

Top Tech Trends 2029

By **Michael Ridley**

Each year at the Ontario Library Association's Super Conference, one of the most popular sessions is Top Tech Trends. Luminaries from the world of libraries are invited to talk about the coming year and to give their prognostications of what tools, services, and cool things will be most important or prominent in the year to come.

So, I can't help but wade in myself. Here are Top Tech Trends for **2029**.

Why 2029? First, it's 20 years from now, which is a reasonable distance into the future – not too near, not too far. It also will mark 50 years for me as a librarian, which seems like a good milestone. And lastly, in 2029 I'll be 75 years old and perhaps too senile to worry about how wrong my ideas were. As the great American Zen master (and sometime baseball player) Yogi Berra once said, "It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future." Here's the countdown.

Top Trend #6

All Neurology, All the Time. While mind control will certainly be possible, in 2029 it will still be crude. However, neural prosthetics and cosmetic neurology will be mainstream. Technological extensions will be directly connected to our neurological systems enhancing processing power and storage (memory) capacity, and even adding wireless functionality. Other enhancements will be accomplished through intelligent pharmacology that targets specific capabilities (e.g., concentration, perception, retention, associative memory).

Top Trend #5:

End of Computers and the End of Software. Computers have been getting smaller all the time: by 2029 they will disappear. Organic computers will be less devices and more capacities that are embedded in other objects (including our bodies). In the same way, software will be less a commodity and more a set of services that are simply accessed at point of need. The word "software" will have fallen out of use. And as our Zen master said, it will be "déjà vu all over again" as the most important input and output device will be paper – e-paper through e-ink

innovations. The computer is now a piece of paper that can be folded up and put in your pocket.

Top Trend #4:

Enriched Experience. Forget multimedia, think multi sense. Digital environments and experiences will include smell, taste, and touch. Simulated 3D may be cool today but the real advance in 20 years will be full holographic displays like the holodeck. Second Life will be mediated not through a screen but experienced like a tableau playing out in your living room, office, and likely other places as part of a fully immersive experience.

Top Trend #3:

Mediated Reality. Why accept the world as it is when you can have the world as you want it? Contact lenses will act as computer screens. A heads-up display in the lens will be connected to always-on video feeds and linked wirelessly to the network and to the various neural prosthetics that we have (see above). What you see will be what you choose to see. Advertising could be replaced (in your field of vision) with art, and the building on the street you see will have information overlays explaining their history, purpose, and the services they offer. This mix of deeply embedded wireless communication and information exchange will create a kind of digital telepathy (Kevin Warrick of the University of Reading calls this “techlepathy”) and it will make MSN look like something from the Stone Age.

Top Trend #2:

Lifeblogging. Virtually everything you say, write, create, do, and even think will be digitally captured or represented.

There will be a full digital archive of you. So rich is this record with so much information about you (images, attitudes, opinions, ideas, proclivities) that an avatar will continue being you in virtual worlds after your physical death. Of course, all this promises endless fun and debate regarding privacy, legal precedents, and intellectual property.

Top Trend #1:

Libraries Matter. In 2029, technology will still be in service to humans. (The supremacy of the machine in the posthuman world is still a bit further away; it is, however, on its way. Sorry.) The key Top Tech Trend is that libraries will still be the agency that mediates between the power of technology and the aspirations of people. Within this new and strange technologically driven world, libraries will help to make this experience meaningful, transformative, and heartfelt. Whatever the trends and whatever the technology, libraries will continue to nurture individuals and build communities.

What a relief – 2029 sounds OK after all.

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