Highlands Regional Library Cooperative

Keeping Current: A review of library technology literature

This article was written by: Kurt W. Wagner, Head of Library Information Systems, David and Lorraine Cheng Library, William Paterson University of New Jersey, wagnerk@wpunj.edu, Phone: 973-720-2285, of the HRLC Technology Committee. Please contact him with any additions, corrections or questions.

The challenge of the information technology librarian is twofold: mastery of a set of hardware, software and networking techniques and protocols and a continual improvement of this skill set by keeping current. It is an impossible task to read all that there is out there, to absorb the enormity of the technology wave as it constantly washes over us. A walkthrough of the vendors' displays at the annual PC Expo convention or at the ALA annual conference provides an analogous example: an overwhelming assault of the new.

The reality is, however, that most of the hype bleeds away, many of the promises fail to materialize, and the technology trends downward somewhat to that which is more reliable, practical and (mostly) compatible with existing standards. For the Librarian wishing to keep current, this serves to make things easier.

Here is a summary of some of the print resources I've found to be useful. This is not meant to be an exhaustive review. At the outset I admit that I've chosen a set of journals that I've come to rely on, but that ignore other fields entirely. The computer magazines I mention are not those that Macintosh users would find useful. I've not included some resources that School and College Media Specialists might consider essential. Everyone's set of favorites will be unique to them and reflect their individual set of responsibilities and interests. In a follow-up article I will feature a set of online resources that I rely on to keep current.

Popular Computing

PC Magazine – **Audience**: general public, computer enthusiasts.
Examples of articles: 8 ways to enhance your browser for research; Safeguarding computer passwords; Comparison of presidential candidates' views on technology.

Consumer electronics ride about a wave and a half ahead of that adopted by libraries, and the forward thinking information professional should always have the next technology on the radar screen. Though tangled with advertising, PC Magazine provides valuable information on topics such as virus and adware/spyware protection, new peripherals for data storage in input/output, and reviews of the latest hardware and software. Full text available 1/5/1999 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

PC World - **Audience**: general public, computer enthusiasts.

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Examples of articles: Solutions to five common types of Wi-Fi network problems; Fixing common PC problems yourself; Tweaking XP Service Pack 2 security settings.

A must for those involved in PC technology. As with PC Magazine, PC World is a treasury of "living with computers" lore with the goal of improving the marriage of human and technology. It regularly offers simple steps to overcome technology problems, improve out-of-the-box functionality, and comparisons of the newest hardware and software. Full text available 1/1/1994 to present in Wilson OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition and 1/1/1996 to present in in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

Wired – **Audience**: general public, computer enthusiasts.
Examples of articles: How intelligent design models can be seen as at the basis for life, therefore opening a new perspective on evolution and creationism; How satellite radio has revolutionized broadcast music and devastated FM; Profile of K. Eric Drexler, nanotechnology pioneer, whose work was co-opted by government and corporate science, leaving him at the margin.

Wired is a magazine for those who need little assistance in making technology choices or keeping current in their field. Instead, Wired puts the information age into perspective, whether it be hardware, software, high or low culture, Wired speculates on how computing is changing our civilization. A favorite of the breakfast browsers, you'll always find something here that is surprising. Citations available from 1998 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

General Librarianship

American Libraries – **Audience**: general librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: The seven deadly sins of library technology; Archiving the Internet using the Wayback Machine (www.archive.org); Recruiting new Internet Librarians.

American Libraries is, of course, the most general of journals, floodlighting the whole of Libraryland with topics of interest from school library management, to public library trends to the specific issues addressed in its regular features. "The Internet Librarian" covers a wide range of issues facing the web-connected and automated library. Full text available 1/1/1975 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

Computers In Libraries – **Audience**: general librarian.

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Examples of articles: Bilingual virtual reference; Outsourcing integrated library systems; Improved holdings standards improves resource sharing and interlibrary loan transactions.

