

**TECHNOLOGY:
THE VISION**

Libraries are challenged to manage access both to traditional analog (print-form) information and to the exploding world of digital information.

The Dallas Public Library's Master Plan Technology vision should be for the Library to become a highly proficient, technology-driven organization where all employees are well-trained and ready to master change and provide new technology-based services.

As the Library positions itself to offer new and enhanced services in the 21st Century, it should make the financial commitment to provide, update, and expand its local information infrastructure, and be willing to adapt and re-structure its organization to provide capabilities required for an expanded role. The Library staff should also constantly seek and adapt best practices in delivering information resources and services to its customers.

In order to achieve this vision, the following Information Technology Strategic Goals have been defined for the Library in the first decade of the 21st Century:

- Maximize Customers' access to analog information resources,
- Maximize Customers' access to digital information resources,
- Coordinate acquisitions of analog and digital materials for children,
- Maintain and enhance the Library's information infrastructure,
- Develop the organizational and human resources required to provide and support a Dallas Public Library for the 21st Century, and
- Establish strategic partnerships:
 - In education with schools, colleges, and universities
 - With cultural institutions
 - With Dallas-area and other Texas companies.

The Challenge

Providing free access to information technology, expert consultation, and training has become one of the most popular services in public libraries today. Advancements in information technologies and communications have made a growing number of powerful new tools available that the Library can use to empower its customers and enable its staff to be of better service to them.



Some citizens have come to expect quality computers in libraries, and they want the convenience of accessing the library's resources from their home computers. One of the most difficult challenges the Library must face in the future will be to select and implement the right technology in time to meet its customers' growing expectations. To others the library may be the only place to gain access to a computer, but increased access is not enough. The Library should establish a comprehensive program to further develop the staffs' ability to train both employees and customers so that more people can use its resources effectively.

During the period when the Technology assessments and recommendations were being developed, the Library System shared a T-1 line with City Hall and had a DRA automated library system and approximately 700 networked computers available to staff and customers. While the DRA system will be maintained for the foreseeable future and can be upgraded to address many of the recommendations of the Master Plan, the shared T-1 line and current number of networked computers were inadequate.

The consultants met with the Library staff to evaluate existing technology and identify new ways to achieve the Library's goals. An Information Technology Plan was submitted with preliminary recommendations for potential projects and initiatives. The Library now has its own dedicated T-1 line, and the following projects have been approved.

Telephone System and other Communication Devices

Implement a new state-of-the-art telephone system to enable the library staff to provide better service to telephone patrons. This should include communication devices such as wireless headsets, wireless phones, personal digital assistants that will increase staff productivity and response time to the public.

Personal Computers for All Staff and Users

In the next three years, an estimated 1,400 workstations, (excluding servers), will be needed to provide the level of service the public expects and will provide the necessary equipment for staff to perform their jobs. This will double the Library's number of workstations, from the current 700. Additionally, because of swift changes in technology and its requirements, it is recommended that the Library have a rotating replacement schedule for its workstations to keep equipment current in order to provide needed and expected services.

Enterprise E-Commerce Site

As part of the Technology vision, it is recommended that the Library's website be made available for use by patrons 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to access accounts, pay fines, buy items from BookEnds (the Library's used bookstore), make contributions, join the Friends of the Dallas Public Library, Inc., etc. This goal compliments the current efforts of the City of Dallas to implement e-commerce to facilitate a myriad of city operations.

The balance of the Master Plan Technology priorities include:

Web Technology Team

It is recommended that a "web team" with a host of technological tools for digitizing photographs from the Library's collections, creating temporary websites for Library programs, providing electronic reference, and countless other applications, be established to enable the Library to respond as needed and as requirements for newly identified services come to the forefront. As the Library's web presence expands through additional services and information provided through its website and as the Library endeavors to make its collections more accessible, the website will become a focus of service which will require this investment.

Smart Cards

It is recommended that the Library switch to a "smart card" or debit card system where payment can be made by swiping a card with a magnetic strip through a reader. The application of this technology will allow the Library to increase financial accountability, eliminate waiting in line, and allow staff to more efficiently spend their time helping patrons. Library patrons will be able to utilize this customer service enhancement for such things as computer printouts, microfilm printing, Central Library parking garage, fines, Used Bookstore purchases, etc.

Express Check-Out

It is recommended that self-checkout units be placed in each branch and throughout the Central Library to enhanced customer service. Self-checkout stations where a patron can check out materials without interacting with Library personnel would improve service to citizens and provide for better utilization of resources by reallocating staff to those areas that require more individual help.

Building Security & Monitoring System

The Central Library-with nine floors, elevators, and stairwells-presents particular challenges for visual control over a collection of fine art and rare books currently valued at millions of dollars. A networked system that would enhance security at branches and Central is recommended. This program will help the Library fulfill part of its mission, to be good stewards of public resources.

Enhanced Access to Library Collections

Over the last 15 years, a deficiency has come to exist in the way the Library system provides access to the totality of its collections as the result of a reduction of cataloging staff and an increase in the frequency and volume of material received. As a consequence, the Library lacks the ability to adequately catalog portions of the collection. To resolve this, it is recommended that funding be provided for retrospective processing of these collections.

