(cc) image via flickr courtesy of marygkosta

Background

Age: 67
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: White
Location: Flat Rock, MI
Technology: Feature phone, basic desktop computer, iPad Mini
Connectivity: Broadband internet

Key characteristics

- Middle-class blue collar retiree in a moderately rural area
- Has resources available to him but doesn't know how to make use of them

Robert Harris | Overwhelmed retiree

Retired auto worker has gadgets, but doesn't know how to use them

Robert worked at the Ford/Mazda plant in Detroit exurb of Flat Rock up until his retirement at the age of 65. His wife is still working as a teacher at the local elementary school. He has two adult children, and three grandchildren between them.

They do have a computer, though it's mostly used by his wife for word-processing on materials for school. His son and daughter-in-law gave him an iPad Mini for his birthday so that he could read his favorite Patterson and Grisham novels on it, and use FaceTime or Skype to see his grandkids. As a result, he and his wife got internet through their cable company, but he hadn't installed any new apps on his iPad, and doesn't even know what a web browser is.

Motivations

- Feels somewhat isolated in retirement; wants to remain connected to former coworkers and knows that technology is the means to do so.
- Wants to see photos & video of his kids and grandkids, and thinks it's really amazing that he can have a live, face-to-face Skype video chat with his grandkids.
- Looking for something to do with his newfound free time, and knows that the internet can provide many diversions.

Quotes

"Why does everything have to be so complicated? I just don't understand what I should do."

Concerns & frustrations

- Technology makes him feel ignorant, as it just doesn't come naturally like it does for his kids.
- Becomes paralyzed when faced with the unknown, as he's constantly worried about breaking something.

Needs

- **Reassurance:** Robert is capable of learning how to use technology, he just needs to be made to believe it.
- **Autonomy:** Robert is used to doing things on his own, and would like to have the option to take things at his own pace.

Suzanne Moreno | Spanish-speaking mom

Stay-at-home mom worries that she's being left behind

Suzanne is a stay-at-home mom in a hispanic community within San Antonio, TX. Her two sons — one in elementary school and one in junior high — have been learning about computers and the internet for many years in school. At home, Spanish is the only language used.

The family has a laptop computer with basic broadband internet for homework use. Suzanne had used the computer a bit, but does not use email or regularly use the internet. Most of her technology experience stems from helping her sons with schoolwork, and now they know substantially more than she does.

Background

Age: 42
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: Hispanic
Location: San Antonio, TX
Technology: Feature phone, laptop computer
Connectivity: Broadband internet

Key characteristics

- Speaks Spanish in the home; English-language skills are limited
- Children are quickly becoming more tech-savvy than she is

Motivations

- Her kids are learning about computers, the internet, and other digital resources at school, and she wants to keep up.
- Wants to help kids with homework and remain connected with family by accessing news from Mexico.
- Interested in saving money by shopping online and using online tax filing to receive refund more quickly.
- Thinks that using the internet regularly may help her increase her English proficiency.

Quotes

"I know that there are a lot of opportunities for me and my family online; I just need to know how to make use of them."

Concerns & frustrations

- Knows that technology is increasingly the means to get ahead, and is worried about being left behind.
- Fears that if she doesn't understand and use technology, she won't able to provide her kids with the resources that other kids will have.

Needs

- **Inclusion:** Suzanne needs resources that can help her learn about technology without needing a full command of the English language.
- **Personal Growth:** Suzanne would like to learn how to use the internet in order to become more self-sufficient.

image via flickr courtesy of deflam

David Combs | Rural working poor

Service industry worker wants to increase his computer skills to get a better job

David lives in the rural community of Greensboro, Alabama. After dropping out of high school his junior year, he's gone on to work in the service industry, with stints at McDonald's, a local restaurant, and a nearby hotel. He'd like to get a better job, but knows that almost any job outside the service industry is likely to require more technical know-how than he currently has.

He does own a hand-me-down computer from his sister, but he rarely uses it since he can't afford internet service. He has used some specialized applications in his jobs, but that's the full extent of his technology experience. Jeremy does have a work-issued smartphone, as he's often on-call for the hotel, but he doesn't know how to do much with it besides making calls.

