Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff

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Burke, John J. **Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff.** 3rd Edition. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2010. 279 pp. 65.00 USD. ISBN-13: 978-155570-676-0. ∞

The contemporary library is a technologically intense environment where new technologies are frequently adapted to enhance key services or to establish novel services. Library collections have become increasingly available online, at first as journals were displaced by e-journals and now by a nascent e-book market poised to supplant much more of the library's print collections.   As these collections have moved online, so to have services like Reference and Information Literacy. These services are now frequently performed virtually using synchronous or asynchronous communication technologies such as Instant Messaging applications, VoIP, SMS, web forms, email and discussion boards in Course Management Systems or Virtual Learning Environments. Indeed, all aspects of library service have undergone a remarkable technological transformation in recent years and have been refocused to accommodate a growing number of users who seldom pass through the library's gates.

These technological shifts in collections and services can be quite bewildering to staff who fill specialized positions which require the use of only a small subset of the technologies otherwise supported and understood by the 'experts'. However, the need for library staff to have a basic understanding of the 'big picture', how various technologies are used, developed and implemented in libraries today to complement sophisticated and modern services, is apparent. Staff lacking a holistic understanding of this modern service environment may find themselves unable to adequately participate in discussions pertaining to future directions in services and collections or meet many of their community's evolving information needs.

Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff by John J. Burke begins to address some of the aforementioned gaps in staff knowledge by providing a current and concise overview of most technologies used within libraries today. While there are many other more specialized library technology texts on the market, Burke's guide should prove a useful prerequisite to these more advanced works for readers with modest technical competencies. This introductory work provides clear, detailed and suitably contextualized discussion of libraries and technology, chapter review questions, and ample sources for further reading.

Library Technology Companion is organized into five parts: "Library Technology Basics", "Technology Tools for Libraries", "How Libraries Put Technology to Work", "Building and Maintaining the Technology Environment in Libraries", and "Where Library Technology is Going, and How to Get There". The five parts of this work consist of 19 chapters logically arranged from the more familiar and easily understood to emergent and less-transparent technologies. Topics covered range from how technologies are deployed and used in library environments to how such technologies are planned, maintained, and developed to further enhance libraries' key services.

Parts 1 and 2 of this volume concern technology basics and how these technologies are used within libraries. The author leads with a discussion of results from a "library technology skill survey" to set a skill-set baseline and proffers a chronology of key information technology developments ranging from the printing press and classification systems to library systems

and the internet. Later chapters discuss the parts and peripherals of personal computers, evaluating technology performance needs for library services, and more recent innovations in mobile computing and storage devices. OPACs, proxy severs and numerous other library-specific technologies are also discussed at length. These chapters suitably anchor and situate the reader for the ensuing discussion of the library's complex technological landscape.

Parts 3 through 5 of this volume build upon the introductory content of the first two parts and address the questions of how technologies are used, maintained and planned within libraries. Discourses surrounding user experience, usability, accessibility and web standards are introduced. Equity of access is a predominant theme in discussions of deployment and integration of new technologies as concepts such as the "digital divide" and assistive and adaptive technologies are advanced. The author concludes the book by inviting the reader to reflect upon learned material, to consider how technology plans are developed in ways complementary to the library's mission and vision and to consider what new future technology applications await the library.

Burke's **Library Technology Companion** provides a fine introduction to the myriad technologies in libraries. Extensive listings of additional resources, review questions and an expansive glossary of key concepts will permit the readers to expand their knowledge of each discussed technology and discover the many ways libraries are using technology to deliver more efficient, relevant and contemporary services to their communities. This title is recommended for staff of all library types who would like to possess a more holistic view of how technologies and services intersect within the library, and who possess novice to intermediate technical skills.

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