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Bandwidth Upgrade at the Saint Paul Public Library

The Library uses an assessment tool called Edge to evaluate a number of technology indicators. The Edge was developed by the University of Washington's Information School and funded in part by the Gates Foundation. The Edge benchmarks encompass a comprehensive set of best practices relating to public access technology. Libraries throughout the U.S., including all eight systems in the metro area, use the Edge assessment to inform decision-making and planning for technology and public service improvements.

One of the Library's challenges in recent years has been inadequate bandwidth available through the City's I-Net. The Saint Paul Public Library scores zero on the Edge indicator: "The library meets or exceeds the minimum bandwidth capacity necessary to support public user demand."

Many current online applications - used by both staff and public- demand greater bandwidth and higher connection speeds. At the library, multiple public access computers, staff computers, and patron laptops and handheld mobile devices connected to the library's network are in continuous use as they access broadband-intensive services and resources. The strain on the library's network continues to increase as patrons bring their own devices to the library and rely on new interactive, multimedia, and high-resolution applications and programs. Inadequate bandwidth has disrupted basic library operations, like circulation and ordering new materials.

Funding approved in the 2015 budget and the recent franchise agreement with Comcast will result in significant upgrades to network bandwidth at libraries. Staff from the Office of Technology and Communications will present information to the Library Board and answer questions about the upgrade plans. Attached is a summary of the current bandwidth at each library, projected future bandwidth, and dates for the upgrades.

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