

# Increasing Information Literacy and Awareness at African Library Project Through Information Literacy Programs: Prospectus Part A

## **Introduction**

African Library Project (ALP) is a not for profit based in Pittsburg, California. Funded by Enlight Foundation, ALP coordinators book drives in North America and partners with African schools and villages to create small libraries with the aim of increasing literacy in African youth. Another mission albeit not as prevalent is to educate volunteers about African countries and cultures. It is made up of eight volunteers that sit on the board of directors, three paid staff members, two paid interns, 12 board emeritus, six country liaisons, a revolving number of volunteer book drive organizers (BDOs), as well as a revolving number of youth ambassadors and representatives from their active partner countries Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Swaziland. ALP relies heavily on its book drive organizers and African partner countries. BDOs volunteer by collecting 1000 books and fundraising \$500 for the cost of shipping the book container. African representatives from (country) pay for the processing that it takes to receive the container of books. African partners are also responsible for having a safe structure to store the books and creating and maintaining a library board for the small community libraries. The folks immediately responsible for outreach, community events, marketing and publicity, and making sure each “container” are the three staff members and two interns. For the purposes of this paper, we will narrow our focus to the paid staff and interns at ALP, and discuss the information literacy program implemented to educate and, most importantly, retain BDOs - and how BDOs may use this framework as a standard for learning and collaborating.

## **Defining Digital Literacy**

As defined by the American Library Association in the report *Digital Literacy, Libraries, and Public Policy*, digital literacy is:

*“...the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information, an ability that requires both cognitive and technical skills.”*

## **Benefits of Defining an Information Literacy Program**

*“Information competencies are a key factor in lifelong learning. They are the first step in achieving educational goals.” - Jesús Lau, Chair Information Literacy Section / IFLA*

Information literacy programs for nonprofits can often be less defined than those you will find in a college, university, and traditional business settings. However, the role of information literacy (and its necessity) in these institutions is just as prevalent because ALP, in particular, seeks to 1) provide folks with the necessary skills to navigate their information environment 2) challenge organization members to find new ways to use the digital landscape to promote ALP, and 3) help youth across North America build leadership and project management skills for which digital literacy is essential.

Information literacy programs provide a framework for ALP organization members to interact with information in and outside of academic and organizational settings. Currently, ALP

staff and interns do not have an overarching standard they're expected to work with and no current way of measuring whether BDOs have, in the process of their volunteer experience, gained knowledge about the African country they are serving. Despite this being a secondary mission, it is essential to the retention of BDOs. When BDOs have more information on the country they are serving, bonds are built between the country - and those children they're directly benefiting - and the BDO. Another added benefit of a planned information literacy program is educating BDOs on how to best collect books in (and with the help of) their communities along with finding new ways to fundraise the \$500 needed to ship book containers - and how collection and fundraising is changed or can be improved with the use of technology. As well, giving BDOs (who often consist of middle-school to high-school students) a framework for understanding the data and statistics of literacy and education rates in the countries they're volunteering for as "Knowing how to recognize the role data plays ... is critical to navigating today's complex world." (Fontichiaro, etc. p, 7).

It's important to remember "To teach effectively, you have to reach your students, students who come to the classroom with varied backgrounds, expectations, abilities, and learning styles." (Georgetown.edu). This is even more vital when creating information literacy programs for youth outside of classrooms, classrooms which inherently may have a more uniform population than the average ALP volunteer BDO. Information literacy programs are challenging to implement but their benefits are wide-ranging, and consistently address the information needs of various organization members. A uniform information literacy program is essential to meet the business objectives of ALP, give youth the tools to excel as volunteers, connect with like-minded organizations to foster partnerships that can expand ALP across North

America, and provide an overall operational and singular structure for how ALP (staff, volunteers, board members, interns, donors) identify, access, evaluate, sort, categorize, prioritize, and distribute information.

### **Critique of Existing Information Literacy Program**

The existing information literacy framework in terms of information technology and information technology instruction is an informal and participatory series of web-based lectures and webinars provide by ALP staff for youth ambassadors. In particular, the course-based curriculum has been broken down into four sections, three of which can be relevant to those outside of the youth ambassador program as stated on ALP youth ambassador webpage:

1. Online Resources
  - a. Book Drive Organizing 101
  - b. Community Engagement
  - c. Ghana and India 2019
  - d. Social Media Marketing and Storytelling

Outside of the written (orientation decks and manuals) and web-based instructions that are youth-ambassador specific, there is no formal framework for information literacy and technology learning for BDOs.

