Expanding Community Education through Libraries
RBDB Grant Final Report

March 31, 2016

Project Description:

> Expanding Community Education through Libraries (ExCEL) has been developed to improve digital literacy services in traditionally underserved rural communities by increasing the level of expertise among rural library staff.

Goals:

> ExCEL will better the lives of New Yorkers by increasing our public libraries' capacity to serve the digital literacy needs of their communities.

Evaluation of this, in part, was measured through increased digital literacy service offerings in the STLS region. Participation in the program by 12 of 15 primary target libraries and an additional 6 of 7 secondary target libraries indicates we had successful reach.

Final Outcomes:

> For learning to take place and new knowledge to be made, the training we provide must be interactive, relevant, and outcome oriented. ExCEL will not provide seminars, but rather workshops with tandem outcomes: participants will gain technical proficiency *and* participants will create a program based on this proficiency.

The ExCEL program has held 10 full day workshop sessions with participation at one or more workshops by 18 of our target libraries, 18 STLS member libraries, and 30 library directors and staff. Of the participating libraries, half have conducted digital literacy programs since attending the ExCEL workshop.

STLS has purchased and begun work on a Learning Management System for access to the workshop curricula and the resulting participant products to make all outcomes available libraries everywhere. As an additional resource for libraries that participated in the ExCEL program, we have purchased and will deliver library copies of *"Is This Thing On?": A Friendly Guide to Everything Digital for Newbies, Technophobes, and the Kicking and Screaming* by Abby Stokes.

The experience of one of the many librarians and staff who had never presented any digital literacy programming at their home libraries who implemented what they learned at ExCEL:

> *The program was set for an hour, but lasted two hours. They just didn't want to leave!*

There is a hunger in our region for local expertise in digital literacy issues. The ExCEL program was an excellent start to build local capacity to assist patrons and STLS is committed to continuing the work. Thank you for the funding that launched this!