TECHNOLOGY PLANNING: DESIGNING THE DIRECTION TO GET THERE
A strategic plan for the school library program designs a learning environment that includes technology for the higher-level thinking skills, attitudes, and responsibilities in AASL's Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007). Empowering Learners, AASL's national guidelines for school library programs, states that the school library program is "built on a long-term strategic plan that reflects the mission, goals, and objectives of the school" (2009, 29). School librarians develop a technology plan for the school library program that reflects teaching and learning for today's education. The school librarian's leadership in the overall process and the written plan itself can influence future strategies for teaching and learning with technology that can go well beyond the school library program.

Empowering Learners describes a framework for a 21st-century learning environment where "technology is woven throughout" (AASL 2009, 10). This level of technology integration in the school library program should be reflected in any technology plans for the school or district. I've been the school librarian on district technology planning committees, participated in writing a state technology plan, provided technology-planning guidance as a state E-rate coordinator in two states, and reviewed all the school district plans as a certified state-level technology plan approver. All too often in my career I have read
school district-level technology plans in which the only reference to the school library was a mention of the automated card catalog.

School librarians can influence the integration of technology in a meaningful way—and advocate for the school library program—through a technology plan that reflects external and internal goals. You may not have been part of the district-level technology planning, but that doesn’t stop the planning so essential to the administration of an effective school library program. A technology plan can provide opportunities for the future. The school library plan describes needs and strategies you can use as the basis for a grant proposal or in your response when your principal says there is a source of funds available if you write—by tomorrow—about the impact you could make with technology.

The technology plan as a written document provides evidence the school library program is integral to teaching and learning with technology in the school environment. The collaborative process for developing a dynamic technology plan can also highlight the leadership of the school librarian.

**Community of Practice**

The process of creating an effective plan for using technology in your school library fosters understanding and goals through a comprehensive approach that includes stakeholders. Planning for educational technology is a social process (Picciano 2011). Leaders for successful technology initiatives frequently note the learning is more about the people than the technology. Find the people who can help connect the school community’s needs and wants to your knowledge about the school library program. A school library advisory board or another formal group may already include the representation of stakeholders you need to develop an effective technology plan for the school library program. If you lack a formal community group, a collaborative approach that involves colleagues, students, and parents will help ensure an understanding of aspirations, commitment to the plan, and continuity as technology and needs change.

Enlist the school community to understand what technology is being used or why it isn’t being used. Seek out colleagues who are knowledgeable about assistive technology and accessibility issues. Explore the literature for articles about new technology for teaching and learning in school libraries and discuss with colleagues. Ask what isn’t available in your school now and reflect upon why it is needed.

Start technology planning for the school library program by reviewing the technology already present and how it is used currently in the school library, and then envision what new use or technology could positively impact learning in your school. Dream big! How would you teach multiple literacies in an ideal environment? The planning process helps you develop a long-term vision to benefit the school community. Think about what you have read, seen, or heard in the enthusiasm of a colleague or student for technology to support the school library program’s goals for teaching and learning.

Proposing ideas amidst tough economic times may be difficult, but—to be prepared for unforeseen opportunities that may arise—you should explore strategies for added capacity or new technology. Be realistic, but don’t get bogged down in the negatives of limited staff or finances as you brainstorm about technology and how you want to use it through the school library program. Rather than assume you do not have the capacity to meet your goal, look at how you might break the goal down into smaller pieces, implement changes over time, or coordinate with another program. With some strategic thinking, a planning group might be able to modify a goal rather than eliminate the goal entirely.

**Technology Plan**

Many of the technology plans found in school districts are formatted to meet the original requirements for funding under No Child Left Behind Title IID (funding...
SCHOOL LIBRARIANS CAN INFLUENCE THE INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN A MEANINGFUL WAY—AND ADVOCATE FOR THE SCHOOL LIBRARY PROGRAM—THROUGH A TECHNOLOGY PLAN THAT REFLECTS EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL GOALS.

that is no longer available) or criteria to ensure funds are used effectively to improve education as determined by the E-rate program's technology plans. These federal programs heavily influenced school district plans. Check for any requirements for school technology plans in your state. Several states suspended requirements for written technology plans when IID funds ended while others continue to require technology plans as part of school-approval processes.

Technology plans often cover a three-year period. The third year of the plan may be less specifically described than the first year, but a plan with a three-year horizon provides a long-term vision—a direction for how to get there. Follow the criteria or format for writing technology plans in your district and make sure the plan meets funding sources' guidelines. Technology plans for E-rate funding include four requirements: goals and strategies, professional development, an assessment or inventory of current technology or services, and an evaluation process to monitor progress toward the goals in the plan itself (E-rate Central 2013). Additionally, a plan should include information about costs, timelines, and other budgetary considerations that can be used for determining implementation and sustainability.

The following components and key questions should be considered as you develop a technology plan for the school library program.

Goals and Strategies

Goals establish the framework for a comprehensive technology plan. Goals should align with the overall mission of the school library program in ways that are consistent with the community's vision for teaching and learning with technology. What are the goals of your school library program? What are the primary goals in your school or district technology plan? How can you maximize existing resources and coordinate plans for new resources or coordinate with the professional development in a larger initiative within the school?

