Since the first utterance of the word "blog", the nature of our interactions with the technology around us has changed dramatically. The web has been transformed from a place to view and absorb information to an enormous, interconnected community. In the wake of these dramatic changes comes the library, itself transformed. No longer simply a point of access between people and information, libraries are quickly becoming a point of connection between people and their world. Not only is this a place to search and explore but also a place to create and share.

In the Tech Set, creator and editor Ellyssa Kroski compiles a ten-volume collection of practical advice to help librarians capitalize on these favourable technological developments. Winner of the 2011 Greenwood Publishing Group Award for the Best Book in Library Literature, the set challenges administrators, librarians and library paraprofessionals to adopt a wide array of emerging technologies.

The topics covered are as follows: next-generation library catalogues, mobile technologies, microblogging, videos and webcasts, wikis, technology training, social networking, camps and unconferences, gaming, and blogging.

Each slim volume is structured along practical lines, helping the reader manage the project from start to finish. After giving a detailed introduction to the topic, the authors go through the planning, implementation, marketing, best practices and evaluation of the project, effectively creating a step-by-step guide for adopting the technology in any library environment.

Many readers will find the introductions alone to be quite informative. Most librarians and library staff will by now have some familiarity with the broad topics covered by each volume; however, all of the topics are new enough to be shrouded in some mystery. How do you define "next-generation"? Why only 140 characters? What exactly is an unconference? These are all questions we might reasonably ask, and all are addressed expertly by the authors.

Beyond the introduction, the reader is walked through the planning process with specific reference to the technology being discussed. While some technologies will require very significant planning (a new library catalogue, for instance), all of them need to be planned out to some degree in order to be successful. The planning chapter summarizes all the important considerations, including the necessary equipment, space and staffing. Some even go so far as to offer checklists of materials. Many of the authors also focus on change management or administrative and staff buy-in, which can at times be sticky issues in the adoption of new technologies.
Once the planning is complete, the authors describe the implementation process. This outlines exactly what to expect in getting the project up and running. The advice here is distinctly practical, explaining the whole process and detailing any pitfalls that might commonly be encountered. This is where the authors may at times over-step the technical understanding of some readers. The more technical aspects however, are generally presented in a manner that would give less tech-savvy readers the necessary overview and vocabulary to find out more from their techy colleagues in systems and technical services.

The implementation chapter leads in to a discussion of marketing. There certainly exists a lot of cross-over between how best to market these new services, and the reader is presented with a number of variations on the themes "get the word out" and "develop a brand". While much of this might seem like generic marketing advice, the authors do take care to describe the various intricacies of the technology under examination and to sketch out how the new service might factor into an institution's overall marketing strategy. Some even suggest ways that the service might tie in with the emerging technologies examined in other volumes in the set.

One important aspect of the set is the chapter on best practices. Some of the most practical advice is found here. Each author provides a short list of the key considerations necessary for success and experience-based advice for moving forward.

The final chapter presents methods to assess the project and identify future directions. Readers are encouraged to monitor how the new services are being used and to seek feedback regularly. Many of the technologies come equipped with built-in data tracking features to observe how users are interacting with the new service. Most volumes suggest methods of obtaining feedback by using online surveys. Some interesting tools are presented, many of which the reviewer was previously unaware. Ultimately, the recommendation is to include the assessment of these new services in the broader service evaluation already underway.

Each volume also has accompanying materials available online, such as blogs and wikis, to provide support and updates.

The majority of readers will be most interested in perhaps one or a few of the volumes, based on the developments happening in their library, or those they would like to see happen. Although very few librarians would dare undertake all of these projects simultaneously, the volumes can easily be dispersed amongst librarians and staff. The results of ten productive librarians, each taking the lead in one area would be very interesting. Overall, the Tech Set provides a thorough introduction to the adoption of the most prominent emerging technologies in today's libraries.
Ian Fraser, Head Library Instruction, Data Services & Teaching Technology, i.fraser@uwinnipeg.ca, University of Winnipeg Library, The University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba

This review copy was provided by The OLAStore. Neal-Schuman titles are distributed in Canada by the OLAStore. Members of the Partnership (http://www.thepartnership.ca/) will generally receive a discount of 5-10% on most publications. For further information about this title, please visit www.accessola.com/theolastore or contact orders@accessola.com.

The Tech Set ® collection is comprised of the following 10 volumes, and each volume in the set may be purchased separately:


