Magic Tricks & Maintenance
Helping the Public Learn
Technology

**Magic Tricks and Maintenance: Helping the Public Learn Technology**
We'll discuss the digital divide and the library's position as the safety net tech support provider for Americans. Jessamyn West will discuss some of her successes and failures in running technology instruction classes in both library and non-library contexts.
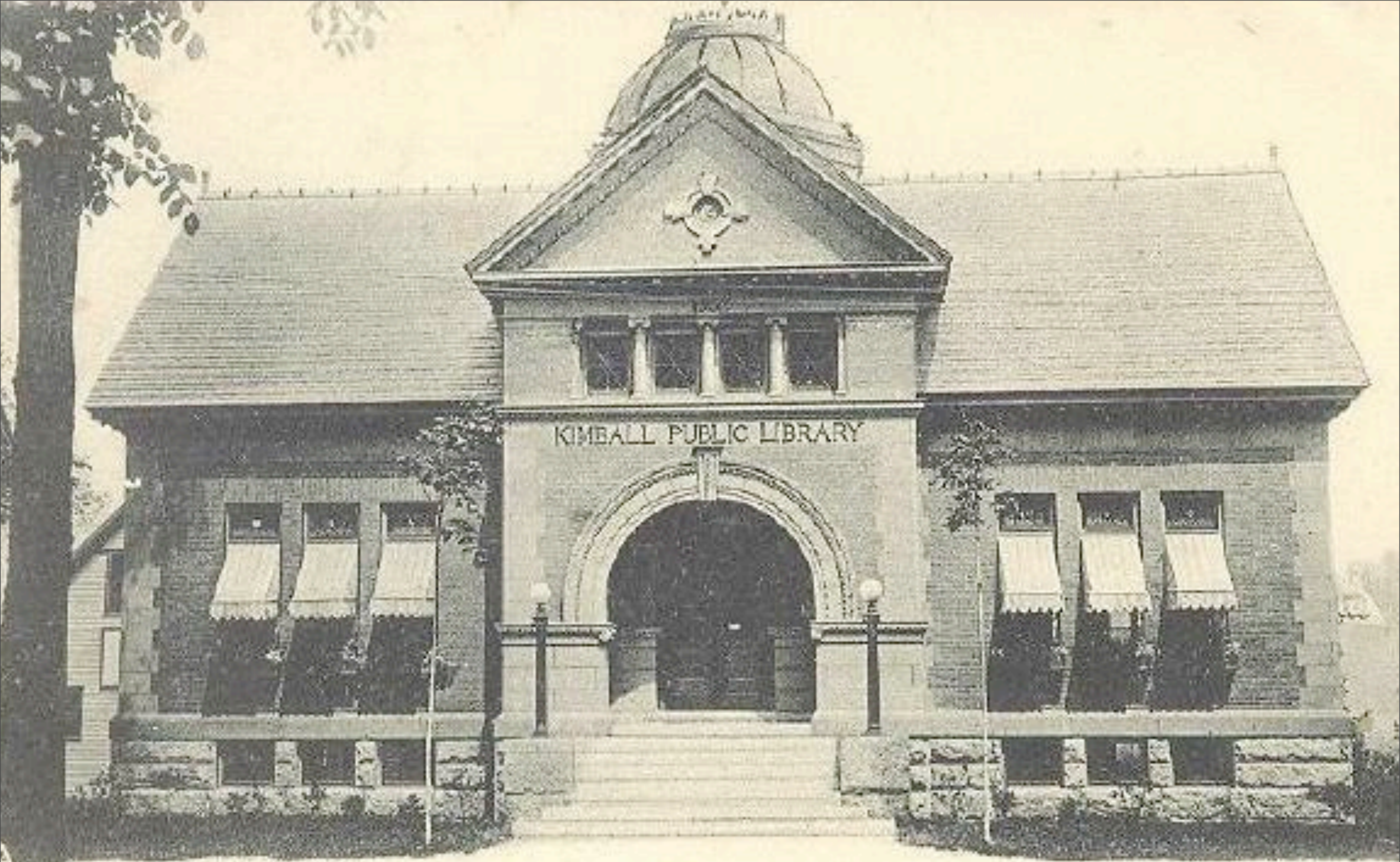
Setting the Scene

