What is the ALA Self-Assessment Tool?

The ALA self-assessment tool has been designed to provide a clear framework by which libraries can understand how best to be prepared for the 21st Century. It is a tool that can help all libraries, no matter the size, population, or level of technology deployment, to develop and implement a plan for creating a 21st Century library. It provides a roadmap for libraries as they move towards creating a modern and user-friendly library.

This self-assessment tool is not a standard, but a tool to help libraries determine where they are and where they want to go: it outlines a vision for the future that libraries can strive toward. The tool's flexibility allows it to be adapted to state and local standards. It is intended to provide libraries with a guide to creating a vision for 21st Century service and content.

How the ALA Self-Assessment Tool Can Be Used

Libraries can use the self-assessment tool to help gauge their readiness for the 21st Century patron. The questions generated from the use of this tool can help form discussions, drive decisions and guide libraries, library boards and communities toward developing a 21st Century Library.

The tool looks at four broad library roles and at how these roles shape the creation of the 21st Century Library. The self-assessment tool will ask libraries to consider how they can move towards becoming a 21st Century Library in all of these areas. The areas are:

v **Benefits to the Community:** views the library's role in the community and how community needs are assessed.

v **Community Needs and Services:** looks at the community programming, services and partnerships with the library.

v **Role of the Library in the Networked World:** looks at how the library accesses and creates content and evaluates the role of the library staff in these endeavors.

v **Infrastructure:** considers the facilities, hardware and connectivity of the library.

v **Policy and Planning:** examines overall planning for the library and larger policy issues.

How to Take the ALA Assessment

This self-assessment is a guide, not a definitive measure, of a library's effectiveness in integrating technology into the library and library processes. Since each library is unique, it is likely that a library will fall into several categories.

v Starting under Benefits to the Community, look at each column and see where you fall.

v You can use the 21st Century library measurement to determine where your library is in relation to the technology goal.

v After finding where your library falls in each column, note in which row your library predominately falls.

v Use your findings to start discussions with your staff, community and government officials about setting goals and improving the library's technology.

Terms to Consider When Using the Self-Assessment Tool

v **Programming**: includes any event, ongoing series, course or library function that is designed for patrons.

v **Information Literacy**: the ability to understand all levels of media and the application of information through different sources of technology and media.

v **Electronic Services**: any media or technology used to serve the library or available to library patrons.

The Library in The Networked World

	Benefits to the Community		Community Needs and Services							Role of the Library in the Networked World				Infrastructure				Policy & Planning		
	Potential Benefits	Assess Audience & Community Needs	Community Programming	Educational Services	Partnerships & Collaboration	Government & E-Government	Business, Community, Workforce, and E-Commerce	Community Support for Libraries	Equitable Access	Access to Content	Content Management	Information Literacy	Role of the Library Staff	Facilities	Hardware	Connectivity	Security	Information Use Policy	Funding	Overall Plan and Assessment
Low-Networked Library	Source of print-based materials, community programming and events, and educational programming for some community groups.	Input from board and community	25% of programming is available to remote users and is archived.	Educational services are only in person, schools and libraries have informal association that is not technology-based.	Activities are independently planned by the library and are not technology based.	Government materials offered only in printed form.	10% of library activities have a partnership with local businesses.	The community does not use the library technology outside of the library.	Electronic services are generalized without special accommodations.	All content is print based, some of the catalogue is accessible online.	Library is aggregator of content.	100% of information literacy training is print-based.	Less than 5% of library staff have information literacy training, staff development is not technology-based.	There is a lack of capacity to be flexible in space usage and new technologies.	High ratio of users to equipment, wait for hardware is extensive, maintenance is limited.	Few connections available to the public.	Virus software available on individual computers.	The policy in place only addresses print materials.	Public funding is only used for print materials.	Only short-term planning in place, no technology used.
Mid-Networked Library	Integration between government and community, some programming for specific groups, some technology-based services, some workforce services.	Use of demographics & census data, some marketing analysis	50% of programming is available to remote users and is archived.	50% of educational programming is available online, school and libraries have some formal associations with some use of technology and 50% of students have a library card.	Many activities are associated with other organizations and some are technology based.	50% of government services offered online are available at the library.	20% of library activities have a partnership with local businesses.	Over 25% of the community uses the library's networked tools.	Electronic services are fully accessible to all populations on-site, technology at library is available at no cost.	100% of the catalogue is accessible online, 50% of print material is accessible online.	Library is aggregator and customizer of content.	50% of information literacy training is technology-based.	Over 25% of library staff have technology-based training.	Entire building is up-to-date including adequate electricity, space, storage and wiring capabilities.	Wait for hardware is extensive but a variety of hardware is available, maintenance is weekly.	All hardware is connected but not necessarily at highest speed, speed fluctuates.	Virus software is system-wide, slow system recovery.	The policy addresses intellectual property, privacy and intellectual freedom in both print and online materials.	Some public funds are used towards non-print materials.	Some long-term planning is in place and some technology is used in planning.
21st-Century Networked Library	Informed citizens, increased library access and usage, business-library partnerships, increased partnerships with education, library as integral part of community life, more cultural and educational opportunities, more technology and information literate community, increased customized services for all constituents.	Technology is used to develop strategies to determine the 21st Century library user, library is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the user, demographics, census data and statistics are an important part of the library planning, the percentage of the community using network tools (online access, resources and in-library use) is assessed through user activity.	100% of programming is available online, access to collection is both online and in alternative formats, online reader service and recreational reading programs available 24/7 online.	100% of educational programming is available online, 100% of education institutions connected to library and 100% of students have a library card.	Seamless partnerships between the library and community groups to create original community content and programming using technology, information for all community events and community resources online 24/7.	100% of online government services are available through the library, library expert available as guide and as a resource for government services.	30% of library activities have a partnership with local businesses, school-to-work programs are supported both online and offline through the library, online and offline training and workforce expertise is available in the library.	Over 75% of the community uses the library's networked tools, library is primary source for community technology resources.	The library's electronic services work to reach underserved populations and supports outreach programs.	100% of the system is automated and fully catalogued, 100% of print materials are referenced online.	Library is aggregator, customizer and creator of content.	100% of information literacy training is technology based, 100% of staff are trained in technology based information literacy and training is available to all constituents.	100% of employees are networked and most staff can support digital services, 30% of technology budget is used for technology-based staff development.	Library is fully capable of housing most up-to-date IT equipment. Facilities do not limit programming as it is not just locally situated, 100% of facilities are prepared for without-walls programming.	Low ratio of users to equipment, 24/7 help desk; wait for computer use is minimal, wireless service available.	Highest speed connection available at all workstations and for wireless connections, all branches are networked.	Security is system-wide with a 48-hour recovery, plan for patron online security is written and executed, enforcement measures are in place, security grows with library, backups and disaster recovery plans are in place and up-to-date.	The policy reflects intellectual property, intellectual freedom, internet safety and privacy issues. Policy is regularly reviewed, enforced and communicated to users and staff.	Funding is used for the most appropriate library materials, which includes both print and technology-based materials, funding sources are diversified, including both private and alternative funding sources.	Technology is used to support the design of policies, procedures, to analyze library performance, support budgets, measure sustainability, to report and communicate results, and manage continuous improvement.