Chapter 1

The Planning Process

MILESTONES
By the time you finish this chapter you will know how to

- link your technology plan to your service plan
- identify external and internal issues that may affect your technology planning
- design a process to develop your technology plan
- select members of the planning committee

A typical day for a library staff member starts like this:

Open the back door by keying a code or waving your badge at the electronic security system.

Swing by your desk to boot up your computer before you get your morning coffee, tea, or cola.

Check to make sure the book-drops have been emptied and staff are checking the items in on the integrated library system.

Read and respond to the most urgent e-mail.

Stroll through the public service area to make sure the PCs are on, there is a chair in front of each one, and the printers all have paper.

Check the PC at your service desk to make sure the Internet connection is working.

Smile because the doors just opened and here come the customers.
With variations for local practice, most library staff start their days in similar ways. Technology is such a fundamental tool in twenty-first-century, first-world libraries that we don’t even think of much of it as “technology” anymore—unless it is giving us problems. Materials selectors use vendor and commercial websites to identify titles for purchase. The accounting staff use automated systems to cut checks and manage the budget. The board agenda and minutes are written with word-processing software, are sent to the board members via e-mail, and are posted on the library’s website in compliance with open meeting laws. Even in the smallest libraries, the director has a PC she uses for word processing and e-mail. And thanks to the Bill and Melinda Gates Library Foundation, nearly every library has at least a few PCs available for public use. Many libraries have dozens or even hundreds of public PC workstations available to support their service delivery.

We no longer discuss whether or not a library should invest in technology, but we are still grappling with how much technology we need, how we choose from among the myriad options available, and how we are going to fund it. This book will help you resolve these issues. Technology for Results is not about which technologies you should consider buying. Nor does it contain technical information about how to install and utilize various technologies. There are plenty of books written about the technologies themselves, from the basic For Dummies series to the highly technical how-to-do-it manuals printed by publishers such as O’Reilly, SAMS, and Microsoft. This book is about the process of identifying what you need to support the library’s service objectives and then developing a coherent plan to fund and implement those technological tools.

It All Starts with Service

It is an axiom of the Public Library Association’s Results Series that planning for expenditures begins with planning for services. The core book of the series, The New Planning for Results, identifies four resources that library managers have at their disposal to achieve their objectives: staff, collections, facilities, and technology. Acquiring each of these resources requires funding. Ensuring that you spend that funding in the most effective way requires linking your spending to your service objectives.¹

Although it is possible to develop a technology plan without a service plan, it is not recommended. As anyone living in the modern world knows, there are endless opportunities to spend money on technology. The technology planning process explained in this book is designed to help you select from among the options. The only way you can answer the question “Is this a good technology for us to invest in?” is to first determine what services the proposed technology will support. Then you ask: “Are these services my library wants to offer?” Your library’s strategic service plan answers this second question. If your library doesn’t have a current strategic plan, see figures 2 and 3 for suggestions on how to determine service priorities before moving on.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that a library’s technology plan can be affected by more than just the library’s service plan. External agencies and actions can impact technology planning, too. A good example of this was the December 2000 passage of the federal Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Libraries that had made a decision not to filter public Internet access were faced with the loss of significant government funding. Many libraries decided to comply with the provisions of CIPA and install...
filtering software. Technology plans that hadn’t included filtering were rewritten while library technology support staff figured out how to comply with CIPA.

Another aspect of library operations that affects technology planning is ongoing support for the existing technologies. Every library has some type of technology in place today. Like our book collections, our technology becomes outdated and worn and needs to be replaced. When the worn technology directly supports public service, it is easy to see the link between its replacement and the strategic service plan. But when the worn technology is a staff or backroom item, the need to plan for the upgrade sometimes escapes notice until it becomes a crisis. The first time you discover that your accounting program is so old that you can no longer get the developer to support it often occurs when you are busiest with the budget or end-of-year reports. Planning for the continued

### FIGURE 2
What Should You Do If Your Library Doesn’t Have a Service Plan?

If your library does not have a strategic service plan, you don’t have to stop your technology planning until you develop such a plan. You will, however, have to identify some service priorities before you continue.

**How Can You Determine Your Service Priorities?**

The most effective way for your library to determine its service priorities is to base your discussion on the thirteen public library service responses, which are described in *The New Planning for Results: A Streamlined Approach*. Service responses are defined as “what a library does for, or offers to, the public in an effort to meet a set of well-defined community needs. They represent the gathering and deployment of specific critical resources to produce a specific public benefit or result.”

*The New Planning for Results* provides extensive information about each of these service responses, including the following:

- example of the need addressed
- what the library does and provides
- some possible components
- target audiences and service aspects
- resource allocation issues to consider, further subdivided by staff, collection/information resources, facilities, and technology
- possible measures to consider
- stories describing how real libraries provide the service

### Who Will Be Involved in the Selection of Service Responses?

The selection of service responses is not the responsibility of the technology planning committee, although one or more of the committee members may be involved. If service responses must be selected, representatives from the library board, library administration, and the various public service sections of the library should be involved in the selection. The library director will appoint someone to lead that process and will decide who else to involve in the selection process.

