

Notes of Binge Thinker
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The Library as an Information Gateway in the Next Decade

Happy April!

If you remember, I am going to focus on five guideposts that NTLP feels libraries need to follow in the next decade when planning their service offerings. Here are the five guideposts again as a refresher.

The Library of the Future increases the overall value of its community by:

Guidepost 1: facilitating access to education as a service to the public.

Guidepost 2: staying aware of current interests within the community, finding information relevant to those interests, and making that information publicly available.

Guidepost 3: ensuring easy public access to information in all its forms.

Guidepost 4: encouraging civic participation through public information campaigns that explain matters of public policy, informing public decisions, and maintaining awareness of public services (including its own services).

Guidepost 5: maintaining its standing of public trust by operating as an independent "third voice" in its operations as well as its communications, and meeting on neutral ground.

Each month I will focus on one guidepost. I will highlight a library (or libraries) that I feel is following that guidepost closely and doing something innovative to make the guidepost a reality. I will then give some benchmarks (examples of what libraries can do to follow the guidepost) that the NTLP staff has developed.

This month I am focusing on guidepost number three. In my time, I have seen the types of information mediums available multiply greatly. When I was a child, if I wanted information about a topic, I had to ride my bike down to the local branch of the Arlington Public Library and look it up. When I reached high school and college, I found that some information was available in a digital format through specialized databases. By the time I reached Library School, the Internet age had begun and you could find information in a wide variety of digital formats from websites to wikis. Now as I sit here typing this article into a Word document, my smart phone has just beeped informing me that Japan has had another earthquake. The information mediums just keep getting better and better. How can a library ensure that all community sectors have access to these same information mediums that I do? This is the essence of our

guidepost this month. I have selected the Arlington Public Library as a great example of what a library can do in this age to ensure easy public access to information.

Arlington Public Library

I grew up in Arlington and this is the place that I learned to love libraries. I really did ride my bicycle to my local branch on the local southeast side of the growing city (at that time there was only about 50K in Arlington.) I remember loving to find answers to my many questions and then figure out how to get all the books I checked out home without killing myself on my bike (I was not the most coordinated kid).

Arlington Public Library has evolved greatly under the fine leadership of Cary Siegfried, the library director. My childhood branch has been turned into a computer center with very few books. I went back and was amazed by how many people were in the building waiting to use the library's computers. It really does provide a wonderful service to that community.

Through its strategic plan (<http://www.arlingtonlibrary.org/about>) the Arlington library leadership has identified four main goals: Live, Learn, Connect and Grow. In terms of our guidepost for this month, I want to focus on the Learn and Connect goals.

With the Learn goal, the third objective caught my eye. It states that the library will “provide opportunities for users to learn to find and evaluate information efficiently and effectively.” As a library explores the different forms of information, it must also think about how to teach patrons the best way to locate and use these information mediums. It is not enough to just provide information in its many forms, you have to assist patrons in navigating these many different forms. Arlington attempts to achieve this objective through information literacy classes. It gauges its success by how many people feel they have learned something at these classes. Arlington provides the various mediums and then teaches its patrons on how to use them.

For the Connect goal, two objectives tie into our guidepost.

TWO: We will provide equitable access to technology that builds bridges to opportunity, interaction and ideas.

THREE: We will connect users to information sources.

One role I think the library will continue to serve in its community for years to come is providing technology to all community sectors. Many of us are fortunate enough to acquire the technology needed to get to information in all its electronic formats. There are just as many individuals that do not have the means to get to this technology and this is where the library contributes value. The term that has been used in our industry for years is the “digital divide” and I wish I could report that it is getting better. In a recent Pew Research Study, it was found only 57 percent of the lower income households use the Internet daily in their homes while 95 percent of wealthier households access information online.

(http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/business/media/13drill.html?_r=1).

“Unsurprisingly, the wealthy engage in online commerce and search for health information more often. However, while there is relatively little disparity across income brackets for consumption of television and print news sources, the richest households are more than twice as likely as the poorest to read online news.”

