

A National Digital Library to Support U.S. Adult Foundational Education

A Concept Paper
by the Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group

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Contact: Group Coordinator, Paul Jurmo, Ed.D.
at pjurmo@comcast.net, www.pauljurmo.info

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A National Digital Library
to Support U.S. Adult Foundational Education

A Concept Paper by the AFE Digital Library Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary and an accompanying concept paper propose creation of a national Adult Foundational Education (AFE) Digital Library. This networked system would coordinate and add to existing resource collections (e.g., LINCS, ERIC, archived materials at universities and other institutions) to make relevant information more accessible to adult foundational education providers, adult learners, researchers, policy makers, and other stakeholders.

The Problem

Millions of U.S. adults have gaps in the foundational (i.e., basic literacy, numeracy, and other communication and problem-solving) skills they need for work, family, civic, and lifelong learning roles. This is despite decades of significant efforts to provide adult education and other supports to this diverse and important population.

Experienced adult foundational education researchers and advocates share a concern that significant valuable research and other resources are difficult or impossible for educators and other partners to access. These resources:

- include curricula; assessment and evaluation instruments; strategies for partnership building, program planning, professional development, funding, and policy; reports of meetings; and other published and unpublished materials;
- have been developed by practitioners, researchers, policy makers, adult learners, and other stakeholders in the U.S. and other countries;
- were supported by diverse public-and private-sector investments;
- provide an historical record and data that can be used by researchers and other stakeholders to make AFE services more effective and available for the millions of U.S. adults who have gaps in their foundational skills.

This inadequate accessibility is due to multiple factors, including:

- Existing collections sometimes have restrictions on the amount and age of the resources they can make available, the efficiency of the technologies they use (e.g., non-operating links), and the staffing they can devote to updating collections.

- Some resources are copyright-protected, making them expensive or otherwise difficult to access.
- Many older resources are out of print and never digitized and made available on-line.
- Several previous “go-to” sources on important topics (e.g., public policy, corporate and union involvement, contextualized and integrated AFE) are now closed and the resources they previously made available are now difficult or impossible to access.
- Many useful resources are stored on specialized websites (e.g., of universities, non-profits, state and local adult literacy resource centers, and international agencies), but those sites are often hard to find and/or difficult to navigate.

Exacerbating these gaps is the fact that there are (a) limited coordination across existing collections and (b) a general lack of awareness within the AFE field about the existence, value, and location of such resources.

These access limitations undermine the effectiveness of research, planning, partnership-development, professional development, instructional and other supports, policies, funding, and other key elements of AFE efforts. This is evident when there is renewed interest in topics for which our field had previously developed expertise, funding, and networks. (These topics include social justice, workplace literacy, awareness raising, learner leadership, uses of digital technologies, contextualized learning and integrated services, and adult basic education systems reform.) Though many resources on those topics have previously been developed, those wanting to tackle those subjects now often do so with little or no awareness that resources already exist that they could learn from, build on, and adapt to current conditions. Too often stakeholders are starting from scratch, relying on trial and error, and reinventing wheels.

Proposed Solutions

We propose a national “Adult Foundational Education (AFE) Digital Library.” Borrowing from emerging digital library and more traditional municipal library system models, this system would have a central “main library” as a hub which would support and coordinate both existing specialized “satellite” collections (or “spokes” connected to the central hub) and -- when appropriate -- new collections.

These strengthened, coordinated collections would help diverse stakeholders in the AFE field (e.g., AFE service providers, policy makers, researchers, and other current and potential partners) to efficiently access relevant, high-quality digitized documents and other resources (e.g., video and audio recordings). Stakeholders would thereby be better able to perform their

roles and improve the quality and quantity of supports for adult and out-of-school youth learners.

The creation of an AFE Digital Library would be done through a collaborative effort of individuals and institutions working in AFE and “digital libraries.” This effort would build on the significant work previously done in both fields, further strengthen the institutions that are currently making digitized AFE-related resources available, and make those existing resources – and new ones that might have gotten lost over time -- more easily available to AFE providers and other stakeholders. Teams of professionals would do this work in a multi-year, five-phase project, described below:

Phase I: Securing of Seed Funding for Initial Planning

Members of our AFE Digital Library Group and other supporters of this proposed project will (a) identify one or more “digital library partners” and “AFE research and professional development experts” and (b) secure modest seed funding to support and implement the initial planning to be carried out in Phase II described below. Funding might come from one or more sources that recognize the importance of making important research and other resources available to the AFE field.

Phase II: Initial Planning

Using the seed funding generated in Phase I, a small team of AFE and digital library experts will – with guidance from a Professional Advisory Committee composed of representatives of current collections and other relevant institutions – (a) carry out a needs assessment showing the potential users of a new AFE Digital Library, the information they might use, and gaps in the contents and accessibility of current collections; (b) identify how a new AFE Digital Library system can provide AFE stakeholders with useful information and networks; and (c) develop a plan that shows components of a more-effective digital resource-sharing system and actions and resources needed to create and sustain such a system.

In particular, the plan will show how to identify, gather, review, organize (using an agreed-upon thesaurus of categories and criteria and a robust database), and digitize the information that would be accessible through this system. This plan would be based on information contained in the accompanying concept paper and on additional input from AFE and digital library experts. The plan would be approved by the Professional Advisory Committee and submitted to funders to secure funding for the piloting and further implementation of the proposed AFE Digital Library described in Phases III, IV, and V below.

Phase III: Assembly of AFE Digital Library Components

With approval and funding for Phases III, IV, and V secured, the initial project team of experts and advisors would put in place a more-permanent, qualified staff and administrative supports at a central “hub library.” (This hub might be based at one of the institutions that currently host AFE resource collections, as they already have expertise and resources related to AFE and digital archiving in place.)

Guided by the plan prepared in Phase II, the new “hub” staff will prepare for the launch of the Phase IV pilot project by working with “satellite” collections to:

- Clarify the diverse audiences to be targeted and relevant information to focus on in the pilot phase. Audiences might include policy makers, public and private funders, AFE instructional and administrative staff, diverse populations of adult learners, researchers, and stakeholders concerned about particular life challenges that adult learners face. Topics might include:
 - AFE policy, funding, and system reform
 - AFE for diverse purposes
 - workforce development for incumbent workers and job seeker;
 - public health;
 - criminal justice reform;
 - immigrant and refugee integration;
 - services for people with special needs (neurodiverse learners and/or individuals with physical disabilities);
 - environmental sustainability;
 - democracy and social justice.
 - AFE teaching/learning strategies
 - AFE management strategies
 - AFE resources for learners on “AFE learner leadership” and “AFE resources for self-study.”
- Emphasize making resources available in “user-friendly” ways (e.g., annotated bibliographies with up-to-date links to digital copies; research brief and fact sheet summaries of particular topics; recordings of webinars and other video presentations) and putting them in place in satellite collections for system launch.
- Use agreed-upon digital resource-sharing technologies to (a) systematically organize, store disseminate, and track collections at each satellite and (b) coordinate the satellite collections across the overall Digital Library.

Phase IV: Piloting of an Initial Round of AFE Digital Library Collections

The project team would field-test a small, pilot version of the newly-created system (developed in Phase III) which would make relevant resources more easily available to selected audiences. This new system would be introduced, implemented, monitored, and improved by:

- Presenting the AFE Digital Library as a way to help stakeholders create and continuously improve an updated national system of AFE and other supports for adult learners;
- Announcing availability of pilot collections to target audiences in the existing AFE field and other stakeholders. This would be done by providing publicity about the collection and developing and implementing training for using it;
- Monitoring how many users access the system, what they use, and how they use it. User feedback and other relevant information will be collected and analyzed to guide ongoing improvements in content and user-friendliness of the pilot collections and future collections.

Based on these pilot activities, the project team and participating partners would make improvements in existing collections and, if necessary, create new collections, to improve how resources are stored and made available.

Phase V: Implementation and Ongoing Improvement of the AFE Digital Library

The project team would further strengthen and expand the pilot version of the system based on (a) results of the Phase IV pilot; and (b) successful securing of additional resources and partnerships with user groups and other resource collections.

Supports Requested for Phase II and Subsequent Phases

To ensure that this effort is based on a solid plan and a collaborative foundation, we seek seed funding to support the above Phase II “initial planning” activities. Phase II budget items will include:

- Compensation for initial consultants with relevant expertise in AFE and digital libraries;
- Stipends/honoraria for Professional Advisory Committee members;
- Equipment and facilities costs (for in-person and/or remote work);
- Postage and shipping costs;
- Travel (for possible in-person meetings and conference participation to promote the effort).