### How Will the Service Responses Be Selected?

The person managing the process to select service responses will want to read *The New Planning for Results* carefully, paying special attention to the sections that address the service responses. For this very abbreviated process, the service responses can probably be selected in a single meeting. Because service responses are intended to meet specific community needs, it would be helpful to prepare a brief (one- or two-page) profile of the community. The participants should receive a copy of the community profile and a summary of the service responses prior to the meeting.

The meeting will begin with a review of the community profile and a discussion of community needs. The group will then discuss each of the service responses. Finally, the group will select the three to five service responses that most effectively address the identified community needs. There are several suggested processes to help groups reach agreement on service responses included in the Tool Kit section of *The New Planning for Results*. 

The Planning Process 3
FIGURE 3
Library Service Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASIC LITERACY: A library that offers Basic Literacy service addresses the need to read and to perform other essential daily tasks.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS &amp; CAREER INFORMATION: A library that offers Business &amp; Career Information service addresses a need for information related to business, careers, work, entrepreneurship, personal finances, and obtaining employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMONS: A library that provides a Commons environment helps address the need of people to meet and interact with others in their community and to participate in public discourse about community issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY REFERRAL: A library that offers Community Referral addresses the need for information related to services provided by community agencies and organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSUMER INFORMATION: A library that provides Consumer Information service helps to satisfy the need for information that impacts the ability of community residents to make informed consumer decisions and to help them become more self-sufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL AWARENESS: A library that offers Cultural Awareness service helps satisfy the desire of community residents to gain an understanding of their own cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURRENT TOPICS &amp; TITLES: A library that provides Current Topics &amp; Titles helps to fulfill community residents' appetite for information about popular cultural and social trends and their desire for satisfying recreational experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMAL LEARNING SUPPORT: A library that offers Formal Learning Support helps students who are enrolled in a formal program of education or who are pursuing their education through a program of homeschooling to attain their educational goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL INFORMATION: A library that offers General Information helps meet the need for information and answers to questions on a broad array of topics related to work, school, and personal life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOVERNMENT INFORMATION: The library that offers Government Information service helps satisfy the need for information about elected officials and governmental agencies that enable people to participate in the democratic process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION LITERACY: A library that provides Information Literacy service helps address the need for skills related to finding, evaluating, and using information effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFELONG LEARNING: A library that provides Lifelong Learning service helps address the desire for self-directed personal growth and development opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL HISTORY &amp; GENEALOGY: A library that offers Local History &amp; Genealogy service addresses the desire of community residents to know and better understand personal or community heritage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


support of mission-critical existing technologies is just as important as planning for new or improved services.

Content and Infrastructure

The technology-based services offered by libraries generally consist of two elements: content and infrastructure.

*Content* is electronic information used by staff and the public in the provision of services. Content includes sources of data provided by commercial vendors, as well as data developed by library staff. Examples of content include licensed electronic databases, electronic pathfinders and bibliographies, e-mail marketing pieces such as electronic newsletters, library web pages, digitized photo collections, online event calendars, and a whole host of other sources of data.
Infrastructure is a comprehensive term that encompasses all of the elements required to make electronic content and services available to the staff and public. Infrastructure includes the hardware, operating system software and workstation applications, networks, and telecommunications services that support the delivery of your technology-based services and electronic content. Infrastructure elements in a library may include both products you buy (the online library system) and products you simply contract to use (telephone lines or outsourced e-mail services). As technologies and the people who offer and support them change, the buy versus contract decisions can change as well.

In this context, infrastructure also includes the skills it takes to install and operate the technologies you choose to implement. You can also buy or contract for these skills. You buy skills when you hire staff with specific skills or train existing staff in new skills. You contract for skills when you hire a third party to provide you with needed services.

This book deals with planning for the infrastructure needed to deliver content and services to the public and the staff. Content itself is not covered in this book. A number of other publications cover the issues of selecting and licensing electronic content and developing content for library websites.

The Technology Planning Process

Library managers have long recognized the need to have comprehensive selection policies and collection development plans. For centuries, print collections were the core of any library’s services. During the twentieth century, the whole public library management structure was organized to provide an infrastructure that supported these collections. Staff were given specific responsibilities for selecting, purchasing, cataloging, processing, displaying, circulating, and shelving printed materials. The bulk of the space in a library building was allocated for shelving to house those materials. The annual budget contained specific line items to support collection maintenance and development. When libraries began adding significant numbers of nonprint items to their traditionally print collections in the 1980s, the collection support infrastructure was modified to address issues specific to the new media, but no fundamental changes were made.

Staff in many libraries tried to use the same traditional collection support infrastructure when they began adding electronic resources to their collections in the mid-1990s. However, it rapidly became apparent that the underlying infrastructure needs for electronic resources and services were very different from those that libraries had traditionally maintained. Books and media are relatively simple to manage—buy them, process them, shelve them. The key piece of “equipment” needed isn’t equipment at all; it is shelving, which is one size fits almost all (and many librarians are very cranky about the few oversized books that don’t fit) and which often lasts decades once purchased.

