

# From iSchools to US Ignite: Strategies for Fostering Inclusive Gigabit Networks

**Jon P. Gant**  
University of Illinois, Urbana-  
Champaign  
[jongant@illinois.edu](mailto:jongant@illinois.edu)

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## Abstract

The goals of this interactive, half-day workshop are to raise awareness of the U.S. Ignite initiative and the opportunities it provides to collaborate among iSchools as well as communities. U.S. Ignite brings together high-speed broadband resources to create test beds at a national scale. The initiative uses the Global Environment for Network Innovation (GENI), an NSF-funded cloud network that provides a fast virtual laboratory to develop new applications to address societal needs in healthcare delivery, advanced manufacturing, education and work force development, economic development, disaster response, and energy use. How can iSchools help libraries play a leading role in building inclusive next-generation Internet applications and services? We will showcase specific applications from communities, including Chattanooga and Cleveland, and projects such as the Video Mosaic Collaborative at Rutgers University. Municipal and institutional variations generate distinct local strategies to increase social inclusion in the digital world.

*Keywords:* broadband, GENI, high-speed networks, US Ignite, libraries

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The iSchools in the United States are at a critical juncture as the build-out of broadband infrastructure is being completed in 2013. Broadband creates opportunities and challenges for educational institutions concerned with interconnections among people, information and technology. Not as well known, but perhaps even more impactful, is the U.S. Ignite initiative, launched in June 2012. U. S. Ignite promotes “leadership in developing applications and services for ultra-fast broadband and software-defined networks” with the aim to address crucial social needs, such as health information and education. The Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, received funding for one year from the U.S. Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for “Inclusive Gigabit Libraries,” a project to examine the ways in which libraries and other community anchor institutions can provide the facilities, skills, and incentives for their users to work together to address common concerns, such as workforce development, public safety, and safe energy. Our formal grant partners are the Office for Information Technology Policy at the American Library Association, and U.S. Ignite. I am serving as the PI for the grant and will facilitate this interactive workshop. We are eager for input from iSchool members, in order to enrich our final white paper, which will be widely distributed in professional and policy circles by summer 2013.

Three brief presentations, by myself and our partners, will introduce participants to:

- Digitally inclusive communities and the role of the public library
- State of broadband access for libraries today
- Future of broadband access with the build-out of gigabit communities
- US Ignite Initiative and the opportunity for libraries
- The technology behind the fiber, in very accessible terms
- Case studies of “gig cities,” Chattanooga, TN; Cleveland, OH, and Kansas City, as well as relevant projects such as the Video Mosaic Collaborative at Rutgers University

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## Presentations

- 1:30-1:50pm Introduction to gigabit speed networks and the IMLS grant, "Inclusive Gigabit Libraries" by Jon Gant
- 1:55-2:15pm Presentation by US Ignite staffer (possibly via Skype) about US Ignite initiative, with five minutes for questions
- 2:20-2:40pm Presentation by ALA Office for Information Technology Policy (Larra Clark or other OITP staffer, possibly via Skype) about libraries and high speed Internet networks
- Break —
- 3-3:15pm Setting up the fishbowl with guidelines and discussion topics

## Fishbowl Discussion

- 3:15-3:45pm How can iSchools serve as incubators for inclusive uses of high-speed networks? What are the challenges and opportunities to using gigabit speed networks for teaching and research in iSchools?
- 3:45-4:15pm How can we leverage the opportunities to most effectively engage iSchools with community anchor institutions, such as libraries?
- 4:15-4:45 How can we mitigate the challenges of these networks to make collaborations most effective?
- 4:45-5:30 Wrap-up and evaluation

The goals of this workshop are to raise awareness of U.S. Ignite and the opportunities it provides to collaborate among iSchools as well as among communities. "Stitching together existing ultra-fast and software-defined networks across campuses and communities" creates exciting opportunities to incubate not only technical applications but also inclusive social structures. The iSchools community is well-positioned to contribute ideas and insights about the US Ignite platform that has been created to serve as a testbed within cities, as well as at a distance. Each institution will bring distinct local approaches to the conversation that will inform the final report and the discussions and web-based materials on which the report will be based. These institutional variations will generate strategies to increase social inclusion in the digital world.