Collective Leadership for Collaborative Community Action: A New Framework for Library Engagement around Digital Literacy

Kirstin C. Phelps, kphelps@illinois.edu, Graduate School of Library & Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Problem Statement & Big Question
Public libraries have many innovative ideas, but leadership is necessary to implement and sustain effective initiatives. How can we leverage collective leadership to empower and prepare public libraries to better serve their communities’ digital literacy needs?

Collective Leadership Framework
Sustainable, successful, community-focused digital literacy programming requires collaboration and engagement of multiple stakeholders.

- By employing a framework of collective leadership, DILP:
  - Moves beyond consumption of digital literacy technologies
  - Prepares stakeholders to contribute their unique knowledge, skills, and abilities when and where needed to advance community goals
  - Engages stakeholders in the process for increased sustainability

Digital Innovation Leadership Program (DILP)
DILP provides an innovative framework for public engagement around digital literacy programming that utilizes a collective leadership model to encourage collaborative partnerships among public libraries, community anchor institutions and private industry organizations.

Created through a partnership with Illinois Extension, DILP is developing and implementing a sustainability program to build digital literacy and use of digital technologies statewide. DILP takes a sociotechnical approach that blends technology, people, and community context while integrating values of play, tinkering, computational thinking, design thinking, creativity and inclusion. The goal is to help develop essential 21st Century skills to foster economic and social development.

DILP uses a three-prong strategy to approach our goals of digital literacy education:

1. Digital Tech Hub provides access to a mobile Fab Lab to learn and play with new technologies around digital manufacturing, digital media production, and data analytics
2. Digital Literacy Training to build the number of individuals within communities with digital literacy skills
3. Capacity Building within communities to sustain digital literacy programming and ongoing education

DILP Toolkit
Our toolkit will provide stakeholders with the resources they need to address their community’s digital literacy needs. The toolkit will be offered through a Learning Management System: an online access point to share knowledge and resources among and across communities, provide ongoing educational training for digital literacy educators, and share other relevant resources.

The following components will be provided in the toolkit:
- Collective Leadership Framework to help groups understand how individuals can contribute to the leadership process of inter-organizational collaborations.
- Stakeholder Alignment helps communities identify where they converge in their thinking on digital literacy initiatives, and where there is divergence that could lead to potential tensions or conflict.
- Needs Assessment helps community groups learn how to identify their unique economic and social needs around digital literacy, as well as existing community resources to support such initiatives.
- User Acceptance Tools provides insight into the degree of user acceptance with different technologies, as well as levels of comfort or familiarity which may identify potential educational modules.

21st Century Skills Training and Resources provided by subject matter experts on topics such as: empathetic design, design thinking, marketplace literacy, digital literacy, demystifying technology, computational thinking, creativity, information literacy, among others.

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Key Terms
- Collective Leadership – an informal, distributed process where the responsibility for leadership is shared among team members (Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter & Keegan, 2012)
- Digital Literacy – the ability to use digital technology, communication tools or networks to locate, evaluate, use and create information (Digital Glossary of Terms)