So, we know libraries are needed for building bridges to technology for certain sectors of our communities, but what information sources do they provide. Arlington is a perfect example of the wealth of information mediums a library can provide to its patrons. Here are just a few:

Texshare databases – This program, paid with local and state funds, gives community residents access to a wide variety of information sources called databases. These tools provide information in a much more structured manner than you might find on the free Internet. These databases receive heavy usage in Arlington and other communities because the library purchases the databases and provides the computers to access this information.

Ebooks – Through a vendor called Overdrive, Arlington provides access to digital books, otherwise known as ebooks. As digital books become more widespread, certain information will only be available in this format so it is important libraries provide this medium whenever possible.

Learning Express – This is a great service that assists patrons with getting ready to take certain tests. If you have a test like the GED, LSAT, GRE, etc, go to your local library and see if they offer this service. I have been told Learning Express is a fantastic way to prepare you for these tests. The service also has a wide variety of other learning tools.

Mango – Want to learn another language? Mango will teach you how to do this. Rosetta Stone is another service that does this.

Live Homework Help – Need a tutor to help you with a subject? Live Homework Help is a service provided by tutor.com that connects a student with a tutor online. It is a wonderful way for a student to get free assistance when it is necessary.

There are many other online services that are provided by the Arlington Public Library. They really do shine when it comes to providing information in all its forms. They are a model for other libraries to follow in attempting to reach our third guidepost. I want to thank Cary for being willing to share with me what her library does in this regard and encourage my readers to check out their long range plan, it is very good!

As always, my staff has some suggestions for this guidepost as well.

- I think this one is going to be the most challenging with the current ebook environment, budget cuts on the local level affecting purchasing power, and the loss of infrastructure on the state and regional levels which can potentially affect ILL, reciprocity, and consortia. Also, information in closed web environments such as Facebook and other

"members only" places. Teasing out how much of this is under a library's control might be the best approach?

- I'd recommend keeping universal accessibility for everyone - including staff and volunteers - in mind at every step along the way. Consider all formats and as many disabilities as possible when purchasing tech, furnishings, etc., and when building or remodeling. Adjustable levels for tabletops, seating, workstations - including keyboards - plus monitors which can be repositioned according to the current viewer's needs, appropriate lighting for individual uses - not just for the folks who are browsing the stacks or attending a program. For promotional materials and other library information, including the library's website: 16 pt type whenever possible; colors chosen for easy viewing over dramatic effect; following the guidelines for universal online accessibility whether or not those become requirements any time soon; and providing materials in multiple formats.
- Libraries need to consider coming together to purchase content as a consortium and then let regional organizations assist individual libraries with implementation and training. In this way, patrons will have access to important information for their daily decisions, but local budgets will not be devastated.

Ebook Future Scenario 2: Ebooks Skip the Library

I also want to present four possible future scenarios for ebooks and public libraries. As a refresher, here is my second scenario. My proposed strategy follows.

John Wilcox drove up to the library for the first time in twenty years. The last time he was at the library was in High School, when he did his senior thesis. He didn't have much use for them since then. However, his beautiful wife got him a brand new ereader for Christmas so he wouldn't have to carry around all of his novels when he hit the airport every week. He was going to buy the ebooks himself, but he heard that he could get them for free from the public library. He thought, "why not?" He rarely took advantage of the services provided to him by the city.

The library parking lot was virtually empty as he pulled in a spot right next to the front door. He noticed the library had a flyer on its front announcing new hours. It looked like it was closing on Tuesday nights starting next week. Boy, I am glad I came this week; I would hate to have to take time off work to do this. He was lucky he was in town at all with his travel schedule.

As he walked into the library, he noticed several people at the computers and still others studying silently at various tables around the library. Three or four librarians seemed to be removing several shelves of books from the area immediate adjacent to the circulation desk.

One particular person, an older lady, seemed to be the one in charge. John was not one to go through the proper channels. He marched up to her and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Yes. Can I help you?" she said as she turned around.

"Are you the one in charge?" John asked her.

"Well, yes, I am Catherine Rainwater, the director of the library. How may I be of assistance?" she smiled at him.

