



Book Review

Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff, Seventh Edition

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ABSTRACT

This review examines the seventh edition of *Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff*, by Robin Hastings. The book is fully revised from the sixth edition and is a comprehensive and accessible introduction to library technologies. It provides an overview of topics including electronic resources, library systems, social media, makerspaces, accessibility, and emerging trends. It is written in clear, approachable language and is designed for library staff engaging in library technology in various capacities. This review evaluates the book's strengths, while noting some limitations. Ultimately, this review recommends this book as a valuable foundational resource for a wide range of library professionals.

KEYWORDS

library technology, professional development, electronic resources, computing

SUGGESTED CITATION

Bagley, A. (2025). Review of *Neal-Schuman library technology companion: A basic guide for library staff*, 7th ed., by Robin Hastings. *Journal of New Librarianship*, 10(2), 58–62.

<https://doi.org/10.33011/newlibs/19/6>

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Introduction

In an era of fast technological advancement and shifting user expectations, library workers are frequently called upon to understand, implement, and support a range of digital tools and services. As such, practical, up-to-date guidance is essential. Robin Hastings' *Neal-Schuman Library Technology Companion: A Basic Guide for Library Staff* (7th ed.) arrives at an opportune moment and reflects the technological landscape of libraries in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It addresses both the foundations of library technology and the emerging innovations that are reshaping library services.

The book is structured to serve as both a training guide and a quick-reference manual. It covers a wide range of topics from integrated library systems and electronic resources to assistive technologies, social media, and more. Hastings writes with clarity and approachability about complex topics and grounds technical content into the daily realities of library work. Hastings' treatment of current trends and user-centered design makes this book relevant for a wide audience, from library and information science students to library administrators. This review explores the book's structure, content, and its contributions to the ongoing professional development of library personnel.

About the Author

Robin Hastings is the Library Services Consultant for the Northeast Kansas Library System, where she serves 118 libraries. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technology in 2010 and a Master's degree in Library and Information Management in 2016. She has twenty years of experience building websites, has authored multiple works, including books, articles, and book chapters, and has presented at conferences worldwide about library technology and library management. She is active in professional leadership and currently serves as president of Mountain Plains Library.

Key Themes

A few recurring themes stand out in the newest edition of *Technology Companion*: the importance of aligning technology decisions with user needs, the ongoing challenge of digital equity, the reality that libraries must balance innovation with long-term sustainability, and the need for continuous professional development in an ever-changing field. Hastings takes care to emphasize the human side of technology and reminds us that library services are fundamentally about people, not platforms.

Summary of Contents

As an Electronic Resources Librarian, I work with technology, but I am not a library systems specialist. I found the tone and structure of Hastings' book inviting and informative. Hastings excels at breaking down complex concepts into digestible summaries. The chapters are

concise but well-organized. Each chapter ends with lists of resources and actionable frameworks, like questions to ask before purchasing a new integrated library system and guidance for planning web content.

The book is organized into 16 chapters. Early chapters ground readers in historical and conceptual frameworks. Later chapters move into specific application areas: social media outreach, instruction technologies, makerspaces, digital privacy, trend forecasting, and more. Notably, the book reflects post-pandemic realities and cites data from the 2023 Public Library Administration technology survey to highlight how technology usage in libraries has increased. The chapter on future trends is a particular highlight for its reflection on how libraries uphold traditional library services while constantly experimenting and evolving.

Assessment

Hastings argues that to serve patrons effectively, library workers must understand the technologies that support and enhance library services. Unlike the previous edition that focused mainly on overviews, the seventh edition takes a human-centered approach. Hastings emphasizes that library technology is not an end, but rather a means to support access, equity, and engagement. By centering real-world applications and snippets from practicing librarians, Hastings reinforces the idea that practical context and adaptability are just as important as technical literacy.

Notable strengths of the book are its broad scope and practical applicability. It is a valuable resource for library workers across a range of institutions. Hastings' accessible writing style ensures that newer staff members or those less familiar with technology can engage with the content. This clarity is complemented by Hastings' credibility, which is built on real-world experience in library technology, leadership, and consulting. The book is strengthened by insights from actual library workers, which offer perspectives that enhance the relevance, authenticity, and human-centered approach to technology. Additionally, the inclusion of planning checklists and implementation guides offers a hands-on framework that readers can readily apply in their own libraries and practices. An organized and thorough glossary and index further support ease of use. These additions allow for quick references and increased usability.