Electronic content and services, on the other hand, need to be supported by an extensive and relatively complex infrastructure. To deliver electronic services, libraries need PCs, monitors, keyboards, mice, printers, servers, cables, wiring, connectivity, and more. None of these items is one size fits all and very few last longer than five years. The challenges of managing a technological infrastructure quickly became apparent to library managers who were beginning to provide electronic services. However, few of those managers had the training or the expertise to develop and maintain the infrastructure needed to provide electronic resources and service—and neither did many other librarians. Most library
managers had to hire technical staff with little or no library training to manage their technology needs. These technical staff members viewed the library technology as an end in itself—and for those staff members it was. There was no history of integrated planning for technology issues and service issues for either managers or technical staff members to use as a guide in this new environment.

Before 1996, technology planning usually meant asking vendors of integrated library systems to provide cost estimates for a system so the library staff would know how much money to request in the budget to fund a new or upgraded system. Another all too frequent technology “planning” process was applying for grants that would fund technology purchases, often without any clear link between the grantor’s objectives and the library’s own service objectives. These types of “plans” sometimes resulted in equipment and software that didn’t get used. In many cases, programs were initiated that were dropped as soon as the funding ceased because the library had no real commitment to the service.

The need for technology planning became a reality for many libraries with the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The provisions of this act included funding (known as E-rate funding) to assist libraries with telecommunications costs and the facilities remodeling needed to support networked electronic services. A provision of the bill required libraries to have technology plans in place prior to the award of funds. Early E-rate guidelines did not require that technology plans be linked to library services, which tended to reinforce the feeling that library technology was an end in itself.

In 1997, the Bill and Melinda Gates Library Foundation began to provide hardware, software, training, and support to public libraries in states around the country. The Gates computers were the initial set of networked PCs in many libraries. Foundation staff expected that once library managers saw how popular networked services were, they would plan for and fund the replacement of the first PCs. Unfortunately, in many libraries the Gates computers were not fully integrated into the provision of library services. Instead they were kept apart and used to offer access to educational and office automation software and general Internet surfing. Since they weren’t used to provide “real” library services, the need to plan for their replacement was not always obvious to library managers, boards, and funders. The introduction of statewide and consortial funding of electronic content and the development of service-oriented library web pages and information sites made accessible through the Gates-provided PCs made these groups begin to see the PCs as integral to library service. That, in turn, led to an increased understanding of the importance of technology planning.

The annual or biennial budget cycle, the need to produce “approved” annual plans for E-rate funding, and even the earlier Results Series book Wired for the Future: Developing Your Library Technology Plan suggest it is sufficient to treat a technology planning process as an event to be undertaken annually at most, or even less frequently if possible. But library technology staff know that long-term plans are often changed by near-term requirements. As noted earlier, the Children’s Internet Protection Act was passed in 2000 and some libraries complied with its requirements that year. In other libraries, the management team and board decided to wait until all of the legal appeals concerning the act were complete. In June 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that CIPA was constitutional, and this meant that many library staff found themselves spending the 2003–2004 budget year grappling with CIPA-imposed filtering in order to continue receiving federal E-rate funds despite the existence of other planned technology implementations.
This book will describe a process for developing a technology plan as a planning event for libraries that do not have an existing technology plan. But it will end with a suggested strategy for maintaining the technology plan as an active, flexible, continually refreshed document that is reviewed and adjusted as needed to respond to internal and external changes.

**Tasks in the Technology Planning Process**

A technology plan is a plan for acquiring and expanding technology-related resources. It is about filling the gap between what you have available to achieve your service objectives and what you determine you need to achieve those objectives. To do this you need

- an inventory of the elements of your current technology infrastructure; and
- projections of the technology infrastructure you will require to support planned services or improved productivity.

The difference between what you have and what you need is what you plan to get. Sounds simple, right?

Of course, it is not that simple. Technology planning is not just about new services. Library managers need to plan for sustaining, modifying, or expanding current programs as well as implementing new ones. Vendors cease support for older equipment, and you have to plan for its replacement. Older hardware and operating systems won’t run the software you need, so upgrades become necessary. Of course, this is not so different from our continuous purchasing of new materials to replenish popular, well-used circulating collections. But most librarians learned how to think about collection development in library school, and most have participated in some aspect of collection development all of their professional lives. By contrast, many of us had no formal training in developing our library’s technological infrastructure; we are learning by doing.

This book recommends a set of ten tasks to undertake—by yourself, with a few other staff, or as a committee effort—that will lead you through the process of developing and implementing a technology plan. (See figure 4.) While the book focuses on a committee approach, it is important to realize that the process can be done even in a library with a

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**FIGURE 4**

Ten Tasks for Technology Planning

| Task 1 | Identify Results |
| Task 2 | Choose the Committee |
| Task 3 | Evaluate Existing Services |
| Task 4 | Identify New Services |
| Task 5 | Assess the Current Technology Environment |
| Task 6 | Determine the Requirements of New or Expanded Services |
| Task 7 | Select and Present |
| Task 8 | Inform |
| Task 9 | Implement the Projects in the Plan |
| Task 10 | Sustain the Planning Process |
small staff. The tasks are the same even when you have only yourself or one or two other staff members to consult.

**Where to Begin**

Before you initiate a technology planning process in your library, ask yourself what you need to get out of the effort. What do you need to know at the end of the planning process? What results are you expecting? And who, other than yourself, will need to see, use, or review the technology plan?

