

Key Ingredients

for a Successful Web-Based Technology Plan

by Karen Silber

It's Wednesday afternoon, the last session of the last day of the AALL conference. Also, it's raining—has been all day. What better way to pass the time than to attend “Key Ingredients for a Successful Web-Based Technology Plan,” program L-3? Attend we did and listened to **Kathy Coon** (Deputy Director of the Jenkins Law Library) and **Tim Brown** (President of Myxa Corporation) describe how they worked and designed the Jenkins Law Library Internet/Intranet/Extranet Technology Strategy. They explained that with all the technological changes taking place today, it no longer works to plan one step at a time. (The Jenkins Law Library is a non-profit county law library located in Philadelphia. Myxa Corporation is a technology services company located in the greater Philadelphia area.)

Based on this program, anyone planning a technology change would benefit from the tips given by Coon. She grabbed our attention right off the bat with several key questions relating to technology and then went on to describe the “secret recipe” for a successful plan.

An implementation strategy should be a key feature of any technology plan. It's a time-consuming effort and expensive to devise a technology plan, so this section is critical for approval of the plan. Coon described the research she did, including looking at both a custom plan and an off-the-shelf plan and the drawbacks to each. She also described the important services she was looking for in an

outside consultant. In addition, she walked us through the steps of doing the research and reminded us of the importance of talking with others who have gone through this experience. Although some of her discussion could have been gleaned from a management course, she gave great examples and tied it to her experience in the Jenkins Law Library. The ever-changing world of technology requires frequent evaluation and re-evaluation of your organization's technology strategies. Constantly question what you are doing and why; use the technology plan as a blueprint that can and should be changed.

Tim Brown gave us the technology advisor perspective. He discussed the process starting with the discovery phase right to the final report. He discussed how he analyzed the librarians' capabilities and expertise. He stressed the importance of knowing what technology can and can't do for us. He cautioned us to be realistic in the implementation strategy and also to be realistic in the timetables and budgets. He talked about “phased implementation” and using “get-acquainted time” for staff, etc. He also picked up on Coon's tip of devising a strategy to use the technology plan by pointing out that “having a plan is not the end result, it's the beginning”—it's important to implement it. The plan can be used as a tool in attracting key people. Brown mentioned one firm that developed a technology plan and with it attracted key people. After about six months, the people left because the plan was never implemented.

The outcome of the technology plan for the Jenkins Law Library is two new staff positions, a Web site redesign, including new content, marketing materials and a marketing plan being implemented, and an Intranet infrastructure. The slide presentation (page 569 of the conference handout materials) was useful and Coon added to it with her experience over the past year. The two speakers delivered a well-thought-out presentation of their success plan and gave great tips to aid those who are thinking in this direction.

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