Strategic Technology & Planning for the Church Library
Written by Ken Satterfield

Plans are nothing; planning is everything. Dwight D. Eisenhower

You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there. Yogi Berra

My church decided to put together a time capsule in 1999 to be opened in 2100. We asked "What format should we use that could still be read in a hundred years?" You may feel that way if you've thought about how to plan beyond the upcoming budget year.

It may seem unimaginable – just look *backward* 20 years: No DVDs, Amazon, or MP3 players. No Google! Most cell phones were bulky and designed for cars. Books, newspapers and magazines were almost universally printed.

What kind of media will we be using in the *next* 20 years? Perhaps the best way to prepare is to consider trends that affect the media we use today.

Print continues to make way for digital.
Print is not dead, but it is changing. Church libraries have moved from vinyl to cassette, then CDs. VCR tapes have become DVDs. Now, Library Concepts reports several church libraries in Texas are beginning to offer eBooks, the result of two consortia to share the expense. As screen quality continues to improve, so will the digital experience.

Books require TLC – space, proper temperature and humidity, avoiding dust and direct sunlight – while the contents of the entire Library of Congress can be digitally stored in a shoebox. While more fragile – affected by cracks, hard drive crashes and power surges – digital information is much easier to duplicate.

What does this mean to you? Bill Gates has been quoted as saying that DVDs and Blu-Rays will be obsolete in 10 years. *PCWorld* asked if CDs would be gone by 2015. Downloading and streaming media take their place. A storage cloud will become the source for information, much as we rely on electricity for power now.

Last year, 21% of Americans read an e-book. As screens improve in quality, tablet-like devices can more easily take the place of more and more books and magazines.

Finally, when a single library may not be able to afford an upgrade to the next level of technology, libraries working in consortia may be able to make advances possible.

Information becomes more and more available.
A few years ago, a church library might be considered a smaller but more specialized version of the local public library. Today, a smartphone has access to more titles than the local library!

What does this mean to you? Today's library is limited in size. That doesn't have to be a limitation to tomorrow's library. Technologies that favor availability more than the collection are needed. Computers, tablets, phones – or whatever takes their place – need to be kept up-to-date. Embrace information technology.

Many unlimited streaming music services already exist. Oyster is an app being launched with the goal of offering unlimited books for a monthly fee. A library team will continue to be needed to make sense of all the world's available information, guiding users to find, filter and recommend quality media.

Many do not utilize the Internet, BUT…
A lot of people are like my mom. She doesn't access the Internet and has no interest in emails or texting. Then there are those who cannot afford Internet access. Others can surf the web, send emails and keep in touch with Facebook, but have not fine-tuned their skills to know how to search effectively or attach a file to an email.

What does this mean to you? It is critical that library teams also become guides for technology, knowing how equipment works and how to do common tasks. That's a moving target. As a new generation comes along and new technologies come into play, today's questions will be unnecessary, replaced by new questions. Developing and utilizing other helps is needed.

Products are becoming less valued than experience.
Thomas Frey of the DaVinci Institute predicts that as Baby Boomers begin retiring and lifestyles become more mobile, having the right things will become less important and experiences will be become prized.

What does this mean to you? If the library becomes more digitized and has access to this incredible amount of content, will it still need a location? Yes!

Currently in public libraries, the Institute of Museum and Library Services determined that 30 million people use them to find a job. These individuals may never check out a title but they appreciate access to free information. *The library continues to provide a useful service.* You may not be providing employment helps, but what can you provide? That could point the need for computer devices and software, paired with your resourcefulness and your care for people.

Colorado library professionals founded R-Squared: The Risk & Reward Conference. They are trying to find ways to become crucial parts of their community, identified as the key to the library's future. That of course, has been not only the mission of the church, but also desire of a vibrant library ministry!

The recent power outages caused by Hurricane Sandy remind us that a library powered by machines and electricity alone can be disabled. A church library that is creative, resourceful, and provides superior service, however, is one that will be vital to future believers regardless of the technology tools we use.

Want to explore this topic yourself? Here are some thought-provoking resources.

- The Bookless Library (*The New Republic*):
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-TBL
- The Future of Libraries in a Digital Culture (Huffington Post):
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-DC
- Beginning the Great Transformation (DaVinci Institute):
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-BTT
- The Technologically Competent Staff (Guerrilla Librarian):
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-TCS
- Libraries, books, ebooks and the future (Phil Bradley's weblog):
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-PB
- R-Squared Risk and Reward Conference:
  www.rsquaredconference.org
- Library & Information Association future trends:
  www.tinyurl.com/CLFuture-LITA

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