The answers to these questions will vary widely depending on your internal and external operating environments. A technology plan can range from a general description of the changes or additions you will make to your technological infrastructure to support specific services you intend to deliver (“the library will revamp its website to provide easier, more intuitive access to all of its electronic resources”) to a detailed set of implementation steps, each with a timeline and an associated cost. The more detailed you become, the more labor-intensive the planning process will be.

You don’t want to spend more time on developing your technology plan than you need to. But you should recognize that the planning process can serve more purposes than simply listing the hardware and software you want to buy. The planning process can spark conversation about the ways technology might support more efficient operations, which can lead to rethinking workflows. The planning process can provide a forum for technology staff and services staff to jointly design technology-based services, breaking down any “them versus us” barriers that might exist. It can even jump-start better project management by focusing as much attention on how to implement the technology plan as it does on what technologies to adopt.

If your technology funding is a part of the operational budget and needs little justification, then a plan that simply outlines the library’s priorities and expected timetables may be all you need. Many smaller libraries that participate in technology consortia acquire all of their technology through their consortium membership fees and depend entirely on the consortium’s staff for implementation and support services. For these libraries, it makes sense to develop local plans based on the consortium’s plan, linking the larger group’s plan to local needs. Describing the services to be offered and providing information on when new or expanded services are expected to be available may well be a sufficient plan.

Consortium members that offer technology services beyond those supported by the consortium and libraries with staff that manage their own technology environments generally will want a more detailed plan. Libraries that are a part of city or county government may have specific technology planning requirements that their parent organizations impose. Libraries that intend to file their plans with their state library in compliance with E-rate requirements need to be sure to include all the necessary elements. Thinking about what you need the plan to include and who will use it helps to ensure that the results of your effort will meet all your needs.

All of the tasks and steps in the technology planning process are detailed in figure 5. As you work through the tasks and steps, you will find that you have options at various points in the process, and your choices will depend on the planning results you identify at the beginning of the process.
Task 1: Identify Results
Step 1.1 Identify the audiences
Step 1.2 Identify the technology planning results
Step 1.3 Determine the planning timeline

Task 2: Choose the Committee
Step 2.1 Appoint a committee chair
Step 2.2 Select staff for the committee
Step 2.3 Consider the role of outsiders
Step 2.4 Provide an orientation for the committee

Task 3: Evaluate Existing Services
Step 3.1 Develop an inventory of current technology-supported services
Step 3.2 Match existing technologies and services to the strategic service plan
Step 3.3 Decide which existing technologies and services should be sustained, expanded, or phased out

Task 4: Identify New Services
Step 4.1 Identify opportunities for more effective public services through technology projects
Step 4.2 Identify opportunities for more efficient or effective administrative functioning through technology projects
Step 4.3 Evaluate options
Step 4.4 Create a list of technology projects to sustain, expand, phase out, and add
Step 4.5 Make a preliminary presentation to the library administration

Task 5: Assess the Current Technology Environment
Step 5.1 Assess future upgrades or replacement requirements for existing infrastructure to sustain services
Step 5.2 Assess staff skills
Step 5.3 Develop cost estimates for upgrades or replacements needed to sustain current services

Task 6: Determine the Requirements of New or Expanded Services
Step 6.1 Determine technical infrastructure, skills requirements, and costs for expanded or new services
Step 6.2 Identify available staff resources with the necessary skills
Step 6.3 Develop time estimates for each project or pilot as needed

Task 7: Select and Present
Step 7.1 Begin with needed investments to sustain current levels of service
Step 7.2 Choose from among expansion and new projects
Step 7.3 Write up decisions with rationale and anticipated outcomes; provide estimated budgets and timelines
Step 7.4 Present as needed to decision makers for approval and commitment to funding

Task 8: Inform
Step 8.1 Present the adopted plan to target audiences
Step 8.2 Inform the public

(cont.)
Task 9: Implement the Projects in the Plan

- Step 9.1 Identify a project sponsor for each implementation
- Step 9.2 Identify a project manager and develop a projected timeline with needed resources
- Step 9.3 Plan a data-capture strategy to measure success
- Step 9.4 Report regularly on progress to all
- Step 9.5 Capture and use trigger points for assessment of later implementations

Task 10: Sustain the Planning Process

- Step 10.1 Measure and report results
- Step 10.2 Update the infrastructure inventory
- Step 10.3 Update the services inventory

TASK 1: IDENTIFY RESULTS

**Task 1: Identify Results**

**Step 1.1: Identify the audiences.**

**Step 1.2: Identify the technology planning results.**

**Step 1.3: Determine the planning timeline.**

Task 2: Choose the Committee
Task 3: Evaluate Existing Services
Task 4: Identify New Services
Task 5: Assess the Current Technology Environment
Task 6: Determine the Requirements of New or Expanded Services
Task 7: Select and Present
Task 8: Inform
Task 9: Implement the Projects in the Plan
Task 10: Sustain the Planning Process

Identifying the results for the planning process starts by identifying the audiences for the plan. Who will need to review, approve, or understand the plan? The board? Staff who will use the selected technologies? External funders? Library budget planners? Each group you identify will have its own specific information needs. The key to determining the results you want to achieve is to understand what those needs are. If you identify the information the audiences will want at the start, you can be sure the plan includes all the information you will need when you get to Tasks 7 and 8, the tasks where you get needed approvals and inform everyone of the plan.

**Step 1.1 Identify the Audiences**

Use Workform 1, Audiences and Planning Results, to list the audiences you expect to be affected by the plan in some way. Then ask yourself what you want or expect each audience to do as a result of the plan. The board may have to act on some of the plan’s recommendations to provide needed funding. Line staff will actually be implementing parts of the technology plan, so they need to have an idea of when the changes are going to occur and what kind of training will be provided to support new or expanded services. You want the budget folks to support the plan, so they may need the costs and some timelines. Figure 6 depicts a typical example of Workform 1.
This is also a good time to begin to think about the role each audience should have in the development of the plan. A few of the audiences you identify will simply need to be informed about the plan but will not need to participate in the development of the plan itself. Other audiences, especially the staff, maybe the board, and possibly external audiences such as city or county IT (information technology) staff, may need to be involved as the technology plan is developed.

A technology planning process is an opportunity to build consensus among the groups who will be affected by your plan. Think about whether or not the audiences you identify can be advocates for the plan with others; if so, involving them from the start...
would be a way to build support. Conversely, if an identified audience has the ability to veto or derail the plan, then it is important to involve members of that group from the start to ensure that any objections they may have are addressed in the planning process.

Participation in the technology planning process can range from attendance at every meeting and active involvement in each task to offering review and comment opportunities along the way. After you appoint a chairperson for the planning effort, discuss your thoughts on participation with that person. Supporters are always welcome, but critics should be welcomed as well. One key to managing potential opposition is to ensure that critics can’t say “No one asked me about this.”

**Step 1.2**
**Identify the Planning Results**

After you have determined the audiences for the technology plan, decided what you want them to do with the plan, and defined what they need to know, you are ready to identify the technology planning results you intend to achieve. These will be used to create the charge given to the technology planning committee. The list of your intended results, taken together, should create a clear picture of what you expect the technology planning committee to produce. As noted earlier, for some libraries, the committee charge will be quite limited, while for other libraries the charge will be detailed and comprehensive. The charge for your committee will depend on the unique circumstances in your library.

Look at the Need to Know column of Workform 1. This is the list of the data elements that need to be included in the technology plan. Now look at the Planning Results part of the workform. The process of developing the technology planning results gives you the chance to communicate your own vision of the role that technology should play in your library. In the example shown in figure 6, the planning results begin with “The Tree County Public Library technology plan should be a blueprint to improve services through the use of technology.” This lets the planning committee know that the plan they produce should be linked to the library’s service objectives.

You will want to involve your senior staff in the development of the technology planning results and in the identification of the audiences for your plan. Senior staff themselves are an important audience for the technology plan; they need to know what the process will be and how it will affect their departments and staff. They can be helpful in surfacing issues and questions that staff will have about the process, and they may be able to identify additional audiences or information needs.

**Step 1.3**
**Determine the Planning Timeline**

How long should the planning process take? As mentioned earlier, the ideal technology planning environment is not a onetime event, but rather a continuous process of periodic review, with ongoing adjustments made as services evolve and external forces affect the library’s technology environment. Creating the initial plan from which you can begin this periodic review should take no more than four to five months. (See figure 7, Example of Technology Planning Timeline.)
## FIGURE 7
Example of Technology Planning Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Tasks 1 and 2 | Develop the Planning Process  
  - Identify audiences for the plan  
  - Write the planning objective  
  - Develop the planning timeline  
  - Appoint a committee chair  
  - Select committee members  
  - Consider the role of outsiders | Month One |
| Step 2.4 | Orientation Meeting for the Committee  
  - Review audiences and objectives  
  - Review suggested timeline | Month Two |
| Task 3 | Evaluate Existing Services  
  - Develop inventory of technology-supported services  
  - Match existing technologies and services to the strategic service plan  
  - Make sustain, expand, or phase out decisions | Month Three |
| Task 4 | Identify New Services  
  - Identify opportunities  
  - Evaluate options  
  - Create list of new projects to consider | Month Four |
| Task 5 | Assess the Current Technology Environment  
  - Develop inventories of current hardware, software, networks, and skills  
  - Assess future upgrades or replacement requirements for existing infrastructure to sustain services  
  - Develop cost estimates for upgrades or replacements needed to sustain current services | Month Four |
| Task 6 | Determine the Requirements of New or Expanded Services  
  - Determine technical infrastructure, skills requirements, and costs for expanded or new services  
  - Identify available staff resources with necessary skills  
  - Develop time estimates for each project | Month Five |
| Task 7 | Select and Present  
  - Select projects  
  - Write up decisions with rationale and anticipated outcomes; provide estimated budgets and timelines  
  - Present as needed to decision makers for approval | Month Five |
| Task 8 | Inform  
  - Present plan to target audiences  
  - Inform the public | Ongoing |
| Task 9 | Implement the Projects in the Plan  
  - Identify a sponsor for each project  
  - Identify a project manager and develop projected timeline  
  - Plan a data-capture strategy  
  - Report regularly on progress | Ongoing |
| Task 10 | Sustain the Planning Process  
  - Measure and report results  
  - Update the infrastructure and service inventories | Ongoing |
As you will see when you get to Task 6, Determine Requirements, sometimes simply determining the requirements to implement a desired technology is a project in itself. This means that the technology plan you develop using the processes described in this book may identify issues that cannot be resolved immediately and will include the future dates on which you expect to have enough information to resolve those issues. But moving through the first five tasks (Identify Results, Choose the Committee, Evaluate Existing Services, Identify New Services, and Assess Technology) and setting firm dates for Task 6 (Determine Requirements) and Task 7 (Select and Present) should be doable in four to five months. Task 8 (Inform) and Task 9 (Implement the Projects in the Plan) are implementation tasks and will go on throughout the life of your technology plan. Task 10 (Sustain the Planning Process) describes how to move into continuous review and regular updating of your technology plan rather than waiting for two or three years and then initiating a whole new planning process.