Jessamyn West

Without a Net: Librarians Bridging the Digital Divide

librarian.net
jessamyn.com

My background.
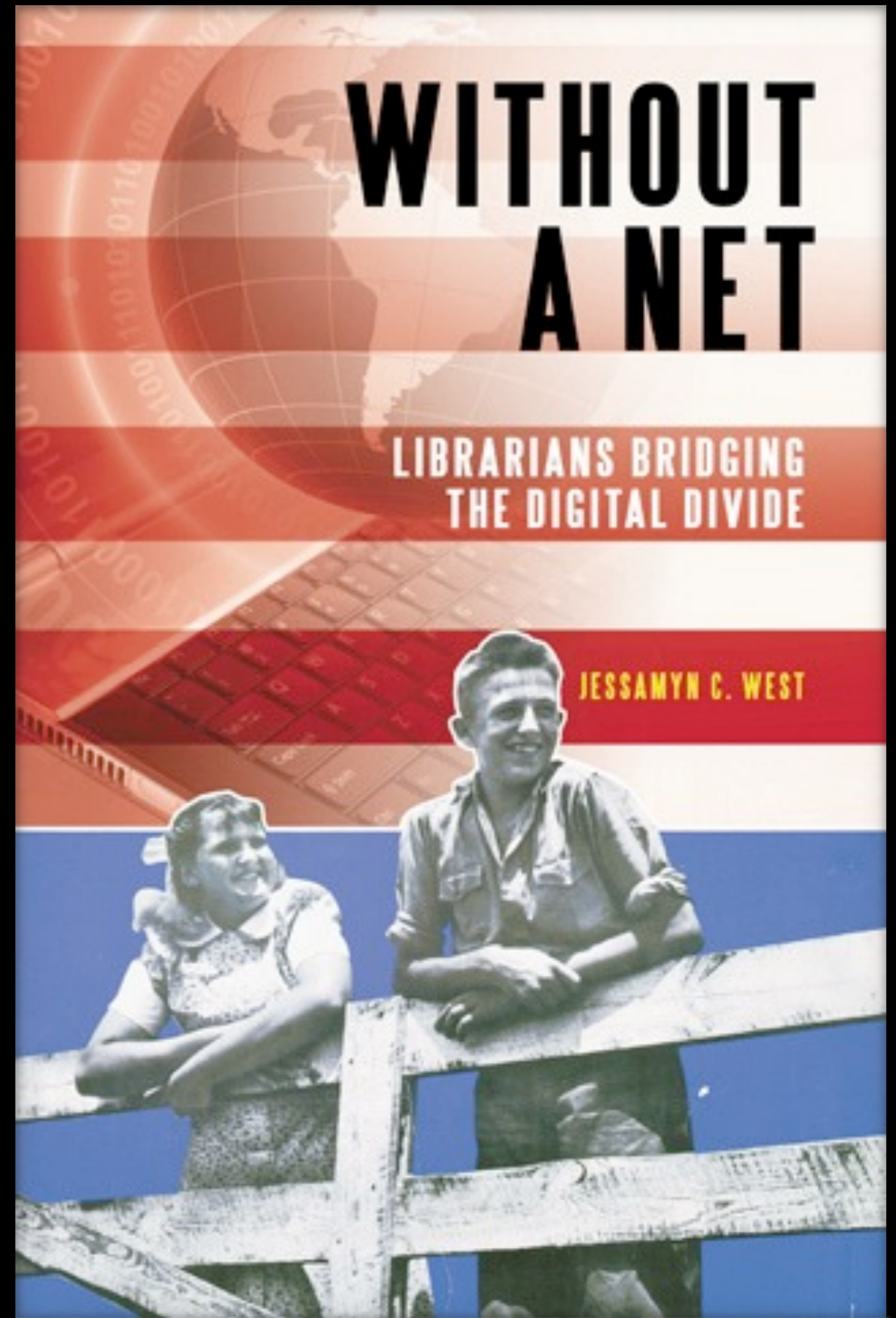
KIMBALL PUBLIC LIBRARY

RANDOLPH, VT. KIMBALL PUBLIC LIBRARY.

