



Annual Report of the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology Calendar Year 2021

Submitted in Accordance with CGS § 61a, Sec. 4d-80(c)(8)

*Hartford, Connecticut
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2021 Year in Review

Disruptions to “traditional” teaching and learning that began last year with the outbreak of the Coronavirus continued in 2021, leading to many innovative uses of technology. If 2020 was the year of educational technology adoption, 2021 defined itself as a year of transition. The advent of vaccines and other public health protections enabled schools, universities, and libraries to return to in-person learning while using digital tools as part of a broader “hybrid” approach. This mix of learning modalities — often changing from one week to the next — brought its own set of challenges.

The Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology's work expanded to equip educators and leaders in making effective use of technology for learning, aligning with its [State Educational Technology Plan](#). Staff and members of the Commission worked to ensure that the unprecedented levels of federal education relief funding would provide immediate and long-term benefits to students. These efforts addressed the essential conditions for learning with technology — access to broadband and devices— through the continuation of the Everybody Learns initiative and partnering with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to help Connecticut schools and residents leverage funding for free Internet access. The Commission provided guidance on educational technology use to K – 12 districts, which collectively received \$1B in funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Prior Commission efforts around digital learning standards and open education resources helped maximize State-level ARPA investments in these areas.

The transition from technology deployment to sustainability may serve as a central theme for the Commission's work in 2022. Even with forthcoming programs to expand broadband access, digital literacy skills, and cybersecurity protections, schools, universities, and libraries face concerns about how to leverage and fund digital learning into the future. As Commission research indicates, educational institutions have significantly expanded the use of devices, bandwidth, and software for learning, straining the capabilities of educators and support staff. Challenges await in leveraging limited budgets and staff to support an expanded educational technology footprint.

In 2022 and beyond, the Commission will address these demands by continuing to provide guidance and solutions that help institutions maximize and sustain the use of technology for teaching and learning. As a leader and enabler of digital learning approaches, the Commission has already laid significant foundations for the creative use of technology in education. The launch of Connecticut's open education resources portal (GoOpenCT.org) in 2021 will help reduce the cost and expand the use of high-quality learning materials. Advocacy around data privacy will help ensure safe and efficient access to personalized learning tools. Expanded Internet access through the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) and State-led broadband efforts will reduce barriers to advancement for millions of residents. Through these and other initiatives, the Commission will help ensure equitable access to digital learning for students of all ages.



9,000 Courses

The launch of www.GoOpenCT.org, the Commission's open education resources site, makes nearly 9,000 courses and other digital learning materials available to every educator in Connecticut.

→ See [Open Education Resources](#), page 15

700 Teachers

The AccelerateCT program, led by the CSDE with Commission input, covered the cost for more than 700 Connecticut educators to develop skills in teaching with technology through the ISTE Summer Learning Academy.

→ See [Professional Development](#), page 16

90,000 Connections

Concerted promotion of the Emergency Broadband Benefit program has spurred more than 90,000 households in Connecticut to take advantage of free Internet access.

→ See [Broadband Programs](#), page 19

\$40M Awarded

Guidance from the Commission has encouraged Connecticut schools and libraries to apply for free home Internet access for students and patrons through the Emergency Connectivity Fund, with \$40M in awards to date.

→ See [Broadband Programs](#), page 19



100% Increase

2021 saw a doubling of the number of districts using the LearnPlatform Inventory Dashboard, a free resource that empowers decision-makers to assess the usage and return on investment of more than 5,000 educational software titles.

→ See [Educational Software Hub](#), page 20

\$4M⁺ Cost Avoidance

Since its 2017 launch, the Commission's Educational Software Hub has saved districts an estimated 40,000 hours in staff time — in addition to legal fees — to comply with Connecticut's data privacy law. The Hub helps schools leverage innovative technology solutions and comply with state statute.

→ See [Educational Software Hub](#), page 20

\$40M⁺ Savings

The Connecticut State Library continues to deliver exceptional value through researchIT, the digital library free to all Connecticut residents. This service delivered \$43M in digital content subscriptions at a cost to the state of \$1.5M.

→ See [researchIT CT](#), page 28

\$30M Cost Avoidance

The CEN delivers Internet connections, federally mandated content filtering, and cyber protection services to schools, colleges, libraries, towns, and open access members at a cost that saved these institutions more than \$30M this year alone.



Background

The Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology (“the Commission”) was established in 2000 by [Public Act 00-187](#) to serve as the State’s principal educational technology policy advisor. This document summarizes the Commission’s progress in attaining its [statewide technology goals](#) during the past calendar year, in accordance with its governing statute ([CGS § 4d-80](#)). The report serves to inform and provide recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to education, appropriations, and the budgets of state agencies; the State Board of Education; and the Board of Governors of Higher Education. Readers accessing this report online may use the embedded links to view minutes, watch recorded meetings, and review publications.

Membership

Name and Position	Representing or Appointed By
Mark Raymond, CIO, Commission Chair	Department of Administrative Services
Michael Mundrane, UCONN Vice Provost and CIO, Commission Vice-Chair	University of Connecticut
Douglas Casey, Executive Director	Commission for Educational Technology
Colleen Bailie, Director, West Haven Public Library	CT Library Association
Nick Caruso, Senior Staff Associate	CT Association of Boards of Education
Burt Cohen, Staff Attorney, State Broadband Policy and Program Coordinator	Office of Consumer Counsel
Charles Dumais, Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services	Governor's Office
Tom Dillon	Minority Leader of the House
John Elsesser, Town Manager, Town of Coventry	CT Council of Small Towns
Russell Feinmark, CT General Assembly	Speaker of the House
Ajit Gopalakrishnan, Chief Performance Officer	Connecticut State Department of Education
David Hayes, Elementary Teacher, Bristol Public Schools	American Federation of Teachers – Connecticut
Barbara Johnson, President, CECA, and Colchester Public Schools	Connecticut Educators Computer Association
Rich Mavrogeanes, President, Discover Video	President Pro Tem of the Senate
Maura Provencher, Vice President of Research and Administration	CT Conference of Independent Colleges
Deborah Schander, State Librarian	Connecticut State Library
Josh Smith, Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools	Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents



Name and Position	Representing or Appointed By
Bart Stanco, Vice President, Gartner	Governor's Office
Steve Stephanou, Deputy General Manager, Town of Manchester	CT Conference of Municipalities
Erin Stewart, Mayor, City of New Britain	Minority Leader of the Senate
Chinma Uche, Math and Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering	Connecticut Education Association
Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Executive Director, Office of Workforce Strategy	Department of Economic and Community Development
Holly Williams, Section Director, Education and Workforce Development	Office of Policy and Management
Scott Zak, Senior Director of Learning Technologies	Connecticut State Colleges and Universities

The Commission welcomed two waves of new members in 2021. At the March meeting, three state leaders began their service as appointees to the Commission: Deborah Schander, State Librarian (representing the Connecticut State Library); Holly Williams, Section Director for Education and Workforce Development (representing the Office of Policy and Management, OPM); and Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Executive Director of the Office of Workforce Strategy (representing the Department of Economic and Community Development, DECD).