A good technology plan incorporates the input of the public services staff who provide direct services to the public, the support staff who use technology to manage in-house functions, and the technology staff who are directly responsible for maintaining the library’s technological infrastructure. The public services and support staff members bring their perspective as users of the technology to the planning process. These staff members can often see ways in which their job performance can be improved through technology applications. Public services staff have the most direct contact with library users and can often articulate ways in which existing technology can be improved or new technologies can be employed in order to enhance services.

But public services and support staff are often unaware of the requirements of implementing new or enhanced technologies. The technology staff’s input is crucial here in tempering “great ideas” with the reality of what it will take to actually make those ideas come alive. Technology staff also understand the level of maintenance needed in the existing infrastructure. They know all too well the problems of maintaining old equipment and protecting the library’s technical environment from viruses, hackers, and accidents. Technology staff are aware of when equipment and software have reached—or are about to reach—the “end of life” and are no longer supported by the manufacturers or developers.

These different perspectives of the public service staff, the support staff, and the technology staff are important in developing a technology plan. Each group has a specific role to play in the process. Public service staff and support staff can articulate needs, technology staff can figure out how to “make it so,” and all staff members can work together to envision the future. Of course, there are times when the technology staff have to say that the skills or tools simply don’t exist in the organization to achieve the dreams. In that case all of the staff need to work together to determine how much of the dream is possible with the available resources. A good technology planning environment is one in which the public services staff, support staff, and technology staff are continuously passing ideas back and forth, refining their varied visions into possible results.
### Task 2: Choose the Committee

**Task 1: Identify Results**

**Task 2: Choose the Committee**

- **Step 2.1: Appoint a committee chair.**
- **Step 2.2: Select staff for the committee.**
- **Step 2.3: Consider the role of outsiders.**
- **Step 2.4: Provide an orientation for the committee.**

**Task 3: Evaluate Existing Services**

**Task 4: Identify New Services**

**Task 5: Assess the Current Technology Environment**

**Task 6: Determine the Requirements of New or Expanded Services**

**Task 7: Select and Present**

**Task 8: Inform**

**Task 9: Implement the Projects in the Plan**

**Task 10: Sustain the Planning Process**

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**Step 2.1 Appoint a Committee Chair**

The most important committee appointment to be made is the committee chair. The chair needs to be someone who has good people skills and a track record of successfully managing projects. He or she should also be capable of managing effective communications between groups and helping diverse groups reach consensus. The committee chair should be familiar with technology issues and with library technology applications, although he or she certainly doesn’t need to have the greatest technical expertise on the committee.

It is very likely that the committee chair will be a staff member, although there may be instances in which a board member would be an effective chair. In small and medium-sized libraries, the chair may be the library director. In larger libraries, the chair will probably be someone other than the director. Once the planning committee chair has been appointed, the library director and the chair (if different) will work together to make the rest of the committee appointments.

**Step 2.2 Select Staff for the Committee**

Technology planning is a process that should involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders throughout your library. It is not a task that you should assign solely to the technology staff “because they are the only ones who understand it.” The planning process needs to include people who understand the library’s mission and its service objectives. Staff who will use the technologies you select and staff who understand the library’s diverse clientele and the way current services and programs are being used need to be included.

You will be selecting your committee members from among the library’s public services staff, support staff, technical services staff, and administrative staff, and they will bring different information and strengths to the process. Even if you are in a small library with three or four people serving all of the aforementioned functions, you will still find that each person has specialized skills and interests. In a large library, you will probably have two groups working on your plan: the appointed committee and the staff of the technology department, who will both gather data and work with the data generated by the appointed committee at interim steps along the way. Choose a technology staffer for membership on the appointed committee who can communicate effectively about technology with those who are less familiar with technology issues.

You will want to strike a balance between including representatives of every area in the library and appointing a committee so large that it has difficulty finding times to meet and making decisions. Many public libraries have staff members with specific areas of
expertise. The staff from the section serving special populations may know a lot about adaptive technology for the visually or hearing-impaired; staff working with children will be very familiar with software for children; and staff working with periodicals will have expertise in that area. It is not necessary for all of these people to serve as members of the committee for them to participate in the planning process. They can be asked to make presentations to the committee or to attend meetings in which their areas of expertise are being discussed.

**Step 2.3**

**Consider the Role of Outsiders**

Look again at the copy of Workform 1 you completed. You have probably included a number of audiences other than the library staff and board. There may be a role in the technology planning process for members of these audiences as well. For example, staff from other city or county IT departments may have more expertise in some areas than the staff in your library’s technology department—and will almost certainly have more expertise than any library staff members in a library that doesn’t have a technology staff. You may also find outside consultants helpful at points along the way.

