

# Attitude

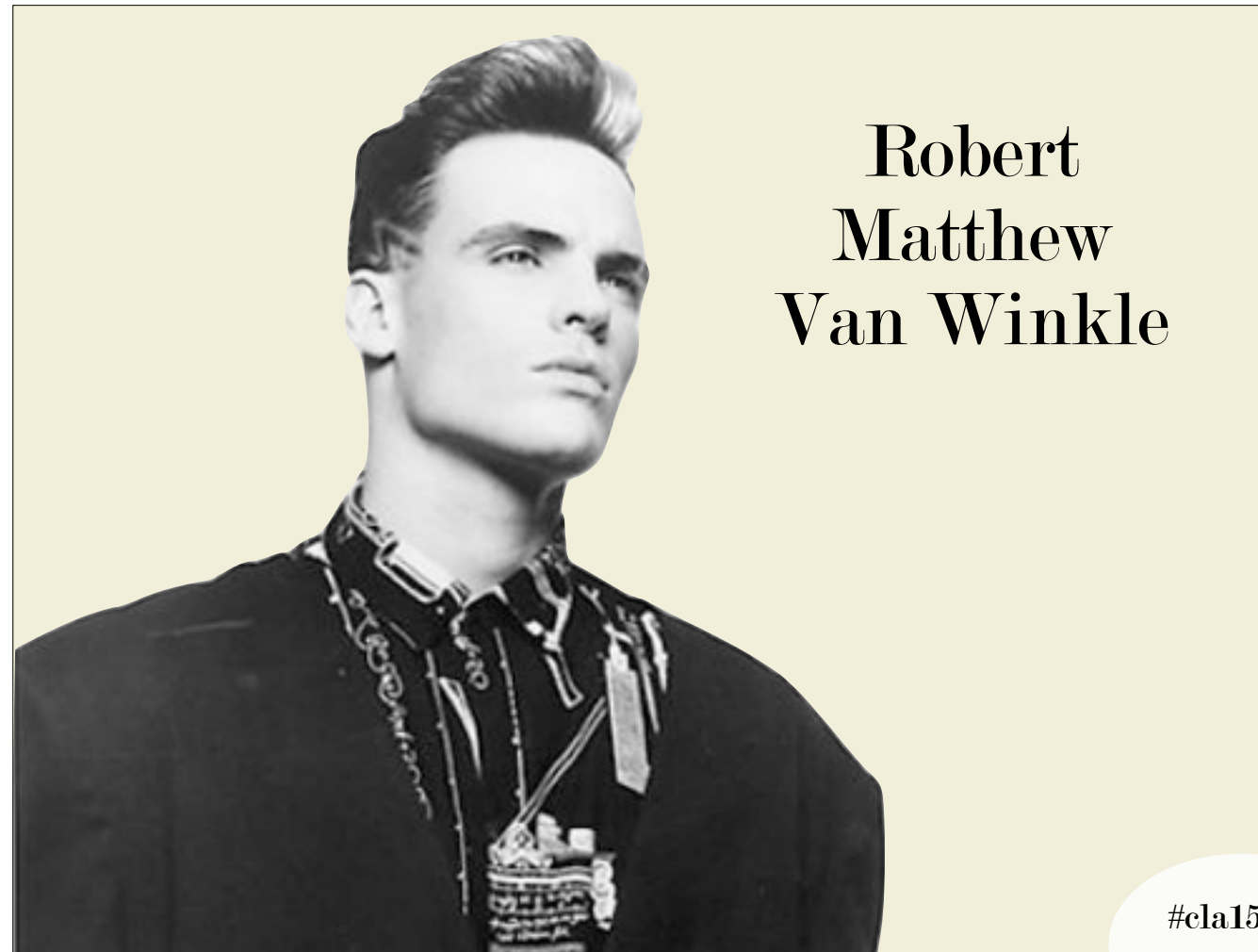
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How you help bridge the empowerment divide  
by being more like Vanilla Ice.

Jessamyn West

#cla15





For those of you who do not know Robert Matthew Van Winkle, he is also known as Vanilla Ice. Rapper, television star, dated Madonna. More on him later.

# Without a Net

Confronting the Digital Divide

# 2011

Thanks for having me back. When I was last here in 2011, I talked about the digital divide and what we could do to change it and/or work on it. Making good websites, promoting good projects, being supportive of each other and our patrons. The good news is we've made progress! The bad news is the harder problems are ... harder. And since libraries have always served the hardest to serve, our jobs are more challenging. I don't need to tell you this but here I am anyhow.



Just to refresh everyone's memory..... We used to have a simplistic tech understanding of the digital divide 1) people didn't have computers, they were expensive (so give them computers)  
2) people didn't have internet, it was expensive (give them low cost internet and shift them to mobile so phone/internet are in the same place!)



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And so we did those things. Libraries handled those things like bosses. 97-ish% of people in the US have free access to the internet and computers in their public libraries. Normally this would be our mic drop moment. PEACE I'M OUT.



Why is there still a pervasive digital divide? We did all the things. Well, let's look at where we get our reporting from...



“If there was a  
problem, yo I’ll  
solve it”



People like having a problem that they can describe in such a way that they can solve it. This is Vanilla Ice using power tools as part of his home improvement show named The Vanilla Ice Project. Vanilla Ice is a bit of a project himself but it's interesting watching him reinvent himself. And he has the notable line (above) which, rephrased to me says: "If all I have is money to throw at this problem and I want to portray myself as the one fixing this... what does the digital divide look like?"

SEPT 22, 2014

# OVERCOMING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE WITH TECH EDUCATION, ACCESS



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...which is what we get from the media and the people who send press releases to the media. They describe the problems they can solve. "Comcast is fixing the digital divide by making home internet cheap!" Some restrictions apply. Lots of them actually....





Turns out: people don't know what to do with the computers and internet that they have (I mean they sort of do but where do they learn the stuff that they don't know?).

we've been doing a lot of explaining...



**Putnam Public Library**

April 9 at 9:30am · 🌐

Our tax help agency, VITA, will be here tomorrow afternoon for the last time before "the big day". If you're doing your own taxes we have the 1040, 1040A and 1040EZ forms in the library, as well as reproducible copies of all of the schedules, instructions, etc. The feds did not send copies of anything except the forms this year, so we've been doing a lot of explaining...

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AND: they're being "forced" to use this technology to interact with their governments. How happy are we all now that tax time is over, right? Right?



You know this. I know this. But it's a challenge. It doesn't fit in a tweet and doesn't allow people with money to swoop in and save the day with those economies of scale they love so much.



Turns out the divides contain multitudes. It makes terrible press because it's complicated.



There are a few divides. The economic divide (poor people can't afford a computer or reliable internet access) we have sort of handled. But we've still got the Usability Divide (40% of the population has lower literacy skills, seniors – mobile is helping) – we helped with classes and better websites. Corporations help somewhat with this because better functioning websites sell more product and so they're worth investing in.



### Harvard and M.I.T. Are Sued Over Lack of Closed Captions ...

[www.nytimes.com/.../harvard-and-mit-sued-over-faili...](http://www.nytimes.com/.../harvard-and-mit-sued-over-faili...) The New York Times ▾

Feb 12, 2015 - The lawsuits, filed by the National Association of the Deaf, which is seeking ... The federal government has already moved to ensure that blind ...

### National Federation of the Blind Files Suit Against Scribd ...

<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-...> ▾ National Federation of the Blind ▾

Jul 29, 2014 - Burlington, Vermont (July 29, 2014): The National Federation of the ... it is essential to success, productivity, and equal participation in society.

