

# Dangers and Opportunities: Challenges for Libraries in the Digital Age

Doug Johnson, Director of Media and Technology, Mankato (MN) Public Schools  
[www.doug-johnson.com](http://www.doug-johnson.com) 2010

The complete set of these resources can be downloaded from:  
<https://dougjohnson.wikispaces.com/Dangers>

*The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger - but recognize the opportunity. - John F. Kennedy, Speech in Indianapolis, April 12, 1959*



- Johnson, D. Are Libraries (and Librarians) Heading Toward Extinction? Teacher-Librarian, Dec 2003
- Johnson, D. "Dangers and Opportunities." Minnesota Media
- Johnson, D "Letter from the Flat World Library Corporation," LMC,
- Johnson, D. "Turning the Page" (E-books and impact on libraries)
- Johnson, D. "Skills for the Knowledge Worker, T-L, November 2005
- Johnson D. and Joyce Valenza, Things That Keep Us Awake at Night. School Library Journal,

## Top Three Dangers for Libraries in the Digital Age

- Danger 1: The growing digitization and portability of information.
- Danger 2: Fundamental changes in the nature and sources of information.
- Danger 3: The need for new skills for workers in a global economy

## Top Seven Opportunities for Libraries in the Digital Age

- I. An opportunity to improve our physical facilities
- II. An opportunity to truly educate
- III. An opportunity to remain information "experts."
- IV. An opportunity to be team players
- V. An opportunity to become a push institution
- VI. An opportunity to diversify, offer non-traditional services to our patrons
- VII. An opportunity to help close the digital and generational divides

BONUS OPPORTUNITY: An opportunity to grow our own professional abilities.

(Edward De bono?) Activity

Imagine a situation in which every student and teacher in your school has a practical, powerful e-book with access to nearly an unlimited number of books and other educational resources through it. Using the form below, jot down some ideas about what may be good, what may be bad, and what is interesting about this scenario. (You must have some ideas in each column.)

What's good?	What's bad?	What's interesting?



## FLAT WORLD LIBRARY CORPORATION

March 15, 20xx

Superintendent Dennis Hookworm  
Left Overshoe Public Schools  
Left Overshoe, MN 56034

Dear Superintendent Hookworm:

We at the Flat World Library Corporation can offer you a complete library program at a *very* attractive price.

For considerably less than you currently pay for your K-12 library program, we can provide a full range of library resources AND library services – all on line.

**For only pennies a day per student, FWLC will:**

1. Provide a full range of reading materials (periodicals, picture books, fiction and non-fiction titles), videos and reference sources that are tailored to your state standards, your district's curriculum and your digital textbook series. These resources are being constantly updated, and are available, of course, in a wide range of lexile ranges to support your differentiated instruction efforts. You can specify the level of community tolerance for issues ranging from abortion to gay rights to evolution from "university community" to "small town Kansas."
2. Provide ready reference services, student research help, readers' advisory service, and curricular planning advice through our real-time connections (video, chat or e-mail) to our experts in Bangalore, India. These highly-qualified MLS certified professionals will be available 24/7 to both your staff and students from school *or* home. (Do you get 24/7 service from your current library staff?)
3. Allow teachers to submit student work for comment and assessment. Our staff will give each project a consistent grade, check for plagiarism, and provide a report for each child that teachers can share with parents about the research and technology skill strengths and weaknesses of every individual student. We can even help your teachers design assignments and assessments, so they are free to lecture.

Just think of the advantages:

- No musty books from the 1950's cluttering your library shelves. No more lost or missing books.
- No library facilities. Turn that old library space into those badly needed special education classrooms.
- No more pesky librarians who want more money for materials, support staff, and staff development. Our highly skilled Indian librarians are happy to have their \$5 per hour jobs!
- A single, semi-competent technician in your district can maintain your entire library program.
- You can justify your district's expensive 1:1 computer/student initiative.
- No more contentious book or curriculum "challenges."

Please read the attached study (scientifically-based and conducted by FWLC's very own research department) that empirically demonstrates that this product can dramatically improve student performance where it counts - on high stakes tests. (FWLC has been approved by for Federal Title and grant funding – unlike traditional library materials and librarians.)

Act today!

*Coming soon – special pricing for regional and statewide purchases.*

Sincerely,  
Bill Baudrate, CEO  
Flat World Library Corporation  
300 Gates Drive  
Greenmond WA  
1-800-NO-BOOKS

The penciled note at the bottom from the superintendent read simply: "Why should I *not* buy this product?"