This is the library I work at, occasionally. They call me "the intrepid part timer" Most of the time when I'm not doing my community management job at MetaFilter.com I'm working at the local vocational high school.

In the past I had an AmeriCorps job via this same school and part of my job was to do outreach at the libraries in the "sending towns" On a good day, class would look like this. A lot of happy people using Macs and learning stuff. On a bad day we'd have people with virus laden PCs who couldn't afford to get them repaired who hated the town librarian and needed the PC fixed so they could do their

The Numbers

34%

Americans with
no broadband at home

21%

Americans with
no internet at home
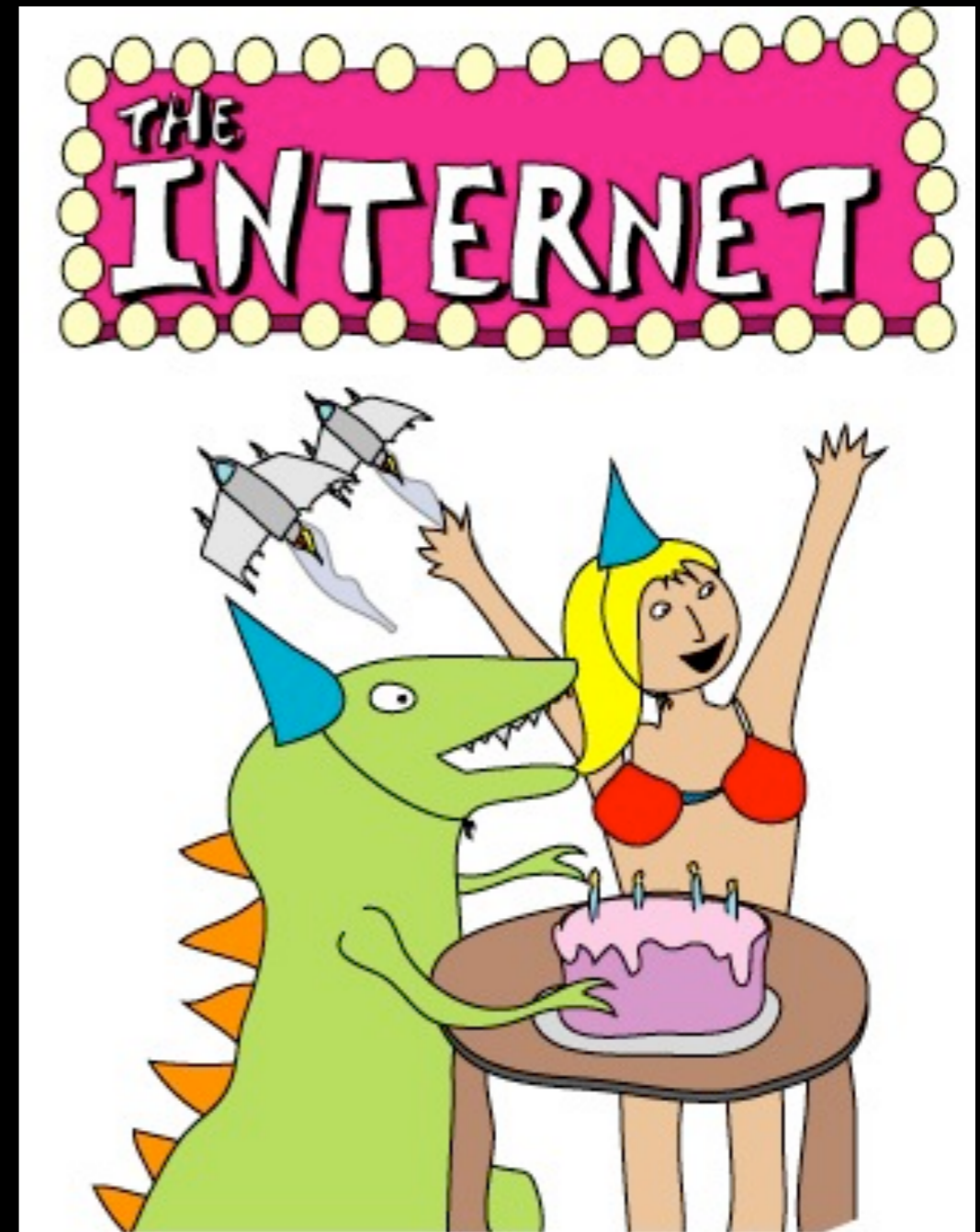
"no point of reference" says Kathryn

"One in 10 non-users say they would like to start using the internet in the future."

