

**The Complete Library
Technology Planner:
A Guidebook with
Sample Technology Plans
and RFPs on CD-ROM**

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with a Foreword

by

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Foreword

Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!

—Lewis Carroll

The Red Queen may not have specifically been talking about libraries, but she had a point:

On the one hand, the transformation of library services by technology has been an incredibly rapid process and one that appears to be accelerating, not decelerating. Many people working in libraries today have literally seen the entire history of library technology unfold before them. The widespread use of integrated library systems goes back only 30 years, the Web less than 20, social networking as a phenomenon less than 10, handheld devices capable of accessing Web-based library catalogs—and library materials—less than 5. New developments that are transforming communication and opening up new possibilities for library services are rolling out every month. It's a dizzying, never-ending race to keep up.

On the other hand, the fundamental issues faced by those who developed the first hand-written catalog cards and book catalogs have remained the same since the beginnings of modern libraries in the nineteenth century. What to offer and how to make it available to best meet the needs of the community we serve are fundamental questions that have not changed and show no sign of changing, whether the raw materials are books and catalog cards or Web resources and users accessing the library through handheld devices and voice recognition software.

The reality is that technology and library services have become

inextricably entwined. At this point, there are very few aspects of library service that do not involve some form of technology, and almost all of the new services libraries are adding today are technology related. Conversely, the leading edge of technology in libraries today is all about creating an environment that embraces and integrates the social, interactive potential of the Web and allows us to forge new relationships with our users and with the broader community.

New technologies notwithstanding, traditional processes, such as the circulating of library materials, fund accounting in the acquisitions department, and creating “machine-readable cataloging” records, remain as critical for most libraries today as when the present authors wrote *Planning for Automation: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* (Neal-Schuman) in 1992. In recognition of this, the present volume considers technology issues that pertain to these more established functions in our libraries as well as to the “cutting-edge” services related to the Internet and Web 2.0.

In fact, this book is not so much about technology per se as it is about planning for technological change in libraries. Those looking for information about the newest products, latest gizmos, and specific applications are going to have to keep reading, talking with other librarians, and attending the workshops and conferences that have become an essential part of keeping up—much less getting ahead—in today’s library environment.

Whether you’re bringing your library into the twenty-first century or transforming it into a state of the art library, introducing technology into a library is more than just buying hardware and software. To quote Lewis Carroll again: “If you don’t know where you’re going, any road will take you there.” One of the goals of this book is to help guarantee that the technology you implement is clearly driven by the needs and desires of your users and the community you serve.

A second and equally important goal is to help you create documents that make a persuasive and compelling case for increased support for technology. The truth is, we are for the most part adding technology on to all the other services that we already provide, and this will in most instances require additional investment on the part of those who provide the library’s financial resources. A good technology plan is above all a compelling case statement.

Last of all, technological change is still change, and we are all aware of how difficult change can be. The rapid, often dramatic

pace of technological change has raised the tolerance level for some, while lowering it for others. Ultimately, planning is a very powerful way of demystifying what at first appears to be overwhelming.

The specific planning techniques and processes in this book will help you to better manage the tasks of introducing new technologies. At the same time, we hope you'll find that the book you're holding helps you better handle that even more challenging process of introducing change by creating a framework and a guide—the technology plan—for managing it in the years ahead.

Keith Michael Fiels
Executive Director
American Library Association

Preface

If decades of both library management experience and hundreds of technology consulting projects have demonstrated nothing else consistently, one thing is certain: no implementation of technology in a library can be successful without careful and systematic planning. *The Complete Library Technology Planner: A Guidebook with Sample Technology Plans and RFPs on CD-ROM* is designed to provide responsible staff in any type of library with three critical elements necessary to success:

1. a basic understanding of the concepts and key issues necessary to engage in basic library technology planning so that they can be effective planners;
2. an understanding of the components of and the process for developing and implementing a technology plan so that they can both set up the process and communicate it to others; and
3. the actual tools needed for preparing and maintaining a technology plan and keeping it current over time so they can actually write a plan without reinventing the wheels needed for each step.

We intend this book as a guide for planning any technology-based system or service, with a focus on planning for the introduction of an “integrated library system” (ILS) or migrating from an existing ILS to a new one.

When our first book was published in 1992, we defined an “integrated system” as one that computerizes a multiplicity of library functions using one common database. While this definition remains technically accurate, technologies in general and library systems in

particular had evolved to the point where such a definition was certainly incomplete, if not antiquated, by the time our third book appeared in 2001. The original definition suggested a focus on using computers where previously you did things manually; and while that is no small consideration for a library that is acquiring its first system, the scope and potential of today's systems far exceed such a limited vision. Indeed, as we discuss in Chapter 1, technological innovation and heightened user expectations are challenging the whole idea of the ILS as the core of the library's technology services.

The current book's overall format and its many figures and checklists carry on the tradition of the earlier volumes. The goal throughout is to offer the reader a complete yet clear-cut and hopefully uncomplicated approach to planning for technology—one that respects the often limited amount of time that is allocated for this kind of activity. Some issues are covered extensively, others more briefly. For readers who may want additional information about specific topics, annotated lists of sources are included at the end of each chapter. These sources deal with the subject material in specific, direct, and practical ways; many of them contain references and bibliographies that also may be of interest. The CD-ROM includes 38 carefully selected current sample technology plans and RFPs for technology-based services that illustrate principles and practices discussed in the narrative of the book. A complete list of these begins on page xvii.

ORGANIZATION

Chapter 1 introduces the subject of how new technologies and changing user and library expectations are impacting the traditional ILS. It discusses the potential future of the older generations of integrated systems and, more significantly, the importance of strategic planning for *new* generations of library systems and technologies, including Web 2.0-based systems.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 deal with the purpose and scope of library technology plans, the elements or components that are common to all plans, and the process used to develop a technology plan. Chapter 4 discusses shaping a technology plan to meet funding requirements and focuses specifically on the “E-Rate” program that is important to so many libraries.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss how to collect data and develop a li-

brary profile in preparation for implementing technology, how to assess and identify institutional needs and priorities, how to go about writing and updating a technology plan, and how to put a price tag on your plan by defining its cost factors. Chapter 7 presents a model five-step process for developing a basic strategic plan.

Chapters 8–11 present the various aspects of actually working with your technology plan: preparing your library’s collections (covering retrospective conversion, bar coding, and applying standards); implementing your plan (whether your system is traditional, open source, or Web 2.0 based), with particular emphasis on undertaking an ILS procurement; staffing and training issues; as well as evaluating and amending your plan. Chapter 11 includes a model exercise for getting input on what you have accomplished with your plan.

Chapter 12 considers what makes a technology plan good—and not so good—and reviews the importance of keeping your plan current. The book’s conclusion again places the plan in the context of your library’s mission and offers additional thoughts on getting the most out of your plan.

The Complete Library Technology Planner, like its predecessors (*Writing and Updating Technology Plans: A Guidebook with Sample Plans on CD-ROM* [Neal-Schuman, 1999] and *Planning for Integrated Systems and Technologies: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians* [Neal-Schuman, 2001]), is a hands-on book—one that is written to provide librarians in medium-sized and smaller libraries of all types with practical advice on planning technology projects and implementing systems in a sensible and systematic manner. As with anything else, what appears daunting and overwhelming at first blush becomes manageable when it is demystified. Understanding the issues and getting organized are the keys to a successful technology effort, either for the first time or when replacing an existing system. This book provides the concepts and the tools for such an effort.