool for gathering information, staying connected and the myriad other resources offered on the Worldwide Web. The connection between the needs of homeless people and the Internet is in many ways like the connection between the Internet and those who have permanent homes. It can be used for personal, educational and business reasons, such as selling or buying items, watching movies or television programs, taking an online class, researching a topic, playing games and much more. Internet users, homeless or not, create websites, stay in touch with their friends, research travel or simply entertain themselves with far-flung statements that may or may not be based on reality.

But for someone who is homeless the Internet can provide a base, a place he or she can always be reached - as long as there is access. Having a free email account, created and accessed for free at a public library, can make all the difference to someone who may not know where he or she is going to spend the night. Creating a web page or a blog - also for free and also at the public library - gives yet another source of connection and permanence in a world that may feel unpredictable.

Mike Davidson (2001) does an excellent job of presenting the importance of the Internet to those who are homeless. In his article "The Homeless and the Internet" he writes honestly and directly about the use of the Internet. The section called "Why learn to use the Internet?" begins with the answer: "In a word, parity. Whether one's circumstances are temporary or semi-permanent, the Internet can help to level the playing field by giving one a voice and access to massive amounts of information." He goes on to stress the power of the Internet as it helps to create ties with society and perhaps help in breaking out of the condition of homelessness. The only barrier, he tells his audience, is "learning how to use it effectively...The Internet has opened its playing field

to anyone - including the homeless.” In this article, Davidson includes tips and definitions to help novices understand what one can do on the Internet (check the weather, look for maps, etc.), how to get an email account, what a newsgroup is, how to join homeless discussion groups and more. He encourages readers to use public libraries for free access to the Internet and provides a link to 500 libraries with Internet access. Although many of the links in his article no longer work, including the public library one, the information is inspiring and is itself a great example of how the Internet can be of help to people who are homeless.

“The Alliance to End Homelessness” in Ottawa, Canada also has information on homelessness and using the Internet. Resources on their website include answers to questions like “Where can I get free Internet access in Ottawa?” “How can I get a free e-mail account?” and “How can I connect my computer to the Internet for free?” Again, public libraries are mentioned as the first place to access the Internet for free, although interestingly their link to the libraries also doesn’t work. However, the information is helpful and there is a link at the bottom of the page to the “Homeless People’s Discussion Network,” which has ongoing and archived discussions on a wide range of topics that relate to homelessness, including an anti-immigrant piece and a link to an article about the large influx of homeless people into the shelters in Bangor, Maine. That piece, written by Eric Russell of the “Bangor Daily News” (n.d.) contains a poignant quote from one homeless man, Ray, who is described as a “sort of homeless ringleader who jokes often with his fellow homeless and takes liberal swills from a jug of vodka and orange juice.” When asked what the worst part of being homeless is, he answers that he misses his kids. Sometimes, he says, he goes to the public library and looks them up on Facebook just so he can see their photographs.

The “EverybodyOnline” initiative in Glasgow, Scotland is geared toward addressing the issues of homelessness and helping homeless people develop new skills and gain benefits from online services. In partnership with other organizations, it was launched by Citizens Online, “a charity that campaigns for internet, information and communication technology for all,” and BT Scotland (Citizens Online). Their emphasis is on including digital technology in all aspects of programs for working with homeless peoples in such areas as “employment, skills development, resettlement and housing” (Citizens Online). This far-sighted program has taken a realistic look at the connection between Internet usage and the skills needed in the 21st century. One of their tasks is to demonstrate to

homeless people the relevance of the Internet to their lives for uses such as email and access to online services. But the larger goal is to help “homeless people integrate back into mainstream society, via education and skills which increase employability and new information and communication channels.” As Catherine Jamieson, the head of Glasgow Homelessness Partnership, explains:

Our emphasis is to ensure that homeless service users, especially those who have been homeless a long time, have access to training, education and employment in the longer term. We already know that access to IT can help address literacy skills and can lead to service users accessing further education, training and employment. (Citizens Online)

Christl Dabu’s article “Bridging the Digital Divide” gives an in-depth look at the power of computers and the Internet in the lives of the homeless in Toronto, Canada (February 2, 2003). The people described in the article use the Internet in a variety of places, including the local public libraries. Dabu emphasizes the importance of computer training, and she quotes a volunteer computer instructor: “You can sit there with the world’s greatest computers,” he says, “but if you don’t have someone to teach it, you’re pretty much at a loss” (“The Barriers to Digital Access”).