During the 2021 legislative session, members advocated for the reinstatement of previous Commission seats. The resulting [Public Act 21-76](#) allowed for the appointment of four members, introduced at the September meeting: David Hayes, 5th Grade Teacher at Edgewood School in Bristol (representing the American Federation of Teachers); Barbara Johnson, Library Media Specialist at Jack Jackter Intermediate School in Colchester and President of the Connecticut Educators Computer Association, or CECA (representing CECA); Chinma Uche, Math and Computer Science Teacher at the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Hartford (representing the Connecticut Education Association); and Josh Smith, Superintendent of Region 15 Public Schools (representing the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, or CAPSS).

Leadership

Mark Raymond, the Chief Information Officer for the State, continues his service as Chair of the Commission. Michael Mundrane, the University of Connecticut's Chief Information Officer and Vice Provost, serves as the Commission's Vice-Chair. Douglas Casey serves as the Commission's Executive Director, with responsibility for planning and activities as described on the Web sites of the Connecticut General Assembly ([Chapter 61a](#)) and Commission (www.CT.gov/CTEdTech). In several of its 2021 meetings, members called for the appropriation of funds for an additional staff member, given the Commission's expanded work and impact over the past two years, as well as the likely benefits to the state that person would provide.



In addition to its members, the Commission benefits from the insights of Advisory Council members. Ten Commission members and alternates as well as nearly 40 subject matter experts from across the state serve on these Advisory Councils, representing a broad diversity of constituents to help guide the Commission's priorities and programs. The list of Advisory Council members follows:

Digital Learning Advisory Council

- Nick Caruso (Chair)* — Senior Staff Associate for Field Service, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)
- Katie Bauer — Director of Library Research Services & Collections, Trinity College
- Kevin Corcoran — Executive Director of Digital Learning, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities
- Jonathan Costa — Assistant Executive Director, EdAdvance
- Larry Covino — Director, Bristol Adult Education
- Andy DePalma — Director of Technology, EASTCONN
- Josh Elliott — Director of Educational Technology, Fairfield University Graduate School of Education and Allied Professions
- Barbara Johnson — Library Media Specialist, Colchester Public Schools and President, CECA
- Karen Kaplan — Technology and Communications Director, Hamden Public Schools
- Dawn La Valle* — Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library
- Shannon Marimón — Executive Director, ReadyCT
- Laura McCaffrey — Director of School Support and Academic Services, Hartford Archdiocese
- Greg Mcverry — Professor, Southern Connecticut State University
- James Mindek — Director of Technology & Operations, Connecticut Technical High School System (CTECS)
- Josh Smith — Superintendent, Region 15 Public Schools
- Karen Skudlarek — Educational Technologist, University of Connecticut
- Jim Spafford — Coordinator of Business Services and Partnerships, Manchester Adult Education
- Shelley Stedman — Past President, Connecticut Association of School Librarians
- Chinma Uche — Computer Science Teacher, CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, and President, CT Computer Science Teachers Association
- Scott Zak* — Senior Director of Learning Technologies, CT State Colleges and Universities

Infrastructure Advisory Council

- Tom Dillon (Chair)*
- Colleen Bailie* — Library Director, West Haven Public Library
- Joe Campbell — Educational Technology Consultant, CTECS
- George Claffey — Chief Information Officer, Central Connecticut State University

*Also serves as a Commission member or alternate.



Infrastructure Advisory Council (Continued)

- Burt Cohen* — Staff Attorney and State Broadband Policy and Program Coordinator, Office of Consumer Counsel
- Karen Fildes — Director of Educational Technology and Communication, New Fairfield Public Schools
- Fred Kass — Director of Networking & Infrastructure Services, Trinity College
- Kerri Kearney — Supervisor of Instructional Technology, Manchester Public Schools
- Ryan Kocsondy — Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
- Michael Mundrane* — Vice Provost and CIO, University of Connecticut
- Sabina Sitaru — Interim Chief Operating Officer, New Haven Public Schools
- Rick Widlansky — System Manager, Libraries Online (LION)
- Rob Wilson — Director of Technology and Information Services, Somers Public Schools

*Also serves as a Commission member or alternate.

Meetings

Dates and topics of Commission and Advisory Council meetings appear below, with minutes and materials available from the Commission Web site, www.CT.gov/EdTech.

Commission Meetings

Monday, March 1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome New Members • Broadband Legislation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers and Connections for Students • Digital Navigation Programs
Meeting Minutes	Video Archive
Monday, June 7	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission Staffing Needs • Closing the Digital Divide 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Digital Learning Survey
Meeting Minutes	
Monday, September 13	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission Membership Expansion • Open Education Resource Site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning for Teachers • K – 12 Staffing and Device Report
Meeting Minutes	Video Archive
Monday, December 6	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Broadband Expansion • Federal Technology Funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote Learning Practices • Measuring K – 12 Technology Access
Meeting Minutes	Video Archive



Advisory Council Meetings

Digital Learning Advisory Council

Friday, February 5

- Digital Inclusion
- Post-COVID Recommendations

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Monday, April 26

- Best Practices in Digital Learning
- Open Education Resources (OER)

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Thursday, July 29

- State Legislation on Digital Learning
- OER Collections

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Tuesday, October 26

- Digital Learning Survey Analysis
- Adult Digital Literacy Supports

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Infrastructure Advisory Council

Thursday, February 11

- Broadband Legislation and Standards
- Closing the Digital Divide

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Friday, April 23

- Federal Funding and Programs
- Eduroam Expansion

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Tuesday, August 3

- Cybersecurity Needs and Legislation
- Federal Broadband Funding

 [Meeting Minutes](#)

Wednesday, November 3

- Measuring Technology Access
- Eduroam Survey and Legal Terms

 [Meeting Minutes](#)



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State Educational Technology Goals and Plan

In 2017, the Commission released its five-year [State Educational Technology Goals and Plan](#), with the following Vision Statement:

THAT EVERY LEARNER AND EDUCATOR IN CONNECTICUT BENEFITS FROM THE FULL POTENTIAL OF TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT PERSONALIZED AND IMPACTFUL TEACHING, LEARNING, RESEARCH, AND ADVANCEMENT.