Background

Age: 32
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: White
Location: Greensboro, AL
Technology: Basic Android smart phone, basic desktop computer
Connectivity: Internet on phone only

Key characteristics

- Did not finish high school
- Has worked in the service industry for over 10 years
- Member of the "working poor" despite many years of experience

Motivations

- Looking to acquire basic computer skills (Microsoft Office, web browsing, etc.) so as to advance into a better-paying job.
- Would like to learn how to do more with the technology that he already has (his smartphone and the hand-me-down computer).

Quotes

"I'm getting too old to be living paycheck-to-paycheck, but to find a better job, I need to know how to use a computer."

Concerns & frustrations

- David works long and often unpredictable hours, and is concerned about having the time to go learn about technology.
- Worried that learning about technology will be challenging as he did not succeed in a traditional classroom environment.

Needs

- **Empathy:** David needs someone to take a personal interest in him and his situation so he isn't left behind, as he was in high school.
- **Achievement:** David has goals of finding a better job, continuing to advance in his career, and move into a management role someday.

Jeremy Taylor | Low-literacy homeless teen

Inner city homeless teen wants to get his life together

Jeremy is a former foster kid from the city of Chicago. During high school, he worked in several service jobs, but is now unable to find work. As a result, he couldn't afford rent, and became homeless—living on friends' counches (occasionally staying in homeless shelters) and relying on food stamps and charity to survive.

He knows that he will need to use a computer to find a new job, as everywhere he's gone to has told him to 'apply online'. He doesn't own computer, and only has a basic cell phone, so he needs both the training and the resources to be successful in his job search.

CC image via flickr courtesy of Joe Mabel

Background

Age: 19
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: African-American
Location: Chicago, IL
Technology: Feature phone
Connectivity: None

Key characteristics

- Currently homeless
- Does not own a computer
- Receives food stamps and some charitable support, but isn't able to make ends meet.
- Low literacy

Motivations

- Has never been taught how to apply for a job except by filling out paper applications, and thus needs to learn how to prepare a resume, search for job openings, and apply though job websites.
- Needs to use public access computers, as he does not have a personal computer or internet access.
- Desperately wants to find a job so he can afford to rent a place to live.

Quotes

"All I want to do is find a new job -- why do they make it so difficult?"

Concerns & frustrations

- Unfamiliar technology and low literacy level make even basic computer skills much harder. He is embarrassed to ask for help constantly.
- Doesn't know where to go to get help with computers and job skills.

Needs

- **Timeliness:** Jeremy wants to get a place to live as soon as possible.
- **Clarity of purpose:** Jeremy isn't concerned with learning everything he could possibly do online, but rather, the few things he needs to know to find work more quickly.
- **Hand-holding:** Jeremy needs more support than the library can provide. He also needs clear direction as he is not sure where his life is headed or what steps he needs to take.

Amanda Lowe | Assistive technology newbie

Legally blind woman needs assistive technologies to access resources

In the suburban community of White Plains, Amanda works in phone sales. As a result of head trauma sustained during a recent car accident, she has lost approximately 85% of her vision. Though doctors are hopeful that she will regain some sight with further rehab, in the meantime, she is trying to relearn how to live her life with minimal sight.

Computers present a challenge for Amanda, as she's never really used them except for basic usage of Microsoft Office. She doesn't even own a home computer. Now, she has to figure out computer usage **and** how to make use of accessibility tools, and doesn't know where to start. Her basic cell phone, too, is mostly unusable unless someone calls her because she can't see the screen. She needs help to learn how to use technology given her new situation.

image via flickr courtesy of TheeErin

Background

Age: 29
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: White
Location: White Plains, NY
Technology: Feature phone
Connectivity: Internet at work only

Key characteristics

- Became legally blind as a result of a recent accident
- Needs to learn how to use a screen reader and high-contrast options to navigate technology

Motivations

- Since the accident, has avoided using technology because she doesn't know how to use the various assistive technologies, but she knows that this is not sustainable in the modern world.
- Wants to continue to be successful at her job, which requires her to look up information on a computer before making contact with sales leads.
- Needs to access health and insurance information, and file claim paperwork online.

Quotes

"I'm trying to make the best of a tough situation, but I don't know who can help me relearn how to use a computer or my phone in new ways."

Concerns & frustrations

- Doesn't know anyone who can help explain how to use a screen reader or other assistive technologies, and doesn't know how to get started on her own.
- Things that used to be quite easy now feel like insurmountable tasks, which is incredibly frustrating.

Needs

- **Security:** Amanda needs help from someone who is knowledgable about assistive technology and can lead the way.
- **Calmness:** Life has been incredibly hectic since the accident, and Amanda needs the help of someone who can put her at ease and is patient enough to understand how frustrated she feels.

