Library and Information Technology AssociationTechnology and Access Committee
Information Technology Access Assessment Checklist
Introduction

The purpose of the Information Technology Access Assessment Checklist is to identify access issues and stimulate consideration of them in the development, implementation and/or evaluation of information technologies. It is designed to serve as a non-prescriptive guideline or checklist of access issues in the areas of privacy and security, accessibility, price, databases, standardization, work environment, and any other considerations that might pertain. The checklist considers access in the context of the impact of information technology on the "freedom or ability to obtain or make use of" information because the technology is advancing ahead of social concerns. It is hoped the Information Technology Access Assessment Checklist will serve to:

1. Assist the library staff in addressing practical questions relating to information technology and access in relation to information access;
2. Assist library technology providers in their development of new information products and services; and,
3. Assist publishers and government agencies in their development of new information products and services or in their provision of established products in new technological formats.

This Checklist was originally written for the Committee by Lois Kershner in 1991, and revised by her in 1995. As technology changes ever more rapidly, so too do the tools, like this one, that support our informed use of technology. In that context, the Information Technology Access Assessment Checklist should be considered a work in progress. We encourage you to send your suggestions and ideas about issues that should be included, more fully developed, etc. to the Committee Chair. Thank you in advance for your help in this important effort.

Privacy and Security

This section is concerned with the collection and confidentiality of personal information. Modern technologies make the collection and aggregation of personal data easier. Library policies, regarding privacy and security of personal information, may need to be reviewed or created prior to adoption of a particular technology.

1. How can the equipment, software or other mechanisms be used to monitor the public's use of the system? Does this violate individual privacy?
2. How can the equipment, software or other mechanisms be used to monitor staff use of the system? Does this violate individual privacy?
3. What are the capabilities of the system for preserving user-specific data?
4. If copyright restrictions require sign-on, how does the system keep track of individuals who sign-on to the system?
5. What is the library's policy concerning the types of data that are recorded for storage, later consultation, research, or other purposes?
    a. How is usage data available online? In hard copy in either raw or cumulated form?
6. What security mechanisms exist to assure the confidentiality and the integrity of all data?
    a. What security mechanisms exist to restrict access to the application data and control files?

Accessibility

This section considers ease of access to new information technologies for both patrons and staff.

1. How easy is the system to use for people without computer experience?
2. How can the technology be used by the user community with varying levels of education and computer literacy?
3. How does the system allow for different modes of interaction (mouse, touch screens, menus, etc.) that facilitate use by persons with varying backgrounds, i.e., cultural, ethnic, and linguistic?
4. How does the system serve users with special needs?
    a. How does the system provide special access features for the physically challenged?
    b. How does the system provide special access features for people with learning disabilities?
5. If the same set of data is packaged in different formats (e.g., paper, online, CD-ROM), what are the differences in the level of skill and training required to use the formats?
6. What are the differences among the formats (e.g., paper, online, CD-ROM) in terms of the manner, ease, and sophistication with which information may be retrieved and manipulated?
7. What are the vendor-provided online or printed instructions or tutorials for learning the system without staff assistance?
8. What are the differences, if any, when accessing and using a system remotely?

Cost

This section addresses the cost/performance ratio of databases and/or systems, and is specifically related to the maintenance of free access to information.

1. In comparing the total cost of ownership for a database in different formats, which format provides the best public access per dollar spent?
2. In comparing the total cost of ownership of alternative technologies, which alternative provides the best public access per dollar spent?
3. Will fees for service or other special charges accompany the use of this information technology?
4. Will the use of this product draw money away from other library services?
5. Are there low cost equipment alternatives for remote access to system or services?

Databases - Local and External

The database is the heart of an information system. This section focuses on data ownership, integrity, and access issues.

1.Ownership of Data:

a. Who owns the database(s) - the library, a commercial vendor, or another organization such as a network? Or, is the database in the public domain?

b. Are you purchasing, or leasing the data? Are the products returned if the license, subscription, or maintenance agreement is not renewed? Will this lead to gaps in coverage?

c. What, if any, are the restrictions on using, copying and downloading or printing the data?

d. What, if any, are the copyright considerations?

2. Integrity and Completeness of Data:

a. What, if any, are the provisions for maintaining archival copies of previous versions of the data?

b. Does the system, and your rights to it, allow you to make a full copy of all essential files (records, indexes, software) for off-site storage in case of disaster?

c. Is the database comprehensive and accurate? Does it provide the same information in all formats?

3.Access to Data:

a. What, if any, are the technical limitations on access to the data, i.e., use on multiple work stations or a network?

b. What, if any, are the political or legal restrictions on access to the data, i.e., use on multiple work stations or a network?

Standardization / Open Systems

This section examines how standardization allows hardware, software and/or networks communicate. The Open Systems concept goes beyond standardization to provide a vendor-independent systems designed to work with a variety of products. Open System standards are determined from a consensus of interested parties rather than one or two vendors.

1. What modifications, if any, does the vendor make to generic, off-the-shelf hardware? Does the vendor provide standard telecommunications and/or networking hardware and software?
2. Is local support and maintenance of the hardware available?
3. Is the equipment built to meet ergonomic standards i.e., easy on the eyes, adjustable screens, adaptable keyboards, etc.?
4. What are the reports of the stability, or instability, of the product technology (hardware and software)? What information is available, if any, that the technology is being replaced by newer technology?
5. Does the system use centralized or distributed system architecture?
6. Does the system meet currently available technical standards?
7. Does the system vendor adhere to established standards? Does the system vendor commit to follow future standards that will have a bearing on access available through

this technology? What is the nature of the commitment, i.e., member of standards making body such as NISO?

8. Is the operating and application software portable to a wide-range of hardware?
9. Does the system meet standards for the transfer of data (or portability of data) to other systems?
10. Does the vendor develop interfaces to related products? If not, what are the reasons given, e.g., related product does not meet standards? What interface products exist?
11. Interoperable. Does the proposed system(s) have the ability to communicate/function with existing systems?

Work Environment

The work environment has an impact upon staff's ability to assist with patron access.

1. What are the delivery and other support mechanism needed to support the demands created by the introduction of this technology? Are they in place?
2. How does the introduction of this technology increase or decrease the complexity or amount of work for staff?
3. Will the introduction of this technology increase or decrease the amount of time available to provide public services?
4. How does the introduction of this technology affect staff job descriptions?
5. How does the introduction of this technology reduce or increase the skill level required to do the job?
6. How does the introduction of this technology increase or decrease work at Workstations? For longer than the recommended period of time?

Other Considerations

1. Who will benefit or be hurt from the introduction of this technology?
2. What, if any, is the possibility of misuse of the technology?
3. What will be the impact, if any, on services if this technology is not introduced?