Dabu also gives examples of success stories of homeless people who have found employment through the Internet. One man found a job with a dot.com company, another is creating an accounting program he hopes to sell, and yet another is planning to take online courses to fulfill his dream of becoming a publisher.

In an article about how homeless people are using the Internet, Jacob Ogles (June 22, 2006) describes Kevin Barbieux, a homeless man who maintains a popular blog called “The Homeless Guy.” Barbieux talks about his social anxiety issues and the freedom conversing with people online has given him. Ogles points out that Barbieux maintains his blog in “one-hour stints at a public library terminal.”

5. INFORMAL INTERVIEWS

Preliminary to formal research, the authors interviewed staff from two urban libraries in the United States, one in the west coast and one in the southeast. The interviews were informal conversations, based on a list of questions and probes developed after reviewing available articles. Of particular note was the degree of agreement among

the interviewees that, while they are willing to talk about serving the homeless population, they resist any efforts to blatantly identify any of their library users as homeless. This stance is understandable and fits well with the library culture of privacy, but it is worth considering another approach, since that one may make it difficult to develop programs and outreach to this group.

The questions asked were an effort to understand more fully how public libraries are addressing the needs of the homeless library patrons they serve. From these two interviews, it appears that libraries are struggling to balance the requirements of their homeless patrons with the safety and comfort of library users in general. Some of the approaches being used include having a social worker available on the premises, creating volunteer opportunities by having some of the homeless monitor the public restrooms, and helping staff become more comfortable with all library users.

In relation to the Internet in particular, the interviewees from both libraries commented on the importance of having Internet computer stations that don't require a library card number or other official numbers for users to log on. At one of the libraries these are called Express Computers and the librarian called them "a real life-saver"(personal communication, 2009).

6. POLITICAL CLIMATE

An excellent example of the political climate surrounding the homeless in general and their use of public libraries in particular is a *Newsweek* article by Tony Dokoupil (2008). Although Dokoupil makes a valid point about the drain on public libraries as they strive to negotiate the expectation that they serve all people, the emphasis on the more challenging aspects of coping with difficult behaviors appears to validate the general public perception that those who are homeless are necessarily mentally ill or drug users. Dokoupil points out: that "More than 100 homeless people a day hang out in the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington D.C., while librarians in Las Vegas, Detroit, and Portland, Ore., estimate similar crowds." Presenting the homeless as "crowds" and emphasizing the strain on staff makes it sound as if public libraries in urban areas are dangerous and unpleasant places to visit. An urban library administrator noted this attitude when she commented on what people seem to believe about the main library: "What do you mean that's the main library? Nobody uses that library but homeless people" (personal communication, 2009). She also gave an example of a library patron complaining about a homeless man with Tourette's who was quite loud. But, she pointed out, this man wasn't homeless

and he was working while in the library.

Hodgetts and Hodgetts (2006) address this issue in their article "Life in the Shadow of the Media." After presenting a news story about the health of those who sleep in the rough, they point out: "This extract relies upon a common news media characterization of homeless people as being diseased, passive, voiceless and overly reliant upon charitable assistance and management" (p.498). Add these common media portrayals to the fact that terms like homeless, street person, houseless or living in the rough all carry a certain stigma, and it is easy to understand why some homeless people, especially those who are newly homeless, may be reluctant to disclose their living situations. In addition, this negative impression can impede efforts to allocate funds and provide much-needed resources for the population.

It is difficult to predict how the current economic crisis will affect the public view of those who are homeless. As more people unexpectedly lose their jobs or become homeless, the political climate could shift. Personally knowing someone who is or was without a permanent address can go a long way toward creating empathy, understanding and respect.