Consider the impact on facilities planning. What are the space and wiring needs, or furniture implications for the school library? Reflect upon how the technology can be used to support the library program's core values such as ethical use or equitable access. Providing equitable access is more than making hardware and software available. Through the school library program, school librarians provide "diverse sources of information that match curricular needs, lend themselves to units of inquiry, and are of high interest to students" (AASL 2009, 39). Determine how the library program can support technology use with high-quality content in a virtual collection to meet the needs of all learners.

Goals, as in almost any planning, should be specific, measurable, and describe what it is you want to accomplish. Identify and develop strategies to meet these goals. Your strategies may include collaboration with other educators, influence classroom pedagogy, or be more apparent in the school library itself. How will you promote and encourage these strategies within the library and in the school?

Professional Development

A professional development strategy in the technology plan ensures that staff will know how to use new technologies as well as develop more effective uses of current technology to facilitate learning for students. What do library staff and teachers already use? What would they be
JUST AS RUBRICS ENABLE STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS NEEDED BEFORE THEY START AN ASSIGNMENT, AN ESTABLISHED EVALUATION PROCESS HELPS TO KEEP PLAN IMPLEMENTATION ON TARGET.

willing to use? Will they be required to use any new technology? The professional development strategy is also an opportunity to emphasize the school librarian's role as a technology leader and to offer informal or formal interactions "to sustain and increase knowledge and skills" (AASL 2009, 43).

Budget

Budgets are used to determine the benefits versus the cost of implementing or maintaining a strategy. What would it cost to meet the goals you have set? Does your yearly budget for the library reflect the strategies in your technology plan? Include software, hardware, professional development, maintenance agreements, and any significant staffing implications. The plan should include these costs even if the line item is outside of the school library budget. The E-rate program no longer requires that a plan include a budget sufficient to acquire and support elements of the plan, but budgets are part of a school librarian's responsibility when administering a school library program.

Assessment and Evaluation

Although evaluation is typically described at the end of a technology plan, your process for developing a plan should start with an assessment of past and present use of technology (Papa 2011). An assessment provides an inventory or picture of what is available. Use the assessment to develop an evaluation process that provides expectations for the technology plan. Just as rubrics enable students to understand what is needed before they start an assignment, an established evaluation process helps keep plan implementation on target.

A plan is useful for identifying needs, explaining how new resources would be used, and justifying why an item is not appropriate for your program. Unfortunately, it is not unusual to find unopened and unused equipment in a school where purchases were made without considering how the technology could support the goals, strategies, and professional development of a technology plan. A comprehensive technology plan is prepared for change. If the school library is offered technology, you are ready! You have already
developed a plan for what you need and how you will use it to benefit teaching and learning.

Describe a process to regularly evaluate the plan itself. Although the technology plan may encompass only three years, a lot can happen over the life of a plan, and even the most effective technology plans may need a mid-course correction. Individual projects may need to be modified to meet financial constraints. The technology changes; staff members are reassigned; and new initiatives are proposed. An evaluation process should provide assessment of progress toward goals, an awareness of opportunities, and the flexibility to respond to changes in the school library or school environment. With regular review and response, a technology plan can be a living document that maintains the validity of the overall planning process.

Influence for Leadership

Technology is central and often transparent in the daily transactions, services, teaching, and learning found in today's school library programs. A plan for technology and related strategies for its use is essential to understanding and designing a school library program as described in *Empowering Learners*. Demonstrate how the library program impacts teaching and learning through technology. Provide the narrative and data you need to support requests for technology. Write the plan to show technology as integral to each goal.

Technology plans provide a direction you can communicate to decision makers. I recommend that a technology plan for the library not be separate from a plan that is written for the overall library program. You can quickly pull out relevant information for use during a school-wide planning process if you write the library plan with an awareness of format and requirements in other school or district plans. A technology plan approved by the school board and other decision makers may not guarantee an adequate budget for implementation over the next three years. It does, however, highlight the importance of sustaining necessary support as difficult decisions are made.

Planning technology for the school library program is critical to developing a learning environment that produces successful learners skilled in multiple literacies. A well-written plan can determine how you will integrate technology into the library program and meet the needs for teaching and learning in your school. My experience as a reviewer of technology plans has shown that the school librarian's unique perspective as leader, instructional partner, information specialist, teacher, and program administrator can significantly influence the direction of a technology plan—and its successful implementation.

As a technology leader, the school librarian plans a school library program for teaching and learning that fits into the plan for the school or district. The school library program may have only a few computers, a classroom-sized computer lab, or the ubiquitous computing found in a one-to-one school environment, but whatever the level as it currently exists in your school library, don't let the direction for technology use be determined by happenstance or a remote district plan. Communicate the technology plan for the school library program to district technology leaders. As an active participant in developing a technology plan at the higher level, the school librarian contributes to determining how technology is used throughout the school, instead of focusing only on how much "stuff" the school library might receive. Through the technology plan, a school librarian can positively influence the direction for students and teachers to use technology for teaching and learning.

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**Works Cited:**