To support that vision, the following Mission Statement defines the strategies and activities of the Commission:

DESIGN, STEWARD, AND PROMOTE POLICY, PROGRAMS, INSIGHTS, AND RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT THE EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY FOR ALL LEARNERS AND EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CONNECTICUT.

In the past year, the Commission has faithfully stewarded, promoted, and enlisted assistance to deliver upon the initiatives defined in the Goals and Plan. That blueprint for educational technology in our state addresses eight broad initiatives falling under three focus areas: Digital Learning, Infrastructure, and Data and Privacy.

Digital Learning

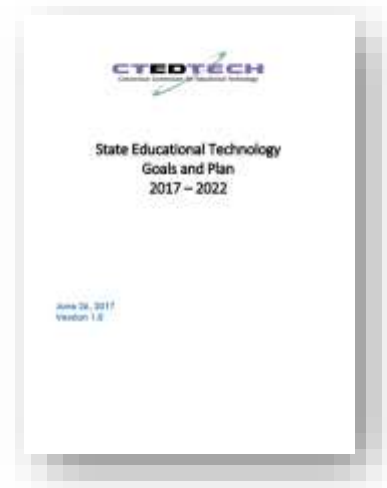
- Open Education Resources
- Student-Centered Learning
- Technology Proficiency Standards

Infrastructure

- Digital Equity
- Educational Technology Standards and Best Practices
- E-rate Maximization

Data and Privacy

- Privacy Best Practices
- Privacy Compliance



At all quarterly meetings, Director Casey provides members with an update on progress made against the Goals and Plan, reflecting the insights and efforts of the Commission members, Advisory Council members, and other subject-matter experts enlisted to support this work. The following page provides a high-level summary of these efforts.



State Educational Technology Goals and Plan: Objectives and Progress

Objective	Status
Digital Learning	
Open Education Resources	
Obtain GoOpen Status	Completed (June 2017)
Launch OER Resource Page	Completed (May 2019)
Launch State OER Portal (GoOpenCT.org)	Completed (July 2021)
“Frontiers in Personalized Learning” Report	Completed (November 2017)
Student, Teacher, and Administrator Standards	
Commission Endorsement of Student Standards	Completed (September 2016)
Commission Endorsement of Teacher Standards	Completed (September 2017)
State Board Adoption of Student Standards	Completed (June 2018)
Commission Endorsement of Administrator Standards	Completed (December 2018)
Curation of Educator and Leader Supports	In Progress and Ongoing
Infrastructure	
E-rate Maximization	
Statewide Survey Design and Feedback	Completed (July 2018)
Statewide E-rate Report	Completed (April 2019)
Digital Equity	
Digital Equity Toolkit	Completed (December 2018)
Digital Equity Advocacy and Programming	In Progress and Ongoing
Data and Privacy	
Educational Software Hub Design and Launch	Completed (August 2017)
Promotion of Privacy and Security Best Practices	In Progress and Ongoing



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The following sections provide updates on the Commission's State Educational Technology Goals and Plan, as well as other related activities to ensure the effective use of technology in Connecticut schools, libraries, and institutions of higher education.

Digital Learning

Support for Remote Learning

The Commission has provided resources and insights to support the rapid and nearly universal adoption of online and blended learning approaches since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. That work continued in 2021, with highlights shared in the sections that follow.

Resources for Schools, Colleges, and Libraries

To serve the needs of educators and leaders, the Commission curates a set of Remote Learning resources (www.bit.ly/CET-Remote) across five key areas of concern:

- Guiding Considerations: High-level issues to address the online learning needs of staff, students, and families that fully leverage the existing resources within a given college or school district.
- Planning Frameworks and Checklists: Tested guidelines for quickly designing, implementing, and supporting remote and blended learning programs.
- Connecting Students Outside School: Free and low-cost programs to provide families with high-speed broadband access to support remote learning, work, and research. See the [Digital Equity](#) section for details on additional materials posted in 2021 to boost home broadband adoption.
- Free or Reduced-Price Software: Digital learning tools for consideration by district leaders and educators, vetted by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and national organizations such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), Digital Promise, and others.
- Free and Open Educational Resources: Repositories of standards-aligned lesson plans, unit plans, and other digital learning materials provided through the Commission's open education resources (OER) site, GoOpenCT.org.

Director Casey continues to add resources to the remote learning pages, accessed more than 22,000 times to date by visitors from Connecticut, the United States, and 27 other countries. He also shared these and other materials through social media posts using the campaign hashtag [#KeepCTLearning](#). Of interest, the significant volume of requests from third parties to list their materials on the Commission's Web site spurred members at the June quarterly meeting to adopt an updated [Policy on Third-Party Endorsements](#) to limit referrals only to trusted education providers.



Best Practices from Remote Learning

During the spring Digital Learning Advisory Council meeting, members of that group recognized that, disruptive as the shift to remote learning in 2020 was, the use of technology for learning likely led to the adoption of promising practices. Members of that group suggested that the Commission create a statewide survey to collect feedback on remote learning. The Advisory Council members — comprised of K – 12, library, and adult education experts — developed a single prompt that anyone in the education community could respond to:

"What about school during the pandemic is worth keeping as we return to in-person education?"

Director Casey developed and shared outreach materials with leadership groups across the state, encouraging them to share the survey with their constituents. The [final results](#), generated from the Thought Exchange platform that EdAdvance graciously provided, indicates that shifting logistical activities online benefitted the education community. The most highly recommended practices to continue after the pandemic include virtual parent-teacher conferences, the use of learning management systems to assign and collect homework, and assurances that students will have devices and Internet access for learning.

A total of 190 individuals responded, 140 of whom identified themselves as school teachers, with parents of school-aged children making up most of the remaining balance of survey takers. The Advisory Council and Commission members acknowledged the relatively small number of respondents and found it surprising that the recommendations did not include more innovative uses of technology, such as personalized or project-based learning. However, the results may well reflect the reality of remote learning in Connecticut during the 2020 – 21 academic year. That is, the tactical nature of the recommendations reflects the “emergency” approaches to technology use during the pandemic, rather than more advanced and intentional applications.

Remote Learning Commission

In addition to expanding and curating the resources shared on the above site, Director Casey serves on the statewide [Remote Learning Commission](#). The General Assembly charged the CSDE to create this group in the 2021 legislative session (see [Public Act 21-2](#)). The 15 appointed members and CSDE staff began work late in 2021 to fulfill the group's mandates of assessing the impact of remote learning on K – 12 students, establishing best practices in online learning, and determining the feasibility of a statewide remote learning school. Director Casey is actively engaged with this group, sharing insights and research from the Commission for Educational Technology toward the successful fulfillment of the Remote Learning Commission's goals.