### National Federation of the Blind Sues Department of ...

<https://nfb.org/national-federation-blind-...> ▾ National Federation of the Blind ▾

Jan 22, 2014 - Washington, D.C. (January 22, 2014): The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the oldest and largest nationwide organization of blind ...

### National Federation of the Blind v. Target Corp. - Wikipedia ...

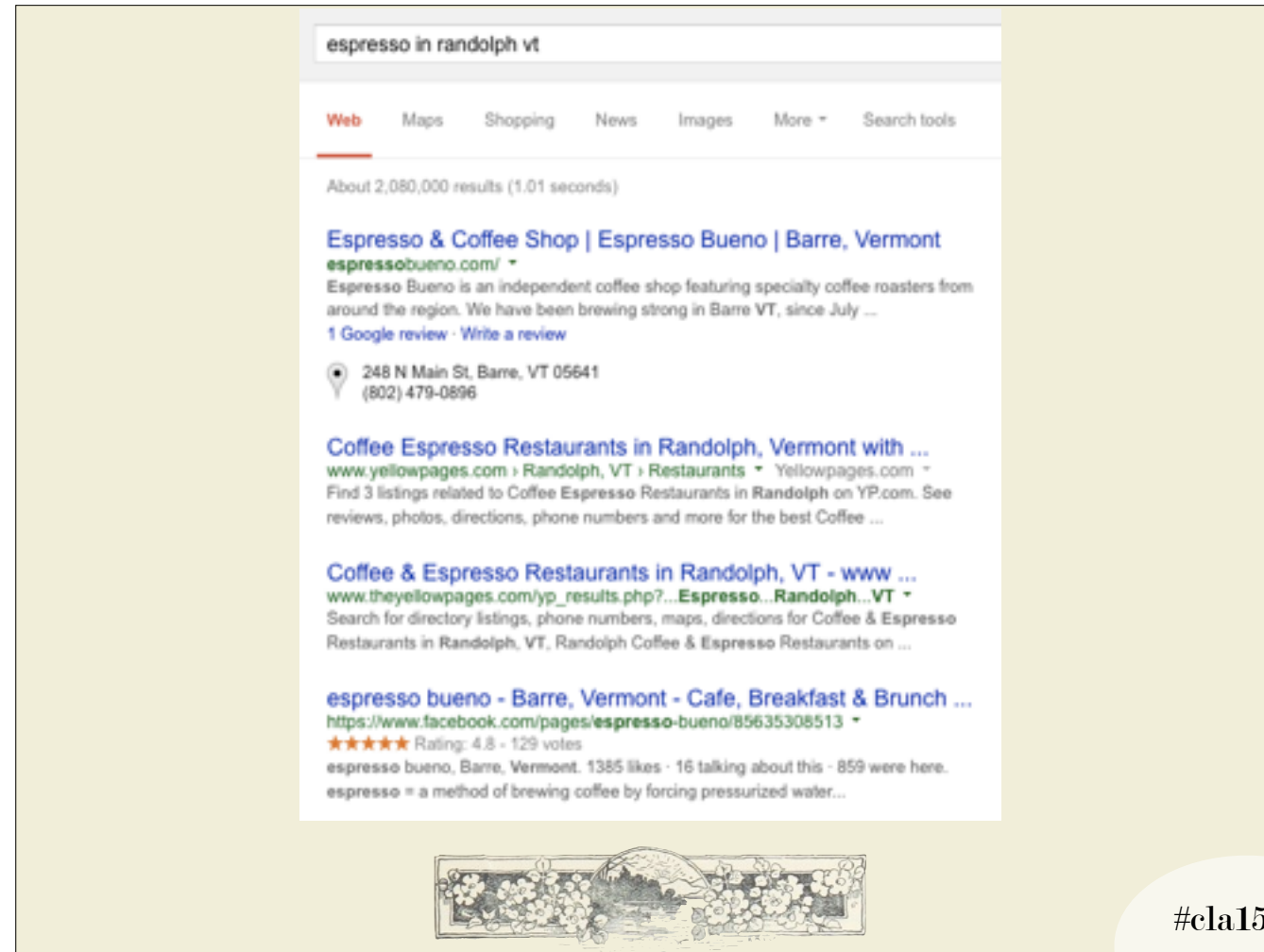
[en.wikipedia.org/.../National\\_Federation\\_of\\_the\\_Blind\\_v.\\_Tar...](http://en.wikipedia.org/.../National_Federation_of_the_Blind_v._Tar...) ▾ Wikipedia ▾