This is a weird statement because it implies that for 90% of the disconnected, they're actually not that interested in getting connected. So how much is it our job to SELL the internet to them?

competing messages

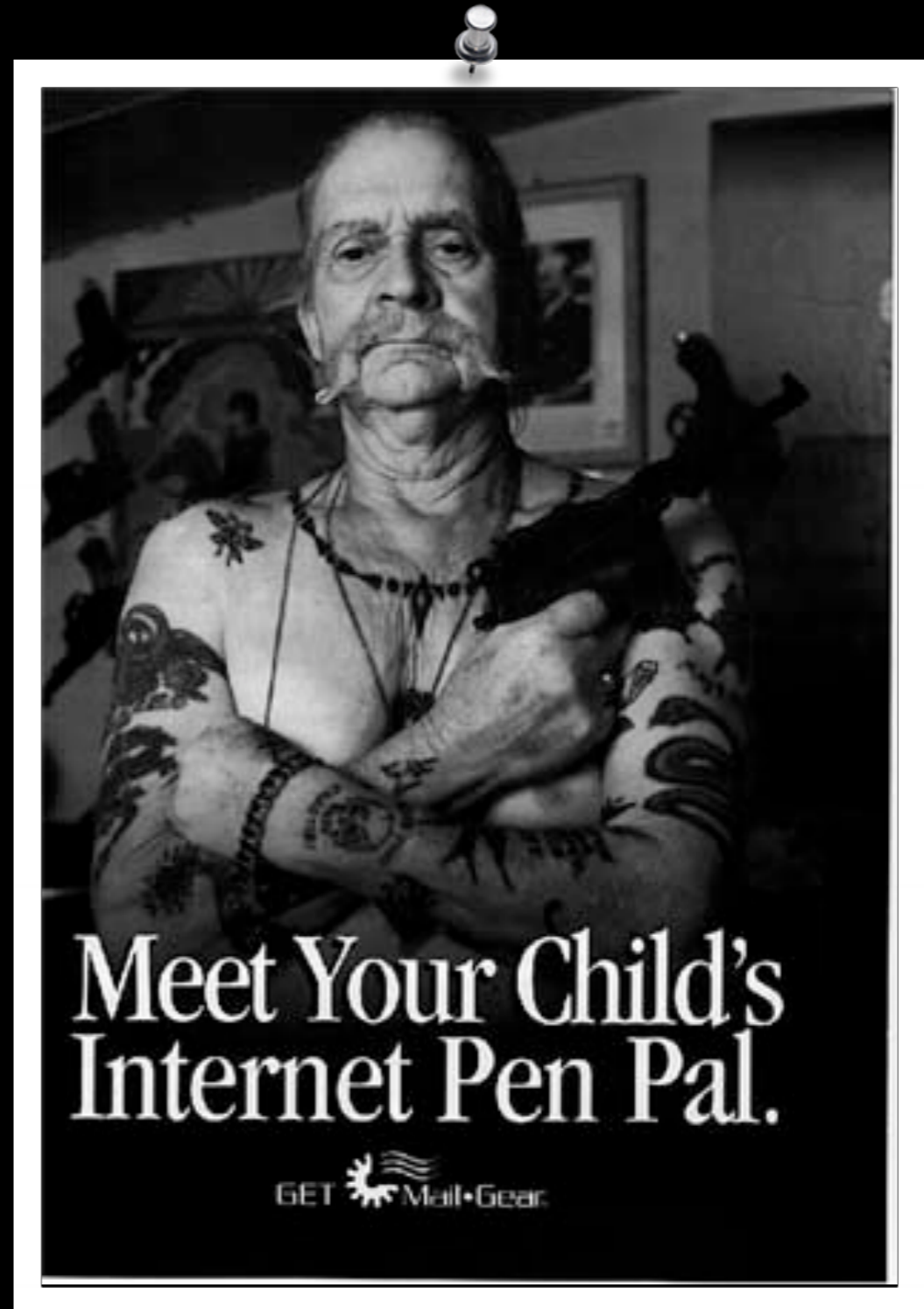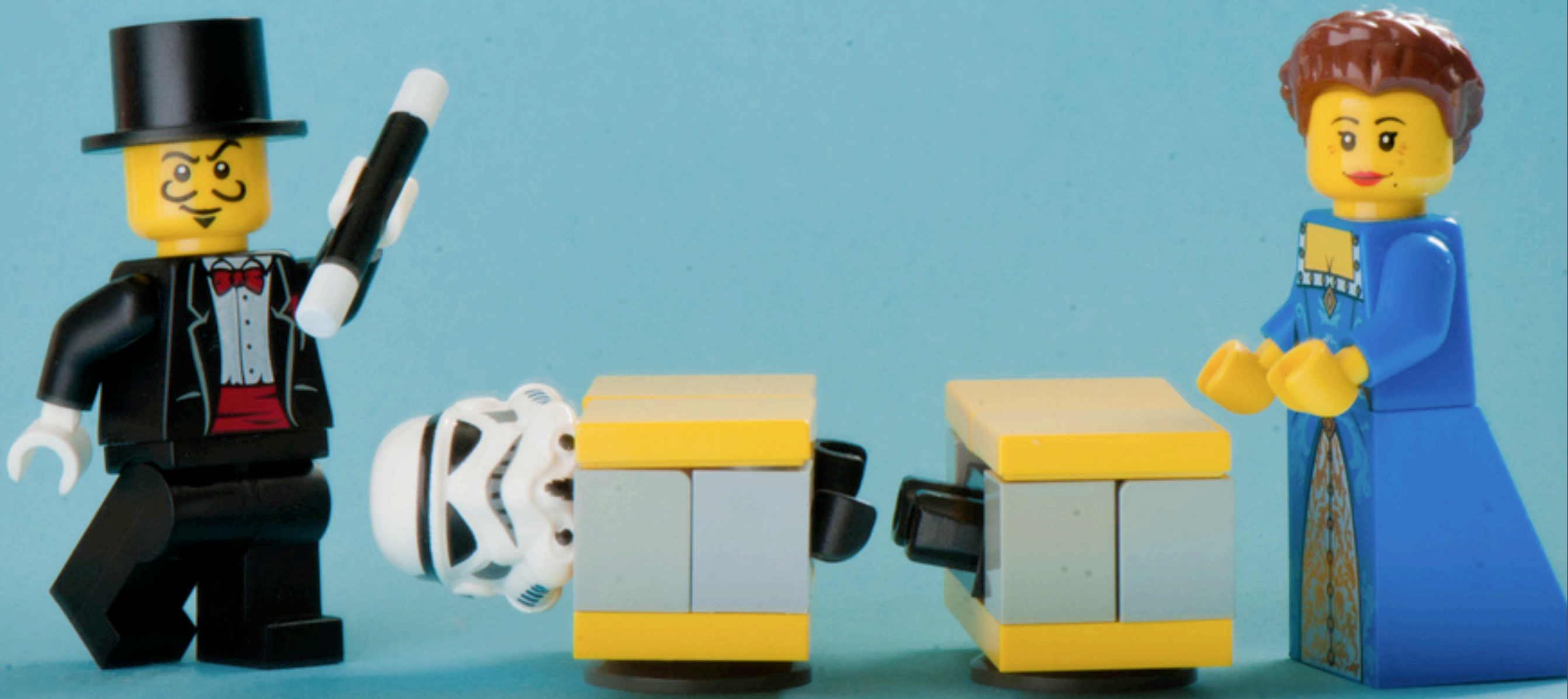The internet makes you more productive!

23%

competing messages

The internet is not secure

18%

Meet Your Child's Internet Pen Pal.

GET Mail•Gear

it's magic?

The problem, to my mind is summed up in one basic idea. People learn through media and from other people that computers can do magic. They do not understand why they do some sorts of magic and not others.

