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Digital divide: Access to information technology
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Developed by the Pew Research Center—a nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends shaping America and the world—the Pew project features several types of content dedicated to the digital divide topic: commentaries, data sets, online media articles, presentations, and reports.

I explored several digital divide items with focus on access to information technology. They suggest that the concept of *digital divide* has changed in the recent years. Whereas originally it was used to describe a divide between those who had access to the Internet and those who didn't, in the first decade of the 21st century the social issue changed its scope to inequality of skills and knowledge required to use the information available online. As early as in 2001-2002, researchers concluded that there is no binary divide between different groups of information and communication technology (ICT) users and recommended shifting the focus from technology to social inclusion (Jarboe, 2001; Warschauer, 2002).

The Pew project explores the shifting nature of the digital divide concept. According to Rainie (2013), 85% of adults in the United States used Internet, according to December 2012 data; among those, 68% of adults had broadband at home. In addition, 89% of adults owned cell phones, as of January 2013, and over 50% of cell phone owners accessed Internet via phone. 78% of adults had desktops or laptops (December 2012), and 31% owned tablets. Now that majority of population has access to Internet, new dividing trends have emerged. Some of them are related to the new ways in which people access the online information. Washington (2011) finds that Latinos and blacks are more likely than the general population to access the Web by cellular phones. The cellphone use of the Internet, in turn, has limitations: it is difficult to fill out an online job application or upload a resume using a cellphone. As a result, "researchers have noticed signs of segregation online that perpetuate divisions in the physical world. And blacks and Latinos may be using their increased Web access more for entertainment than empowerment," adds Washington (ibid.).

Several population categories, however, still remain at disadvantage lacking the Internet access at home: senior citizens, low-income groups (earning less than \$30,000), and adults with disabilities (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). Low-income groups in particular rely heavily on libraries in the job search and job application process (Rainie, 2013). Income disparity generates inequality in the field of education, as well. Today, when digital technologies have become central in teaching and learning, teachers of the lowest income students "are more than twice as likely as teachers of the highest income students (56% v. 21%) to say that students' lack of access to digital technologies is a "major challenge" to incorporating more digital tools into their teaching," conclude Purcell, Heaps, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013).

Furthermore, the digital divide is observed in the online access to health information. Fewer than 50% of African Americans, Latinos, adults living with a disability, people age 65 and older, adults with a high school education or less, and adults living in low-income households access health information online, according to Fox (2011).

The Pew project resources indicate that digital divide continues growing both in the ICT access and the skills needed to use information technology, impacting all spheres of people's lives. In this context, bridging the divide has become a top priority for state and local government agencies, educational institutions, libraries, and information professionals. The resource I would like to recommend to my classmates is a [Digital Divide](#) section of the [ipl2 website](#), hosted by Drexel University's College of Information Science & Technology and a consortium of colleges and universities with programs in information science.

The website merges the collection of resources from the Internet Public Library (IPL) and the Librarians' Internet Index (LII) websites. The Digital Divide section features diverse content related to the digital divide issue, such as digital divide in social media, digital divide with mobiles, digital literacy, public libraries' roles, digital divide and gender, digital divide and minorities, global digital divide, and others. In the Public Libraries' Roles topic, for example, I found a *Washington Post* article describing how D.C. libraries help low-income people and minorities learn computer skills and online information access skills (Roso, 2011). The web site also hosts the Ask ipl2 Librarian feature, offering help from trained professional librarian volunteers and graduate students in library science programs.

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