

Technology Planning for Libraries

Responsible Netizen

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This document sets forth questions and issues for libraries to consider in the development of their technology plans.

How does the use of technology and access to the Internet fit with mission of library and how will you use technology in the library?

- Uses of technology in the library
 - Online catalogue of holdings
 - Online catalogue of regional, state holdings
 - Library administration
 - Internet access for patrons
 - Web access
 - E-mail (hot mail accounts or patron accounts)
 - Chat
 - Other computer use for patrons
 - Word processing
- The Internet provides access to:
 - Information from all over the world.
 - Information sources that are not within the library's budget,
 - Time-sensitive information
 - Community information

What is your technology planning and implementation decision-making structure and process?

- Committee involved with the development of the technology plan
- Oversight authority that approves the plan
- Involvement of patrons
- Regional collaboration with other libraries
- Regional collaboration with other institutions, e.g. schools

How will you gather information about the use of the technology in the library and use this information to guide future decision-making? (performance measurement)

- Issues to assess
 - Level of patron use
 - Patron satisfaction
 - Problems and interventions
 - Funding requirements

What are the potential funding sources for initial capital expenses and ongoing expenses?

- Capital asset bonds
- General operating expenses
- Grants (state, federal, foundation, corporate)
- Local fund-raising
- Fees for services, e.g. fees to cover printing
- E-rate discount (not actually a funding source)

What is your technology infrastructure design and requirements for initial capital investment?

- Equipment requirements
- Networking requirements
- Software requirements
- Facilities upgrade requirements
- Furnishing
- Disability access requirements
- Need for technical expertise -- any money saved by not consulting with technology experts will be lost in dealing with an inadequate technical system

How will your technology infrastructure be maintained and updated?

- When planning for a technology infrastructure it is **essential** to consider the Total Costs of Ownership (TCO). These costs that are most frequently inadequately addressed are the costs necessary to provide for ongoing support and staff training and the costs for maintenance and upgrade of computers.

How will you provide for the professional development of library staff?

- Basic skills training for all library staff
- Technical skills training for staff with technical support obligations
- Ongoing professional development to support patron use of the Internet
 - Self-study
 - Workshops
 - Online discussion groups (informal)
 - Online classes

What services will you provide for patrons?

- Library web interface
 - Helpful for novice users
 - Guide to high quality material
 - Default to filtered search tools
 - Potential problem with establishing a library web page with links that ultimately end up at inappropriate sites
 - Check initial links carefully
 - Provide a disclaimer that the library does not have the ability to assess all potential links from remote sites
- Classes for Patrons
 - Basic skills
 - Specialized use of the Internet, e.g. using the Internet to conduct genealogical research,
 - Children and the Internet (for parents)
 - Safety on the Internet (for children)
- Support for Patrons
 - Librarians cannot provide an individualized in-depth training to every novice user
 - Strongly encourage library training classes because the greater the basic skills, the less the demand on library staff
 - Use of student, senior and community assistants to provide support

What are your procedures for providing public access?

- Development of policies for access
- Process to communicate policy to patrons
 - Options: written form provided to patrons, on the computer as part of the log-in process, posted by computers
- Signed agreement

- Agreement should contain a waiver of liability because potential of liability of libraries is unknown
- Scheduling procedures
 - Time limits
 - Options: Strict time limits, time limits when others are waiting, different time limits for different times,
 - Sign up sheets
 - Helps to manage time limits, good way to track usage
 - Reservations
 - Issues to address: in person or on the phone, staffing, location, how far in advance, how many reservations, waiting period for "no-shows."
- Printing procedures
 - Printing costs
 - Where printer will be located -- need to control output if charging for copies
- Download procedures
 - Be sure library system is configured to allow download only to individual workstation and that all workstations have anti-virus software
 - Do not allow patrons to use their own floppy disks
 - Use of personal floppy disk can introduce viruses into the system
 - "Cheapie" disks can cause significant damage to library computer

What are your procedures for enforcing library policy

- "Tap on the shoulder" -- reminder of policy
- Repetition or refusal -- ask to leave workstation library and removal of privileges for period of time (how will this be enforced?)
- Refuse to leave library -- call security or law enforcement
- Notice to parents if a minor
- Keep records of incidents and intervention

Anticipating Problems and Addressing Them Before They Occur

No Library Selection Committee

- Information not accurate
- Information may be controversial
- Inadvertent access to inappropriate or offensive material
 - Mistyped URL's
 - Bad searching strategies
 - Following links from other sites
- Options to address potential problems
 - Disclaimer in policy
 - Classes on searching strategies and methods to assess information accuracy

Privacy Concerns

- Concerns of patron that others will see the information they have been accessing
- How it might occur
 - Patron looks over shoulder
 - Staff looks over shoulder
 - System level monitoring and routine maintenance
 - Failure to set system to delete history file at log off
 - Failure to log off properly
- Options to address potential problems
 - Disclaimer in policy
 - Privacy screens and/or placement of computers (Need to balance -- more public viewing will naturally moderate intentional access to inappropriate material)
 - Set computer to delete history when patron logs off -- encourage patrons to log off and inform of potential that next patron could access their history files if they do not log off

Unacceptable behavior

- Illegal behavior -- violation of state or federal laws or actions that may give rise to civil liability
 - Computer security violations -- going beyond authorized access, hacking, intentional spread of computer viruses
 - Use of computer for illegal activities -- arranging sale of drugs, gang activity
 - Display of obscene material or display of obscene material to minors
 - Trafficking in child porn or obscene material
 - Sending threatening, harassing, or defaming e-mail (especially to president)
 - Violating copyright law
- Disruptive behavior
 - Excessive uses
 - Downloading large files
 - Extensive hot mail, chat activity
 - Online gaming
 - Groups of people around one computer
- Options to address potential problems
 - Prohibit in policy
 - Intervene if occurs
 - Inform patrons that monitoring or routine system maintenance may give rise to obligation of library staff to report suspicious illegal activity to appropriate legal authorities

Children's Access to Inappropriate Material

- Material that is of concern (many of these sites are being designed to attract children)
 - Sexually explicit material or sexually-oriented chat groups
 - Potentially dangerous material (recipes for bombs)
 - Violent hate literature
 - Sites that promote alcohol and tobacco
 - Sites that promote illegal behavior
 - Violent games
- Two issues
 - Inadvertent access -- treat as an educational problem
 - Intentional access -- treat as a policy violation
- Options to address potential problems
 - Library should make a determination about the extent to which such material ought to be considered off-limits to children or in the children's section of the library -- issues of concern are
 - Children who are not accompanied by parents
 - Viewing by other children
 - Options for youth access
 - No access for youth under a certain age
 - Youth access under a certain age only if parent present
 - Youth access with parent permission -- signed form with disclaimer
 - Other issues to consider
 - Open environment in children's area -- all computers readily visible
 - Staff monitoring and assistance
 - High quality children's web site that guides to appropriate material
 - Default kid-safe search tools
 - Filtering on computers in the children's library area
 - Classes and material for parents and children about child safety

Child Involvement with Sexual Predator

- Most common method of interaction is chat
- Probably not a legal responsibility to intervene, but probably a moral responsibility
- Options to address potential problems
 - Options discussed above with access to inappropriate material
 - Staff should be aware of signs of potential involvement -- vulnerable child, excessive chat activity, furtive behavior, quick change to another site if an adult approaches -- and seek to intervene