Based on the plan resulting from Phase II, additional funding would be sought from the funders of Phase II and/or other sources to carry out Phase III (Assembly of AFE Digital Library Components), Phase IV (Piloting of an Initial Round of AFE Digital Library Collections), and Phase V (Implementation and Ongoing Improvement of the AFE Digital Library).

For further information, please contact Group Coordinator, Paul Jurmo, Ed.D., at pjurmo@comcast.net, www.pauljurmo.info.

About this Document

Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group Members and Activities

The Adult Foundational Education (AFE) Digital Library Group is composed of a dozen researchers and advocates within the U.S adult foundational education field (See Glossary below.) who came together in April, 2022. (See Appendix A.) They recognized that, though the field had for the past five or more decades generated valuable resources (e.g., research, guidebooks, and other resources related to learner needs, instruction and assessment, public policy, funding, evaluation models, partnership models, professional development, public awareness, and other areas), many of those resources have become difficult or impossible to access. The Group agreed to explore whether and how the field might create a new “digital library system” for archiving both past and more recent resources and making them more accessible and useful for a variety of audiences.

While exploring how to better make existing resources available, the Group also recognized that additional efforts are needed to improve how *new* research and other resources are generated in our field. However, due to the limited time our all-volunteer Group has available, for now we have chosen to focus our immediate efforts on improving how *existing* resources are disseminated within the field.

In April through October, 2022, Group members shared information about (a) existing resources that might be included in a new “digital library system” (aka, archive, repository, clearinghouse, portal), (b) previous and current models of resource sharing, (c) the contents and organizational structure of a possible new digital library system, and (d) actions for moving these initial discussions forward.

Why and for Whom this Paper Was Prepared

This document’s observations and recommendations are prepared for AFE advocates and funders and others who share our Group’s belief that adult foundational skills efforts – as is true in any other professional field -- need to be able to learn from and build on valuable work already done within our profession. We will also share it with experts in “digital libraries” who might advise us and work with us on the project proposed here. We welcome further thinking, dialogue, investment, and action on how to create and sustain an improved national AFE digital library system.

Glossary

- Adult Foundational Education: The term “adult foundational education” was adopted in 2022 by the Open Door Collective with input from other stakeholders. It refers to the diverse types of instructional and other services that help U.S. adults to strengthen the range of oral and written language, numeracy, digital, problem-solving, collaboration, and other essential skills and credentials they need for work, family, civic, and lifelong learning roles. These services are based in multiple institutions and communities, serve diverse populations of adults and out-of-school youth, and often involve other stakeholder partners.
- Digital library system: We are using “digital library” and “digital library system” to describe a national, coordinated, multi-component system for collecting, organizing, and sharing a range of past and new digitized resources (e.g., research and evaluation reports, curriculum and assessment tools, strategies for program development and professional development, policy and funding models) for use by adult educators, adult learners, and other stakeholders. (Related terms might include archive, repository, clearinghouse, portal, collection, hub, satellite, and network.)

Acknowledgments

The author¹ thanks all the members of the Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group and the other individuals listed in Appendix A for their many valuable contributions to this document. Special thanks to the core team of “AFEDL Worker Bees” (Judy Alamprese, Alisa Belzer, Michele Diecuch, Daphne Greenberg, David J. Rosen, and Federico Salas-Isnardi) who – for ten months – participated in on-line meetings, exchanged emails, collected information, edit drafts, and provided vital ideas and encouragement to keep this process going.

¹ This report was written by Paul Jurmo, Ed.D. (www.pauljurmo.info) with valuable input and encouragement from the Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group members and others listed in Appendix A.

The Problem

The following observations are presented to those interested in creating a strengthened, expanded national system for sharing research and other resources relevant to adult educators, adult learners, and other adult foundational education stakeholders.

Observation #1: Those interested in creating a new system for sharing resources have past and current models to build on.

Since the 1970s, the U.S. adult foundational education field has had a mix of institutions that have created, preserved, and disseminated research and other resources on various topics, for diverse users (primarily adult education service providers and their supporters, but also for other stakeholders) and purposes, and in hard-copy and digitized formats. This diversity has included:

- Research and documentation on a wide range of topics relevant to adult educators, adult learners, and other stakeholders.
- General collections (which provide resources on diverse topics) and more-specialized collections (which focus primarily on particular themes and users). (Specialized collections, for example, have focused on English for immigrants and refugees, family literacy, workforce education, and public policy.)
- Digitized collections (which became increasingly common by the mid-1990s) and collections of items that have not been digitized (which might include the “non-published” items described below under Observation #2).
- Collections based at various kinds of institutions (e.g., U.S. Department of Education; National Institute for Literacy; universities; urban, regional, and state adult literacy resource centers).
- Collections that are tied to various kinds of professional development activities (e.g., university courses, certificate programs) and resources that are “stand-alone” (not directly linked to such activities).

Examples of these models are presented in Appendix B.

Observation #2: There are many types of resources that might be included in a new system.

These resources have been developed over decades and include:

- Formally “published” items (i.e., published in research journals or other venues) and non-published documents. Non-published documents include (a) “gray” materials such as reports published by government

agencies, universities, nonprofit and for-profit research organizations, and foundations and (b) “primary” sources that were never formally made public such as notes and handouts from meetings and conferences, manuscripts, learner-generated materials, informal newsletters, and correspondence. These published and non-published resources serve as records of activities and topics within diverse segments of the field at various times.

- Printed materials and other media for educators, learners, and other audiences (e.g., video and audio recordings and software for instruction, professional development, or public awareness purposes);
- Items funded by diverse sources, including public (e.g., federal, state, and local government agencies) and private (e.g., foundations, individual donors, corporations) sources.
- Resources related to a wide range of topics relevant to various audiences including:
 - particular foundational skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy, digital literacy, and problem-solving;
 - contextualized uses of foundational skills in social venues such as workplaces and families;
 - diverse learner populations such as workers in specific industries and jobs, formerly incarcerated individuals, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees;
 - particular program functions including program planning, instruction, assessment and evaluation, professional development, program administration; and
 - various stakeholders who might partner with adult educators such as employers, labor unions, employment agencies, health service providers, correctional and re-entry service providers, K-12 schools, and social justice advocates.
- Resources from decades ago and more-recent items.
- Resources developed in the U.S. and in other countries (including English-speaking and non-English-speaking nations).

These multiple types of resources vary in terms of their adherence to quality standards (e.g., reliability, accuracy, and completeness), relevance to users, and ease of access and use.

Observation #3: There are significant gaps in how resources are currently shared.

These gaps include:

Resources are often difficult or impossible to access.

Though currently some of the above resources can be accessed on-line (though sometimes via cumbersome and time-consuming detours), many are not available. (Lack of availability might be due to copyright restrictions and/or to the fact that they were never digitized or made available on-line, or are in storage in institutions' or individuals' offices or homes.)

Former leading institutions and funded projects are now closed or limited in what they can make available.

Many of the past resource-sharing models (mentioned under Observation #1 above and in Appendix B) no longer exist or now operate in significantly reduced, difficult-to-access forms. For example:

- Former national-level go-to information sources are now closed. Examples include the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education; the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy; the Business Council for Effective Literacy (and its successors the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, National Commission on Adult Literacy, and National Council on Adult Learning); the National Center on Adult Literacy; the National Institute for Literacy;² and the Association for Community-Based Education. The same is true of regional institutions (e.g., Literacy South), state literacy resource centers, and local-level literacy resource centers like Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute and Washington, DC's PLAN (Push Literacy Action Now, a community-based adult basic skills service and advocacy organization).
- Currently-operating resource centers have limitations. For example, the U.S. Department of Education's Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Resource Collection doesn't generally include items more than ten years old. The Open Door Collective (ODC) operates with no funding and relies on volunteers who have other professional responsibilities. The COABE *Journal* and World Education's *The Change Agent* social justice magazine for adult educators and adult learners must be purchased to access. The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (and its partner, World Education) no longer publish the *Focus on Basics* newspaper and New York City's Literacy Assistance Center respected *Literacy Harvest* Journal is likewise no longer published.

Many potentially-valuable resources are not recognized as relevant and not made available.

² Though the National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future documents are now stored at the Center for Literacy, Education & Employment at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, the Center lacks funding to actively disseminate those EFF resources.

These reductions in resource sharing have been accompanied by fluctuating interest and investment in the research capacities of the field, as reflected in (a) the discontinuing of national demonstration projects like the National Workplace Literacy Program of the U.S. Department of Education and the Equipped for the Future initiative of the National Institute for Literacy and (b) the fact that research grants tend to be finite and typically don't support sustaining of work beyond an agreed-upon project period.