Two Bulleted Lists

Multiple divides

1. Economic divide

2. Usability divide

3. Empowerment divide

Economic divide: Comcast...
Usability divide: 40% of the population has lower literacy skills, seniors and peopel w/ disabilities...
participation inequality. "in social networks and community systems, about 90% of users don't contribute,
9% contribute sporadically, and a tiny minority of 1% accounts for most contributions." We know this, and
yet we act like facebook is really reaching people... it is and it isn't.
Empowerment divide: [if you wanted to get online, you would be online already]

Multiple populations

1. Library patrons

2. Library staff

3. People to impress ($)

Not the What

But the How

First, the Why

First, the Why

We know the obvious things the internet can help you with. To my mind they break down into two classes: work and social. Or "get laid and get paid"

Google

Add your mobile phone to your account

Without a phone number, you could lose all access to your account if you forget your password or if your accoun is hijacked. Learn more

Mobile phone number

| | United States |

Google will only use your number for account security. We'll never share it with other companies or send you unwanted messages—ever.

Add phone

Adding a phone number helps make your account much more secure. Click here to skip this step anyway.

When I talk to public librarians I often stress just basic access to services. Being able to fill out your FEMA forms, or being able to apply for a job or collect unemployment. But there is a whole new level, a more sophisticated level of tech understanding that people need. Think of it as a consumer education or criitical thinking skills but for college level students [and faculty, let's be serious].

In this example, what does Google want? What's in your best interests? How does the design lead you one way and not another...?

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In this example, what does Google want? What's in your best interests? How does the design lead you one way and not another...?

Bank of America

Dear Bank of America customer,

We recently have determined that different computers have logged onto your Online Banking account, and multiple password failures were present before the logons.

We now need you to re-confirm your account information to us.

If this is not completed by March 15, 2009, we will be forced to suspend your account indefinitely, as it may have been used for fraudulent purposes. We thank you for your cooperation in this manner.

To confirm your Online Banking records click on the following link:
https://online.bankofamerica.com/IdentityManagement/

Thank you for your patience in this matterm,
Bank of America Customer Service

Please do not reply to this e-mail as this is only a notification. Mail sent to this address cannot be answered.

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People need to be able to understand enough about the new environment to not be preyed on by it

http://www.myhaubau.com/

Apple   Yahoo!   Google Maps   YouTube   Wikipedia   News (147)   Popular

This is NOT Bank of America!

of America   **Higher Standards**

Online B

n In

Enter Online ID:

(5 - 25 numbers and/or letters)
☐ Save this online ID (How does this work?)

Enter Passcode:

(4 - 12 numbers and/or letters)

Sign In

Reset passcode
Forgot or need help with your ID?

Not using Online Bankin
Enroll now
for Online Banking »

Learn more
about Online Banking »

Service Agreement »

Pay By Phone user's gu

Go to Online Banking fo
a state other than Califo

Stop writing checks
and you could save $53

People need to be able to understand enough about the new environment to not be preyed on by it

Where do you think you're supposed to click here?

Where do you think you're supposed to click here?

Postage Price Calculator

Domestic Services

☐ **Display All Options**

Package, weight 0 lbs 13 oz, mailed on October 20 after 8:00 AM
from RANDOLPH VT 05060 to LANSING MI 48911

Products	Expected Delivery	Post Office Price	Paid Online
Express Mail® Options - Money Back Guarantee			
○ **Express Mail®** ?	Fri, Oct 21 by 3 PM	$26.10	$24.02
Priority Mail® Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		
Priority Mail® Hold For Pickup Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		
First-Class Mail® and Other Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		

Product Selected

No Product Selected

Expected Delivery	Post Office Price	Paid Online

(|< Start Over) (< Back)   (Add Extra Services >)

I expected more from the post office.

Postage Price Calculator

Domestic Services   ☐ **Display All Options**

Package, weight 0 lbs 13 oz, mailed on October 20 after 8:00 AM
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Priority Mail® Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		
Priority Mail® Hold For Pickup Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		
First-Class Mail® and Other Options	>> Click to View these Mailing Options		

Product Selected

No Product Selected

Expected Delivery	Post Office Price	Paid Online

(|< Start Over)   (< Back)   (Add Extra Services >)

I expected more from the post office.

