
Yakima Valley Libraries Technology Assessment and Recommendations for Upgrades and Enhancements

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Executive Summary

The Yakima Valley Libraries (YVL) face a major three-phase project of replacing and upgrading technology resources to improve performance and provide better quality library services to the citizens of Yakima County and to the YVL staff. The needs are urgent, and—in addition to hardware, software, services, and personnel efforts—YVL must immediately upgrade and replace its existing Wide Area Network (WAN), which is on the point of failure and requires an immediate fix.

As background to this summary, several key facts are important to note.

- YVL has been aware of the service and technology problems it faces and has been actively planning and executing upgrade steps for several years. Some examples include:
 - Moving most servers and network control features into Yakima County’s Secure Data Center (SDC).
 - Installing a high-speed fiber optic network between the Downtown Yakima Library and the SDC.
- The costs of technology upgrades and replacements are high, and YVL has accumulated revenue for use in the upgrades.
- The Library’s strategy of relying on “open source” software has permitted YVL to deploy low-cost technology, but with that low-cost deployment has come a lower level of service to patrons and staff. Some examples include:
 - Most library client technology in the marketplace is built around Microsoft Windows software, and those products provide a variety of services not available in open source environments.
 - Among the software not available in open source are most literacy products, adult education products, many children’s games and educational products, popular website animation products, office software products in forms familiar to patrons and staff, Spanish language software, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) software. YVL has foregone many of these services because open source versions are not available.

- The availability of these products was noted by public services staff throughout YVL as a key requirement or unmet need for patrons and staff.

YVL will need to begin replacing some of its open source products and services if it is to offer higher quality library services, and—it should be noted—these patron services are standard in other public libraries. Services to staff should also be standardized around familiar products, for interoperability and for ease of use.

In addition to the requirement for an immediate fix to the YVL Wide Area Network, other key infrastructure assets requiring replacement are the YVL e-mail server and server software, and the network security firewall.

The way forward for YVL will involve a demanding upgrade project stretching over at least three years, and involving more staffing and more capital and operational spending. The staffing issue recommendations are detailed throughout the report.

The chart on the following page (ES-3) shows the timeline of the recommended three-phase project, and the major task areas in each.

A summary budget for the recommended technology improvements is provided on page ES-4.