



The Council of State Archivists Supports Universal Broadband Access for All

Approved by the CoSA Board of Directors, February 27, 2019

“Like electricity a century ago, broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life. It is enabling entire new industries and unlocking vast new possibilities for existing ones. It is changing how we educate children, deliver health care, manage energy, ensure public safety, engage government, and access, organize and disseminate knowledge.”

National Broadband Plan, Federal Communications Commission, 2010

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is the membership association of the nation’s state, territorial and District of Columbia archives - institutions that document government, promote history, and secure citizen rights. CoSA joins with other national associations in asserting that access to the internet is increasingly essential for every citizen and resident. Yet, more than 30 million U.S. households do not, or cannot, use the internet at home, and more than 60 million United States residents lack digital readiness.

CoSA:

- supports the American Library Association (ALA,) the School, Health, and Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition, the Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA), and the National Association of Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) in supporting universal access to broadband.
- supports the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) modernization orders to ensure archives, libraries, state and local governments, health care providers, and schools have access to high-speed broadband connectivity.
- joins ALA, SHLB, and COSLA in supporting efforts to modernize the FCC's Lifeline program to close the homework gap.
- urges Congress and the FCC to improve rural and tribal broadband access.
- joins ALA in supporting an increase in the amount of unlicensed spectrum available to support access to archives and library technology services.
- joins NASCIO in its support for strengthening statewide wireless connectivity and implementing broadband technologies.
- calls for the FCC to work with states with current laws that may create barriers to broadband infrastructure investment, deployment, competition, and innovation.
- supports fostering competition in the provision of high-capacity broadband internet services.
- supports the provision of universal broadband access for all by the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States in 2026.

Further, CoSA believes that the gaps in digital opportunity disproportionately affect rural and low-income families, tribal communities, African Americans, Latinos, and those with disabilities. “The digital divide is most often found along socio-economic and cultural lines,” says CoSA President John Dougan, Missouri State Archivist.

"[Broadband] levels the playing field for rural- and small-town schools. Now students in places like Gravette, my hometown of 2,300, can get their hands on every bit of information that is available to students in Fayetteville and Little Rock. Geography no longer will dictate which Arkansans have access to learning and opens broad opportunities for many that previous generations haven't enjoyed."

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson, 2017

Archives, along with our public and school libraries, are addressing these gaps, helping to realize the vision of universal broadband adoption, and promoting the ability to use broadband technologies. But the vision is far from fully realized.

Archives and libraries provide internet access for those who lack home broadband, to support digital learning opportunities, resulting in expansion of home use of broadband through increased awareness of and confidence in online resources and services.

Every archives and modern library needs affordable, high-capacity broadband internet access. It is critical to their missions and operations. Visitors to archives and libraries use broadband to access digital collections, e-government services, legal information, distance learning, telemedicine, employment opportunities, and a host of other community services.

Archives and libraries offer public access to the internet, devices and digital collections, and archives and library professionals are continuously developing new digital content, e-learning services, and other tools that depend on unfettered access to the internet.

"Broadband infrastructure is no longer a "nice-to-have" amenity for American cities – it is a necessity. Broadband access and adoption help promoted economic development and social equity while promoting public health, public safety and educational opportunities for Americans around the country."

David Luna, Vice Mayor, Mesa, Arizona
National League of Cities Blog, May 17, 2017

Decision makers at the FCC, the National Telecommunications & Information Administration, the U.S. Congress, and the White House, should regard and rely upon archives and libraries as willing and vital participants who are prepared to help make broadband available for everyone.

About CoSA

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) is a nonprofit membership organization of the state and territorial government archives in the fifty states, five territories, and District of Columbia. Through collaborative research, education, and advocacy, CoSA provides leadership that strengthens and supports state and territorial archives in their work to preserve and provide access to government records. CoSA facilitates networking, information sharing, and project collaboration among its member organizations to help state and territorial government archives with their responsibilities for protecting the rights and historical documents of the American people.