Observation #4: In addition to having inadequate ways of sharing and using existing information, the field lacks a coordinated way of creating new research and other resources relevant to diverse stakeholders.

While the field continues to generate curricula, reports, peer-reviewed articles, webinars, and other resources that might be made available in a new AFE Digital Library system, we no longer have a national "center" that helps to coordinate such work. For example, the now-closed National Institute for Literacy – through its Equipped for the Future adult education systems reform Initiative – helped guide the field toward a more consistent vision of the purposes, contents, service-delivery models, and policy for a research-informed adult basic skills system. And the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy developed research focused on key questions in the field and presented the results in ways (e.g., the *Focus on Basics* magazine) that were user-friendly for busy practitioners. We currently lack such national centers to develop and coordinate new research and other resources.

Creating a better-organized way of sharing *existing* research and other resources could have the added benefit of helping to strengthen how *new* research and other resources are created. For example, a better-organized way of sharing existing resources should produce a clearer understanding of the multiple audiences for research, the types of resources they need, the purposes they need those resources for, how best to "package" research and other resources for those existing audiences and for potential additional funders and partners. An expanded and strengthened AFE research effort might tap into what is learned in a new AFE Digital Library.

Observation #5: Effectiveness and efficiency of efforts in our field are jeopardized by lack of awareness of, interest in, and use of evidence from professional experience and research.

With the decline in investment in and availability and use of such resources, there is a too-common tendency for programs, professional development activities, policies, and funding to be designed without awareness of or learning from past valuable models -- or even acknowledging basic facts. Previously-developed concepts and models are "rediscovered" and promoted as new ideas (frequently described as "exciting") and reinvented all over again –

sometimes in useful ways but too often with unproductive and unnecessary limitations.

When this happens, the motivation of professionals to perform, document, and share good work is undermined. Funders are also less likely to support similar work in the future if they suspect that resulting products and lessons learned won't be preserved and used. The net effect: a reduction in the effectiveness and efficiency of the field.

We believe that new AFE efforts should learn from and build on previous valuable work, to extend what is known, and apply it to current and emerging conditions.

Questions to Consider

Designing, piloting, managing, and sustaining a more effective way of sharing research and other resources within the adult foundational education field will require significant collective thinking and work. Those interested in pursuing this idea are encouraged to consider the following questions and potential responses:

1. Why create a new, coordinated system for sharing resources to support U.S. adult foundational skills efforts now?

We recognize that adult foundational education efforts require many types of supports. These include not just significantly increased and sustained financial and in-kind resources but also a vision and plan for an AFE system that provides better-quality supports to more learners. Educators and other partners who do this work need to be equipped with necessary professional expertise and effective tools. Currently, valuable research and other forms of information are difficult or impossible for AFE stakeholders to access.

A new AFE Digital Library can:

- build the knowledge base of adult educators and other stakeholders to create and sustain well-informed, high-quality services, policies, and investments for basic-skills-challenged adults.
- build a professional identity and infrastructure for the field by:
 - enabling adult educators and other stakeholders to understand the range and depth of models for assessment, instruction, administration, policy, career opportunities, and other areas already developed within the field;
 - strengthening professional networks (aka, communities of practice) able to collaborate and communicate around specific questions and functions;
 - inspiring respect and interest vis-a-vis adult foundational education as a profession that serves important purposes for society.

2. Who are potential users (primary users and others) of a new AFE Digital Library? And what types of information might they want to access – and for what purposes?

As shown in Appendix C, there are many potential users of such a system. This presents both opportunities (e.g., increased involvement of new stakeholder partners) and challenges (e.g., the increased expertise,

staffing, and technologies required to respond to many potential users) for those establishing a new AFE Digital Library. The good news is that (a) many types of resources have already been created that could be made available to a wider set of users; (b) technologies – and individuals experienced in designing and operating them --now exist that can efficiently link users to relevant information. (For example, there are many types of resources related to various aspects of work-related foundational skills³ that could be made available to not only adult education providers and policy makers but to special audiences such as employers, labor unions, and workforce centers.)

As a planning strategy, the new system might initially focus on an agreed-upon set of “Primary Users” and “Other Users” (as outlined in Appendix C) and on existing relevant and reliable information on particular high-priority topics. (See “Proposed Solutions” below for more about how this might be carried out.)

3. Who are potential partners who might play roles in planning, piloting, operating, improving, supporting and sustaining (with financial and in-kind supports) a new AFE Digital Library?

Potential partners might include representatives of:

- Institutions that have already been involved in the past and current research centers and clearinghouses outlined in Appendix B.
- Other stakeholder groups in the U.S. who have a significant history of and/or potential interest in working with adult education programs, including:
 - Universities (which might have adult education and other departments that have expertise, interests, infrastructure, and other strengths relevant to the proposed new research and resource-sharing system);⁴
 - Employers and employer associations;⁵

³ For examples, see the Open Door Collective’s “An Archive of Work-Related Basic Skills Resources” (at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/er96od4ax26oxo2/Work-Related%20Basic%20Skills%20Archive%20ODC%203-12-21.pdf?dl=0>).

⁴ See “What Universities Can Do to Strengthen U.S. Adult Basic Skills Efforts”: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/23fjv6nmqoboy4/ODC%20Universities%20Can-Do%20Guide%201-10-19.pdf?dl=0>

⁵ Read “What Forward-Thinking Employers Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Our Workforce” at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/bfong29i4kicotz/ODC%20Employer%20Can%20Do%2012-10-18.pdf?dl=0>

- Labor unions (and related institutions like university-based labor studies programs and the AFL-CIO archive at the University of Maryland Library);⁶
- Workforce and economic development agencies;
- Public health organizations and related “health literacy” researchers and providers like the Institute for Healthcare Advancement;⁷
- Correctional and re-entry service providers (and related organizations like the Correctional Education Association and others who have developed educational program models for prisoners and formerly incarcerated individuals);⁸
- Organizations promoting environmental sustainability;⁹
- Organizations serving immigrants and refugees (e.g., the Migration Policy Institute);
- Financial education service providers;
- Organizations serving people with special needs.
- Adult learners who might use the new system to access learning resources and other relevant information customized to their needs and abilities.
- Experts in information science and other areas who have not yet been involved in adult foundational education work but who might bring particular expertise, fresh ideas, and resources to this new effort. (Three possible examples: Representatives of (a) the Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la>); (b) the Civil Rights Digital Library < <http://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome&Welcome> > that was funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences < <https://www.ims.gov> > and (c) the Peace Corps, which operates a “Peace Corps Live” on-line system that makes relevant documents on a wide range of subjects available to Peace Corps staff in about 60 countries worldwide.
- International experts in adult education (e.g., UNESCO and government and non-governmental agencies based in the U.S. and

⁶ See “What Labor Educators Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Our Workforce” at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/gdsr09vnl5tqzbn/ODC%20Union%20Can%20Do%2012-10-18.pdf?dl=0>

⁷ See “Strengthening Public Health and the Healthcare Workforce: What U.S. Health Partners and Adult Basic Skills Programs Can Do Together” at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/kjzrvif4rc38v47/ODC%20Health%20Partners%20Can-Do%20Guide%209-30-19.pdf?dl=0>

⁸ Read “What Re-Entry Services Can Do to Strengthen the Basic Skills of Former Inmates” at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8o18b4q8ae7s73/ODC%20Re-Entry%20Services%20Can-Do%2012-10-18.pdf?dl=0>

⁹ See “Greening U.S. Adult Basic Skills Efforts: What Eco-Partners and Adult Educators Can Do Together” at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/3mwjwse7ar9v45s/ODC%20Eco-Partners%20Can-Do%20Guide%209-30-19.pdf?dl=0>

other countries [especially English-speaking nations] who have expertise, models, interest, and/or funding related to this topic.)

- Funders (both non-governmental and governmental) which currently have, previously had, or might have an interest in adult foundational education.

Representatives of these partners might be organized in several groupings that could include:

- An overall Professional Advisory Committee to advise the team that will organize and carry out initial planning, piloting, and continuous improvement of the system;
- Specialized task forces and technical teams to advise on content and strategies for reaching and serving particular users.

With support from these advisors, a core professional staff with expertise in various aspects of adult foundational education and in the design and management of digital libraries would carry out the work of operating the proposed new system.