The popularity of Internet book retailers with their customer friendly interfaces have spawned interest in and demand for "enriched" records, i.e. table of contents, back-of-the-book indexes, and photographs of book covers. These customer friendly records provide much more information for patron assessment of specific items. Therefore, it is also recommended that the Library purchase these types of records for retrospective titles as well as provide for yearly purchases for new added titles.

One of the most valuable information resources of the Library is its collection of internally developed files of reference questions and answers. It is also recommended that these files be converted to electronic format in order to increase patron access and to increase staff efficiency.

Management Information System

The Library, as is the case with other institutions, must constantly evaluate its services as well as evaluate the effectiveness of proposed services. Additionally, statistical information in monthly, quarterly, and yearly reports are required by the City, the State Library, and national organizations. This statistical data has multiple uses but is primarily valuable for benchmarking and comparative analysis of Library services and outcomes.

It is recommended that a management information system that will facilitate the compilation of this data be acquired to support the operations of the Library.

Digital Dallas

To facilitate access to special and historical information that may exist in the collections of such institutions as the African-American Museum, Dallas Museum of Art, Sixth Floor Museum, the upcoming Latino Cultural Center etc. it is recommended that the Library embark on a special project referred to here as "Digital Dallas."

This project will require partnering with these institutions to develop a website that will provide access to their collections. In order to accomplish such a project a team of information technology specialists, archivists, librarians, catalogers, and artists to organize, evaluate, assess, catalog, scan and prepare the website will be needed.

IT Customer Services

In order to assure that the Library's technological capabilities are always in operating order, it is recommended that a team of on-site support staff be established. This team can then be dispersed throughout the City to guarantee that each Library unit's problems and concerns are addressed in a timely manner. This type of approach will enable prompt response to problems and will keep Library technology at a readiness level at all times.

Kiosks

Being customer-focused, the Library should consider establishing electronic kiosks throughout the city to increase citizens' abilities to access the Library and its databases and provide a convenient means for patrons without their own computers to conduct business.

Many government entities are moving to these type of alternatives for providing services in more convenient locations on a twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week basis. Citizens visit kiosks located in shopping malls, grocery stores, and other locations that they routinely visit. Kiosks can also provide forms that can be requested and printed out on the spot, as well as access to a variety of federal, state, and local government databases.

The following chart outlines the prioritized cost estimates for the above referenced technology projects and initiatives:

TECHNOLOGY TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

MASTER PLAN TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES

Number	Project Description	Note	Implementation			Subtotal FY2001-2003	Subtotal FY2004-2010	TOTAL
			FY2001	FY2002	FY2003			
1	New Telephone System and Other Communications Devices	C, B	\$1,500,000	\$76,800	\$76,800	\$1,653,600	\$537,600	\$2,191,200
2	Establish a DPL Web Technology Team	A, F	\$508,000	\$308,000	\$308,000	\$1,124,000	\$2,156,000	\$3,280,000
3	PCs for All Staff and Users (1,400) 1/3 Yearly Replacement PCs for new facilities	A		\$1,638,000 (add 234)	\$1,631,000 (add 233)	\$3,269,000	\$8,041,000	\$11,310,000
	Subtotal		\$0	\$1,638,000	\$1,631,000	\$3,269,000	\$8,216,000	\$11,485,000
4	Smart Cards	E		\$2,100,000	\$160,000	\$2,260,000	\$1,120,000	\$3,380,000
5	Patron Self Charge (45) Includes equipment for all new facilities			\$675,000	\$67,500	\$742,500	\$635,000	\$1,377,500
	Subtotal			\$675,000	\$67,500	\$742,500	\$747,500	\$1,490,000
6	Building Security and Monitoring System			\$1,500,000	\$50,000	\$1,550,000	\$350,000	\$1,900,000
7	Enhanced Access to DPL Collections	F		\$425,000	\$425,000	\$850,000	\$2,975,000	\$3,825,000
8	Management Information System	F	\$85,264	\$78,264	\$78,264	\$241,792	\$547,848	\$789,640
9	Enterprise E-Commerce Site	C, E		\$50,000	\$5,000	\$55,000	\$35,000	\$90,000
10	Digital Multicultural Dallas	F			\$1,150,725	\$1,150,725	\$6,924,575	\$8,075,300
11	IT Customer Services	A		\$107,330	\$98,830	\$206,160	\$691,810	\$897,970
12	Kiosks (20)	C, A, F, D		\$1,000,000	\$110,000	\$1,110,000	\$3,500,000	\$4,610,000
	Subtotals		\$2,093,264	\$7,958,394	\$4,161,119	\$14,212,777	\$27,801,333	\$42,014,110
	Items Currently Funded and/or Scheduled		\$1,585,264	\$76,800	\$76,800	\$1,653,600	\$537,600	\$2,191,200
	TOTALS		\$508,000	\$7,881,594	\$4,084,319	\$12,559,177	\$27,263,733	\$39,822,910

Notes:

- A Denotes facility implications
- B Project already has been approved, funded and scheduled by the Department of Communications and Information Services through the City's General Fund
- C Denotes City expenditure from another budget
- D Denotes project already being explored with the Department of Communications and Information Services for outside funding
- E Denotes enterprise operation
- F Denotes staffing implications