Target Corporation, 452 F.Supp.2d 946 (2006), was a class action lawsuit in the ... The plaintiff, National Federation of the Blind (NFB), sued Target Corporation, .... 2010, The National Federation of the Blind (NFB), a national organization ...



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Also people sue them (advocacy groups for the the blind and deaf are great at filing these totally righteous lawsuits) This is not always true with non-profit websites ( COUGH healthcare.gov COUGH) and those websites are making people afraid of the internet which brings me to the real problem....



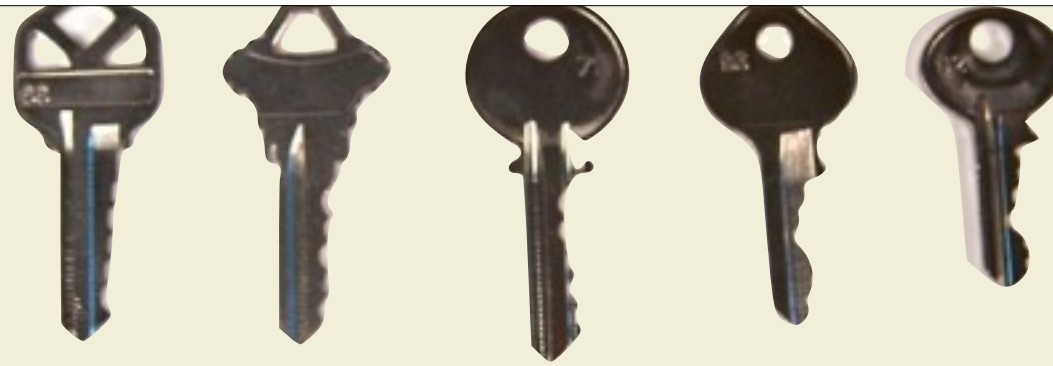
The Empowerment divide. The internet is for everyone. Everyone can create content. It's the great equalizer. But it's not working out that way.

- participation inequality (including harassment)
- SEO thwarting (search results are confusing)
- fear and anxiety (people are bad at risk assessment)



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Most of the people I help with computer stuff nowadays -- been doing this for eight years -- have some level of fear/anxiety that are keeping them from fully engaging online. Or they've engaged, had a bad experience, and didn't go back. They watch the news or read the paper and conclude it's not for them. The old media always likes to make oogy boogy statements about the new media. Remember when the post office was going to be the end of everything? Of course you don't because this was the moral panic of 1875.



# Teach Trust



However people no longer have a real choice. They'll have to be online to be citizens. Ship has sailed. So, we need to make a case for the internet at the same time as we're teaching skills to use it. This is how we ease the empowerment divide. Showing people there is a place for them. There are a few parts to this.