"I need to know how to download library books to this thing." John said as he held up the new ereader. "I heard you had some available in ebook format."

Catherine smiled a sad sort of smile and responded. "Yes, we do. Let's go over to the circulation desk. I will bring up the website to show you how to do it."

John followed Catherine over to the circulation desk and he received a nice 15 minute tutorial on how to use the service. He was disappointed that he had to actually hook up the ereader to the computer to get the books on them, but he understood the necessity of it. He also noticed something else.

"You only have about 5000 books in your collection. Is that right?" he asked.

Catherine nodded. "We are adding to it every month, but that is all we have at the moment."

"Why such a small collection?"

Catherine frowned at his question. John noticed that she looked like she was fighting how much to tell him. Finally, she said, "We were a little late getting ebooks into the library so our collection is smaller than other libraries our size. Most publishers refuse to work with libraries when it comes to ebooks and our options are limited. In addition, the service is very costly because publishers demand more funds for multiple usage of their books. We can't buy as many ebooks as we could the printed ones."

"Why are the publishers hard to work with?" John asked as he found himself very interested in the subject.

"It all has to do with their profit motive. We can't lend out digital material like we can printed ones. Different laws dictate the rules when it comes to sharing of items. With printed books, we could always share the items with our patrons. Since digital media is governed by a license, we have to abide by the license. If a publisher does not want to allow ebooks to be shared, they have the right to do that. It is unfortunate that nobody could convince a majority of them to let us share ebooks. We even tried legal action, but nothing ever gained a foothold. We have a select number of small press publishers that have stepped forward to let us share the ebooks and only one or two of the larger houses."

John scrolled through what was available through the library. He recognized maybe two or three books on the first twenty listed. Otherwise, he had never heard of the books.

"Who are these authors? I have never heard of them." John inquired.

"Yes. That is a drawback to the whole situation. Many of the authors you are familiar with come from those large publishing companies. We don't have many best sellers because of this." Catherine replied, looking frustrated and sad at the same time.

"Well, I really don't want to read most of these books, but I guess I will try them out to see. Man, that is rotten that you can't do more with ebooks." John retorted as he watched another librarian push a cart of books to the back of the library. "What are you doing with all those books?"

"We are taking out the books that do not circulate very often. We do it every year to make room for new books." Catherine replied.

"Wow. You must buy a lot of new books every year. It looks like half the library is being taken down."

"Yes. It does seem that way." Catherine sighed. "Our circulation has been dropping for about two years now since ebooks became the norm in 2011. We simply do not have that many printed volumes being checked out so we are making room in the library for other things."

John looked confused. "If the library is not here for the books, what is it here for?"

"That is exactly what we are going to find out." Catherine responded, smiling at John and

*excusing herself to go oversee the shelf removal.
John left wondering what his library would do....*

In this strategy, ebooks are still dictated by another set of laws versus printed books and community residents seem interested in using the library to get access to ebooks. However, it looks like the publishing community and library community were never able to come to a new understanding about the circulation of ebooks. It looks like the library director is facing a limited number of choices when it comes to the ebooks she can purchase for her community. Here are some of my thoughts:

- My regular column readers will probably get tired of me writing this, but we need a national movement among the library community to sit down with the publishing industry. We need a unified movement to negotiate in the best interests of our communities. It is too late for individual libraries, like the one in our scenario, to make a difference. They simply are not large enough. It would be like a fly trying to get the attention of an elephant. Until that fly is equal in size to the elephant, the elephant will simply ignore the fly. Let's work together to not be ignored. I have been encouraged by all the movement lately on this front, but we need a way to bring all six or seven national movements together in one clear voice. I think the American Library Association is the clear choice to lead this endeavor. With the recent decision on the Google Book Settlement, we are back to square one when it comes to figuring out what to do with digital book formats. Now is the time for the library community to come together and make their voices heard.
- Public Libraries really do need to start thinking about different ways to measure their success and impact. The number of circulations is a clear indication of how much our collection is being used, but does it really measure our impact? Also, what happens, like in this scenario, when the circulation begins to drop due to more and more patrons using the digital format, which is a limited choice through the public library? I hope Catherine Rainwater, from our scenario, takes evaluation into consideration when she is reviewing what value added services the library can provide. You can have a very valuable service, but if you do not have a way to measure its impact, then it is almost like you are not offering it at all.
- Libraries need to start offering ebooks to their communities right now! Poor Catherine was late getting into the game and her community suffered for it. I think libraries need to be early adopters in this regard, because residents expect to get digital books from the library. The choices right now might be limited, but at least give them something. Find a way to make it happen even in these days with decreasing budgets!
- Build a robust online training program for digital books. The fact that John had to drive to the library to get instruction on how to use the service indicates to me that Catherine's library is not doing enough for its residents online. John is a busy