Now, the How

So this isn't going to be about how to set up a class or drop-in time or handouts or assistance because a lot of that is dependent on your own community. I wrote a long book about specifics. However, since we know that we're living in an environment where people are offline for REASONS, we need to make sure that when they decide to make the choice to get online that we're not scaring them right back offline again

four things to do

1

– make lessons with success in mind – we'd rather have someone successfully achieve a simple goal than struggle with a complicated one

Ask open-ended questions. Not "who is your ISP?" but "Where does your internet come from" "Do you know your email address" Encourage people to tell stories about their experiences not just give you rapid fire answers. Students will try to please, we'd rather they

REPEAT

3

repeat, review, remind – your class is the start of a process the end goal if which isn't mastery of the subject you are teaching but the understanding of the concepts and framework of the technological world.

4

The problem you are trying to solve is likely to not be the problem the student is trying to solve. Focus on getting them to solve their problem being what solves your problem

four things you think you shouldn't do

(but you should)

1

Enter Your Password

Write every password down. Of course you should help peoplel choose strong passwords but then help them remember them.

2

Suggest options.

3

This is a cheat because it's really two things
1. ignore users, just a little
2. say no
sometimes users want things that computers can't really do, or aren't good at doing, or that might be easy for an expert to do, but not for them. it's okay to say that something is difficult

Make the computer as much like the user's computer as possible (if possible have them use their own computer...)

four things to avoid

1

From here on out, nothing sucks [even if it does]. Some things can be better than others, things that suck are now "suboptimal" Your attitude makes an impression try to make it, if not positive then objective.Other wording options, instead of easy [hey a monkey could do this!] opt for simple/uncomplicated [there aren't many steps and we can learn them]

2

don't grab the mouse and other suggestions. While there are occasionally times when you may need to say "hey ignore me for a second while I..." in general let them do the driving even if it takes forever. Muscle memory is part of this. Phil Agre handout.

3

overgeek "this part is the CPU it is using an intel chip and running OSX bla bla bla" Have simple explanations for technical things and point users to good resources for more information.

try to avoid prostletyzing, in either direction. I love firefox as much as this lady does, but ...

four phrases to remember

"If I am using words that you don't understand I am not doing my job as well as I could be."

1

"We might be able to change that in the program's default settings"