stop

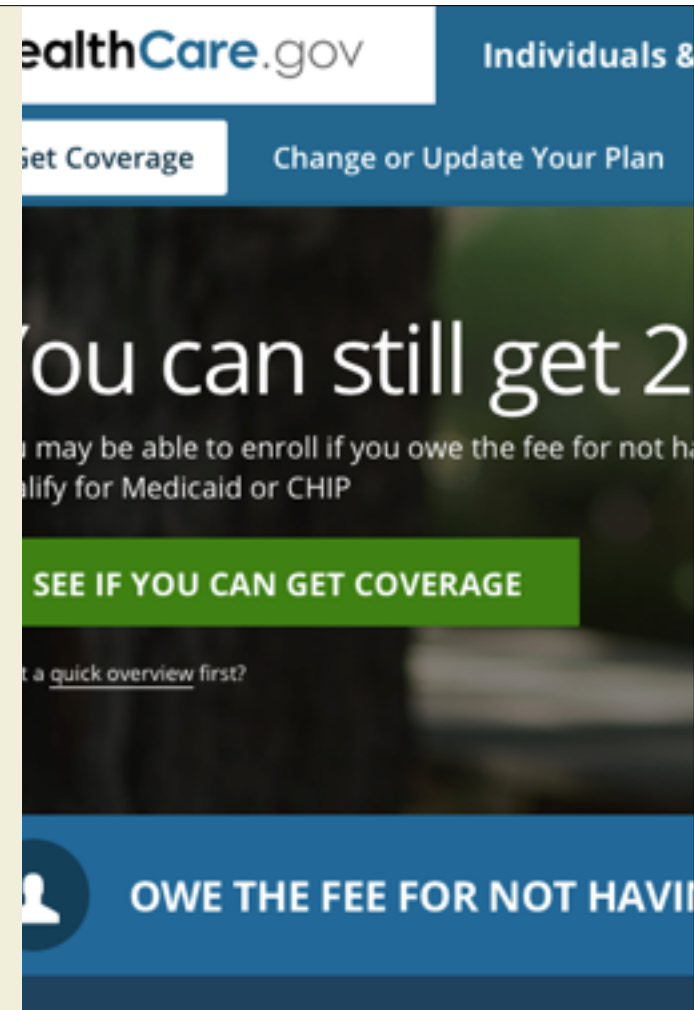
# 1. Reframe negative approaches.



People say a lot of bad things about computers. It's time for some positive self-talk.



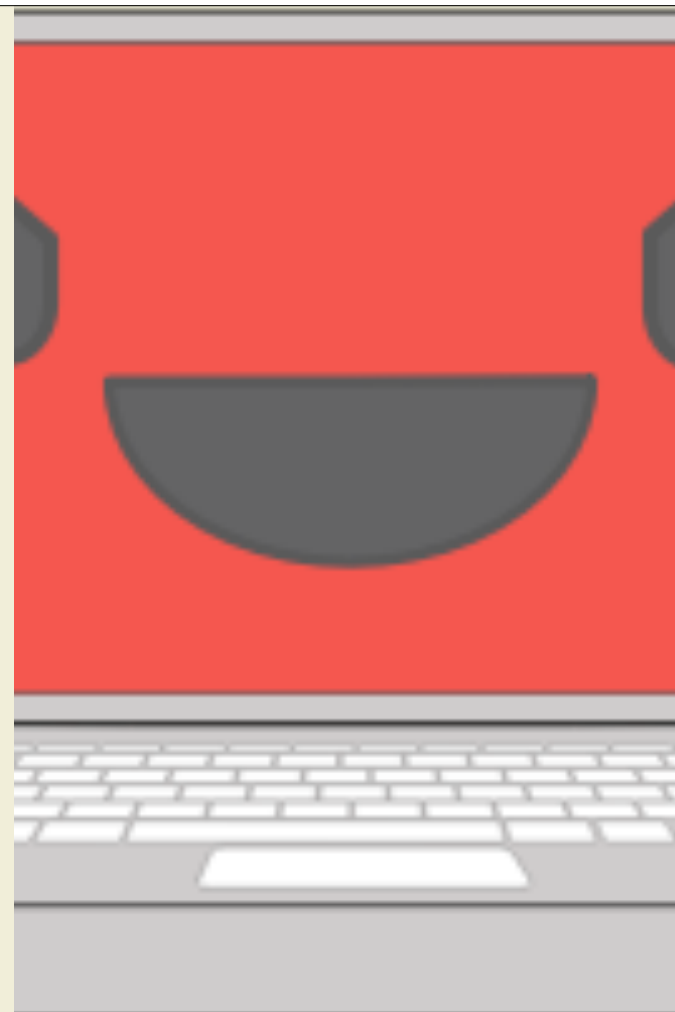
“You are not a  
bad person.  
This is a bad  
website”



Extra details of what it means to be a bad website, or why you might wind up with a bad website even if you are a good person. You can even do more.