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Open Education Resources

For the past four years, the Commission has championed the use of open education resources (OER) — digital textbooks, courses, unit plans, lesson plans, and instructional videos — in schools and universities. Access to free, high-quality, and standards-aligned OER provides educators and students with a host of benefits including cost savings, flexibility, equity of access, and relevancy of materials. Efforts around OER directly support the Commission’s statewide Educational Technology Goals and Plan and its statutory charge of “providing access for all public schools, public libraries, and libraries at institutions of higher education to a core set of online, full-text resources” [[CGS § 4d-80\(c\)\(2\)\(C\)](#)].

In 2021, the Commission launched a statewide OER site, www.GoOpenCT.org. Funding from the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA) Public, Educational and Governmental Programming and Educational

Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA) program as well as the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act covered the cost to procure, configure, and sustain the technology platform (OER Commons) through 2024. The site provides the following benefits and features, free to all Connecticut schools, colleges, and libraries:

- Authoring: Digital tools to enable the creation, revision, remixing, publishing, and licensing of educational materials, with the ability to publish in alignment with international Creative Commons copyright standards
- Workflow: Ability of school and university administrators to review materials for quality and determine which to share at the local and state level
- Content Sharing: Tools to enable district and college administrators to prepare, index, and share content collections from their institutions
- Standards Alignment: Ability of educators to tag and search for materials by Connecticut State Board of Education (SBE) – approved academic standards (e.g., Common Core, Next-Generation Science, etc.)
- State Curriculum Support: Platform for creating, reviewing, and sharing statewide K – 12 curriculum materials from the CSDE, including the [African-American, Black, Puerto Rican, and Latino Studies](#) course
- Reporting and Analytics: Ability for administrators at the institutional level as well as educators at the course or classroom level to view detailed materials usage and impact reports

During the spring and summer, Director Casey led the work to configure and launch the site, addressing concerns such as branding and layout, identification and formatting of eight academic standard sets, review and import of content collections, and establishment of user and group permissions. He recruited more than 20 education leaders and curriculum subject-matter experts to serve on the Go Open CT advisory. Critical input from the CSDE Academic Office has helped ensure that the site has all major curriculum standards loaded to enable alignment of materials during authoring and searching.



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Since the “soft” launch of the site in July, the site has already garnered positive feedback from K – 12 and higher education leaders and instructors. The CSDE and State Education Resource Center (SERC) leverage the site to review and develop materials in support of the African-American, Black, Puerto Rican, and Latino studies high school course. Teams of teachers use the group authoring, collaboration, and review features to help refine those materials in preparation for the statewide course launch in the 2022 – 23 school year. This fall, the CSDE shared the site with the SBE, members of which expressed enthusiasm for the platform. They recognize it as a key component to supporting the development of the Black and Latino studies course or the model curriculum that the CSDE will write for grades K – 8 over the next year (see [PA 21-2](#)).

Registered users will be able to access all statewide curriculum materials once the CSDE publishes them, and educators can today find nearly 9,000 indexed courses and collections from a variety of trusted national providers, including Common Sense Media, the Digital Public Library of America, the Folger Shakespeare Library, Illustrative Mathematics, Khan Academy, MIT Open Courseware, OpenSciEd, and Rice University’s OpenStax Textbooks. At the state level, the site offers collections from Connecticut Explored and Connecticut Humanities, with commitments from several school districts to share their course units and lessons. To date, visitors have viewed more than 13,000 pages on the site.

The Commission will engage in concerted outreach efforts in 2022 to build awareness and use of GoOpenCT. The CSDE invested part of its state-level ARPA funds into brokered services to support site usage for the next two years. This contract, executed with Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull, will provide the technical support to help scale use of the platform. Director Casey will continue sharing the site’s features with professional groups, districts, and universities, as he did in 2021 (see [Presentations](#), page 24) in order to expand site usage and increase the number of learning materials that educators create and share.

Professional Development

AccelerateCT

Making effective use of technology for learning requires ongoing support of instructors at every level. This past year, the use of federal ARPA relief funds made free, high-quality training possible for all K – 12 educators. The CSDE leveraged its \$100M ARPA allocation to launch a set of initiatives known as AccelerateCT. This statewide education recovery and acceleration framework began with enhanced learning and enrichment opportunities for students and teachers this past spring and summer.

Chief Performance Officer Ajit Gopalakrishnan, a Commission member, led the design of [AccelerateCT’s technology components](#), working closely with Director Casey. A partnership with the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) provided free access to the [ISTE Summer Learning Academy](#) for all teachers in Connecticut. More than 700 educators enrolled in the Academy, and discussions continue with ISTE on the provision of more in-depth classes for teachers in 2022. Chief Gopalakrishnan also dedicated the resources necessary to provide end-user support for Go Open CT, as noted above. The AccelerateCT



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initiatives also included convenings of school technology leaders to share challenges and best practices. The Commission has commended the CSDE for these investments in professional development to help advance learning with technology.

Future of Technology Commission

On June 22, The Office of the Governor (OTG), CSDE, and Commission hosted a town hall as part of a series of events for the [Future of Technology Commission](#). This independent body is charged with gathering input and providing policy recommendations to the White House, Congress, and FCC on the effective and equitable use of technology. The [Connecticut event](#) featured remarks from Governor Lamont, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, Senator Richard Blumenthal, and Connecticut Commissioner of Education Charlene Russell-Tucker. More than a dozen state and national education leaders participated in panel discussions on digital equity and the use of technology to support innovation in teaching and learning.

Infrastructure

Digital Equity

Even with the return to in-person learning for most schools and universities in 2021, students still need access to affordable broadband for learning. The Commission continued its advocacy, program management, and sharing of best practices during the past year to help close the digital equity gap, part of its statutory charge (see [CGS § 61a, Sec. 4d-80](#)).

Everybody Learns

In 2020, Governor Lamont's [Everybody Learns initiative](#) provided more than \$43M in federal CARES Act funding for computers, home Internet access, and community wireless solutions — the [largest statewide per-pupil investment of its kind](#). Those investments and the contributions of the Dalio Foundation resulted in the procurement of 142,000 computers for Connecticut students. The Everybody Learns initiative also provided for more than 15,000 broadband connections in the form of cable Internet and cellular hotspots.

To ensure that students continue to have the opportunity to learn outside of school, Director Casey and Chief Gopalakrishnan recommended to OPM that the State continue its investment in home broadband connections. The resulting commitment of surplus CARES funding by OPM Secretary McCaw for this purpose directly supports learning acceleration and equity of opportunity for students.