Nancy Tan | Mid-career professional

Junior marketing staffer needs new computer skills

image via flickr courtesy of brookesb

Background

Age: 36
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: Asian
Location: San Francisco, CA
Technology: iPhone, iPad, MacBook Pro
Connectivity: Broadband internet & smartphone data plan

Key characteristics

- Grew up with technology as a de facto part of life
- Already decently technologically savvy, but would like to learn advanced skills to progress in her career

As a marketing professional living at ground zero for U.S. technology industry, Nancy has grown up with computers and the internet playing an ever-increasing role in her life. However, as younger colleagues enter the workplace with advanced computer skills (including Photoshop, web coding, etc.), she has realized that her computer skills are somewhat lacking.

She knows Microsoft Office well and uses the internet like a pro, but beyond that, has not had much experience working with more advanced applications. In her role as an mid-level marketing professional, she realizes that learning how to use Photoshop and/or build a web site would help her compete with her up-and-coming coworkers. However, it's already challenging for her to find a healthy work-life balance, and she's not sure she has the time or energy to learn all the new things she needs to remain competitive.

Motivations

- Wants to become qualified for jobs that require more advanced computer skills.
- Knows that she needs to learn some of these skills to remain competitive in the workplace, but has minimal motivation to spend the time that it will take to do so.

Concerns & frustrations

- Feels inferior to coworkers who have more innate knowledge of different technology.
- Is overburdened by existing work and family life, and would prefer to not to spend the time that more advanced technology training will take.

Quotes

"Everyone wants to hire amateur 'web experts' and 'graphic designers' now, but I've never had to work in Photoshop or with HTML!"

Needs

- **More Motivation:** Nancy is not eager to spend time learning, but is hoping having someone give her some one-on-one help will inspire her a bit.
- **Fulfillment:** Nancy wants to gain the skills that will help her advance in her career and compete with her more tech-savvy colleagues.

Ryan Kelly | Social technologist

Enthusiastic technology staffer thrives in the community of practice

Ryan has worked as a Technology Specialist in the Chicago Public Library system for the past six years. In this dedicated role, he's been at the front line for a variety of digital literacy initiatives, and is passionate about helping new technology users 'find their feet'. He's also a self-professed geek, who is constantly reading about new software and gadgets.

He teaches both one-on-one and in group training environments. Ryan wants to make connections with others practitioners to exchange resources and learn new practices to try with his patrons.

Background

Age: 31
Gender: Male
Ethnicity: White
Location: Chicago, IL

Key characteristics

- Dedicated technology staff member within a large, urban library system.
- Designer of existing digital literacy tools who wants to share his work with other practitioners.
- Socializer who is active in discussing technology and digital literacy in existing communities and social networks.

Motivations

- Wants to give patrons 'access without fear' and share his excitement about new technologies.
- Hopes to use connections and resources from other libraries to bolster existing offerings and provide a 'one-stop-shop' for patrons looking for technology training.

Quotes

"I'm always staying up on the latest technology developments, and creating new learning materials from them."

"I particularly like the ability to discover that other libraries have the same problems that mine does, and to learn from others about how they are dealing with it."

Concerns & frustrations

- Even in a dedicated role, there is never enough time to develop new materials or help everyone who needs to be helped.
- Worries that employer will view participation in a social community as 'superfluous' to his core job requirements.

Needs

- **Community:** Ryan thrives when learning from others and sharing best practices that he's discovered through work with his patrons.
- **Nurturing opportunities:** Ryan is passionate about helping others, be they patrons or fellow practitioners. It's what makes his job worthwhile.

Linda Thompson | Core practitioner

Reference librarian is passionate about helping people, but is not a tech expert

Linda is a reference librarian in the suburban community of White Plains. One aspect of her job is to teach and manage digital literacy programs. While she is passionate about teaching and helping patrons, her own knowledge of computers and the internet is somewhat limited, so she's always looking for high-quality, ready-built resources that she can use with her patrons. She is also interested in taking some courses herself (if she can find the time).

Because her primary role involves many different aspects, she does not often have the time to sit down with patrons one-on-one or teach advanced classes, so she relies on resources that can be somewhat self-service for end users.