- contact the website
- contact the government

“The computer  
is an advanced  
calculator. It  
does not have  
feelings or  
motivations. It  
does not  
dislike you.”



People get emotionally attached to their computers. This is rarely a good idea.

“Here’s how to  
create a good  
password. Now  
write it down.”

123456  
12345  
123456789  
password  
iloveyou  
princess  
rockyou  
1234567  
12345678  
abc123  
nicole  
daniel  
babygirl  
monkey  
jessica  
lovely

17. michael  
18. ashley  
19. 654321  
20. qwerty  
21. iloveu  
22. michelle  
23. 111111  
24. 0  
25. tigger  
26. password1  
27. sunshine  
28. chocolate  
29. anthony  
30. angel  
31. FRIENDS  
32. soccer

People will want to tell you about their difficult times with passwords. Listen then encourage them to move on. This is their life now. If writing down their password is ultimately a better user experience, have them do that.

“Here’s why  
you have to do  
that stupid  
update...”



Apple Watch made everyone update their operating system software on every iPad and phone because some technophiles got a new gadget. People can relate to this (and are amused) tell them the full story.

# collaborate

## 2. Connect problems with solutions



and explanations, if necessary



“Here’s how I  
do my own  
tech  
support...”

Go

how do I|

how do i **love thee**

how do i **get a passport**

how do i **screenshot**

how do i **enable cookies**

how do i **get a passport in ct**

how do i **renew my passport**

how do i **live**

how do i **print screen**

how do i **delete an app**

how do i **find my iphone**

Google Search

How to Google an answer. How to call tech support. How to get details about your computer so that you can answer the tech’s questions. How to read a support forum. What is a FAQ? We know that searching is an iterative process. Users don’t. Show them. A little bit of inattention goes a long way.

“Here are other organizations that can help with part of this...”

**Libraries**

**Technical and Vocational Centers**

**Aldrich Public Library**

**Barre Technical Center**

**Kellogg-Hubbard Library**

**Morrisville Centennial Library**

**Green Mountain Technology and Career Center**

**Kimball Public Library**

**Randolph Technical Center**

**Bradford Public Library**

**River Bend Career and Technical Center**

“You know  
who else has  
an iPad?  
Sylvie from  
the yoga  
studio...”



“... you should talk to her.” And the proper answer to “What X should I buy?” is always “The one your friends/family have”

listen

### **3. Provide constructive feedback**



“You might  
have an easier  
time if you  
tried...”



Giving advice is tough & not always appreciated. Giving suggestions is a better idea. Sometimes you have to give that advice and walk away Not everyone is receptive to trial and error in front of someone else.

“You are doing  
so much better  
at this than  
when you  
started.”