Despite the commitment of significant funding to offset the costs of home Internet access, many families did not take advantage of this free service. To identify adoption barriers, the Commission designed a survey of school leaders in early 2021, asking them to share the reasons why the fulfillment of Internet access fell below projected demand levels. The resulting report, "[Home Internet Connectivity: Barriers and Opportunities to Closing the](#)



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[Digital Divide](#)," includes estimated current home broadband levels, challenges in connecting students, and initiatives to engage families around the benefits of broadband. The results have garnered interest among state and national leadership and news outlets (see [Media Coverage](#), page 25), especially pertaining to the reasons why families do not take advantage of free and reduced-price Internet service: distrust of providers, the requirement to provide proof of eligibility, privacy concerns, installation scheduling conflicts — and a simple desire *not* to have Internet access. These findings underscore the need to build awareness among all residents of the benefits of being online, as well as to identify barriers to adoption that the Commission and other State agencies can help to mitigate through discussions with schools, universities, and carriers.

The Everybody Learns initiative also provided funding for CEN to deploy community wireless networks across the state. Despite many logistical challenges to complete this work, more than 150 sites across the 40 most needy communities now have the service. During 2021, the wireless network access points provided more than 250,000 connections to more than 83,000 residents (see www.ctedunet.net/everybodylearnswifiinitiative).

In 2021, this work will continue with additional funding through [Governor Lamont's ARPA plan](#). The Governor and his leadership team have offered enthusiastic support for the expansion of free, community wireless across the state, with a focus on those areas where Internet access is either unavailable or relatively expensive. Directors Kocsondy and Casey have developed a detailed plan to expand the initiative, designed as a grant program. This approach will allow local communities to apply for funding that the Commission and CEN oversee. This decentralized approach — leveraging community resources and approved vendors — will help scale the work quickly.

[Eduroam](#)

The Community Wireless program's expansion also brought the Eduroam authentication service to more locations in 2021. Each access point allows visitors to log in using Eduroam using the credentials (i.e., user name and password) issued by their local school or university. The system has proven highly successful among institutions of higher education, allowing faculty and students to get online at any [participating college or university worldwide](#). In 2021, the Community Wireless access points provided more than 90,000 Eduroam-enabled connections to more than 35,000 students and educators.

To encourage the adoption of Eduroam among schools and libraries, Directors Casey and Kocsondy along with leaders from Southern Connecticut State University and the City of New Haven presented at the May 2021 CEN Conference on the successful Eduroam deployment in New Haven. The session generated strong interest from a number of districts, though school leaders have expressed hesitancy over adopting Eduroam until the service is available at more locations statewide. The next phase of the Community Wireless initiative



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will significantly expand the presence of Eduroam-enabled access points, which will likely encourage schools to adopt the service. Director Kocsondy conducted a readiness survey of CEN members in the fall of 2021, revealing that most districts already have the technology components to deploy Eduroam: an enterprise-grade directory, managed wireless system, and Remote Authentication Dial-In User Service (RADIUS) server. The CEN team also launched an Eduroam Web page to provide information about the service to institutions considering its adoption: www.ctedunet.net/eduroam.

Broadband Programs and Advocacy

The Commission played a central role this past year in promoting federal broadband programs. In April, Director Casey hosted a presentation in partnership with the OTG and FCC on the [Emergency Broadband Benefit](#) (EBB). During that event, more than 100 State agency and education leaders received background information about the program, which provides credits to offset the cost of broadband to an estimated 170,000 households in Connecticut. To date, more than 90,000 households have taken advantage of the service, with enrollments by ZIP code available at www.bit.ly/CT-EBB-MAP. In 2022, EBB will transition to the [Affordable Connectivity Program](#) (ACP) as part of the 2021 federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

The new Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) provides dedicated funding for schools and libraries to connect students and patrons at home. In July, Chief Gopalakrishnan and Director Casey hosted an information session about the continuation of the Everybody Learns program, EBB, and ECF. As of December 20, 2021, Connecticut schools and libraries have received nearly \$40M in fund commitments through ECF. The Commission continues to work closely with the OTG, CSDE, OCC, OPM, and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) on outreach and advocacy efforts to help ensure that all eligible institutions and residents take advantage of these programs.

The expansion of affordable broadband will continue in 2022, with significant funding from the IIJA. That law includes the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, which will provide an initial \$100M to Connecticut for broadband expansion and support the development of a five-year statewide broadband plan. The Middle Mile program is especially relevant to the Commission, as CEN serves as the state's middle mile research and education network. The Digital Equity Act funds statewide programs to ensure not just access to technology but also its effective use by learners of all ages. The IIJA also contains significant funding for cybersecurity, 80 percent of which will flow directly to municipalities. Various agencies, including DEEP, OPM, and the OCC, have begun hiring staff who will help administer these programs and champion components of Governor Lamont's Act Concerning Equitable Access to Broadband, which passed in the 2021 legislative session ([PA 21-159](#)). Director Casey continues to work with these agencies — including his service on interview committees — to support the successful implementation of broadband mapping and expansion.



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School Support for Technology

In the fall of 2021, the Commission designed a survey to assess staffing levels in support of the significantly increased technology footprint in schools. Summary findings appear in the report, "2021 K – 12 Technology Staffing" (www.bit.ly/21-K12-Tech-Staffing). Following the rollout of hundreds of thousands of new devices, the doubling of educational software use, and heavy involvement of parents to support remote learning, questions remained as to whether staffing levels had increased to meet these demands.

Respondents from 34 districts provided data on school-issued devices by grade band; input on staff by title, number of positions, and salary; and open-ended comments. The results indicate that nearly all districts have a one-to-one device-to-student ratio, and the average school technology specialist supports 1,000 devices. Many districts have expanded support services beyond students and staff to include parents and other caretakers. Among respondents, 12 districts (35 percent) now provide after-hours and weekend support to students and families. While the expanded scope of support services remains admirable, many districts have expressed concern over the cost of hiring additional staff to address these needs or risk the loss of staff to burnout. The Commission will continue to design solutions and share best practices that can equip school leaders to sustain the levels of technology they now depend on for teaching and learning.

Data and Privacy

The Commission continues to provide guidance and solutions to help teachers make effective use of educational software tools while protecting student data privacy. This work remains important, given that the shift to online instruction in 2021 significantly expanded the use of digital tools to support personalized learning. For example, one study estimates the average school district uses more than 1,000 titles during a given year ([LearnPlatform, November 2021](#)). Usage data from approximately one-third of Connecticut districts identifies 5,500 software products in use by those schools. The integration of educational software into learning at home and in the classroom continues to grow, and the Commission's work helps teachers and leaders choose products that are both effective and protect student data.

