



# Technically Speaking

## The Technology Interview

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### By Stephen Ingram

You see the person walking into the library. Usually, they have a bag of some kind. Not something cushioned, or padded. Usually, it is just a plain plastic bag, sometimes, even a briefcase.

There are wires sticking out of it, some cables, occasionally a power adapter, but mostly just wires, and some paperwork that came with the original technology.

They can look lost, wondering where they should go, glancing at anyone, while most of the staff is refusing to make eye contact.

If they look, if they match eyes, they have to help. It is the unwritten rule.

Finally, when you are cornered, when there is no place to run, they put the bag on the desk and say, "Can you help me download a book from the library?"

So begins a standard Technology Interview at the Library. A Tech Interview is a different format from

the traditional Reference Interview. In a Reference Interview, a librarian usually takes a broad statement from a patron, and through question and answer, along with resources on hand, is able to narrow the original question to something that can be defined and answered.

In a Technology Interview, a staff member, whether Librarian or IT specialist, is asked a broad statement from a patron, and through question and answer determines whether or not they are capable of understanding the answer.

If they are not capable, the Technology Interview becomes an instructional session, with the Librarian or IT specialist, educating the patron in the fundamentals of operating systems and software installation. This may also become a session of computer support, because many of the devices brought into the li-

After dealing with a winter that felt never ending and a seemingly short spring, the CATS division of SCLA hopes you enjoy your summer. During this quiet time, we stop and reflect on our accomplishments and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

The CATS Annual Library Tour on April 25th began at the Gould Law Library at Touro College in Central Islip. Irene Crisci, Head of Public Services, led an informative tour of this unique facility. As our visit was during finals week, we witnessed just how much students rely on the resources and carefully designed study areas available throughout the library. We thank the staff who took time away from their work to help make this event a success.

After a brief break for lunch, the group reconvened at the Smithtown Library, Main Building, which recently underwent extensive renovation. This tour began with a slideshow presentation that illustrated the scope of this major undertaking. Director Robert Lusak led the group through the transformed main

branch, highlighting specific aspects of the project while discussing challenges he and the staff faced during the construction period. Other staff members provided information on some of the special services and resources the library offers, including the new Patent and Trademark Resource Center.

The tour concluded at the Nesconset Branch of the Smithtown Library, where we learned how an abandoned armory was transformed into a state-of-the-art community library. The tour was interesting and enjoyable for all who attended. The CATS board would like to thank Director Robert Lusak, Assistant Director Suzanne McManus and the entire staff of Smithtown Library who helped make this possible.

CATS sponsored two programs at the Long Island Library Conference in Melville on May 1st. Bob Johnson, Ellen Druda, Stephen Ingram and Ted Gutman facilitated *I.T. vs. Librarians* provoking discussion and debate as to

the future of these two departments. As the impact technology has on daily life continues to expand, the boundaries between these departments becomes increasingly more blurred. Since tax caps and budget constraints seem to be here to stay, patron service must be the central focus of all library staff if we hope to remain relevant in the future.

Natalia Tomlin, Tech Services Librarian at LIU presented an informational session on *Resource Description and Access (RDA)*, recent successor to AACR2. Initially released in 2012, the Library of Congress fully implemented RDA cataloging last year. Many believe this change will make catalog records more user friendly while addressing issues presented by certain digital holdings. Ms. Tomlin provided guidance for librarians adapting to this new system.

On May 8th, CATS sponsored TIF meeting was a Joint Technology Meeting with members of the Nassau County Library Association. For the first time, these groups met to share best practices and discuss future plans. The well attended meeting was a welcomed opportunity, and we look forward to meeting with them again in the future.

*- The Technology Interview (continued)*

brary may have technology or software issues that need to be corrected to continue the Technology Interview.

If the patron is capable of understanding the goal of the Technology Interview, then the session becomes strictly informational, providing them with guidance to either use library services or some other patron goal.

There are, of course, many barriers in the way of the Technology Interview. There is the presence of technology in the process, working or not, the knowledge level of the staff member, the nature of the software, the nature of the hardware, the knowledge level of the patron with the objective, and the general belief

that we are capable of providing the service or objective that they want.

Each Technology Interview interaction is unique. The previous mentioned factors all combine into a complex session, usually associated with a healthy amount of confusion that can easily shrink or expand at a moment's notice. At some point, a combination of general knowledge, previous experiences or blind luck may help in the process.

Some technology interactions may be solved on the desk, answering quick and easy questions, or demonstrating services. Others may require that time must be blocked out for the patron,

and, more than likely, there will be continual support to help the patron understand, or at least tolerate, the technology.

The fact that patrons come to the library for the use of our digital services and for technology support is a cause for celebration. It is an example of something that is untraditional by typical library standards that is becoming a tradition. We must be willing to embrace this position and invest in the time and energy needed to provide the best service to patrons who bring their technology to the Library. When we do so, without hesitation, we need to look at them right in the eyes.



LILC Raffle winner Erin Schaarschmidt of the Port Jefferson Free Library with her new iPad mini



Ted Gutman, presenting CATS sponsored workshop, 'I.T. vs. Librarians' at 2014 LILC

Computer and Technical Services Division  
Suffolk County Library Association  
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**Upcoming Events:**

**July and August** —No TIF Meetings, enjoy the summer!

**9/4/14** TIF Meeting– 10 AM Brentwood Public Library

**10/2/14** TIF Meeting– 10 AM Connetquot Public Library

**11/6/14** TIF Meeting– 10 AM Emma S. Clark Memorial Library

**12/4/14** TIF Annual Holiday Meeting 10 AM Sachem Public Library

**CATS Board Meetings SCLS Blue Room:**

**9/16/14**

**10/21/14**

**11/18/14**

**12/16/14**

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