7. IMPORTANCE OF STUDY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed the connection between those who are homeless and Internet usage in public libraries. Directing people at homeless sites to public libraries for free access to the Internet is a critical step, but it is dismaying to see that, at least on the two sites visited, the links to the lists of libraries are no longer functional. This may simply be a coincidence but it may also be a small example of the lack of acknowledgement of the crucial role public libraries can play in the lives of those who are homeless. The contributions libraries can make are larger than simply providing a warm, dry and safe place. Public librarians can reach out to community agencies and offer to work together, along with the homeless, to use the Internet to address issues of homelessness. Libraries are perfectly situated to do this because they were created to meet the information needs of their communities and they have the ability, the expertise and the mission to do so. However, the logistics and the strain of coping with a population with needs beyond those of the majority of library users have created a negative image of homeless people for both library staff and patrons. Efforts toward including public libraries in community building, by creating community coalitions of all agencies involved in the wellbeing of the public, would be of great help to the libraries as well as those they serve.

The Internet is the present and future for communities. Facilitating its use by those who are homeless is a logical and critical contribution libraries can and should make.

8. VALUE OF PAPER AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This paper is of particular value to practitioners, administrators and educators in the field of library and information science. As modern society comes to depend more and more on the Internet for the provision of essential information related to such topics as housing, government, jobs and education, it is incumbent on public librarians in particular to make sure all their library patrons have ready access to these resources. This study can provide background and supporting information for necessary funding, as well as an impetus for the provision of these services. It is also suggested that educators and library administrators use the research as background in the training of librarians who will provide services to the homeless. It is hoped this study will help dispel myths and stereotypes, and enable librarians to have a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of this population.

Future research on the part of the authors will include a focus group of homeless individuals, an online library listserv survey and in-depth long interviews with library and homeless shelter directors. Examples of the questions that will be asked are included in Addenda A and B. The authors of this paper hope the information gathered will dispel preconceptions about homeless people, demonstrate the importance of removing barriers to library service, and encourage Internet use by *all* library patrons.

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Addendum A

Sample of Online Survey to Library Listservs

1. What is the size of your library's service area?
2. Are you aware of homeless people using any of your library services?
3. How many public use Internet computers do you have at your library?
4. How many years have you been providing public Internet access?
5. Are you aware of homeless people using the Internet at your library?
6. Do you have a special system or policy in place for library patrons who want to use the Internet but don't have a permanent address?
7. Do you do outreach to encourage or facilitate the use of the Internet by people who are homeless?
8. Examples of outreach we do that is intended to encourage or facilitate the use of the Internet by those who are homeless include:
9. Are you aware of homeless people using the following services at your library?
 - Storytimes
 - Meetings
 - Reference
 - Other _____
10. Do you have programs in place that target library patrons who are homeless?
11. The programs we have target the following:
 - Families with children
 - Working adults
 - Unemployed adults
 - Teens
 - Other
12. Please describe a successful program and why you considered it successful.
13. The number of people served by this program was about
14. Please describe an unsuccessful program and why you considered it unsuccessful.
15. When referring to those who don't have a permanent address, we use the term:
16. Are you familiar with the term "hidden homeless"?
17. As far as policies or programs, do you distinguish between those who are chronically homeless and those who are temporarily or newly homeless?
18. The challenges of working with this population include:
19. Please describe any impact working with this population has had on your library (staff, library patrons, others):

20. Have you received complaints from either staff or library patrons about the use of the library by people who are homeless?
21. Please describe any benefits you have experienced from working with this population.
22. What are the perceived challenges of working with this population?
23. Have you consulted other libraries or library literature for ideas in ways your library can work with people who are homeless?
24. Please give examples of outside resources you have used:
25. Please provide any suggestions you may have on the public library use of the Internet by those who are homeless.

Addendum B

Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Tell us about your use of the public library.
 - Do you use the library?
 - In what ways do you use the library?
2. Tell us about your use of the Internet.
 - Do you use the Internet?
 - Where do you use the Internet?
 - How do you use the Internet - for what kinds of information or what purposes?
 - What obstacles have you encountered in using the Internet?
3. Describe ways the public library has helped you in the use of the Internet. If you use the Internet in another environment, what kinds of assistance - if any - do you receive?
4. Describe ways the public library could better help you in the use of the Internet. (Probe: For example, hours of service, choice of search engines, guidance on choice of online resources.)
5. Describe ways the public library has made it more difficult for you to use the Internet. (Probe: For example, hours of service, limited time use, sign-up procedures.)
6. Additional comments on this topic?