2

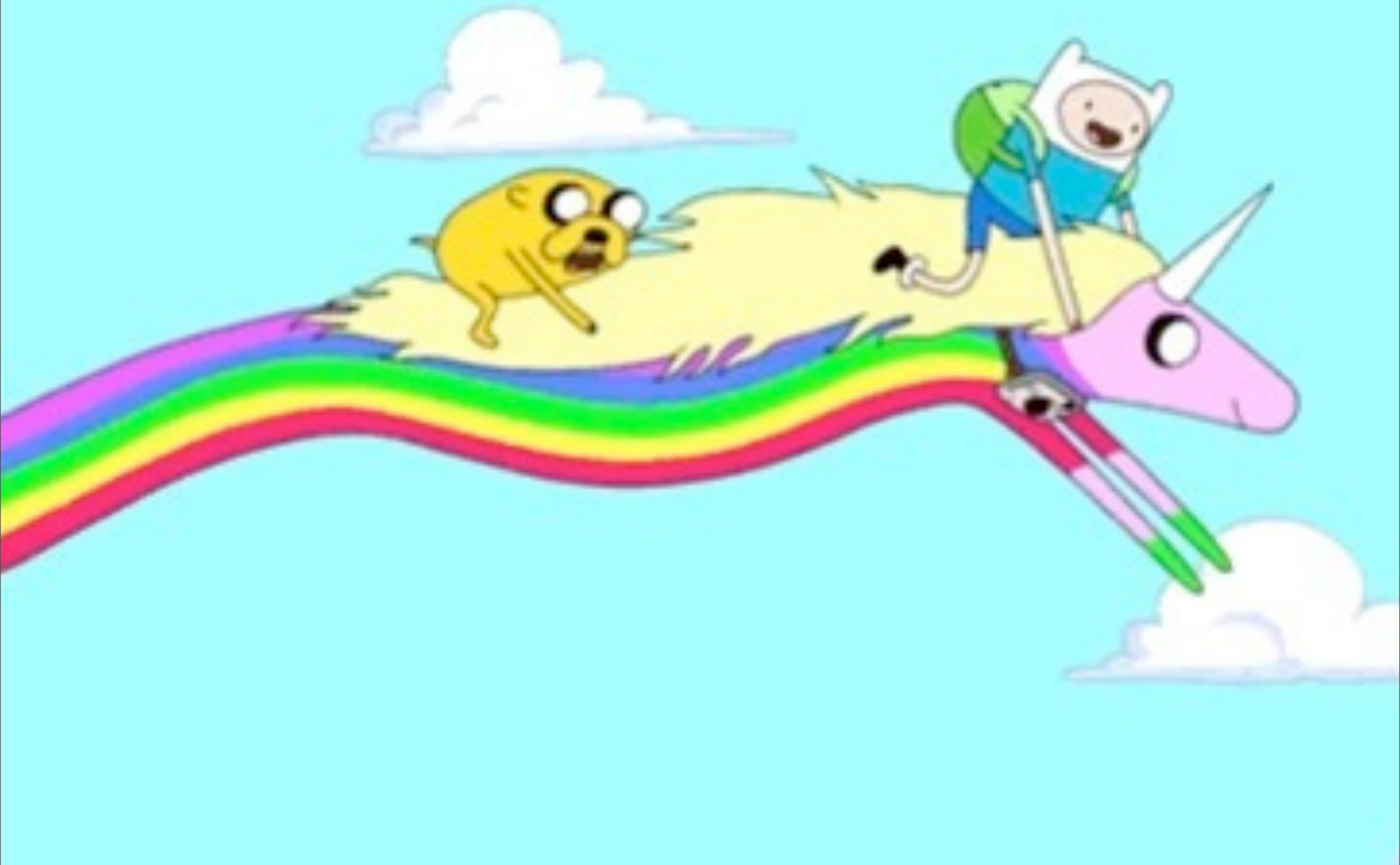this also introduces the concept of defaults to people who don't know much about them

"This is a poorly designed website."

People want to know if it's them or the site. Sometimes it's them, often it's the site. It's okay to explain that some interfaces are bad, and why that might be. It's also worth explaining that people still need to figure them out, but that it's understandably complicated.

"I don't know but let's find out."

4

Kimball Library Strategic Plan

How to use this blog

Dear members of the strategic planning committee, library trustees and staff, and interested parties,

At the suggestion of Amy Howlett (VT Department of Libraries), I have created this blog in order to provide ongoing access to Kimball Library's planning process, and to encourage ongoing participation from all interested parties.

For those of you who are new to blogs (or are new to blogs organized by librarians) you will see to the right of this post a series of hierarchical links. These links contain the meat of this blog's content. For instance, under *Meeting One: the recorded results*, you find *Meeting One: community vision and SWOT*, and then a list of pages for the various segments of the community's population. Each of these sub–pages includes the work we did at the first strategic planning meeting on March 19.

I hope that you will take this opportunity to look over the *recorded results* and *community vision and SWOT*, and then examine, think about, and comment on the flip chart pages. (If you find the images too small to read, you can click on them to get a larger view.) Your comments / replies will be incorporated into the foundation of the Library's plan.

To leave a reply or comment, simply click on Comments and follow my example below. If I can do it, you can, too!

Amy C. Grasmick, Director

Pages »

Contact us
Strategic planning process
Meeting One: the data
Meeting One: the recorded results
Meeting One: community vision and SWOT
Adults: vision and SWOT
Children: vision and SWOT
Elderly residents: vision and SWOT
Employers: vision and SWOT
Older adults: vision and SWOT
Parents: vision and SWOT
Workers: vision and SWOT
Young adults without children: vision and SWOT
Strategic planning committee: the names

Archives »

March 2011

Categories »

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Free to All

Access to information, in whatever format, is a right, not the privilege of a few. And especially not the few who understand it and how to get it. And the more we enlarge that community, of people who get it, the more we live up to our ideals.

thank you