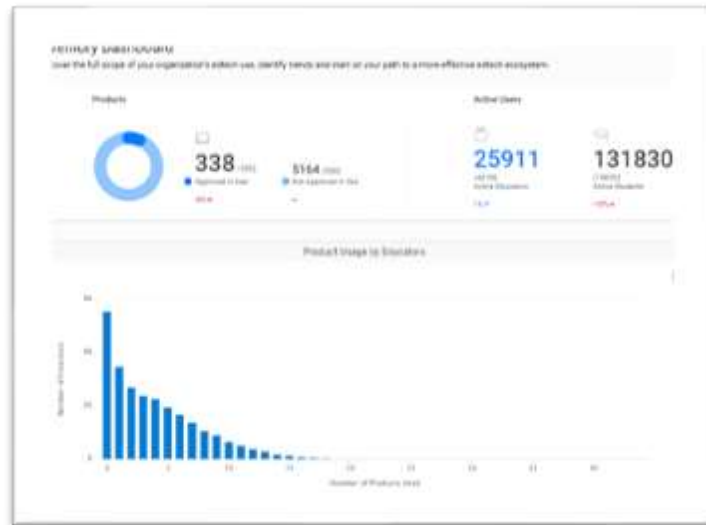
Educational Software Hub

Since its launch in 2017, the Commission's [Educational Software Hub](#), powered by LearnPlatform, has served as a clearinghouse of educational titles from providers that have pledged compliance with Connecticut's data privacy law. Even as schools reopened in 2021 with a return to in-person learning, the growth of compliancy-pledged software continued. The Hub now lists more than 500 compliancy-pledged apps, representing a 10 percent increase in titles over the last year. Director Casey continues to engage vendors to assist with their compliance efforts, as he did last year in helping to ensure that companies such as Zoom and Epic comply with the state's privacy statute.



Use of the Hub saves time for school leaders and teachers, reduces data privacy exposure, and offers efficiencies for educational providers serving the needs of Connecticut schools. Conservative statewide estimates point to nearly 10,000 staff hours (\$1M indirect) saved annually from the review of data privacy agreements with vendors that have registered their products on the Hub.

Beyond the ability to find compliancy-pledged software, the Hub provides education leaders with a detailed inventory of titles used in their schools. In 2021, Director Casey hosted online sessions to encourage schools to take advantage of this free service, resulting in the doubling of the number of districts using the Inventory Dashboard. Use of this data can help decision-makers identify new software titles that support student learning as well as apps that administrators have not approved. The Inventory Dashboard can also provide insights on software that districts pay for every year but that may not see significant use. Identifying such educational technology “waste” allows leaders to consolidate their software catalog, reducing licensing and support costs.



In 2021, the Commission provided enhancements to the Hub that now allow schools leaders to share and view the library of software they use with those of their colleagues in other districts. These features encourage discussions among decision-makers who can leverage the insights of peers to identify the efficacy, overall cost, and ease of use of educational software. With sustainability and impact top concerns among district leaders, the Hub's peer review tools will help minimize educational technology costs and focus software use on those solutions that most positively impact student learning.

Exemption Reporting

In each of the past three years, Director Casey has collected data from public school districts on their use of exemptions defined in [Public Act 18-125](#) to support individualized education plans (IEPs) and student accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Districts who used the exemption shared details about each software title, its provider, and assurances that the district made reasonable efforts to comply with all other aspects of state and federal privacy statute.

Director Casey partners with the CSDE Special Education team as well as CONNCASE, CAPSS, CABE, and other leadership groups to communicate the requirements of and deadline for reporting, as well as the previous year's results.



In December 2021, Director Casey provided members of the Connecticut General Assembly's Education Committee a [memorandum](#) with results from the past year as well as three-year trends. That document also references visualizations and data sets on the IEP and 504 reporting, available through the Connecticut Open Data portal (<https://data.ct.gov>). Highlights from the report include the following points:

- Reporting Levels: A significant number of districts do not submit their report. In terms of percentages, [43 percent submitted a report](#) this past year, down slightly from 49 percent the previous year but the same as the first year of reporting, also 43 percent.
- Small Percent of Districts Using the Exemption: Of districts that reported, the percent indicating that they use the exemption has decreased when compared with past years, with 11 percent in 20 – 21, 14 percent in 19 – 20, and 23 percent in 18 – 19. The decreased use of the exemption may have resulted from the increased number of products with terms that now comply with state statute.
- Low Number of Apps Used Under the Exemption per District: Each year has seen a “long tail” of apps used under the exemption. Of districts that [used the exemption this past year](#), 62 percent did so for just one software title, consistent with the 19 – 20 school year (67 percent of districts) and the 18 – 19 school year (54 percent of districts). This past year, only two districts used the exemption for more than four (4) software titles.
- Total Software Titles Used: Across districts reporting the use of apps under the exemption, totals have fluctuated somewhat year over year. [This past year](#), 33 titles were used under the exemption, nearly double the number used in 19 – 20 but significantly lower than the 83 used in 18 – 19. Analyzing exemption use by title, we see that trends remain consistent in that most apps have only a district or two using them under the exemption. In each of the three reporting years, 88 percent of apps were used by only one district (note: not the same district, just a single count of one district).

The Commission has not received any feedback or questions concerning district exemption use by members of the General Assembly. The [statute](#) does not require the development of these reports, only that districts share usage with the Commission. Members of the Commission discussed the significant work required to collect and share the results during the [December 2021](#) meeting. They did acknowledge the value simply in asking districts to share information about exemption use. The reporting directive likely heightens awareness of data protection protocols and best practices.



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Communications and Outreach

To raise awareness of its work and gather feedback from its diverse constituents, the Commission leverages several online media channels, including the Commission Web site, Twitter account, and e-mail listserv. Director Casey continues to present at state and national events, produce research and publications, submit news to educational media outlets, and participate actively in several [professional and advocacy groups](#). The following sections provide highlights of these communication and outreach efforts.

Online Media

- **Web:** The Commission's Web site, www.CT.gov/EdTech, continues to support the educational community. Site traffic decreased by roughly a third over the same period the previous year, but visitation remains strong, approximately one-third higher in page views than in the period directly prior to the pandemic. Additions to the site this past year include significant collections of resources to help education leaders, parents, students, and the general public get online through federally subsidized broadband programs.
- **Twitter:** The Commission's Twitter account, @CTEdTech, serves as a means of communicating important research and policy updates to 663 followers, up from 620 over the last year.
- **Statewide Listserv:** In early 2016, the Commission launched a statewide e-mail listserv to share research, best practices, and announcements with the K – 12 education community. Since that time, the list has grown to include more than 400 members, including school technology leaders from nearly every Connecticut public school district and many private schools. In the past year, contributors have submitted more than 2,300 posts that include funding and legislative updates, best practices in digital learning approaches, and time-sensitive security alerts. Comments from district technology leaders indicate that the service provides an easy and powerful means of quickly communicating with and sharing best practices among members of the Connecticut educational technology community.