4. **What functions will be necessary to plan, create, and operate a new AFE Digital Library?**

Possible functions include:

- Initial planning, capacity building, and piloting of one or more selected collections of resources: A modest number of pilots would be designed and implemented to increase access to selected existing collections. Those collections would respond to selected priority needs/interests in the field for which there already exist significant vetted, quality resources. Each pilot would be carried out by a small professional staff with support from the above-described advisory/steering committee and specialized task forces and technical experts. Planners of these pilots will decide:
 - target users, criteria for content (organized in a “thesaurus”), a process for selecting resources, and information sources for each collection, to ensure relevance and quality of items selected for various user audiences;
 - strategies, technologies, and staffing for organizing and disseminating the resources in user-friendly ways;
 - administrative, financial, and legal supports required.
- Expanding and strengthening the collections and creation of a more robust, better-coordinated resource sharing system: This will build on the initial pilots and require:

- collecting, preserving, organizing, and synthesizing existing (both past and more recently emerging) resources which might include both already-digitized resources and not-yet-digitized ones (the latter of which would include both documents of various types as well as videos, audio recordings, and possibly other resources). This might include organizing new and existing “research briefs” of the types that ERIC-ACVE, NCSALL, NIFL, ProLiteracy, LINCS, the Open Door Collective, and others have previously created.
- making those resources accessible to a variety of audiences via:
 - one or more on-line database(s) to link users to relevant resources;
 - special collections that are continuously refined and made available to users referred through the central database;
 - on-line courses and/or discussion groups (like those offered by LINCS, NIFL, Pennsylvania State University, UMass/Amherst’s Center for International Education, Georgia State University), or possibly other forms of social media.
- working with those involved in supporting and coordinating new research to fill in gaps in the above resources. (See Question 5 below.)
- monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement of the system.
- providing necessary technical and other supports to those doing the work.

(See “Proposed Solutions” below for more about how this might be rolled out in five phases.)

5. How might the various functions and services of a new AFE Digital Library be organized? And how might creation of this improved system for sharing resources be integrated with a parallel effort to better coordinate and support new research and other resources for the field?

Options to consider:

Organization: Resource sharing services would be structured as a collaborative network consisting of a central hub (aka, home base, headquarters) with a core professional staff (See Question 3 above.) which coordinates, supports, publicizes, and provides access to the work of specialized collections based at a variety of institutions.

Integration with creation of new research and other resources: The resource sharing network might be linked to a new and expanded version of a national adult foundational education center that adapts

previous models like the National Institute for Literacy, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, and perhaps others within adult foundational education and other fields. (Creation of such a national AFE center is a topic for a separate document and effort.)

6. **What must be done to ensure adequate, sustained financial and in-kind supports for the proposed AFE Digital Library?**

See “Proposed Solutions” below for actions that those interested in creating a new AFE Digital Library system might take to further flesh out the ideas described in this paper and identify sources who might provide seed funding for both a pilot project and a longer-term effort to plan, implement, improve, and sustain a new system. Our contacts in the AFE and digital library fields have suggested the following as possible funders:

- OCTAE of the US Department of Education;
- Institute of Museum and Library Services¹⁰ (www.ims.gov/grants/listing);
- Institute of Educational Sciences;
- Funders of Barbara Bush Foundation (whose ALL IN Coordinating Committee is considering how to support adult literacy research;
- American Library Association;
- Library of Congress (whose Librarian of Congress has spoken of the importance of adult literacy and which sponsors annual literacy awards and has had a Center for the Book that formerly was actively involved with US adult literacy efforts). One option might be the LOC’s Digital Library Program;
- Digital Library Federation (which might be able to provide technical support for this project);
- The National Archives (which receives support from the same funder who funds the Library of Congress Literacy Awards) One option: the National Historical Publications and Records Commission at the National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/nhprc>);
- One or more individuals interested in serving as a “legacy funder”;
- One or more corporations that have supported adult literacy efforts;
- Current supporters of the AFE research organizations described in Appendix B;
- Archives Collaboratives Grants of the National Endowment for the Humanities (www.archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/collaboratives) and www.neh.gov/grants/listing ;

¹⁰ At the bottom of the IMLS website it states, “The Civil Rights Digital Library receives support from a National Leadership Grant for Libraries awarded by The Institute of Museum and Library Services.” Visit the Civil Rights Digital Library at <https://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome> .

- National Endowment for the Arts;
- Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la>);
- Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR);
- Health Policy Research Consortium (HPRC);
- Digital Humanities programs;
- Mellon Foundation (www.mellon.org/grants);
- Candid (formerly the Foundation Center and Guidestar (www.candid.org);
- The Council on Library and Information Resources (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Council_on_Library_and_Information_Resources), which apparently supports “uplifting stories of marginalized populations”;
- PBS.

Supporters of an AFE Digital Library project would need to advocate for longer-term funding from private and public funders. (The latter might include embedding support for research and resource sharing in various pieces of federal and state legislation.)

7. What other special issues should be considered?

These might include both “bigger” and “smaller” issues such as:

- Need for a lead public or private funder to bring credibility and visibility to this effort and to attract others to get involved and support it.
- Need to create a vision and mission statement for a resource sharing system that would position it as a central support to an expanded and strengthened national adult foundational skills development effort. (See “Why create a new, coordinated system for sharing resources to support U.S. adult foundational skills efforts now?” under Questions to Consider above.
- Need to decide how to deal with copyright issues. (Options might include making copyrighted materials available for purchase or via copy-limited “loan” programs.)
- Need to decide whether to charge user fees for access to some or all resources.
- Need to understand how federal guidelines (e.g., ADA regulations and others) might impact this work.
- Need to consider how this work might be supported by – and support – the work of other governmental agencies (e.g., U.S. Department of Labor; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Environmental Protection Agency; and criminal justice, public safety, and correctional agencies.)

Proposed Solutions

We propose a national “Adult Foundational Education (AFE) Digital Library.” Borrowing from emerging digital library and more traditional municipal library system models, this system would have a central “main library” as a hub which would support and coordinate both existing specialized “satellite” collections (or “spokes” connected to the central hub) and -- when appropriate – new collections.

These strengthened, coordinated collections would help diverse stakeholders in the AFE field (e.g., AFE service providers, policy makers, researchers, and other current and potential partners) to efficiently access relevant, high-quality digitized documents and other resources (e.g., video and audio recordings). Stakeholders would thereby be better able to perform their roles and improve the quality and quantity of supports for adult and out-of-school youth learners.

The creation of an AFE Digital Library would be done through a collaborative effort of individuals and institutions working in AFE and “digital libraries.” This effort would build on the significant work previously done in both fields, further strengthen the institutions that are currently making digitized AFE-related resources available, and make those existing resources – and new ones that might have gotten lost over time -- more easily available to AFE providers and other stakeholders. Teams of professionals would do this work in a multi-year, five-phase project, described below:

Phase I: Securing of Seed Funding for Initial Planning

Members of our AFE Digital Library Group and other supporters of this proposed project will (a) identify one or more “digital library partners” and “AFE research and professional development experts” and (b) secure modest seed funding to support and implement the initial planning to be carried out in Phase II described below. Funding might come from one or more sources that recognize the importance of making important research and other resources available to the AFE field.

Phase II: Initial Planning

Using the seed funding generated in Phase I, a small team of AFE and digital library experts will – with guidance from a Professional Advisory Committee composed of representatives of current collections and other relevant institutions – (a) carry out a needs assessment showing the potential users of a new AFE Digital Library, the information they might use, and gaps in the contents and accessibility of current collections; (b) identify how a new AFE

Digital Library can provide AFE stakeholders with useful information and networks; and (c) develop a plan that shows components of a more-effective digital resource-sharing system and actions and resources needed to create and sustain such a system.

In particular, the plan will show how to identify, gather, review, organize (using an agreed-upon thesaurus of categories and criteria and a robust database), and digitize the information that would be accessible through this system. This plan would be based on information contained in this concept paper and on additional input from AFE and digital library experts. The plan would be approved by the Professional Advisory Committee and submitted to funders to secure funding for the piloting and further implementation of the proposed AFE Digital Library described in Phases III, IV, and V below.

Phase III: Assembly of AFE Digital Library Components

With approval and funding for Phases III, IV, and V secured, the initial project team of experts and advisors would put in place a more-permanent, qualified staff and administrative supports at a central “hub library.” (This hub might be based at one of the institutions that currently host AFE resource collections, as they already have expertise and resources related to AFE and digital archiving in place.)

