

## The Salzburg Curriculum

Transcript: Technology video by R. David Lankes

<http://vimeo.com/50805046>

The next topical area that librarians and library staff – because remember, the Salzburg Curriculum goes beyond what happens in a formal education setting, but what happens in continuous education – the next area is technology. Now, clearly technology we think of these days, we think of iPhones, and new computers and Android and the internet, and bringing instantaneous access to us everywhere. That's important.

Now, technology is nothing new to a library setting. Technology has been an integral part of how libraries have worked for centuries. Before we used electricity and batteries to power our technology, we used crankshafts and sometimes we used pens and paper. The card catalog that we like to make fun of these days was a rather interesting use of technology. In fact, many people don't know this, but they built interesting card catalogs systems where, as you found a topical area, you could twist a bar and only the books related to that, the cards would float above the rest. They were really interesting mechanical structures. During the 50s and 60s, with the introduction of high-quality microfilm, obviously taking pictures of large quantities of information, it was libraries that pushed that technology forward so they could keep large volumes of information and sort through it.

When we talk about technology it's tempting, particularly in this age of participatory culture, to talk about *specific* technologies. Thou shalt know Facebook. Thou shalt know html. Thou shalt know how to take pictures, and digital cameras, and eBook readers, and all this other stuff. But the question that the Salzburg folks wrestled with was, how do you come up with a topical knowledge area, which is clearly going to change rapidly, but in such a way that you can say, "This is a durable skill even though the way we implement it may be different"?

The short answer is you don't overthink it. You don't over-specify it. In fact, of all these, it's the last bullet that's the most important skill: the creation and maintenance of an

effective virtual presence. In essence, libraries and librarians need to be available on the web. That's all it comes down to. And the technology that allows us to do that will change, right? Because you're on the web page, and then web pages became dynamic web pages, then blogs, then social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Those can be effective – first of all, we need to understand what effective is – but there's a technology component, so you keep up with the technology.

But you'll see that that's not enough, that, for example, working from the bottom up, the ability to impart knowledge to communities across generations. That is the idea that it's not enough for you as a librarian, or you as a community member to know how to do something, but you must be willing and have mechanisms to pass it on. Our libraries are full of brilliant librarians who know how to use eBook readers and the web and these different technologies, but if it stays within that building and it stays within those individuals, the ultimate mission of those librarians and the library itself has failed. We must be able to communicate, teach, impart that across generations, across community types, across needs.

What's really important here is that often means that how you *teach* technology impacts how you *learn* technology. Which is, rather than say that a librarian's going to go off to a corner and learn it all and come back and teach us, the librarians need to say, "I'm gonna to learn this. Come with me," so that the librarians and community members and library staff at different levels are working together to *learn*, and in learning they are also teaching. That really is an exploratory constructive environment where people are coming together and discovering and sharing and building that knowledge together as opposed to this group of librarians are going to become experts and pass that knowledge down to us. Now, in every community we know that that's going to be an uneven distribution. There are going to be some people who simply don't have time, effort, or ability to go co-learn. They're gonna need an expert to sort of tell them what to do. But the way in which librarians and libraries develop that knowledge must be integrated with the concepts of how libraries function within the community. They co-own, they co-build, they co-learn.

And that's where you move up to things like the ability to engage and impart technology because you're constantly learning. And the first bullet – sort of end up in completely the wrong order – is about crowdsourcing and outreach: digital technology, but also physical technology, bulletin boards and the wall. There's an idea that's in many museums now called a white room. What happens is you walk into a room and they have whited out, in other words, they just whitewash paint all over the walls, and they leave a table, and they leave pens and markers and paint. What happens is if you're working on an idea, or want to scribble, or you've got an interesting doodle to make. You do that on the wall. And then anyone who comes in can add to it and help you and change it, so it becomes this sort of evolving, graffiti-like way of watching what the community was dealing with. And then, depending on how active it is, these museums will have a quarterly or bi-yearly, or yearly whiteout event. They just paint it all over again and say, "next," and start over.

That idea that we can use technology to reach out to a community, to understand a topic, to identify a dream, to know what we need to know is essential. It's not enough for a librarian, for example, to go and learn how to use Technology A, and then be able to use it. They need to be able to take Technology A and be able to say, How can the community benefit from it? How can the community learn? How can we do this together? How can we, in essence, use whatever technologies we implement to bring the community closer in conversation and learning.