Presentations

Director Casey shared the Commission's work statewide and nationally in 2021. The following list summarizes these presentations.

Organizer – Audience	Topic(s)	Date
Sacred Heart University	Guest Lecture: Technology for Superintendent Candidates (093 Certification)	Jan 9
CT Technology & Engineering Education Association	K – 12 Data Privacy Statute and Best Practices	Jan 27
National Association of State ESEA Administrators	Digital Learning in Action: Best Practices from the Field	Feb 8
edWeb	Following the Ed Tech Money (Panel)	Feb 11
ISTE	Making Schools Digitally Ready in 2021 and Beyond	Feb 23
Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT)	Privacy in the Era of COVID	Feb 25
US Department of Education	Federal Funding for Distance Learning and Student Connectivity	Feb 25
EdAdvance	Commission Updates	Mar 24
CREC Library Media Council	Open Education Resources	Apr 7
CDT	Protecting Privacy While Enabling Access	Apr 22
CAPSS	Executive District Leadership Roundtable	Apr 29
CREC English Language Learner Council	Open Education Resources	May 12
RightsCon Conference	Data Privacy Best Practices (Panel Discussion)	Jun 8
Future of Technology Commission	Connecticut Town Hall	Jun 22
Center for Democracy and Technology	Student Data Privacy Roundtable	Jul 1
Office of the Governor	Broadband Bill Signing (Press Conference)	Aug 5
National Center on Educational Statistics	Closing the Homework Gap While Protecting Student Privacy	Aug 20
US Department of Education	Balancing Public Safety and Student Privacy: Case Studies	Aug 26
CREC Language Arts Council	Open Education Resources	Sep 24
Office of the Governor	Digital Inclusion Week Press Conference	Oct 5
Education Commission of the States	Privacy and the Promise in EdTech	Oct 28
LEARN	LEARN Technology Roundtable	Nov 4
Futures School	Perspectives, Learnings, and the Future of Foresight in Libraries	Nov 10
C.E.S.	C.E.S. Technology Council	Nov 10
Council of Connecticut Academic Library Directors	Open Education Resources (GoOpenCT.org)	Dec 10



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Media Coverage

Outreach campaigns and publishing opportunities promoted the work of the Commission and resulted in coverage across a number of media channels this year. The following table lists stories, interviews, and publications that highlight the Commission's efforts and impact.

Outlet – Publisher	Title	Date
	Biden Expected to Make Narrowing Digital Divide an “Early, Urgent Priority”	Jan 19
	What Educators Should Expect from the Biden Administration on Education Technology	Jan 25
	Biden Nominee's School District Prioritizes Digital Equity	Jan 25
	U.S. Spends More than \$25B on Ed Tech Annually (Release and Report)	Mar 17
	Some kids never logged on to remote school. Now what?	Apr 30
	How you can get extra money to go towards your monthly internet bill	May 12
	If You Build It, They Still May Not Come: Thoughts on Digital Literacy and Engagement	May 18
	Closing the Homework Gap While Protecting Student Privacy	May 28
	Connecticut Plans Statewide Online School For K-12	Jun 22
	CT leaders hint at future of technology in schools	Jun 22
	How are schools fixing the digital equity conundrum?	Jun 24
	Challenges, benefits of keeping school devices in students' hands over summer	Jul 9
	Millions of Prequalified Households Are Missing Out on a Crucial Internet Benefit	Aug 31
	CTLN Opinion+ Interview	Sep 17
	How expanding broadband Internet access benefits Willimantic community	Oct 5
	Gov. makes broadband internet expansion announcement in Willimantic	Oct 5
	Why student data remains at risk — and what educators are doing to protect it	Dec 14



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Professional and Advocacy Groups

To garner support for Commission initiatives, deepen understanding of constituent needs, and identify funding opportunities, Director Casey actively participates in the following state and national groups:

- AccelerateCT: Served on technology committee of CSDE task force charged with developing programs to advance student learning
- Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS) Technology Committee: Provide monthly Commission updates to state superintendents
- Connecticut Educational Technology Leaders (CTETL) Board: Foster partnership with state educational technology leaders to identify and build awareness of best practices for school leaders
- Connecticut Remote Learning Commission: Collaborate with members to assess current online learning in Connecticut, identify best practices, and determine the costs and feasibility of a statewide remote learning school
- Connecticut State Library Digital Inclusion Task Force: Collaborate with library and other leaders to design a framework for connecting residents to the devices, Internet access, and skills necessary to make effective use of technology
- Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) K-12 Innovation Advisory Board: Participate on national group of K – 12 technology experts who identify current digital learning [hurdles and accelerators](#)
- CSDE Computer Science Advisory Committee: Assist in establishing curriculum frameworks, teacher certification standards, and talent pipeline initiatives
- EdTech Evidence Exchange: Committee member to identify the factors that either support or vie against the successful adoption and impact of educational technology solutions
- OTG Everybody Learns Task Force: Design and implement broadband program to support remote learning, develop general broadband policy guidance, and advocate for funding
- ISTE Policy Advisory: Provide input on digital learning policy at the national, state, and local levels
- Skills21 Board: Support EdAdvance (one of six state Regional Education Service Centers) work to provide technology-based curriculum and challenge competitions in STEM subjects
- State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) Board of Directors: Serve as 2021 – 22 Chairman of the Board of national affinity group that develops and advocates for [best practices in digital learning](#)
- U.S. Department of Education "Go Open" Leaders: Engage in monthly discussions to share best practices on the design and governance of state-level OER programs



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Connecticut State Library

researchIT CT

As part of the Connecticut Education Network and administered by the Connecticut State Library, researchIT CT (www.researchitct.org) provides all Connecticut students, faculty, and residents with online access to essential



library and information resources. The researchIT CT service provides a core level of information resources, including secured access to licensed databases, and is available to every resident in Connecticut. These resources support the Division of Library Development's effort around the seven literacies, including Digital Literacy, Health Literacy, Financial Literacy, Legal Literacy, Civic/Social Literacy, Basic Literacy, and Early Literacy. In addition, college students and faculty have access to specialized research information. The researchIT CT service also includes a collection of downloadable eAudio and eBooks for access on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

In 2020, The COVID-19 crisis created access issues for many students and residents in Connecticut. In response to the pandemic and the remote learning challenges it presented, The Division of Library Development worked with database vendors to temporarily provide remote access to researchIT databases without requiring library card authentication. EBSCO created a list of temporary links that can be used by patrons and students who don't have a library card at this time. This means of access remains in effect.