Guided by the plan prepared in Phase II, the new “hub” staff will prepare for the launch of the Phase IV pilot project by working with “satellite” collections to:

- Clarify the diverse audiences to be targeted and relevant information to focus on in the pilot phase. Audiences might include policy makers, public and private funders, AFE instructional and administrative staff, diverse populations of adult learners, researchers, and stakeholders concerned about particular life challenges adult learners face. Topics and users might include:
 - AFE policy, funding, and system reform (users: governmental and private-sector policy makers, funders, and advocates);
 - AFE for diverse purposes (users: stakeholders interested in models of AFE integrated with. . .
 - workforce development for incumbent workers and job seekers (users: employers, labor unions, workforce development agencies interested in strengthening worker employability, productivity, safety, health, and ability to succeed in family-sustaining careers);
 - public health (users: public health and AFE service providers interested in helping adult learners to ensure their health and participate in healthcare-related employment);

- criminal justice reform (users: AFE and other service providers supporting incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families and communities);
 - immigrant and refugee integration (users: AFE and other stakeholders serving diverse communities of immigrants and refugees);
 - services for people with special needs, including neurodiverse learners and/or individuals with physical disabilities (users: AFE and other providers serving diverse special needs populations);
 - environmental sustainability (users: environmental and AFE service providers interested in helping adult learners support the environmental sustainability of their communities and participate in eco-friendly jobs);
 - democracy and social justice (users: AFE providers and others interested in developing AFE as a tool for democracy and social justice).
 - AFE teaching/learning strategies (users: AFE providers and others who want to improve instructional, assessment, and other strategies to help learners build a range of foundational skills (e.g., reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy, digital literacy, problem-solving, and others).
 - AFE management strategies (users: AFE providers and others who want to strengthen how programs secure and manage resources; build partnerships with other stakeholders; recruit and retain learners; recruit, train, and otherwise support and retain high quality staff; and perform other administrative functions).
 - AFE resources for learners including . . .
 - “AFE learner leadership” (users: adult learners, AFE providers, and others interested in supporting the leadership capacities of adult learners).
 - “AFE resources for self-study” (users: adult learners who want to access on-line learning resources, as well as educators, family members, friends, and others who want to help learners engage in self-directed learning).
- Emphasize making resources available in “user-friendly” ways (e.g., annotated bibliographies with up-to-date links to digital copies; research brief and fact sheet summaries of particular topics; recordings of webinars and other video presentations) and putting them in place in satellite collections for system launch.

- Use agreed-upon digital resource-sharing technologies to (a) organize, store disseminate, and track collections at each satellite and (b) coordinate the satellite collections across the overall Digital Library.

Phase IV: Piloting of an Initial Round of AFE Digital Library Collections

The project team would field-test a small, pilot version of the newly-created system (developed in Phase III) which would make relevant resources more easily available to selected audiences. This new system would be introduced, implemented, monitored, and improved by:

- Presenting the AFE Digital Library as a way to help stakeholders create and continuously improve an updated national system of AFE and other supports for adult learners;
- Announcing availability of pilot collections to target audiences in the existing AFE field and other stakeholders. This would be done by providing publicity about the collection and developing and implementing training for using it
- Monitoring how many users access the system what they use, and how they use it. User feedback and other relevant information will be collected and analyzed to guide ongoing improvements in content and user-friendliness of the pilot collections and future collections.

Based on these pilot activities, the project team and participating partners would make improvements in existing collections and, if necessary, create new collections, to improve how resources are stored and made available.

Phase V: Implementation and Ongoing Improvement of the AFE Digital Library

The project team would further strengthen and expand the pilot version of the system based on (a) results of the Phase IV pilot; and (b) successful securing of additional resources and partnerships with user groups and other resource collections.

Supports Requested for Phase II and Subsequent Phases

To ensure that this effort is based on a solid plan and a collaborative foundation, we seek seed funding to support the above Phase II “initial planning” activities. Phase II budget items will include:

- Compensation for initial consultants with relevant expertise in AFE and digital archiving;
- Stipends/honoraria for Professional Advisory Committee members;
- Equipment and facilities costs (for in-person and/or remote work);
- Postage and shipping costs;
- Travel (for possible in-person meetings and conference participation to promote the effort).

Based on the plan resulting from Phase II, additional funding would be sought from the funders of Phase II and/or other sources to carry out Phase III (Assembly of AFE Digital Library Components), Phase IV (Piloting of an Initial Round of AFE Digital Library Collections), and Phase V (Implementation and Ongoing Improvement of the AFE Digital Library).

APPENDIX A

Contributors to this Document

Adult Foundational Education Digital Library Group members who helped write this paper

- Paul Jurmo (Adult Foundational Education Resources Group Organizer and Lead Writer, Consultant in Basic Skills for Development, www.pauljurmo.info)
- Judith Alamprese (Principal Scientist at Abt Associates)
- Alisa Belzer (Rutgers University Professor, Co-Editor of ProLiteracy's *Adult Literacy Education* Journal, and Editor of ProLiteracy's research brief series)
- John Comings (former Director of National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, current Consultant at World Education)
- Michele Diecuch (Senior Director of Programs at ProLiteracy)
- Daphne Greenberg (Professor and Director of the Adult Literacy Research Center at Georgia State University)
- Esther Prins and Carol Clymer (Co-Directors, Pennsylvania State University's Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy)
- Stephen Reder (former Professor at Oregon State University)
- David Rosen (former director of Boston's Adult Literacy Resource Institute and subsequently involved in numerous other research and professional development projects (e.g., LINCS, World Education's EdTEch Center))
- Federico Salas-Isnardi (Director of Houston Mayor's Office for Adult Literacy and former staff member at Texas adult literacy resource center)
- Priyanka Sharma (Vice President, World Education)
- Mark Vineis (President and Chief Executive Officer at ProLiteracy)

Others who provided information and ideas

- Cherise Moore (Project Director, LINCS), Jaleh Behroozi Soroui (Principal Researcher, Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) and Marcela Movit (Senior Researcher, LINCS) at American Institutes for Research
- Susan Imel (former Adult Education Specialist at ERIC-ACVE, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education)

- Staff in Syracuse University Libraries Special Collections Research Center: Courtney Hicks (Lead Curator) and Daniel Sarmiento (Curator of 20th Century/Modern Special Collections)
- James Parker (former adult education specialist at the U.S. Department of Education)
- Gail Spangenberg (former head executive of the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, National Commission on Adult Literacy, Business Council for Effective Literacy, and National Council on Adult Learning)
- Anthony Sarmiento (former Assistant Director of Education at the AFL-CIO and Director of Worker-Centered Learning at the Working for America Institute)
- Katherine Moran and Keira Ballantyne (Literacy Specialist and Vice President of Programs and Development at the Center for Applied Linguistics)
- Francesca Giannetti and Caryn Radick (Archivists at the Rutgers University Library)
- George State University Library staff: Laura Burtle (Associate Dean of GSU Library, with special focus on digital Library Services), Rachel Senese (GSU Digital Projects Coordinator), and Christina Zamon (GSU Head of Special Collections and Archives)
- Digital Library of Georgia staff: Sheila McAlister (DLG Director) and Nicole Lawrence (DLG Assistant Director)

APPENDIX B

Examples of Institutions that Have Created and Disseminated Research and Other Resources for the Adult Foundational Education Field

Outlined below are examples of a range of types of institutions that planners of a new national AFE Digital Library might learn from and possibly work with. (See Appendix E for on-line links to many of these institutions and others of possible interest.)

Name of Archive, Contact Person(s), and Institutional Base	Contents of Collection	Current Availability of this Organization's Resources
Adult Literacy Resource Institute (ALRI) (Contact: David Rosen). Formerly at University of Massachusetts at Boston and Roxbury Community College	ALRI had a "general" collection of resources on diverse AFE subjects. It published (a) a practitioner newsletter and journal, (b) a quarterly adult new writer literary journal (in collaboration with the Brookline, Massachusetts Public Library) and (c) other professional development and training documents for AFE practitioners.	The full ALRI collections are no longer actively available as such on-line. (They were active from 1983 to 2010.) Some individual items are digitized and available on- line (Search for "Adult Literacy Resource Institute, Boston".) Some are in private collections of former staff people. Some could be donated in hard copy to be digitized and be made available for free.
AFL-CIO Archive (contact: Anthony Sarmiento). Based at University of	Focus on labor union documents, some of which include education-related topics. Included well-known handbook by Anthony Sarmiento and Ann Kay	Some previous AFL-CIO adult education-related materials were previously digitized. Collection now being developed at U. of Maryland.

Maryland at College Park.		
<p>American Institutes for Research (AIR) and the Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) (Contacts: Jaleh Behroozi Soroui, Cherise Moore, and Marcela Movit). Independent agency based in Wash., DC.</p>	<p>AIR generates many types of resources related to AFE, including PIAAC reports, "Teaching the Skills that Matter in Adult Education" documents, and others. Currently operates the LINCS system which provides a mix of on-line resources (discussion groups, resource collections of items under 10 years old, courses) related to various aspects of AFE (e.g., ESOL, correctional ed, special needs, reading, workforce education). Also hosts the Adult Education Research and Technical Assistance Center.</p>	<p>Many are digitized and currently available on AIR website.</p>
<p>Business Council for Effective Literacy and three subsequent organizations (Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy, National Commission on Adult Literacy, and National Council on Adult Learning) (Contacts: Gail</p>	<p>Covered a wide range of policy-related topics (e.g., federal and state policy, community college roles, corporate involvement) Promoted public and private sector support for AFE in general and for special areas such as community college roles and workforce education. Funded initially by McGraw Hill CEO then and by diverse other corporate sources and foundations. Issued widely-read newsletters, issue briefs,</p>	<p>Most of these organizations' documents are now digitized. Might be made available via Syracuse University Library's adult education collection and/or other means.</p>

<p>Spangenberg, Jim Parker, and Paul Jurmo). These 4 independent nonprofit organizations operated from McGraw Hill headquarters building in NYC. Operated from 1984 to about 2015. No longer active.</p>	<p>directories, policy papers, etc.</p>	
<p>Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) (Contact: Kate Moran) Independent agency based in Wash., DC.</p>	<p>Focuses on English language learners. Formerly home to the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition and the National Center for ESL Literacy Education.</p>	<p>Some past CAL resources and some newer ones are still active on CAL website.</p>
<p>Center for International Education (Contacts: Ian George Barron and Cristine Smith). Based at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.</p>	<p>Conducts research, operates projects, and trains graduate students and others in diverse areas of formal and nonformal education. Has produced decades of documents related to adult literacy education in developing countries.</p>	<p>Many of its resources (research, project reports) are available at the CIE's website, which makes them accessible through the Scholarworks system.</p>
<p>Center for Literacy, Education & Employment (Contact:</p>	<p>Has produced studies and other tools related to diverse topics in AFE; currently maintains the</p>	<p>Many are digitized, though not all (e.g., EFF documents) are available on-line on CLEE website. (Center hopes to secure</p>

<p>Aaron Kohring). Based at University of Tennessee at Knoxville</p>	<p>documents produced by the National Institute for Literacy's Equipped for the Future adult literacy systems reform initiative.</p>	<p>funding to make EFF materials available on-line.)</p>
<p>Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and the Adult Literacy Research Center (Contact: Daphne Greenberg.) Georgia State University</p>	<p>Documents developed for Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Adult Literacy Research Center among others.</p>	<p>CSAL's website is still active, though CSAL is no longer funded and therefore not operational.</p>
<p>Coalition on Adult Basic Education (COABE): (Contact: Sharon Bonney). Independent organization with large, diverse membership and funding sources.</p>	<p>Publishes the COABE <i>Journal</i> and provides many webinars on a range of topics both at its annual conferences and throughout the year.</p>	<p>Many recent and some past COABE resources are available on COABE website.</p>
<p>Department of Applied Linguistics (Contacts: Stephen Reder and Kathy Harris). Based at Portland State University</p>	<p>Has carried out numerous projects related to English language acquisition, including Learner Web on-line system for adult learners.</p>	<p>Some past and current resources available on this department's website and possibly elsewhere.</p>

<p>ERIC-ACVE (ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Ed.) (Contact: Susan Imel). Based at Ohio State University. (Closed on Dec. 31, 2003.)</p>	<p>Well-researched and -written documents that summarized existing research on a number of topics related to work-related adult basic education.</p>	<p>Many are digitized and available via an ERIC search, though possibly not in the easy-to-locate ways of the past.</p>
<p>Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy (Contacts: Carol Clymer and Esther Prins). Based at Pennsylvania State University</p>	<p>Focuses heavily on family literacy, but also on workforce and other topics.</p>	<p>More recent documents are digitized and available on ERIC and/or Institute's website; some older documents – including ones on work-related basic skills) no longer available on that website.</p>
<p>Literacy Assistance Center (Contact: Ira Yankwitt). Agency of NY City government. Continuously operating since about 1984.</p>	<p>In its nearly 40 years, LAC has published many quality documents (e.g., a newsletter, the Literacy Harvest journal, and others) on diverse AFE topics.</p>	<p>Some of these documents might be available (though hard to find) on-line, but many appear to currently be stored in hard copy form in a storage facility.</p>

<p>National Center for Families Learning (Contact: Felicia Smith and Sharon Darling). Formerly National Center for Family Literacy, an independent agency based in Kentucky.</p>	<p>Provides resources to support intergenerational literacy activities.</p>	<p>Has an active website, though past resources might be difficult to find anywhere.</p>
<p>National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (Contacts: John Comings and Priyanka Sharma). Based at Harvard University, operated with federal funding from mid-1990s to early 2000s.</p>	<p>Research (in formal reports, <i>Focus on Basics</i> articles, etc.) on a wide range of topics (especially on how to integrate basic skills with other themes and services and how to serve diverse learners). Emphasized making research relevant and accessible to adult educators</p>	<p>NCSALL's resources can be found via a link managed by World Education: www.ncsall.net .</p>
<p>National Center on Adult Literacy (Contact: Daniel Wagner or Vivian Gadsden?). Based at University of Pennsylvania. Operated in</p>	<p>Mostly "academic" articles on diverse AFE-related topics.</p>	<p>Some digitized and available on-line at the Center's website.</p>

<p>later 1980s and early 1990s, though continues to operate in a modified form now.</p>		
<p>Open Door Collective (Contacts: David Rosen, Stephen Reder, Eric Nesheim). A project of non-profit Literacy Minnesota.</p>	<p>Issues publications on a range of AFE topics, with special focus on how AFE can help reduce poverty. Items include position papers, “Can-Do Guides,” “An Archive of Work-Related Basic Skills Resources”). Also has offered webinar on those topics. Its Evidence-Based Adult Education System Task Force has conducted research related to AFE’s responses to COVID and other topics.</p>	<p>Some of these resources are available on ODC website, which is being upgraded.</p>
<p>ProLiteracy Research Collection and New Readers Press (Contacts: Mark Vineis, Alisa Belzer). National organization (a merger of the former Laubach Literacy Action and Literacy Volunteers of America) based in Syracuse, NY.</p>	<p>Publishes <i>Adult Literacy Education Journal</i>, Research Briefs, and special documents (e.g., white papers) on a range of topics, as well as curricula and other resources for adult educators and learners.</p>	<p>Many more-recent resources available on the ProLiteracy website, while decades of earlier resources might still need to be digitized and made available online. Some are stored at Syracuse University Library’s adult education special collection.</p>

<p>Rutgers University Graduate School of Education (Contact: Alisa Belzer)</p>	<p>Homebase of widely-published researchers Gordon Darkenwald, Hal Beder, and Alisa Belzer</p>	<p>Some resources digitalized and possibly can be located on-line.</p>
<p>Syracuse University Library's Adult Education Special Collection (Contacts: Daniel Sarmiento and Michele Combs)</p>	<p>Was an original ERIC site and began compiling adult education research materials (e.g., on the External Diploma Program) in the 1970s. Currently specializes in preserving unpublished documents from the U.S. adult literacy field.</p>	<p>Some digitized, but many not digitized.</p>
<p>Texas Center for Advancement of Adult Literacy and Learning (TCALL) (Contact: Federico Salas-Isnardi). TCALL was created in 1989 by the Board of Regents at Texas A&M University to reduce adult illiteracy in Texas.</p>	<p>As the state literacy resource center, TCALL responds to the needs of literacy service providers. TCALL's primary project since 2009 has been the Adult Literacy Clearinghouse, which, provides a range of resources for adult educators.</p>	<p>Many resources are digitally available through TCALL's Adult Literacy Clearinghouse.</p>
<p>Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center. (Contacts: Literacy Specialist)</p>	<p>Provides resources for adult educators on career pathways, data, equity, instruction, program leadership, and teacher leadership</p>	<p>Many are digitized</p>

<p>Elizabeth Severson-Irby and ESOL Specialist Hali Massey). Based at Virginia Commonwealth University</p>		
<p>Voice of Adult Learners United for Education (VALUEUSA) (Contact: Marty Finsterbusch). Independent non-profit, national organization begun in later 1990s.</p>	<p>Has developed and disseminated resources to support development of adult learner leadership</p>	<p>Some are digitized and available on the VALUEUSA website, while others have not been digitized.</p>
<p>World Education, Inc. (Contact: Priyanka Sharma). International non-profit organization based in Boston.</p>	<p>Long history of publishing resources (e.g., <i>Focus on Basics</i>, <i>The Change Agent</i>, <i>World Education Reports</i>. . .) on a range of AFE topics (social justice, college transition, educational technologies, and others) relevant to both the US and developing countries.</p>	<p>Many are digitized, though many older ones likely are not. Visit World Education's website for examples. Currently hosts the collection of the National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy described above.</p>

APPENDIX C

Potential Users of a New AFE Digital Library System

The following “primary users” and “other potential users” would use the system to (a) build expertise they need to carry out particular roles and achieve purposes relevant to them and (b) network with others with similar interests.