professional and would probably appreciate a basic video tutorial on how to get ebooks from the library. This is especially important as we are forced to make our patrons jump through several hoops to get digital books. People are used to the Amazon model where you just wirelessly download the book to your ereader no matter your location. The idea of having to connect an ereader to a computer, download your selections and then sync up the ereader with the computer (not to mention DRM restrictions) makes selling our service very difficult. Libraries will need to make the process as painless as possible by having clear easy training that patrons can watch from the comfort of their homes or offices.

- What does your community really want from the library? Catherine Rainwater is taking the right approach by holding some focus groups to discuss library program and services. I believe she will need to hold some focus groups outside of the library to find out what non-library users, like John Wilcox, would want from the library. In order to build more value for the library, you have to reach out to the people not using the service, and find out what you need to offer to get them to use the library. I think most libraries will find that they will have to mix in new services with the traditional ones to offer a menu of choices to communities.
- Finally, what do we do about books. I do not think we will ever have libraries that do not provide books as a service in one capacity or another. I think we will find many libraries will de-emphasize books in their current library buildings to allow for other services to be offered. Catherine is taking the right approach. If the books are just collecting dust on the shelves, is this space not better used for something else? How are storing books in a library any different than storing the items in a storage facility somewhere? Libraries are more than storage for books! We can keep the books around, but let's get rid of the eight foot high shelving and open up our spaces a bit to make them more attractive, appealing and functional.

National/State News

No real new news on this front. The House did adopt some amendments for support of libraries, but these amendments were not designated for funding rather for contingency in case funds are available. Here is the excerpt from the update received from the Texas Library Association.

The final House version of the state's budget (HB 1) restores \$2.5 million/biennium to TexShare. The budget also contains contingency appropriations (Article XI) for Loan Star Libraries and databases. Note that items in Article XI are not funded; rather, Article XI is considered a sort of "wish list" so that, if additional funding does become available, programs in Article XI are prioritized. TLA offers its deepest thanks to Representatives [Rafael Anchía](#) (Dallas), [Roland Gutierrez](#) (San Antonio), and [David](#)

[Simpson](#) (Longview) who put forward amendments to restore funding to libraries. We also thank Reps. [Jim Pitts](#) and [John Otto](#), who stood ready to accept amendments for library funding.

The Senate Finance Committee has recommended a \$3.5 million/biennium restoration of funds for TexShare. The full Senate is expected to finalize its version of the budget in the coming days. Once the Senate finalizes its draft, a conference committee will be named (with key members from both chambers) to finalize the budget.

Regional Meeting Focus Groups

We held our Spring Regional Meetings last month. Here are the results of the focus groups we held during the meetings. For those who did not attend, we looked at four possible futures for NTLP and asked the attendees to provide feedback on them. These strategies will be discussed in more detail at the July 29, 2011 System Assembly meeting that will be held at the Bedford Public Library. As you can see from below, we had a mixed reaction to the possible scenarios.