Background

Age: 58
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: White
Location: White Plains, NY

Key characteristics

- Helping patrons learn technology is only one component of her job.
- Reliant on finding pre-existing teaching materials, as she has only a moderate understanding of technology herself.

Motivations

- Her library has set out a goal of providing more digital literacy opportunities for the community, and she wants to be able to meet the challenge.
- Passionate about helping patrons learn new skills and achieve their goals.

Quotes

"We've done our best with locally produced handouts, using examples, but wish I knew where to go in one spot to find info."

"My goal is to simply to increase the number of patrons who feel comfortable accessing and using digital resources."

Concerns & frustrations

- With a lack of innate knowledge about technology, Linda would like to get training for herself that she can impart to patrons.
- In a role that has many hats, she worries about finding enough time to prepare and deliver digital literacy initiatives.

Needs

- **Learning:** Linda does not need to be a technology expert, but she does need support to feel confident teaching about digital literacy to others.
- **Balance:** Linda's role is complicated by the presence of many competing priorities, and she needs help with juggling them.

image via flickr courtesy of The Million Dollar Project

Lorraine Baker | Overwhelmed librarian

Small-town practitioner is stretched too thin already

Lorraine understands the value of digital literacy programs, and wants to be able to help people. However, as a member of a very small library staff in a rural community, there just isn't enough time to go around, and she doesn't see digital literacy as a core service. Instead, she spends much of her time looking up resources for patrons, manning the check-out desk, answering phones, sorting and shelving, and all of the other many tasks that make up an average day.

She'd really like to have a resource that she could refer patrons to which would do the 'hand-holding' that she does not have the time for. Ideally, the resource would help them find a learning path, and advance towards their goals.

Background

Age: 37
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: African-American
Location: Greensboro, AL

Key characteristics

- Works at a rural library with low levels of staffing.
- Does not have time to teach classes or run one-on-one sessions.

Motivations

- Loves her job, and truly believes in helping people. Already works 50+ hours most weeks, and still can't get everything done.
- Doesn't see digital literacy as a core service of the library, but knows that more that people are asking for it.
- Needs helps to provide the resources that are being asked for

Quotes

"My days are plenty full enough! I don't think I can spin even one more plate!"

"Is this something that we do?"

"With staff cutbacks and higher expectations from administration, I am more focused on getting through daily responsibilities."

Concerns & frustrations

- Time is Lorraine's number one concern. She and her coworkers are already overworked and underpaid, and simply don't have the bandwidth to add anything new to their responsibilities.
- She is skeptical that any new system will be able to provide enough end user resources without her input.

Needs

- **Effectiveness:** Lorraine simply can't mind 'one more thing', so she counts on having tools and resources that are successful at the job of teaching others.
- **Predictability:** Lorraine's job is already crazy enough, so she needs things to run without surprises.

Jessica Casey | Volunteer tech expert

Tech-savvy volunteer helps patrons while taking a load off librarians

Jessica works for Google in the San Francisco Bay area. Though she loves her job, she decided she needed to get away from the office on occasion, and give back to the outside world. As a result, she got involved with the Community Technology Network, a local non-profit organization which connected her with people who needed help learning about computers and technology at a local library. She's since helped a number of tech newbies find their feet, though it hasn't always been easy.

Before volunteering, Jessica did not realize just how disconnected from digital technology many communities were. Likewise, she didn't expect teaching to be as challenging as it has turned out to be. However, while she's been teaching others, she has loved the opportunity to meet so many new people and learn many new things herself.

Background

Age: 36
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: White
Location: San Francisco, CA

Key characteristics

- Technologically-savvy professional who wants to give back by helping others.
- Has some training through the non-profit organization, but requires some help to a successful teacher.

Motivations

- Initially started volunteering because she was looking for an outlet to give back to the community. However, since then, she's found that she's getting just as much out of it as the people she's tutoring.

Quotes

"It's so moving it is to see the look of amazement on a someone's face when they recognize the power of an search engine or web browser."

"Teaching others about technology has actually helped me to hone my own skills, as well."

Concerns & frustrations

- Sometimes feels frustrated because she has trouble helping a patron "get it" quickly enough.
- As she is not a teacher by profession, Jessica does not have the ability to create instruction resources herself. Rather, she relies on things that have already been created, which are sometimes of varying quality.

Needs

- **Challenge:** Teaching others about technology is a new experience for Jessica, and it's one that she's excited to take on.
- **Contribution:** Jessica is motivated by the good feelings she gets for helping others.