2. Written resources
  - a. Country-fact sheet (Houses stats for each active partner country)
  - b. Social Media tool kit (Written for and accessible by youth ambassadors only)

As BDOs are expected to find new ways to collect books and fundraise money, there should be implemented a program that thereby teaches web literacy, data and statistical comprehension, and information-seeking in the digital space that may be used to innovate, collaborate, and grow as volunteers and, ultimately, students of online information seeking. (As stated a primary motivation for ALP is educating BDOs in African countries but also extends to educating them on volunteer practices and using technology as an outreach tool.) Without this core curriculum, it can not be expected that ALP will retain BDOs and/or continue building enthusiasm BDOs have for volunteering, specifically creating libraries in Africa, or understanding the value their volunteering with ALP has to those youth in Africa who see increase literacy rates as a direct result of having reading material more accessible.

The biggest issues of ALP's existing information literacy program is that it is 1) limited to youth ambassadors 2) does not encourage an understanding of African countries or comprehension of statistics around literacy improvements 3) does not account for different learning styles that BDOs (or even youth ambassadors) may have, and finally 4) no way to measure the result of training. In the following recommendations, we will try to address these issues and understand how expanding our information and technological literacy can help in ALP's overall mission.

### **Recommendations for Expanding**

Keeping in mind the information literacy program for nonprofits and ALP, specifically, is still exploratory, there are ways in which a defined framework can enhance the goals and mission of ALP. Technology that can increase information literacy amongst volunteer and staff/interns,

as well as build awareness of technologies role in information seeking and community outreach, should be incorporated into a more planned information literacy program for ALP.

Since ALP does not have an existing framework for general BDOs, we should first define the information literacy goals best for volunteers and how they may change over time or as volunteers advance, or in the case of ALP, host more and more book drives. ALP must also define a clear way to measure its goals as they pertain to retaining BDOs and how their performance (ways of communicating needs with their community and fundraising) grows. One of the frameworks that stood out in my readings was Mozilla Web Literacy Education Kit, which the below expansion recommendations are based on:

- Defining Expectations
  - Establish a framework for different groups of learners
    - (How does learning differ between staff, interns, board members, volunteers, etc? How do goals differ between groups?)
  - Outline core activities and goals for volunteers in a curriculum overview, including ways to measure success and participation of ALP volunteers.
    - Create a space where youth ambassadors, book drive organizers, staff and affiliates can access resources for understanding 1) African partner countries, 2) ALP objectives and current statistics about containers shipped, book drives in progress, partner libraries, 3) how to promote ALP in different environments and what resources/tools can be used to promote the various missions of ALP online and offline.

- Information literacy program must target: youth ambassadors, book drive organizers (youth), the internal team (including staff, board members, donors, etc.)
  - **Youth ambassadors** could go through online programming on YA-dedicated website (<https://www.alpyouthambassadors.org/>). Specific expectations should lean toward resource and information gathering for fundraising, external and online outreach, and marketing, the ability to locate, access, and distribute information, and understanding information appropriateness.
  - **Book drive organizers'** information needs will not vary substantially from youth ambassadors. BDOs tend to lean younger so the expectation should be creating a foundation for information gathering, expressing the importance of and need for identifying information resources, navigating the information landscape, and being able to effectively locate and evaluate information and its quality.
  - **Internal team** expectations should be around gathering information, the nature and extent of the information need across different platforms (and how that need changes based off socioeconomic backgrounds, location, etc.)
- Expand online tutorials (including webinars, graphics, interactive games, streaming, video conferencing, and other teaching activities) so BDOs (and not

just youth ambassadors of ALP) can have access to them. This does not include tutorials that are specific to youth ambassadors mentioned above.

- Assist volunteers with information seeking, either through in-person workshops or as a part of a wider.
  - In offline discussions, volunteers can share ways they interact within their communities to promote book collection, fundraising tactics that have worked for them, how technology has played a role in these activities.
  - In online discussions, volunteers can “reflect on and share observations, ideas, and feelings about their own web use” ([foundation.mozillala.org](http://foundation.mozillala.org)) and how it may benefit their volunteer experience and outreach. These online discussions can also involve chat-based groups (individual or collaborative) that help volunteers access information by sharing materials and ideas about fundraising and book curation.
  - Actively participate in volunteer’s information seeking process through these workshops and online tutorials.
- Creating content in various forms (using images, ALP messages for in-person or online marketing material) for community outreach and fundraising.
- Measuring Success
  - Measure the engagement of volunteers with activities-online and offline.
  - Retention of volunteers and the number of recurring volunteers. (How has this new framework increase volunteer’s digital competency? How has it aligned with ALP’s mission?)