When considering whether you want to include non-staff members in the planning process, start by deciding what their role in the process will be. In most cases this will be driven by the skills that your staff representatives bring to the committee. If your staff is not good at envisioning new ways to do work or provide services, you may find an outsider’s perspective valuable. If your staff has limited technical expertise, then you may want to include someone who understands what resources are available in your community to implement and support technical projects.

If you decide you need outside assistance, you then have to find that assistance. How you proceed will be based on the resources available to pay for the assistance. If, like most public libraries, you have limited resources, you may want to use the wide variety of free or very inexpensive technical or expert assistance that is available. Sources of general technical assistance include:

- technical or computer support staff of your city or county government
- technical or computer support staff at one of the local schools or from the school district office
- local software or hardware users groups

For library-specific expert assistance, consider these resources:

- state library consultants
- systemwide or regional library consultants
- resource-sharing consortium staff members
- other library directors in libraries approximately your size
- technical or computer support staff in the larger public libraries in your state
- local school librarians (if the school library media center has successfully integrated technology into its programs)
- local community college or college librarians
support personnel from software vendors
representatives from your automation vendor if you already
have an online system and are not planning to replace that system
in the near future

Most libraries also have access to a number of people who will provide free or inexpensive assistance with your planning process. They include

local college or community college professors
county extension personnel
principals or school superintendents
local guidance counselors
local clergy
regional or state library staff

If you have the necessary funds, you may want to hire a specialist in library technology issues or library planning to work with the planning committee. In most cases this will require that you develop and issue a Request for Proposal (RFP). Your local government probably has a format for RFPs. If not, your state library agency may be able to send you one or two samples from other libraries in the state.

It is sometimes difficult to know how to notify potential consultants that you are ready to issue an RFP. Some library consultants advertise their contact information and areas of expertise at www.libraryconsultants.org. Another way to reach consultants is to publish a notice of your RFP in Library Hotline, which is read by many consultants, or post notice of your RFP on PUBLIB or one of the other library electronic discussion lists. A number of organizations, including three divisions of the American Library Association—the Library Information and Technology Association, the Library Administration and Management Association, and the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Agencies—publish lists of consultants, with their areas of specialties. These can be obtained by calling the appropriate organization. The Urban Libraries Council also publishes a list of recommended consultants for its members. You might also want to talk to your colleagues in other libraries to see if they can recommend one or more consultants.

Step 2.4
Provide an Orientation for the Committee

The first meeting of the planning committee should be an orientation meeting. The committee orientation has three purposes: (1) you want to ensure that all of the committee members understand the Technology for Results process; (2) you want to ensure that all of the committee members have a common understanding of current library operations; and (3) you want everyone to have a common framework for discussing library technology issues. Unless one or more of your committee members has used this manual before, you can assume that all of your committee members will need to be introduced to Technology for Results. It may not be as easy to determine what constitutes a common understanding of library technology and current library operations.

The Planning Process  17
WHAT DOES THE COMMITTEE NEED TO KNOW?

Before you can design the orientation for the committee, you have to determine precisely what they need to know. It will probably be easiest to start by defining the minimum that the committee members will need to know about current library practices. When you selected the committee members, you looked at their areas of expertise and tried to ensure that the committee included people who are familiar with library technology and with current library operations. Now you need to look at the individual committee members. Are all of them also library staff members? If so, any orientation you provide about current library operations will be very different than it would be if the committee included city or county staff members and community members. For a staff committee, the minimum base information might include current use statistics, a copy of the current budget, a copy of the strategic plan, and a brief overview of the library’s current technology-based services and programs. If your committee includes city or county staff and community members, you will want to broaden that to include information on the library’s governance, the number of branches the library has, the number and classifications of staff members, and a brief overview of current services and programs.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THE INFORMATION THE COMMITTEE NEEDS TO KNOW?

To ensure that all of the committee members hear the same thing at the same time, you will want to schedule a formal orientation meeting. The orientation meeting will probably take two to four hours, depending on the makeup of the committee and the amount of basic information they need about the library.

The first step in the orientation is to explain the Technology for Results process to the committee members. It is imperative for the committee chair to have a copy of this manual, and it would be good if other committee members could each have one as well. After you have provided an overview of the process, you will want to distribute copies of the completed Workform 1, Audiences and Planning Results. Encourage the committee to discuss the information on the workform and to suggest revisions or changes.

The second part of the orientation process will focus on the library. All the members of the committee should receive a copy of the library service plan during the orientation. Then someone (the director, the chair of the committee that developed the library service plan, or the technology committee chair) should review the major points in the plan. The committee members should have a general understanding of the library’s goals, objectives, major activities, and resource allocation priorities. Many of the decisions that will be made during the technology planning process will be driven by the service priorities in your library service plan. It is critical that all of the committee members understand those priorities.

