

Nathalie Grogan

When I walk through the door of the library I head directly for the numerous touch screens mounted on the opposite wall. The five screens are large enough to read the print from three feet away, and as I approach there are already several reading enthusiasts trying to find the perfect book. I click away, deciding that I want a historical fiction book taking place in sixteenth-century England, with a love story in addition to an account of the struggle between English Protestants and English Catholics. It is 2025, and the improved library catalog is making its mark on the library.

Bethlehem Public Library in 2025 could be a very different place, with lots of new technology. My vision of the library in fifteen years allows for technological change but still retains the traditional area in a library for relaxation and reading. It is my experience that most people enjoy physically turning the pages of a book rather than reading on a screen. Even in this age of the Kindle, there is nothing quite like the scent of a new book and viscerally reading.

My view of reading may be old fashioned, but technology has certainly made its mark on libraries. The online catalog and the availability of multiple computers to do research or write papers certainly contribute to the library system. My ideal technology for the library would be an improved catalog, perhaps on a touch screen on the wall, which would not only search for books by genre, author, or title, but by elements of plots and certain aspects of stories, such as a romance or a battle, politics or technical studies. Also, one would be allowed to search for books without certain characteristics, as there is nothing worse than reading an intriguing spy story when it suddenly gets very violent. This new and improved catalog would allow you to pick out your ideal book based on elements of plot that you like in books.

In addition to the improved online catalog, perhaps the library would have an online 'book profile' for library card holders that make suggestions for books based on what has been checked out in

the past. This could be the library version of Facebook; your library card number would allow you to access a book profile with a record of the books you have read in the past, which you could rate so others could see if certain books were enjoyable. Your book profile could flag new books that match criteria of books that you had read in the past. My vision of the technological changes also includes a barcode system that can detect when a book leaves the shelf, not just being checked out. This would eliminate the library phenomenon of searching for a book that is registered as 'checked in' only to find that someone removed the book from the shelf and was reading it or carrying it around.

As much as technology may change the library, I hope that the atmosphere of a traditional library never changes. Physically reading a book is satisfying in a way that reading a book on a screen can never be, and sitting and reading in a book-filled library will never lose its charm. The Bethlehem Public Library of 2025 may have new and improved catalog system or computers, but I hope the environment of reading and learning is never changed.

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