Information literacy learning in a not-for-profit setting - The case of African Library Project:  
Prospectus Part B

**Our Vision - Challenging the Status Quo and Breaking Down Biases**

African Library Project (ALP) is undergoing a tremendous change. We are shifting away from the main message of our organization, which is about creating and/or improving youth libraries in rural Africa for students. Though this mission is still paramount and considered as the foundation of our nonprofit, we want to focus more on delivering a meaningful and positive message about Africa to our North America book drive organizers (BDOs), board members, partner organizations, and staff. Instead of promoting the act of creating libraries, ALP wants to promote the act of understanding African culture and history, celebrating the measures African countries have taken to increase literacy, and *adding* to that nation-wide change as equals.

All around us, we consistently see stereotypes about African culture. In some cases, those cliches are ingrained into us and our peers as unrealized biases. We aim to provide a curriculum that teaches folks at different levels of our organization how to access and evaluate information efficiently and critically, and also how to create and distribute information to their communities whilst trying to eliminate inherent (and often, unconscious) biases, white-savior complexes<sup>1</sup>, and stereotypes. Therefore, the structure of our information literacy program will be centered around the concept of information seeking and distribution. All members of ALP should not only be able to use technology seamlessly - search engines and social media, in particular - but also be able to

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<sup>1</sup> “The term **white savior**, sometimes combined with **savior complex** to write **white savior complex**, refers to a **white person** who acts to help non-**white** people, with the help in some contexts perceived to be self-serving.” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_savior](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_savior)

coherently strategize ways to use their communities information needs and the data gathered on behalf of ALP to engage different audiences with challenging content.

The information literacy program has a uniform purpose but its structure will change based off of who is learning: BDO, youth ambassadors, or internal team members (paid and unpaid). It will be conducted in a series of lectures and online-based and in-person workshops both autonomously and in groups that will give folks deeper insight into the organization's information needs as well as their own information seeking methods, including their current criteria for information evaluation and how it may include unknown biases, and if so, ways to address them. There is no current time limit for these workshops, only ones that can be speculated. Regardless, ALP seeks to arm all organization members with the tools they may need to better understand the challenges inherent to this reimagining of our mission statement.

### **Outcomes**

The goal of the African Library Project's new program is to build a foundation for digital literacy and learning at all levels of our organization. As this will be our first program, a lot of testing will need to be done to ensure we're optimizing our lessons as much as possible. The current outcomes of this program are detailed in the following ways:

- Fulfill ALP new mission statement by providing online and offline services to all members of organization.

- Help youth ambassadors, book drive organizers, and other affiliates of ALP evaluate the current methods for information seeking, retrieval, evaluation and distribution they may have - whether unconsciously or consciously - and potential biases.
- ALP internal team will ensure all youth ambassadors and select (volunteer) book drive organizers know how to find and evaluate information about the African countries they are creating libraries for. Including learning basic internet search and computer skills.
  - i.e. Help youth ambassadors, book drive organizers, and other affiliates of ALP gain proficiency in information seeking and evaluating.
- Help increase youth ambassador and book drive organizers awareness of African partner countries culture, history, and present.
- Teach youth ambassadors, book drive organizers, and other affiliates of ALP how to evaluate information for the purpose of distributing online and offline content to different communities (school, organizations they may be a part of, clubs they may participate in). This may include graphic design and technology literacy.
- Teach youth ambassadors, book drive organizers, and other affiliates of ALP how to evaluate different information needs in different communities.
- Increase awareness of ALP new mission across organization members and externally.
- Increase awareness of resources from libraries, online repositories and databases that will allow organization members to become aware of different African countries.
- Focus ALP content on the history and unique cultural aspects of partner countries in an effort to eliminate cliches and stereotypes about Africa.

- Help promote an overall understanding of information literacy as a tool for continuous learning and growing.
- Create both one-on-one, group, and self-learning lessons for all organization members with materials they can use multiple times to continuously increase their proficiency of information literacy.

### **Youth Ambassador (YA) Program Timeline**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Activities of Program</b>	<b>Resources and checklist</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Quarter One	Meet with Youth Engagement Program team (YEP) to plan proposal  Evaluate and approve outcomes	Info literacy program business plan  List of outcomes, specific to YA  Approval of board members and YEP team lead	Quality of outcomes and how outcomes align with overall mission, recommendations / number of changes to action plan
Quarter Two	Modify current YA content to align with new mission and design basic courses online and offline that meet outcomes  Set dates for courses and workshops (online and offline) that work with YA schedules	Marketing materials, such as press release, youth ambassador email blast, flyers about program  Individual workshops planned out from start to finish and web development complete for online workshops	Quality of materials, feedback  Whether information is easily digestible for student-aged youth
Quarter Three	Host computer, search engine literacy workshops with focus on - finding, evaluating, creating, distributing content	Marketing led in charge of webinars and YEP team lead in charge of any in-person workshops	Results of online workshops, participation in workshops, feedback
Quarter Four	Apply workshop knowledge to book drive promotion within selected community	Create and approve criteria for assessment	Youth feedback Measure program adoption, usage, and perception

### **Book Drive Organizers Program Timeline**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Activities of Program</b>	<b>Resources &amp; checklist</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Quarter One	Meet with internal (paid) team to create action plan	Info literacy program business plan and list of outcomes specific to BDO	Quality of outcomes and how outcomes align with overall mission, recommendations /

	Evaluate and improve outcomes for BDOs	Approval of volunteer board members and staff	number of changes to action plan
Quarter Two	Create BDO-specific content for info literacy learning (content needs to be digestible by a wide-range of ages)  Set dates for courses and workshops (offline) that work with BDO schedules	Marketing materials, such as press release, general email blast to past and current BDO, flyers about program  Individual workshops planned out from start to finish	Quality of materials, feedback from past and current volunteers  Whether information is easily digestible for youth from middle school, high school to college
Quarter Three	Host computer, search engine literacy workshops with focus on - finding, evaluating, creating, distributing content	Business and community development manager and youth program outreach coordinator to lead in-person workshop	Participation in workshops, feedback from volunteers
Quarter Four	Apply workshop knowledge to book drive promotion within selected community	Create and approve criteria for assessment	How many new book drives signed up Submission of useable content marketing material

### **Internal Team Program Timeline**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Activities of Program</b>	<b>Resources and checklist</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Quarter One	Meet with main staff, CEO and founder to create a business plan specific to internal staff  Evaluate and approve outcomes	Info literacy program business plan and list of outcomes  Approval of board members, founder, and staff	Quality of outcomes and how outcomes align with overall mission, recommendations / number of changes to action plan
Quarter Two	Create content for board members (adults), non-board member volunteers, board emeritus, and staff  Set dates for courses and workshops (offline) that work with schedule  Internal email sent - Mark your calendars!	Individual workshops planned out from start to finish  Marketing team lead and marketing intern to lead in-person workshop  CEO to speak to the importance of new mission	Quality of materials, feedback from past and current volunteers  Whether information is easily digestible for older folks
Quarter Three	Host computer, search engine literacy workshops  Teach how to evaluate the information needs of distinct communities involved with ALP	Business and community development manager and youth program outreach coordinator to lead in-person workshop	Participation in workshops, feedback from volunteers

Quarter Four	Individual lessons as needed	Create and approve criteria for assessment	The application of workshop knowledge to creation of promotional and outreach material for organization
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### Typical Workshop Session

For the sake of being concise, we are going to focus here on what a typical in-person workshop session would look like for ALP's youth ambassadors as well as the learning outcomes of the session.

