

## The Tao of Tablets

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### **Abstract:**

The following studies are included in full in our Library Technology Report on tablets. \* Librarians at McGill University held workshops to help faculty and students use their tablets and other mobile devices effectively and innovatively. \* At San Diego State University, a tablet community, developed across library departments to foster creativity and collaboration, is planning new services. \* The University of Illinois at Urbana- Champaign deployed tablets for curricular use in a first-year undergraduate learning community during the fall 2011 semester.

**Keywords:** academic libraries | information professionals | tablet computers

### **Article:**

#### **Tablets and libraries are getting along fine**

Mobile phones, personal electronic devices, and tablet computers have infiltrated most corners of the academic library. Although many institutions are interested in exploring these new technologies, some are focusing on tablet computers in particular to enhance and even reimagine their services to better support their communities. Library and information professionals who are finding ways to integrate tablets into their workflow include those working in access services, reference, instruction, collection management, information technologies, technical services, assessment, development, administration, and other departments.

The late Melvin Kranzberg, a historian at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, developed "Kranzberg's six laws of technology," which summarize the roles technology has played in society throughout history. Kranzberg's first law states: "Technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral."

He suggests it will always have an impact. Gathering information about library projects with tablets, we've seen that they have become an essential technology for keeping reference and instructional services fresh and relevant.

Furthermore, it is critical that we view the tablet computer not as a shiny new toy but as a component in the evolution of our services and in the continuing value we provide to our communities. We use them for a wide range of projects underway in our libraries. Whether enhancing research instruction or allowing librarians to roam around campus or making the rounds with physicians, tablets have delivered a solution that no other technological tool has been able to rival.

We are barely two years into the tablet revolution and the "post-PC era," as Steve Jobs dubbed this new age of personal computing devices. This convergent evolution of both tablets and academic library services is happening quickly, with innovations in both emerging on a regular basis.

Yet we are only at the beginning. Mobile devices are changing the way consumers access information and the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly connected and digital world. Through the ongoing evolution of reference and instructional services, libraries are helping their users cope with and thrive in the mobile world.

Dave Parry wrote in a 2011 Educause Review article, "The mobile internet changes not only how we teach, but what it means to be knowledgeable and educated in our culture." Academic and school librarians have long sensed this and are rising to this set of challenges by investing in new technologies, integrating them into library services and classrooms, and supporting their faculty and students as they work through what it means to be information literate in a mobile society. The following studies are included in full in our Library Technology Report on tablets.

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These experiments and others underway at other institutions, perhaps yours, pave the way for greater changes to come.