Covering the range of library information technology, Computers in Libraries does not overwhelm the reader with the academic burdens of literature reviews, methodological discussions and empirical analysis. It is much more of a 'how-to' and 'what's up?' periodical aimed at the librarian with general technological skills and interests. Full text available 1/1/1994 to present in ABI/INFORM Complete, and 7/1/1993 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

Library Hi Tech – **Audience**: library information technology specialist (this can include any librarian whose work involves them in automation).
Examples of articles: Supporting PDAs at a health sciences library; Bibliographic metadata infrastructure for the 21st century; Web accessibility validation and repair.

On a scale of generalist to specialist, Library Hi Tech is at the specialist end. Dense in detail and depth, articles assume a general level of expertise and appeal to a specialized audience. Full text available from 1/1/1998 to 1 year ago in ABI/INFORM Complete and from 7/1/2003 to present in Academic Search Premier. Full text also available from 1998 to one year ago in ProQuest.

Library Journal – **Audience**: general librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: Elsevier's *Scirus* search engine touted as superior to Google for science research; Use of PDA and wireless technology for portable database access; How plummeting costs for hard disk data storage invites digitization efforts.

LJ is one of the most ubiquitous librarian resources. Its regular Infotech section features hardware, software and online resource reports, news and reviews. Full text available from 1/1/1975 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier, and in Wilson OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition.

Library Technology Reports – **Audience**: library information technology specialist.
Examples of articles: Computer technology and non-English speaking patrons; An overview of radio frequency identification (RFID) systems for libraries for theft detection and collection tracking; E-journal access and management.

An ALA journal, Library Technology Reports has a bimonthly theme and generally features a single author per issue. Recent topics included "Techniques for creating sustainable digital collections," and "Establishing an institutional repository." These issues treat their subjects in a comprehensive fashion and serve as a valuable reference resource for any library technology project. Full text available 5/1/2002 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier and Masterfile Premier.

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Academic Librarianship

College & Research Libraries News – **Audience**: academic librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: A discussion of both sides of the federated searching coin; Internet resources for Middle East research; Internet resources for Civil Rights Movement research.

C&RLN is an important monthly digest of information. The Internet Resources column is a valuable resource for finding internet sites on specific topics. Full text available from 6/1/1998 to present in Wilson OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition. Citations available from 7/1993 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier.

College & Research Libraries – **Audience**: academic librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: Analysis of the nature of search engine access from academic library home pages, Use of metadata for an academic library digital image collection; Review of *A History of Online Information Services.*

This ACRL journal takes a scholarly approach to a broad range of academic library topics. Its articles are scientifically thorough and can be considered an influential and driving force in the Library Science discipline. Full text available from 7/1/1998 to present in Wilson OmniFile: Full Text Mega Edition. Citations available from 7/1993 to present in Ebsco's Academic Search Premier.

Computers in the Schools - **Audience**: school and academic librarian.
Examples of articles: Why do teachers need to use technology in the classroom? Quick training tips – teaching technology to anyone; Designing a special education course using technology.

Not a library journal, Computers in the Schools focuses on teaching and learning using technology. Useful for instruction librarians or those designing user education programs, it is a scholarly resource wanting to review current trends. Citations available from March 1994 to present in Ebsco's MasterFile Premier.

Journal of Educational Computing Research - **Audience**: instruction librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: Does hypertext disadvantage less able readers? Web versus classroom instructor experiences in teaching; Comparison of text-based and object-based computer mediated communication.

Not a library journal, but completely relevant due to its focus on the impact of computing technology on a user population. This is a research-based journal with peer-review. For those interested in usability studies and library instruction, this is an important resource. View table of contents and article abstracts at publisher's website, www.baywood.com. Full-text access to articles is available for a fee.

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Library & Information Science Research – **Audience**: academic librarian.
Examples of articles dealing with technology: Comparison of adult and children's web search behaviors; Analysis of digital reference services; Survey of health research behavior on the Internet.

At the scholarly end of the information pool, this journal would prove an invaluable source of primary research in information seeking behavior. Available 1998 to present in ScienceDirect Elsevier Science Journals. View citations for free, but if your library doesn't subscribe to Science Direct, you will need to pay a fee to access the full text.

Part two of this article will feature online resources for keeping current in technology.