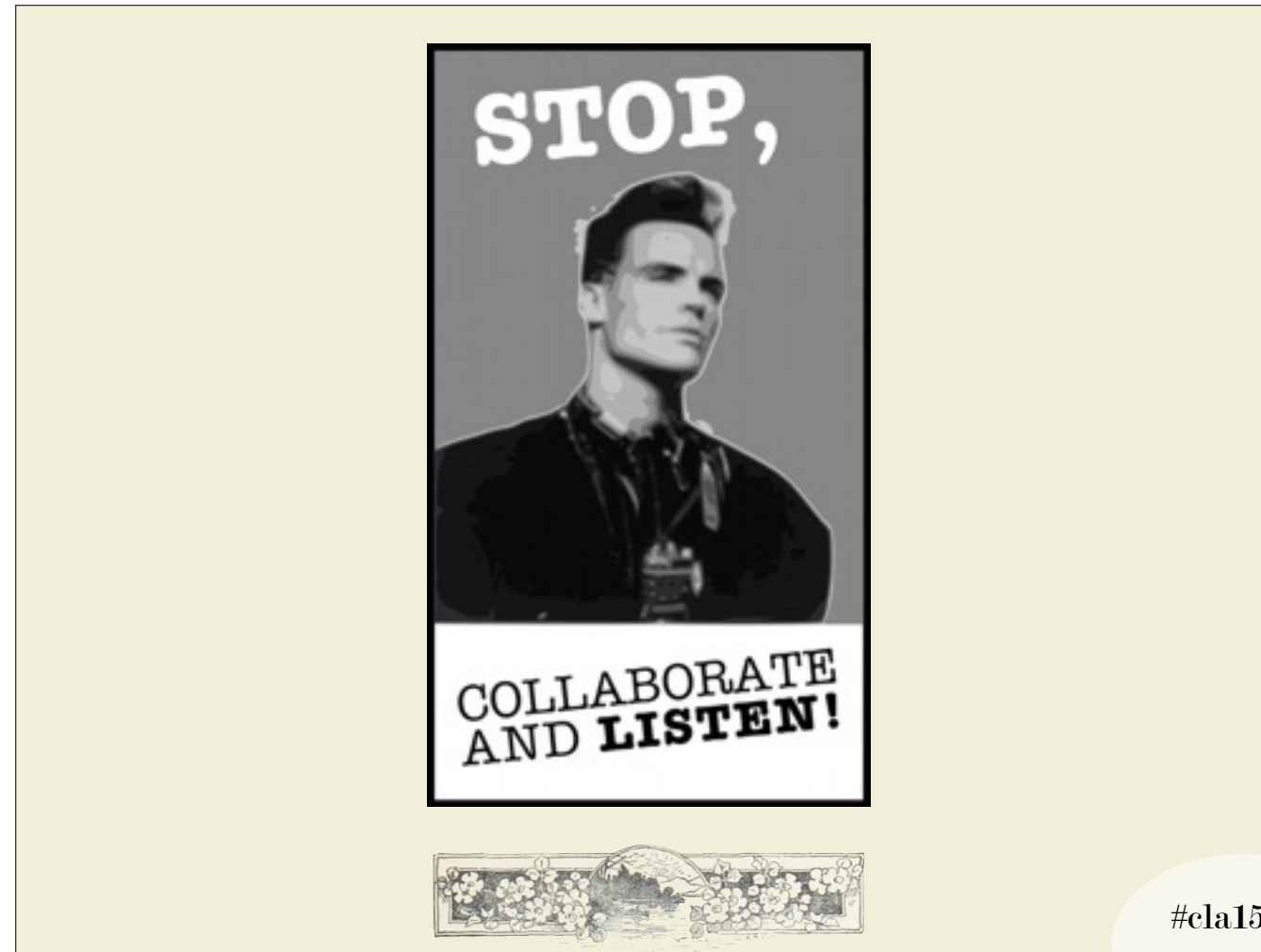


It doesn't always seem like our job, but positive support



I do not care. I will email them a motivational penguin if they need it. It amuses people, gives them a thing in email that is fun “Hey you didn’t even notice it but you’re looking at an attachment” and it’s got a nice message. And before you know it, they have done a thing on the computer that they enjoyed. Because they stopped thinking about how much they hated it. And that’s a feeling that they can then replicate (like that one time you went ot the gym and it wa SO GREAT and now you sort of go because you hope you can feel that way again...)





So, if you've been paying attention. This is the callback. The three steps: stop, collaborate and listen. Help people learn to trust the internet, websites, the library, and you.



Can't touch this.