“Primary” or “Other” Users	Stakeholder
Primary User	Adult education provider: Administrators
Primary User	Adult education provider: Designers and implementers of instructional and assessment supports to learners. (These can include those who serve particular populations such as English language learners, individuals with disabilities, older adults, out-of-school youth, et al.)
Primary User	Adult education provider: Counselors who provide educational, occupational, and personal guidance to various kinds of learners
Primary User	Policy makers and funders (from both public and private sectors) who do/might provide supports to AFE efforts
Primary User	University faculty in graduate and undergraduate adult education programs
Primary User	University students in graduate and undergraduate adult education programs
Primary User	Researchers based in universities, non-profit and for-profit organizations,
Other User	Current and potential adult learners, and their families and their communities
Other User	Employers and employer associations, labor unions, workforce development centers, economic development specialists
Other User	Supporters of public health (e.g., health service providers, policy makers, etc.)
Other User	Correctional and re-entry service providers
Other User	Immigrant and refugee service providers
Other User	Providers of services to people with disabilities
Other Users	Supporters of environmental sustainability; organizations providing services related to housing, family well-being, K-12 education, financial management, legal, and other issues relevant to adult learners
Other Users	News media

APPENDIX D

Suggestions from Digital Library Experts and AFE Researchers

In summer 2022, members of the AFE Digital Library Group reached out to a half dozen experts in “digital libraries.” We wanted to familiarize ourselves about technical requirements of operating a digital archive, arguments for the importance of archiving, and potential funders and partners for the proposed AFE Digital Library. Summarized below are ideas, information, and suggestions provided by those experts via email and interviews, along with ideas contributed by our own team of AFE researchers.

1. Take the time to learn how previous AFE collections (including some that continue to operate now) went about creating their collections.

Before the organizers of this new AFE Digital Library system get started, they should consider how previous collections (e.g., LINCS, ERIC-ACVE, NCSALL, CAAL, and others like those listed in Appendix B) were created and managed. For example, we might consider what LINCS (in its earliest years at the National Institute for Literacy) did:

There are different models and approaches and the group needs to decide which one makes more sense. One of the reasons that LINCS was successful was that it included items or resources that government agencies wouldn't or couldn't post or include, especially during the first few years of LINCS. Our goal with LINCS was to bring all adult education resources in one place with easy access for the end user as well as build networks and connections for sharing resources. We developed three levels of resource development:

- 1. A database of research documents. With this level, we developed a database with an extensive thesaurus in order to precisely tag each document in the database.*
- 2. Special Collections. Expert teams developed criteria for what should or could be posted on each collection and review potential items before posting them on LINCS,*
- 3. Discussion groups with moderators who also had criteria for items posted.*

We also had other resources such as a calendar of events, news, etc.) that had minimum criteria but were less restricted other than the three levels mentioned above.

So, while we had different levels of selection criteria of what would be posted on LINCS, we had fewer restrictions than most government agencies and more freedom on what could be posted (plus a large group of people who were involved in contributing and helping and taking ownership). LINCS' target population was ALL adult education stakeholders and at that time except for ERIC (which was only a database of research papers with a lot of review criteria) and OVAE (which didn't have many resources), there were not that many other resources serving adult education that could compete with LINCS.

Now, considering the existence of many other resources currently on-line and easier to access through Google and YouTube, it seems that the first thing that needs to be done is to determine the goals of a new system and the target population. What are the main needs (for information) and who can benefit from such a system most? (Planners of a new system will need) a clear picture of the landscape of resources in adult education, how available they are (and how easy they are to access), and who the end users will be.

2. Learn how emerging digital library systems work.

Among other sources, organizers of the proposed AFE Digital Library should review reports that our AFE Digital Library Group have already developed based on interviews they have conducted with the Digital Library of Georgia and archivists at the libraries of Georgia State University and Rutgers University. Current experts in digital library systems can provide valuable guidance and other supports to the proposed project.

3. Develop a project team composed of staff and advisory groups who will build, manage, and grow the AFE Digital Library over time. As this team is built, consider:

- This work requires various kinds of expertise (e.g., in AFE, “digital libraries,” project management, legalities of publishing materials . . .)
- Sufficient staff are needed, both at the central hub and in satellite collections.
- Staff need time to do this work in phases. (We are proposing to do this work in multiple phases in which the project might first pilot a small number of collections for selected audiences, learn from that experience, and then gradually build out the proposed networked system.)
- It is vital to plan carefully, to lay a strong foundation for an effective system.

- Don't launch site until there are a good number of resources to share. Otherwise, people won't come back to visit.
- Consider having “information-center”-type staff who can respond to inquiries from users, media, etc. in addition to staff who select, organize, label, and summarize items in the collections.
- There are a number of stakeholders who could play roles (as advisors, satellite centers, users) of this system.

Most state education agencies – plus some national organizations like AIR-- have an adult education site. One way to approach this could be to bring as many of them as possible together to agree on a set of criteria to share some of their main resources based on the criteria agreed to by a national “hub.” Therefore, the new (proposed AFE Digital Library) will be a shared site by all (partners), each of whom will contribute to the content of the site based on the criteria. Later on, based on (what resources are used by various audiences), the (AFE Digital Library) could be organized (further), (customized to) the different types of audiences it is serving and bringing together individuals (subject matter experts) or other groups to share (additional resources).

However, like many other (projects), this work needs funding -- which I am not sure if any government agency or private sector source can support.

4. Identify potential supporters who can provide financial and in-kind supports to the AFE Digital Library.

- As plans are created for the new AFE Digital Library system, it will be vital to develop a realistic budget that will support the initial and ongoing work required.
- It will also be important to identify one or more funders to provide the sustained funding that such a new system would need. (With input from our informants, our team identified a few to consider for all or parts of the system, including IES, OCTAE, IMLS, Library of Congress, private donors [including “legacy donors”], NIH (e.g., to build a health literacy collection), and others. What we are proposing might be very interesting to various funders who already have been supporting similar resource-sharing efforts. Other potential supporters include employers, labor unions, workforce development agencies, public health service providers, prisoner re-entry programs, agencies serving adults with disabilities, and other governmental and non-governmental stakeholders who have an interest in the topics that might be covered in special collections within the AFE Digital Library.

- We will need to emphasize the need for substantive, sustained funding. When reaching out to funders and other partners, we should emphasize how the proposed system would help those funders and partners fulfill their missions. One funding source to consider: the “satellite” collections (“spokes”) might each pay a reasonable membership fee to participate in the AFEDL network, with the understanding that by so doing, they will be able to reach a wider audience than they currently reach.
- We should also become familiar with the Digital Public Library of America (<https://dp.la>) which has created various kinds of on-line resource collections related to diverse issues. (Another model is the Library of America (https://loa.org/subscribe?gclid=CjwKCAjws--ZBhAXEiwAv-RNL0x_1UQCEdsB2_KuLCF3Z6xMC3WRTUi2HETeqxcSQG2eGA7zzQ8HLhoC8nAQAvD_BwE)) Our proposed AFE Digital Library might work with one or more such systems or borrow features of them. (The Civil Rights Digital Library is another model we might look at. It pulls collections from various institutions to make them more easily available to the public: <http://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome&Welcome>).
- While large universities might also already be committed to other types of digital collections, smaller colleges and universities might be interested in hosting smaller collections that might serve as the kinds of satellite collections described in our Concept Paper.

5. Clarify who the potential users of a new AFE Digital Library might be and the types of digital resources those users might benefit from

Do this with input from those currently managing resource collections and conducting professional development related to AFE:

- Identify potential users (both primary users and other users) and survey them to clarify the types of resources (both content and formats) they might find useful (and for what purposes).
 - Do this with input from those currently managing resource collections and conducting professional development related to AFE.
 - Consider including not only “formal research” documents (aka “academic” resources) but other (“practical”) resources presented in various ways:

It seems to me your focus of users is practically everyone interested in adult education (i.e., researchers (from various fields), adult education practitioners, policy makers, workforce specialists). (Information might be presented in) multiple formats (discussion group postings, presentations,

short and long content representations –like info graphics, longer research papers—webinars, videos. . . This means you’d need to create a large database that can hold these resources and will be retrievable by multiple different ways. So the main challenge will be finding a platform or tool that could be used for this purpose (there are a lot of commercial options, with web-based representation formats) as well as customizing and designing it to both meet the requirements of the tool and be user friendly and easily accessible to the intended end-user.