Time	Activity	Learning Outcomes / Objectives	Facilitator
12:30 - 1:00	<b>Arrival</b> ALP staff arrive to set up	NA	Team leader
1:00 - 1:10	Participants Arrive (ice breaker post-its activity, and introduce the activity - "Africa")	Ice Breaker	Everyone
1:10 - 1:15	<b>Overview of the Day</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thank you for coming</li> <li>- Share some responses to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Today I am feeling...</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Introduce the objectives for the day</li> <li>- Go over the agenda</li> <li>- Questions?</li> </ul>	Warm Up	Team leader
1:30 - 2:00	<b>Activity - How much about Africa do we know?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's important that we represent our APCs in a way that is dignifying. We must do our best to dispel African stereotypes and educate ourselves and our communities of the communities we partner with in Africa.</li> <li>- Go over the ice breaker responses</li> <li>- Let's be real though, there are countries and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa with significant challenges. But these challenges exist in the US as well, and we can't let these issues overshadow the progress and beauty.</li> <li>- Stereotypes obscure the truth. There is much more to Africa than what is portrayed in the media. Our role as YAs is to dispel these stereotypes and challenge perceptions in our communities.</li> </ul>	Aligning YAs with ALP refocused mission  Uncover what biases we may have concerning Africa  Help increase youth ambassador and book drive organizers awareness of African partner countries culture, history, and present.	Team leader
2:00 - 2:45	<b>Computer and Search Exercise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Warm-Up Chart Paper Activity (questions)</li> <li>- How does all this relate to YOU as a YA and as a leader? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective communicator capable of delivering a strong message.</li> <li>- You are using a new tool that is capable of reaching millions. What ways do you find information? How to find information more efficiently, save time, increase your impact.</li> <li>- As YAs, a large part of your role is to share</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Evaluating how we currently search for information  Improve internet search skills  Teach youth ambassadors how to evaluate information	Team leader

	ALP mission with your community.	Objectively look at how time is spent and what can be done on internet	
2:45 - 3:00	<b>BREAK / LUNCH</b>	Networking	Everyone
3:00 - 3:45	<p><b>Why We Create Workshop</b>  Identifying our own communities  Different types of community engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It's a powerful tool for social justice work and it's integral to our mission, and to your roles as YAs.</li> <li>- Community Engagement is a very marketable skill and one that any future employer would love to see on your resume.</li> </ul> <p>Sharing Community Engagement experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organize the YAs by geography.</li> <li>- What are the information needs in your environment?</li> </ul>	<p>Basics of creating: flyers, social media content for different platforms / content for different communities</p> <p>Start thinking strategically about communities YAs are a part of, and the possible information needs of those spaces</p>	Team leader
3:45 - 4:15	<p><b>Let's Create!</b>  Practice-oriented social media and traditional marketing material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Formulate, design, assemble, navigate, develop information based off your new knowledge</li> <li>- The impact of content, student achievement</li> <li>- What tools exist on the internet?</li> </ul>	After seeking and evaluating information, use tools online to create and distribute information	Team leader
4:15 - 4:30	<p><b>Wrapping Workshop Up</b>  Photos and Good Bye  Contact gathering and feedback</p>	Networking	Everyone

Sample PowerPoint Slide for Social Media Workshop:


How does this relate to YAP?

## African Library Project and Social Media

[Instagram](#)

- 272 Posts, 1278 Followers, 1098 Following

[Facebook](#)

- 7829 Likes, 7530 Follows
- Social media is a major way that we connect.
- Communicate impact and progress.
- Youth Ambassadors are on the frontline of volunteerism.

How can we harness all of the fun and creative features that social media has to offer?

## Assessing the program

Since our program encompasses a lot of different organizational members, we are going to focus on the criteria and methods of assessment for our youth ambassador-specific information literacy program.

The success of this program can be measured multiple ways, but our main concern is that we hit each learning outcome through comprehensive activities performed in-person or online and feedback given to ALP staff by members of our youth ambassador program.

### *Methods of Measuring Information Literacy Program Success*

- Direct Evidence: Increase in original content being create by workshop participants, increase in YA book drive volunteer retention.
- Indirect Evidence: YAs express more enthusiasm for specific African countries instead of “Africa” as a whole.
- Quantitative Assessment: (Regarding online workshops) Results from self-directed courses online.
- Quantitative Assessment: Feedback survey given to participants after workshops and one-on-one meetings to assess new/changing view point on information retrieval, evaluation, distribution, and the role of information and digital literacy in continued learning.



### *Criteria for Success*

- Comparing youth ambassador information literacy knowledge and performance from the beginning of the youth ambassador program to the end.
- YAs must show an increased proficiency in evaluating results, data, and information found online as well as being able to communicate ALPs mission and their role across numerous platforms and channels
  - This includes the ability to discover, repurpose, and distribute numerous types of information to different communities.

As our information literacy program evolves, so will the criteria for success and the methods by which we assess success. For YAs, in general, our goal isn't to just spread our mission but to help instill positive leadership, technology, fundraising, teambuilding, and management skills within our youth ambassadors while they prep for the next stage in their life. We believe that a targeted information literacy program will do just that.

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