1. How to keep Systems going:

- Combine some Systems
- State contracts with individuals for what libraries need
- Work from home instead of paying for space
- Turn more Systems into non-profits
- Individual libraries take on separate tasks in order to keep infrastructure in place
- Fundraise from individuals & corporations
- Maintain the infrastructure no matter what so that no one has to reinvent system structure
- Consolidate all systems and contract regionally for specific services as necessary
- Be sure something exists to support small and rural libraries and build their standards/quality relative to larger libraries
- Consolidate some systems
- Coordinate mentoring of smaller libraries by larger ones
- Reconsider priorities of systems
- Plan CE and consulting relative to the 5-7 sizes of libraries
- Work toward offering incentives for consolidation of smaller libraries

- Systems could help with management of small libraries
- Use non-profit systems as model for all
- Consolidate regions into super systems
- No systems but TSLAC serves all libraries
- Consider grouping libraries differently (by size, circ., et.) and serving those groups as individual system assignments
 - Find out what's used most and get rid of anything that isn't—reduce staff accordingly
 - Reduce or consolidate systems handle library development and consider those concepts
 - Consolidate systems' office spaces to reduce cost of electronics, etc.
 - State should encourage the other 8 systems to be non-profit
 - Consolidate at state level and provide consulting out of TSLAC with contracted local help
 - Look at how comparable states handle library
 - Consolidate systems into only 2—the 2 nonprofits and cut down on overhead and admin. dollars
 - Fewer systems would increase travel time. What would geographic system look like? To large to go to regional mtgs
 - Utilizing Web 2.0 (Skype) for meetings
 - Satellite offices—going to libraries more
 - Virtual offices—staff office in libraries
 - Back to core of why systems were created—consultants around state (phone consulting/virtual)
 - Definitely need consultants
 - Local budgets have cut training budgets

2. How to fund NTLF without state support

- Fundraisers, possibly by region

- Individual libraries would keep lion's share of what they collect, NTLP would coordinate theme and promote for all libraries
- Libraries would do their own things
- ED would continue to serve as liaison to TSLAC for its members
- Vendor discounts and consortia
- Membership dues
- Web site assistance
- More networking among libraries, possibly meetings of libraries near one another
- Membership based on population served
- Unanimously support keeping this system
- ED should coordinate opportunities for expanded networking
- ED should be clearinghouse person, knowing who has what expertise and providing referrals
- Put the consultant on a retainer
- Tiered membership levels
- ED should keep consortia going
- NTLP continues with possibly only 5 FTE
- Membership dues—possibly tiered
- Administer consortia & vendor discounts
- Determine bare minimum cost for running the system
- Cafeteria plan of fees and services
- Annual mail-in fundraising campaign
- Phone call fundraising campaign
- Majority opposes group fundraising
- Still support systems
- System coordinates contracts PO by libraries for IT, consulting, etc., and helps to ID contractors and negotiate fees

- System goes for grants as representative of multiple libraries and in common programs
- Membership fees-basic + tiers
- Consider membership dues IF local budget allows
- Try to keep CE, overdrive and consulting
- Retain the system as an entity even if there is only 1 employee and that person is responsible for grant writing and fund raising, especially grant proposals to benefit groups of or all libraries
- Cost of consortium membership prohibits cost of membership dues
- Majority votes to keep NTLP (1 opposed)
- Unanimously (4 libraries) want NTLP to exist no matter what
- Consortia administration, inc. vendor discounts
- Grant writing
- CE– even if for fee
- Regional fundraising
 - More consortiums
- Strong infrastructure for communication/support
- Resource sharing
- Regionalization of library services/resources (result could create isolation among regions)
- Impact of ebooks-changes geographic boundaries

3. NTLP gets \$300,000 (maybe a little more)

- TANG
- TSLAC cut their salaries
- CE-ESP on line
- Vendor discounts
- Consortia
- Web site assistance