The third part of the orientation will address technology issues. Start by asking each member of the committee to briefly discuss his or her area of technology expertise. Then ask someone who is well versed in technology and is able to discuss technology issues in easily understood terms to lead a general discussion of the current state of library technology and of general technology trends. It would be very helpful if you could send the committee members one or more articles on these issues before the orientation meeting. You may find such articles by checking some of the resources in Appendix A, Identifying Technology Options.
It is clear that the members of this committee will need to develop and maintain a broad understanding of the technologies that affect libraries in order to complete the planning process and that this general introduction only scratches the surface of what they will need to know. Does that mean that you have to postpone the process for six months or a year while the members learn everything they can? Absolutely not. The planning process in which you are all involved will be a significant learning experience. As you explore the options open to the library and discuss the ramifications of those options, you will be developing the foundation for a broad understanding of the technology you need.

Before adjourning the orientation meeting, encourage the committee members to begin to do some study on their own. Finally, assure the committee that if they identify areas in which they need more information as they go through the planning process, short mini-orientation programs can be scheduled to provide the requested information as needed.

**What’s Next?**

You have identified the results you want to achieve through the technology planning process, selected staff and others to serve on the technology planning committee, and provided the committee members with an orientation. The committee members have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The audiences for the plan and the data elements that need to be included to meet the information needs of those audiences have been identified. The preparation tasks are completed; it is time to begin gathering data about the current library services that are supported by technology and to discuss what new technology might be needed to support the library’s public service priorities.

Part 1 of the Tree County Public Library case study illustrates that portion of the planning process discussed in this chapter.

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**CASE STUDY**

**PART 1**

**The Planning Process: Target Audiences and Objectives**

The Tree County Public Library has a new director. When she arrived, the library had a recently revised strategic service plan but no written technology plan. In her first six months, the director has learned that the public services staff are frustrated by what they say is the technology support staff’s inability to get projects done on time. Staff also feel that their suggestions for new projects are never implemented, that all project suggestions have to originate in the information technology (IT) department if they are to get done.

The head of the IT department tells a different story. She says her department does the best it can, but they are often the last to know when the library will be getting new hardware or software. Grant requests are written without IT input, and staff members purchase and load new software without letting IT know. Everything that is sent to IT from the departments or branches is a “priority rush.” The IT staff is feeling overwhelmed and burned out.

The director wants to lower the frustration level and get a handle on all the ways technology is being used in the Tree County Public Library. She also wants the board to approve a line item in the
operating budget for technology rather than funding each technology implementation as a special project or with grant funds. She has decided that the best way to achieve these results is to have the staff develop a written technology plan.

The two primary audiences she has identified are the staff and the board. The staff are to be participants, while the board will be informed at the start and end of the planning project, with brief updates along the way. The results she sets for the plan are:

The Tree County Public Library technology plan should support systemwide service priorities and efficient, cost-effective library operations. It must link our technologies with our services and ensure that all staff have the skills they need to assist customers as they use those services. The plan will guide us in setting budgets and timelines for our technology investments.

The director asks the assistant director to lead the planning team. She is well respected by the staff and has team-building skills. She’s not the most technically savvy member of the staff, but she manages conflict well and runs an effective meeting, both skills the director believes will be important.

Together the director and assistant director discuss the other members of the team. They agree on the head of IT and the head of adult services, who is the IT department’s most vocal critic. The assistant director also suggests adding the IT department’s server and network administrator because he has the most technical skills in the department. A branch manager, the head of children’s services, the acquisitions manager, and two senior circulation clerks, one from the main library and one from a branch, round out the group. They agree that the assistant director will talk with the county’s IT director about the planning process to determine if there are any county standards or initiatives the library needs to be aware of in its planning process.

**Planning Committee Orientation**

At the first meeting of the technology planning committee, the director explains the results she expects the committee to achieve. She tells the committee that she has reviewed the current technology budget and the budgets for the past several years, and she thinks an annual technology budget of approximately $75,000, not including IT staff salaries, is a reasonable goal for the Tree County Library. She expects to have the committee’s recommendations before the start of the next budget cycle in five months.

The assistant director passes out copies of *Technology for Results* and reviews the ten tasks in the planning process, with particular emphasis on Tasks 3–6, the assessment and recommendation steps.

The group discusses the timeline and agrees to complete the inventory of technology-dependent services and staff skills at the same time. Six members agree to inventory services, while two accept responsibility for inventorying staff skills. All the members agree to look at the list of technology-related skills to be inventoried before the survey goes out and to make suggestions as needed. The target date for completion of these inventories and decisions about current services (sustain, expand, or phase out) is set for four weeks from that day.

Everyone agrees that discussions with the staff on new or improved technology-related services should start immediately and that all committee members will do it. After some discussion, they decide that committee members will schedule at least one meeting with each unit or section in the library to ensure that all staff will have a chance to participate in the planning process. The target completion date for this is also four weeks.

Weeks 5 through 11 will be devoted to assessing the current infrastructure and gathering vendor and cost data on possible new technologies. In week 12, the committee will make choices about its final recommendations and begin to write up those recommendations. By week 14, the written recommendations will go to library administration for review and discussion of the funding requirements. In week 16, library administration will review the draft plan and make any changes or revisions. The board presentation will be scheduled for week 18 with formal adoption by week 20, in time for the budget planning process.
NOTES

1. “Efficiency can be defined as doing something right and effectiveness can be defined as doing the right thing” (Sandra Nelson, Ellen Altman, and Diane Mayo, Managing for Results: Effective Resource Allocation for Public Libraries [Chicago: American Library Association, 2000], 16).