Additionally, The CT State Library received IMLS LSTA CARES Act funds as the steward to procure and allocate resources to aid CT libraries in several areas including jobs and career resources related to economic development, because of the COVID19 pandemic. The CT State Library was able to purchase an 18-month subscription to the EBSCO *Learning Express Job and Career Accelerator*, for public libraries in CT to run from July 2020 through December 2021. In April, we were able to upgrade to Workforce Solutions and extend this subscription which will be available to CT Public libraries through September 2022 with ARPA funds.

Goals of researchIT CT are as follows:

- Ensure universal access to a core level of library and information resources for every resident of Connecticut through their public library, school, and college and from home
- Provide necessary information resources to every school in Connecticut so that all students are prepared to function in an information society
- Provide information resources to the increasing number of students taking advantage of online courses at Connecticut's colleges and universities
- Support the information needs of all Connecticut residents



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Budget

In the spring of 2019, the Division of Library Development coordinated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for the databases that comprise researchIT CT. After 3 years of stable pricing, the resulting proposals included some price increases which pushed the cost to maintain all the current offerings beyond our budget. After carefully evaluating usage and costs, researchIT subscriptions to *Heritage Quest* and the *Business Market Research Collection* from ProQuest were canceled. Other ProQuest offerings remain the same. Access to EBSCO eBook collections (Public Library, High School, K-8, and Cricket collections) were ended. We were able to negotiate access to the following three additional EBSCO resources: *Health Source — Consumer Edition*, *Magill On Literature Plus*, and the *Small Business Reference Center*. Other EBSCO offerings in researchIT remain the same. This subscription model remains in effect.

Annual Savings / Cost Avoidance (FY 2021)

The value of all researchIT CT databases to local communities exceeds \$43 million in one year, while the cost to provide those databases was more than \$1.5 million. This represents a cost avoidance of more than \$41 million. For more details, see the following publication:

[Cost Benefit: What researchIT CT Saves the State's Libraries and Municipalities](#)

Usage (FY 2021)

For researchIT CT's licensed full-text databases, there were a total of 3,891,028 page views (a measure of when search results are viewed), with 305,940 or 8% from public library patrons; 417,989 or 11% from school library patrons; and 3,167,099 or 81% from academic library patrons. The total number of page views represents a 17% decrease compared to the previous fiscal year. In addition, public libraries viewed Connecticut State Library Collections in Ancestry.com 12,670,869 times in FY 2021.

findIT CT

findIT CT, Connecticut's statewide library catalog, went live in May 2016 and now contains the holdings of 355 libraries in Connecticut, with more libraries being added on an ongoing basis. As of October 2021, findIT CT contained 24 million records and 18 million items.





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requestIT CT

requestIT CT, the statewide Interlibrary Loan service in findIT CT, began in September 2017, and as of July 2021, 131 libraries in Connecticut participate in the service.

Librarians can easily place requests on behalf of patrons, update requests, and track the status of requests as they make their way through the Interlibrary

Loan process. Participating libraries filled 7,502 Interlibrary Loan requests during FY 2021 using the fulfillment system.



Digital Collections

The *Treasures of Connecticut Libraries* digital collection, which began in 2008, remains available and had 7300 item views in FY 2021. It contains 1869 objects from 51 libraries and their partnering institutions. The Treasures collection can be accessed at:

<https://cslib.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p128501coll0>

The State Library added the first issues of the *Newspapers of Connecticut* digital collection in 2011. This collection on the ContentDM platform includes 7359 newspaper issues from 95+ newspaper titles. The collection had 11,402 item views in FY 2021 and has been moved to the Connecticut Digital Archive <https://ctdigitalarchive.org/> for preservation. During FY 2021, the State Library added more newspapers to the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA), bringing the new total in the CTDA to 108 newspapers. The total number of page views for FY 2021 through the CTDA was 174,653. In September 2018 the CTDA became a service hub for the Digital Public Library of America <https://dp.la/>, so the newspapers are also discoverable through the DPLA. The Newspapers of CT collection can be accessed at:

<http://hdl.handle.net/11134/30002:newspapers>

eGO and the SimplyE app

eGO CT is the project that includes acquiring digital content, such as eBooks and eAudio, and making it available to users statewide primarily through an app. Library users can download the app and use it to easily discover, check out, and read or listen to digital content, such as eBooks and eAudio. The app is designed to display content that is available in the statewide collection from the Connecticut State Library and content that is available in users' local library collections.



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DLD began offering eGO Information Sessions at locations around the state and online and since November 2019 has provided a total of 11 sessions for 146 attendees with additional sessions planned to coincide with the launch of the Palace app in early 2022.

Launched to the public in February 2020, SimplyE made it possible for Connecticut public library users to access eBook titles from their individual public library, from a parent regional library system, from the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) Open Bookshelf, from the New York Public Library SimplyE Collection, DPLA Content Exchange collection, and Axis 360 collection, all in one intuitive, easy-to-use mobile app for iOS or Android. The service includes downloadable audiobooks as well as eBooks. Our use of SimplyE ended in September of 2021 to be replaced by the Palace Project app.

Palace is a new e-reading app that is built on the same code as SimplyE but is designed for the specific needs of Connecticut libraries. We anticipate Connecticut public libraries will go live in the Palace app in early 2022. The app is now available in the App Store and Google Play and content from the Connecticut State Library and local collections will be available when the app is officially launched.

Content

As of December 2021, and accessible to library users in SimplyE since February 2020, when we began rolling it out to the public the statewide, the eAudio and eBook collection includes the following:

- Baker & Taylor Axis 360: 2,612 items
- DPLA Exchange: 4,890 items
- DPLA Open Bookshelf: 10,950 eBooks
- RBdigital: 4,663 items (The RBdigital website and app was shut down in December 2020 and these titles will be migrated for hosting by DPLA Exchange in early 2022)

Usage (FY 2021)

Because the digital collections are available through a self-service model, State Library staff have no role in the circulation process and are responsible only for collection development and licensing. Usage statistics show that the statewide RBdigital collection of downloadable books and audiobooks included 4,663 titles which were checked out 25,294 times in FY 2021, but it must be noted that the RBdigital app was shut down on December 31, 2020. SimplyE does not currently provide usage statistics.