- Keep meeting regionally, face-to-face
- Directors listserv
- TWDL
- CE
- IT
- Consulting and reference
 - NTLP continues with \$300,000-476,000
 - Administration of consortia
 - Consulting, possibly on hourly allotment basis
 - Follow up on leads passed on by library personnel
 - Tech support
 - Networking opportunities
 - CE, possibly mostly CDB plus local library personnel
 - Start moving systems in the direction of suggestions made for scenarios 1&2
 - Give up the office space and work out of libraries or an executive suite
 - Keep CE even if it means libraries pay to attend
 - Keep networking opportunities
 - Keep opportunities to meet vendors
 - Charge libraries and hourly fee to use NTLP staff
 - Charge fees to participate in consortiums
 - Keep consortia, especially to facilitate economy of scale
 - Core service: IT?, CE, consortium pricing
- Website: webinars, resource page for library personnel with key FAQ responses, calendar, online toolkits, look at to 100 hits for guidance
- Work on system dev. And a structure that will carry us through more than one year at a time
- Expand services without having to follow TLSAC/LSTA requirements

- Consortia
- CE Grant writing
- Hands-on IT training, toolkits or manuals
- TWDL
- Consulting (staff development included)
- Consortiums
- CE—less face to face, changes in CE

4. No restrictions on NTLP Services

- CD funding and no restrictions on purchasing
- Grant writing & assistance with grant writing
- Remote file servers
- New tech CE
- E-books
- Advocacy
- Coordinated programs for SRC, etc.
- ILL
- Advocacy Coordinator
- Grant Writer and researcher
- Expand databases according to member requests
- Vendor discounts
- Help libraries maintain accreditation
- Make libraries stronger
- Pie in the sky
- Promote advocacy

- Database consortium
- Coordinate cost-sharing opportunities
- Grant writing, especially for tech so that all libraries get current tech and it is installed
- Floating library staff
- Centralized cataloging
- Statewide library card
- Coordinate cooperation among libraries within smaller regions
- Conferences
- Coordinate sponsorships
- Coordinate literacy and related adult ed
 - CE on demand
- New buildings for libraries
- Great flexibility to system level
- Ebook assistance (lobby for them as a system)
- Programming consortium
- Find a venture capitalist with a heart
- Help libraries with their bottom lines
- Negotiate with local museums to provides passes for SRC and as door prizes
 - NTLP create pricing guidelines for libraries wanting to charge allowable fees, ebooks, downloadable audio books
- Audio and video PSAs to promote consortia (professionally done)
- Courier service to all libraries (paid by NTLP)
- Membership dues-if services justifies cost (have to show council value of new cost)
- Want systems to continue-yes, but larger libraries may not need services and not stay part if state funds for systems are no longer available

- Problems with cities questioning how money is spent when local funds support systems. Strong argument for state-wide funding
- Can the state keep systems going statewide with one employee? Problem with not matching for federal funds
- Spirit is willing,, uncertainty, not sure what to do
- System wide fundraising? Discussion w/TML are they willing rather have membership fees? Raising dollars is difficult.

Workshops

Register for these workshops at <http://www.ntrls.org/ce/>. If the course is full, let us know if you want to be put on a waiting list.

- Help! I am a Librarian: Not a Social Worker (8 pm), 4/26/2011, Online Webinar
- Help! I am a Librarian: Not a Social Worker (7:30 am), 4/26/2011, Online Webinar
- Sexting and Other Online Safety Issues in the Library, 5/4/2011, Fort Worth Library Shamblee Branch
- Sexting and Other Online Safety Issues in the Library, 5/11/2011, Decatur Public Library

Conferences

I am sorry to report that we will be postponing all conference activities after August. This is due in part to anticipated budget cuts. Our hope is to start the conferences up again when funding is restored.

Technet 2011

Time and Location August 3, 2011 at the Decatur Civic Center in Decatur, Texas

Tentative Theme: Quick Response Through Technology.

<http://www.librarytechnetwork.com/conferencenews.html>

This conference is all about technology.

Children and Youth Conference 2011

Time and Location TBA (Target Month is November 2011)

<http://www.libraryyouthservicesnetwork.com/>

CANCELLED! This conference has been cancelled due to budget cuts.

One Final Note

NTP's longtime IT Specialist, Adam Beatty, is leaving the organization effective April 26th. He has been with the company for over ten years. It is with a heartfelt gratitude that I extend my thanks to Adam for his dedication to libraries. He will be missed. Best of luck to him in his new endeavor!