

LIS 601: Information Perspectives and Contexts

POLICY PAPER ASSIGNMENT:

Improving Access to the Internet for All Citizens

Assignment due: November 14

This assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to demonstrate what you have learned about digital divides and access to the internet via the question of public broadband, a common public policy issue that faces information professionals. As part of this assignment, you will need to consider what your responsibility as an information professional may be for providing information and advocating on relevant public policy issues in general. In short, you are asked in this assignment to think deeply about an authentic contemporary information policy issue and discuss it in an engaging, well-researched, analytical, and concise paper.

Drawing upon your readings, small group discussions, course presentations, whole class discussions, and related work, you must create a 5-7-page policy report (not including works cited or bibliography) that could serve as the foundation for a thorough understanding of how a community can and should address improving broadband access for everyone, regardless of age, education, income, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. The following are items that must be included in your report:

You and the Community: You must select a real community to use as the background or setting for your paper, which will be the basis for a presentation on your findings. You should assume that you are gathering and presenting necessary information that your community's government and elected officials will need to make an informed decision regarding implementation of (or improvement of) broadband internet services to all citizens.

This should begin with a detailed description of this community, including its location, size, demographics, income levels, and access to free information in a variety of media. Describe what role you might have in this community as an information professional. Are you the director of the local public library? Do you work for the local cable company or as a grant writer for the city government? Are you a professor of library and information studies or media studies at the local college? Is there something else the reader needs to know to understand the background to your policy paper?

Your Audience: Assume that your audience is intelligent and interested, but they know very little about what has been characterized as the "municipal broadband debate." So far, the community has engaged in a general, informal, and mostly uninformed discussion of the issue, with a few very vocal advocates on both sides of the debate. You will be making a *formal and public presentation*, designed to help the community as a whole,

and policy makers in particular, decide whether or how to implement or improve broadband access for their citizens.

Your Analysis: You should lay out the pros and cons of different possible approaches to the project that the community is contemplating (installing broadband for the first time or improving the current internet access). You should identify the central issues that you think this community must consider. Various sides of the argument should be supported by examples from your research on the issue. You do not need to take a position in the paper, but you should be prepared to support a particular position if you should be asked to make a recommendation. Which means that you are prepared to fully present the different approaches to the issue, and you will have decided which option, given your professional perspective, will best provide internet access to the community.

Visualizations: You should include any charts, graphs, or tables that could support your findings. These should not be counted in the 5-7-page requirement for the paper.

Citations/References: You must document your findings with internal citations or footnotes as well as a bibliography of references cited. Your bibliography should not be counted in the 5-7-page requirement for the paper.

Mechanics and Format: Your paper should:

- Be double-spaced;
- Include page numbers;
- Have a descriptive title;
- Have your name and date on the first page;
- Use proper grammar;
- Be well-organized;
- Contain an introduction and conclusion.

Evaluation Criteria: Your paper will be judged /graded on the basis of the following factors:

- Suitability for the audience that you have defined.
- Clarity of your overview of the issue: Do you lay out all the factors that need to be considered?
- Persuasiveness: Is your argument concerning what the important issues are for the community in making a decision cogent and convincing?
- Effective marshalling of the information and evidence: Do you cite useful and appropriate studies, data, facts, etc.? Does the evidence support your claims?
- Writing and editing: Have you constructed a readable, grammatical, well-edited, and succinctly stated piece?