However, the book has some minor limitations. It is introductory by design, so readers that require more detail about a topic will need supplemental readings. Some areas, such as social media legalities in libraries, would benefit from slightly deeper exploration. Given the fast pace of technological development, this title needs frequent updates. It should be noted, though, that these limitations are addressed with the book itself. The book is in its seventh edition, so it has already been updated to reflect changing technology, and chapters include supplemental resources lists for readers looking to dive deeper.

Conclusion

Neal-Schuman Library Technology: A Basic Guide for Library Staff (7th ed.) is a thoughtful, highly usable guide to wide-ranging technologies that support today's libraries. Hastings' update to this long-running series brings perspective, clarity, and relevance to our complex information landscape. While it will not replace technical or specialized texts, it does not try to; it serves as a foundation, and it does well in that role.

I recommend this book for any library professional looking to strengthen their understanding of current library technologies with a basic guide. It is particularly beneficial for those of us in roles adjacent to systems work who still need to understand and engage with the tools that shape the user experience and service delivery. Although academic librarians may not find the chapter on makerspaces relevant to their practice, and public librarians may choose to skip the chapter about distance learning, there is something in this guide for most library workers.

References

Hastings, R. (2025). *Neal-Schuman library technology companion: A basic guide for library staff* (7th ed.). ALA Neal-Schuman.

Public Library Association. (2023). *2023 Public Library Technology Survey: Summary Report*. https://www.ala.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/PLA_Tech_Survey_Report_2024.pdf

Tables

Table 1*Overall Patron Satisfaction with Self-Checkout*

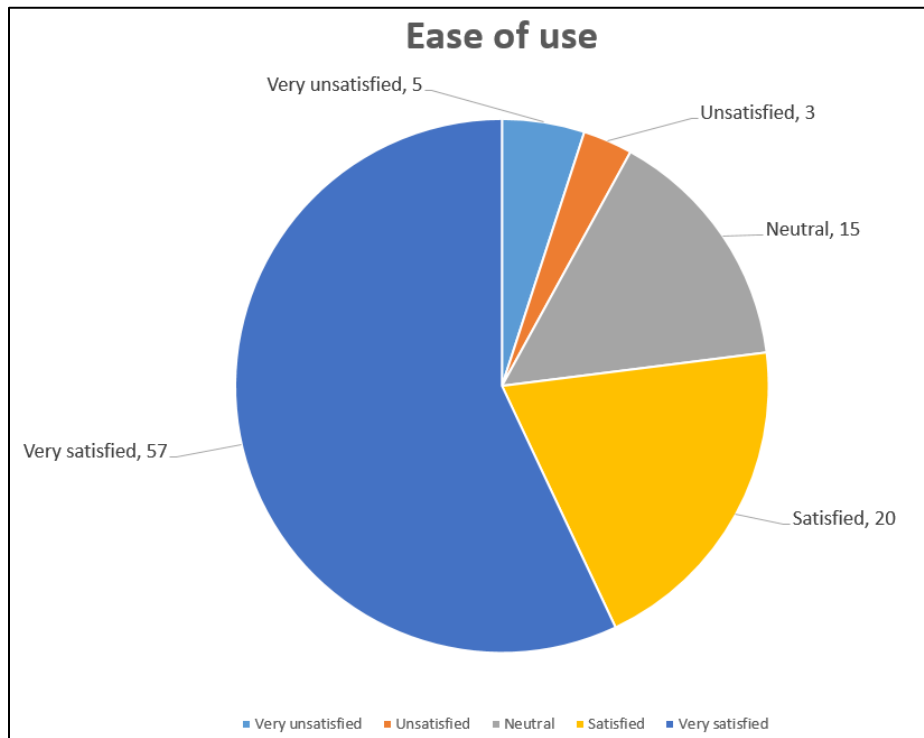
Feature	Very unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Ease of use	5	3	15	20	57
Wait time	1	2	9	13	75
Intuitiveness	4	4	12	35	45
Overall satisfaction	3	3	12	24	58

Note. 100 patrons were surveyed.

Figures

Figure 1

Patron Satisfaction with Ease of Use of Self-Checkout



Note. 100 patrons were surveyed.

Appendix