

The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 30, 2015

## **FACT SHEET: Spreading the Joy of Reading to More Children and Young Adults**

Every child deserves the chance to learn and thrive in an environment that is enriched by the latest technology. Two years ago President Obama announced ConnectED, a signature initiative focused on transforming teaching and learning through digital connectivity and content. Today, building on the progress made to date, at the Anacostia Library in Washington, D.C., the President will announce two new efforts to strengthen learning opportunities by improving access to digital content and to public libraries: **new eBooks commitments** and the **ConnectED Library Challenge**. The first is commitments from publishers to find ways to make sure their content is available to low-income youth in America. Major publishers are announcing they will make over \$250 million in free eBooks available to low-income students. Nonprofits and libraries are partnering with each other to create an app that can deliver this content and materials from the public domain. Complementing that effort, the ConnectED Library Challenge is a commitment by more than 30 communities to put a library card into every student's hand so they will have access to the learning resources and books they can read for pleasure, all available in America's libraries.

These initiatives represent another way the ConnectED effort is making a real difference for students. Combined with the \$2 billion in private-sector commitments, and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) funding for school and library connectivity that includes \$2 billion specifically for Wi-Fi, and \$1.5 billion more in annual funding — today's announcement brings the total **value delivered as part of this five-year transformation in American education to over \$10 billion**. And as a result of these commitments, we are on track to meet the President's goal of connecting 99 percent of students to high-speed broadband in their classrooms and libraries.

-----

As part of today's effort, the New York Public Library is developing an e-reader app that will provide access to a universe of digital books, including contributions from publishers and hundreds of classics already in the public domain, to create a book collection for students aged 4-18 from low-income families. The New York Public Library will work with a network of top librarians who will be volunteering their time through the Digital Public Library of America to connect young readers with books that match their reading levels and interests. New York Public Library will work with Firstbook, a book-donation non-profit, to help make sure eBooks reach students in low-income families. Major publishers are committing to make available thousands of popular and award-winning titles to students over a three-year period. These contributions will create a new book collection for students aged 4-18 from low-income families. Students from all

demographics will be able to access the public domain titles, whose cover art and typography will be freshly designed by world-class designers and artists.

The new commitments the President will announce today will help ensure the smartphone or tablet that is increasingly a part of students' lives is also a teaching tool outside the classroom that encourages kids to become lifelong readers.

**Hundreds of Millions of Dollars in New Private-Sector Commitments:** Today, the President will highlight some of the major publishers and their authors that have pledged to donate titles to low-income students:

- **Macmillan:** Providing unlimited access to all of the K-12 age-appropriate titles in their title catalog of approximately 2,500 books.
- **Simon & Schuster:** Providing access to their entire e-catalog of books for children ages 4-14, comprised of 3,000 titles.
- **Penguin Random House:** Committing to provide an extensive offering of their popular and award-winning books.
- **Hachette:** Offering participating students access to a robust catalogue of their popular and award-winning titles.
- **Candlewick:** Providing unlimited access to all relevant children's and young-adult e-book titles in their catalog.
- **Bloomsbury:** Providing unlimited access to over 1,000 of its most popular titles.
- **Lee & Low:** The leading independent publisher of multicultural books is providing unlimited access to over 700 of its titles.
- **Cricket Media:** Offering full digital access to all of its market-leading magazines for children and young adults, including *Ladybug* and *Cricket*.
- **HarperCollins:** Providing a robust selection of their award-winning and popular titles.

**Commitments from Government, Non-profit, and Philanthropic**

**Institutions:** Today, the President will highlight commitments supporting expanded access to free books:

- **The Institute of Museum and Library Services:** Investing \$5 million to support the development of the e-reader app and tools and services to help the public more easily access e-books and other digital content.
- **The Digital Public Library of America:** Their network of librarians will volunteer with the New York Public Library to help make sure popular books reach the most appropriate audience. DPLA, in conjunction with *Recovering the Classics* are also add age-appropriate public domain titles whose text and cover art has been redesigned by leading graphic designers and artists.
- **New York Public Library:** New York Public Library is developing a cutting-edge e-reader app and working with industry and tech leaders to improve the experience for students.
- **FirstBook:** a book donation non-profit organization has committed to work with New York Public Library and interested publishers to provide authentication and delivery services to ensure that e-books will reach students in low-income families.

-----

President Obama recognizes the critical role that libraries play as trusted community anchors that support learning and connectivity at all times and many different paces. In fact, more than 70 percent of libraries report that they are the only providers of free public internet access in their community. Like many modern challenges, improving education for all children requires key leaders to collaborate in new and powerful ways. Libraries are uniquely positioned to continue to build programs and partnerships that bridge the divide between schools and homes and provide educational services to every person in the community.

**Announcing the ConnectED Library Challenge:** Today, the President will call upon library directors to work with their mayors, school leaders, and school librarians, to create or strengthen partnerships so that every child enrolled in school can receive a library card. These libraries also commit to support student learning through programming that develops their language, reading, and critical thinking; provide digital resources, such as eBooks and online collections of traditional media; and provide broadband connectivity and wireless access within library facilities. Over 30 major cities and counties have announced they are taking the challenge and will work to provide cards to all students.

Communities adopting the ConnectED Library Challenge include: Baltimore, Boston, Charlotte, Chicago, Cleveland, Clinton Macomb, Columbus, Cuyahoga, D.C., Denver, Hartford, Hennepin County, Howard County, Indianapolis, Madison, Milwaukee, New Haven, Oakland, Pierce County, Pima, Pocatello, Pueblo City, Ramsey County, Columbia, Rochester Hills, Rochester, Salt Lake City, San Francisco, Seattle, Skokie, and St. Louis.

**Commitments in support of the ConnectED Library Challenge:** To support the implementation of the ConnectED Library Challenge, the Administration announced new commitments to action:

- **The Institute of Museum and Library Services:** Host a national convening this summer to identify and share best practices in reaching universal library card use among public school students.
- **Urban Libraries Council:** Lead an initiative that provides a forum for community, library and school leaders to work together to meet city and county education goals by leveraging resources and measuring outcomes.
- **American Library Association:** Drive adoption of the ConnectED Library Challenge through their 55,000 members and align the challenge with existing support and technical assistance provided through their *Every Child Ready to Read* initiative.