**** Sample Letters to the Editor

*A letter to the editor of a local newspaper is an effective way to voice an opinion to local policymakers and community leaders and to educate them about why they should support the library. The letter should draw a connection between a recent news story and a library's priority issues, or praise a recent article or editorial. Letters to the editor are a great way to involve supporters in communications efforts.*

*Below are two templates that may help your public library prepare its own letters to the editor regarding the use of public access computers and the Internet at the library. For maximum impact, your library should identify community members that can endorse the letters and work with those individuals to insert specific examples of how access to computers and the Internet at your library is benefiting them*

## Pre-Survey Letter to the Editor from a Library Leader

*This is a general letter to the editor template that a library supporter could submit to draw attention to your upcoming survey. The library director, a board member, or a member of your Friends group can author the letter.*

Dear Editor,

I want to draw our community’s attention to an important opportunity. From [YOUR SURVEY START DATE] to [YOUR SURVEY STOP DATE], the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] will be conducting a survey to better understand how our community benefits from free access to computers and the Internet at the library. This information will help the library improve its technology services and communicate the value of providing these services. The IMPACT Survey is anonymous, available in English and Spanish, and takes 10-15 minutes to complete.

People from all walks of life use library computers to perform routine and life-changing tasks, from emailing friends to finding jobs. A 2009 study conducted by the University of Washington reported that use of library technology had significant impact in four critical areas: employment, education, health, and making community connections. The study revealed that

* 40 percent of library computer users (an estimated 30 million people) received help with **employment needs**. Among these users, 75 percent reported they searched for a job online. Half filled out an online application or submitted a resume.
* 37 percent focused on **health issues**. 82 percent of these users used the computers to learn about a disease, illness, or medical condition. One-third sought out doctors or health care providers and about half followed up by making appointments for care.
* 42 percent received help with **educational needs**. Among these users, 37 percent (an estimated 12 million students) used their local library computer to do homework.
* Library computers link patrons to their government, communities, and civic organizations. Sixty-percent of users – 43.3 million people – used a library’s computer resources to connect with others.

These are the national numbers. But in order for the library to meet our community’s technology needs and to demonstrate how providing these services make a difference, it’s important that we have this information at a local level. **Please** **support the library and help improve public technology services**. Go to the library website [LIBRARY WEBSITE ADDRESS] to fill out the IMPACT Survey or access it from one of the library’s public access computers.

[NAME]

[AFFILIATION]

[PHONE NUMBER]

*and the community.*

## Post-Survey Letter to the Editor from a Library Leader

*This is a general letter to the editor template that a library supporter could submit after your library has run the survey and received its report. Please make sure to feature information from your individual library report. The library director, a board member, or a member of your Friends group can author the letter.*

Dear Editor,

Recently, the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] conducted a survey to better understand how our community benefits from free access to computers and the Internet at the library. The survey builds on a report released by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, **Opportunity for All: How the American Public Benefits from Internet Access at U.S. Libraries** which showed that nearly one-third of Americans have used computers and wireless networks in public libraries to access the Internet. I would like to offer my perspective on how the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] is making a difference in our community through its technology resources.

The [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] offers computers, wireless Internet, training, and one-on-one help to people from all walks of life. Some patrons lack a computer or Internet access at home. Others use library computers in lieu of slow dial-up connections at home or because they need help finding reliable information. Through the recent survey, our community reported that in the past year, the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] has helped people [INSERT TOP USES FROM YOUR LIBRARY’S SURVEY REPORT, e.g. look for jobs, do homework, and find government information].

In today’s society, access to computers and the Internet determines the extent to which we are able to look for and use information, access services, connect with friends and family, and improve our lives in countless ways. The [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] plays a critical role in ensuring all members of our community are able to fully participate in the digital society. Unfortunately, the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY], like many others throughout the country, struggles to the necessary funding to keep up with the increasing technological needs of our community members. [INSERT CONCRETE BUDGET NEWS, if applicable.]

The future of our community depends on the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY]’s ability to sustain the quality technology services that provide opportunities for all people. Let’s make sure our library gets the support it needs to make this happen. Visit the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] to see how you can help.

[NAME]

[AFFILIATION]

[PHONE NUMBER]

## Letter to the Editor from a Patron (In response to a previous article / letter to the editor / survey announcement)

*This letter to the editor template can help a patron - who uses your library’s computers and has accomplished something important as a result - write a letter about the importance of providing Internet access at your library. For example, the letter could be written and submitted by a patron who: researched important personal health care information at the library; found a job using library computers; or was admitted to college after using library computers to research and apply to a school.*

*In addition to sharing a specific story, patrons might share how long they have been using library computers, why they started using them, and what makes the library a productive place for them to use computers.*

Dear Editor,

In response to your article, [NAME OF ARTICLE, DATE], congratulations are in order for both [YOUR CITY/TOWN] and the [YOUR PUBLIC LIBRARY] for their dedication to providing free, quality access to computers and the Internet. I am someone who uses library computers and benefits from this critical public resource.

[INSERT A PERSONAL STORY of how library computers have benefitted you.]

In today’s digital world, the Internet helps people find jobs, further their education, research important health issues, and share ideas. Our library’s technology services ensure that all residents of [YOUR CITY/TOWN] have access to such life-changing opportunities and information, regardless of their Internet connectivity at home.

I am proud to live in a community whose leaders understand the importance of libraries and the services they provide. Together, we can make sure that our library continues to have the support it needs to thrive.

[NAME]

[AFFILIATION]

[PHONE NUMBER]