

RVBAT Meeting - August 5, 2026

Meeting Purpose

Review regional digital literacy initiatives and discuss AI's societal impact.

Key Takeaways

- **AI's Psychological Risks:** AI's tendency to "hallucinate" and reinforce user biases creates a psychological risk, as users may treat its output as authoritative, potentially leading to isolation and a skewed view of reality.
- **Advocacy for Technical Expertise:** Rep. Wynn's proposed permanent AI committee lacks a required technical seat. Advocacy is focused on adding this expertise, especially from rural areas, to ensure policies address real-world infrastructure gaps.
- **Digital Equity Funding Reset:** The Digital Equity Act (DEA) is back on the table after a judge ruled it constitutional, but its race-based criteria were struck down. A new application round is imminent, with a short turnaround (4–6 weeks).
- **Regional Program Updates:** Jackson County Library Services (JCLS) is expanding digital literacy classes to Rogue Retreat and Access. Josephine County Library District (JCLD) is struggling with hotspot service in rural areas due to the U.S. Cellular/T-Mobile merger.

Topics

AI's Societal & Psychological Impact

- **Core Problem:** AI is designed to create, not to be 100% accurate. When it lacks information, it fabricates ("hallucinates") plausible-sounding but false content.
- **Psychological Risks:**
 - **"AI Psychosis":** Users treating AI as an authoritative source, leading to a skewed view of reality.
 - **Social Isolation:** Preferring AI interaction over human connection, hindering the development of critical social skills like conflict management and empathy.
- **Mitigation Strategies:**
 - **Education:** Teach users to apply critical thinking, verify AI-generated information, and understand its limitations.
 - **Intentional Design:** Program AI with guardrails to push back on users and encourage critical analysis.

- **Human-Centered Tech:** Use AI to augment human connection, not replace it.
 - *Example:* A physical robot companion increased exercise participation in older adults by 30% compared to a screen-based program, highlighting the value of physical presence.

Regional Digital Literacy Programs

- **Jackson County Library Services (JCLS):**
 - **New Partnerships:** Expanding online computer basics classes (using Senior Planet curriculum) to Rogue Retreat and Access.
 - **DART Van:** Now a community engagement vehicle, not primarily tech-focused, due to low device usage post-fire/COVID. Starlink equipment is on hiatus but can be reactivated.
- **Josephine Community Library District (JCLD):**
 - **Hotspot Challenges:** The U.S. Cellular/T-Mobile merger is disrupting service, especially in the "connectivity desert" of Williams, creating a public safety risk by blocking emergency alerts.
- **Ashland Parks & Recreation:**
 - **JCLS Partnership:** Continuing monthly digital literacy classes with high participation (e.g., a recent iPhone class was very successful).

State & Federal Policy Updates

- **Oregon AI Legislation (Rep. Wynn):**
 - A proposed bill would create a permanent legislative AI committee.
 - **Key Issue:** The committee lacks a required technical seat.
 - **Advocacy:** Jackie Wirz is pushing for a technical subcommittee with rural representation to ensure policies address real-world infrastructure gaps.
- **Digital Equity Act (DEA):**
 - A judge ruled the DEA constitutional, but its race-based criteria were struck down.
 - A new application round is imminent (4–6 week turnaround).
 - **Strategic Shift:** Grant proposals should now focus on non-partisan outcomes like economic development, workforce development, and healthcare.
- **E-Rate Program:**
 - The FCC has issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) questioning the program's future.
 - Schools and libraries are being advised to advocate for the program's continuation.
- **2030 Census:**
 - The census will be primarily online, risking an undercount of rural and digitally disconnected populations.

Future Initiatives & Events

- **OSU 4-H Grant (Proposed):**
 - **Goal:** Secure 10 Starlink units for rural areas to research connectivity's impact on education and workforce development.
- **Digital Inclusion Week Event (Portland, Oct):**
 - **Goal:** Host a pilot event for nonprofits on AI's community impact, with plans to replicate it regionally (e.g., Southern Oregon).
- **Oregon Connections Conference (Hood River, Oct):**
 - **Focus:** Disaster recovery, including a session on Cascadia earthquake preparedness for telecommunications.

Next Steps

- **Eric Molinsky:** Explore connecting with the Jackson County Continuum of Care (COC) board to expand library partnerships.
- **Jackie Wirz:** Continue advocating for a technical seat on Rep. Wynn's proposed AI committee.
- **Victor Villegas:** Share the Oregon Connections conference link and details on the upcoming DEA application process.
- **All:** Prepare for the DEA application, focusing proposals on non-partisan outcomes like economic development.
- **All:** Attend the next RVBAT meeting on **Wednesday, September 2nd.**