

Public Library Support of College Literacy in Appalachia

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ABSTRACT

Library and information science literature frames education for adults through the lens of lifelong learning, not the lens of earning an academic degree or certificate. Agencies partner with school districts and state departments of education to “create and support use of data and evidence to improve academic outcomes for students” ([Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia](#), n.d.). However, the focus is on K-12 students. Public libraries – civic institutions with a track record for public trust, community building, and providing just-in-time services and programming – can be an important resource for adults hoping to go back and get it (i.e., a college degree) to move forward with their lives.

This poster presents initial findings from phase 1 of an IMLS-funded project. The research question guiding this project is: What affordances relevant to college literacy are available at public libraries for adult prospective students in Central Appalachia? This content analysis examined public library websites across 4 states (KY, TN, VA, WV) comprising the central region of Appalachia. This region has lower educational attainment and income rates and higher unemployment compared to other regions of Appalachia. Prospective students in Appalachia face barriers to advancing their education: academic under-preparedness, lack of information about college and financial aid, and few family members who attended college and can serve as advisors. Challenges have been identified related to adult students’ information experiences including, time constraints, discomfort asking for help, and unfamiliarity with technology to access information and resources. This is an information area in which public libraries must actively engage.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

public libraries; community engagement; education; information needs

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

adult learners; college literacy; Appalachia; rural communities