- b. Identify current AFE collections (both big and small and survey them to:
- clarify what resources already exist (in digital and other formats) in current collections (which can include well-known ones such as LINCS and ERIC and other, smaller ones based in universities, non-profit organizations, individuals’ personal collections in the U.S. and other countries), who uses them, and for what purposes,
 - Identify gaps in the current collections (in terms of content and accessibility).
- c. Based on the above initial surveys of potential users and collections:
- i. Identify primary and other users to focus the new AFE Digital Library on initially and over time.
 - ii. Identify priority content to collect and organize initially and over time. One option: start with categories of materials for which there are already many good materials available.
 - iii. Identify various purposes that users will use the resources for (e.g., advocacy, program planning, professional development. . .)
 - iv. Identify other important features (e.g., are fees required to access them or are they available at no charge; the language used; etc.) of resources to incorporate into the plan.
 - v. Make a “research case” for how the proposed library would help various stakeholders carry out their work. For examples, policy makers and funders can learn from how AFE policies were created in the past, how resources were targeted, what worked, what didn’t, and what is required to create effective policies and funding for AFE.
 - vi. Be aware of federal requirements for making research transparent and available to wide audiences.

6. Develop a coding system and user-friendly database that all collections would use in a coordinated way.

- Develop a coding system (a “thesaurus”) to identify categories and subcategories of content, users, purposes. Resources need to be accessible and easy to find. Time therefore needs to be spent figuring out how to tag with appropriate keywords. (The new AFE Digital Library might adapt coding/thesaurus systems previously developed by LINCS and other collections, while ensuring that the new “thesaurus” is relevant to current needs, opportunities, terminology, concepts, etc.) This organizing system should be in keeping with professional standards in the adult education and archiving (information science) fields.
- Consider including two types of resources: (a) “gold standard” items that are assessed as meeting agreed upon standards of reliability, relevance, ease of use, etc. and (b) “other resources” that might not meet the “gold standard” criteria but are nonetheless deemed relevant and useful to various audiences. (A “5-star” rating system might be used to rate items.)
- Identify and/or develop a robust content management (database) system that can efficiently manage the storage, longer-term preservation, dissemination, and security of multiples types of information across participating institutions. Keep in mind the user experience. It needs to be user-friendly, inviting, easy to navigate, and clear in its focus. (Options might include OMEKA.)
- Clarify how this system would relate to the kinds of federal guidelines that LINCS (and possibly others) currently operate under.
- Clarify whether and how to copy and disseminate items that are copyrighted.
- Create a glossary of terms that will be used within the system, so users and others can easily understand and navigate the library. There are many related terms that have emerged in our group’s discussions in the past several months – such as “library,” “collection,” “archive,” “portal,” “repository”, and “clearinghouse,” (web)site” – that need to be defined, so we can be on the same page about the terminology we use – or don’t use. (LINCS currently has an overall “library” of resources, with specialized “collections” related to various themes housed within that “library.” The library also contains a smaller number of items that don’t neatly fit into the existing “collections.”)

6. Gather and organize robust, high-quality collections for initial pilot phase.

With input from subject matter experts (who might include those who have been managing current collections) . . .

- Develop well-organized collections of high-quality resources around priority topics and audiences.
- Carefully tag them with agreed-upon codes that will be meaningful and user-friendly for users.
- For each item, provide a brief, clearly-written abstract.
- Tap into existing collections and possibly other sources (the latter of which might include items that were never digitized or are older than current collections like LINCS can house).
- If appropriate, create new collections on topics that were never previously made available digitally or for audiences (e.g., adult learners, various stakeholder groups) that were previously given lower priority.
- Coordinate the development of these diverse collections through the staff and advisors based at the central hub.
- Recognize that collections might include various types of resources, including:
 - Newer resources and older ones not available in existing collections.
 - Items that are available at no cost and links to items that have a cost attached.
 - Items related to various aspects of AFE service provision (e.g., instruction, learner assessment, program evaluation, staff/professional development, facilities management, recruitment, community outreach....)
 - Items related to funding and in-kind supports for AFE programs and learners.
 - Items that meet federal publication guidelines and those that don't.

APPENDIX E

Links to Related Resources

- American Institutes for Research (AIR): <https://www.air.org/our-work/workforce/adult-learning> ; <https://www.air.org/centers/aertac>
- Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)
 - <https://www.cal.org/caela/>
 - <https://cal.org/what-we-do/projects/caela>
- Center for International Education:
<https://www.umass.edu/cie/resources/cie-publications>
- Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy (documents accessible via WayBack Machine at <https://web.archive.org/web/20171206232609/http://www.caalusa.org/publications.html>) and National Commission on Adult Literacy (<https://nationalcommissiononadulthoodliteracy.org>)
- Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE): <https://coabe.org>
- Digital Library of Georgia: <https://dlg.usg.edu>
- Digital Public Library of America: <https://dp.la>
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC-ACVE): Susan Imel article about ERIC-ACVE titled “Perspectives on ERIC and Adult Education” in New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 28(3), 3-13, 2016 (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/nha3.20147>)
- Georgia State University’s Center for the Study of Adult Literacy and Adult Literacy Research Center:
 - <https://education.gsu.edu/research-outreach/alrc/>
 - <https://sites.gsu.edu/csai/>
- Institute of Museum and Library Services: <https://www.ims.gov/> (Visit <http://crdl.usg.edu/?Welcome&Welcome> to see the Civil Rights Digital Library supported by IMLS.)
- Literacy Information and Communications System (LINCS), currently operated by the American Institutes for Research:
 - LINCS main website: <https://lincs.ed.gov>
 - <https://www.air.org/project/literacy-information-and-communication-system-lincs>
- Massachusetts System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES):
 - About SABES: <https://www.sabes.org>
 - SABES Resource Library: <https://www.sabes.org/resources>
 - SABES video gallery: <https://www.sabes.org/resources/video-gallery>
 - SABES DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) Resources: <https://www.sabes.org/resources/dei-resources-library>

- National Center for Families Learning:
<https://www.familieslearning.org/history>
- National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL):
 - John Comings article “The First Five Years: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 1996-2001”, NCSALL Reports #23, October 2002.
 - NCSALL collection (currently maintained by World Education):
www.ncsall.net
- National Center on Adult Literacy at University of Pennsylvania:
<https://repository.upenn.edu/literacyorg/> and
<https://www.literacy.org/content/contact-us>
- National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) and its Equipped for the Future (EFF) systems reform initiative: See Sondra Stein articles at
https://library.syracuse.edu/digital/guides/s/stein_s.htm#d2e56
- Open Door Collective publications (at
<https://www.literacymn.org/OpenDoorCollective>) which include “An Archive of Work-Related Basic Skills Resources”
(<https://www.dropbox.com/s/er96od4ax26oxo2/Work-Related%20Basic%20Skills%20Archive%20ODC%203-12-21.pdf?dl=0>)
- Pennsylvania State University’s Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy and Goodling Institute for Family Literacy:
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=%22goodling+institute%22>
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=%22institute+for+the+study+of+adult+literacy%22>
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=author%3Aaskov>
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=author%3Abarbara+van+horn>
 - <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=%22esther+prins%22>
- Portland State University’s Department of Applied Linguistics:
<https://www.pdx.edu/applied-linguistics/> and <https://www.pdx.edu/applied-linguistics/research-and-projects> and <http://www.isal.pdx.edu/index.html>
- ProLiteracy Research Collection:
<https://www.proliteracy.org/Resources/Research> and New Readers Press
(<https://www.newreaderspress.com>)
- ResearchGate (researchgateemail.net)
- Society of American Archivists pamphlet:
<https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-orgrecs>
- Syracuse University Special Collections Research Center, Charters Library of Resources for Educators of Adults: <https://library.syracuse.edu/special-collections-research-center/collections/collection-areas/charters-library/>
- Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning (TCALL):
<https://tcall.tamu.edu/TRAIN-PD-TCALL-About.html>
- VALUEUSA: <https://valueusa.org>
- Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center: <https://valrc.org/about/> and
<https://valrc.org/resources/>