

**2** *The technological challenge:* What media will be available in various mission situations that can be used to reach large audiences with the Gospel message? What means of message distribution are available?

- What is the best medium for outreach in [location]? What will it take to employ it?
- How can we achieve maximum output in regions with limited power sources?
- A basic production or distribution set-up for video/ or radio/ or print/ or internet/ or (?) in [location]?
- New technology on the horizon with promise for Gospel outreach applications.

***Paul Hartman wrote:***

Access to the Internet has transformed communication in developed countries in North America, the European Union and far eastern countries along the rim of the Asian continent. Now the usage in developing countries, such as China, India and Latin America is growing so rapidly that their numbers surpass the number of users in the developed countries.

Even so, the proportion of the population using the Internet in developing countries is still low. Whereas nearly four of every five people in the United States get onto the Internet, only 40% access it in Latin America, while only one fourth of the population in Asia has access and the percentage in Africa is little more than half of Asia.

On the other hand, much cheaper cell phones are universal. In developed countries there are more subscriptions than people. In developing countries that include many of the places where the WELS is proclaiming the gospel, subscriptions equal nearly 80% of the population. As Gonzalo says, "It's hard to find a person today that does not have access to a cellphone." Areas that have little access to electricity, such as in the Himalayas, use solar-powered generators to recharge batteries.

Smartphones with access to the Internet offer a way for people in developing countries to access the Internet without having to purchase a computer. Nearly 10% of the population in developing countries now has mobile phones with access to the Internet. Used smartphones can be loaded with applications and publications for use among people who would not use smartphones to access the Internet.

Digital tablets combine the smart phone with a scaled down computer. Television, movies, music, blog messages and books can be accessed. Information can be processed by the user and incorporated into sermons, Bible studies and other messages in order to proclaim the gospel and teach the Word of God. Globally the sales of tablets will probably surpass 100 million this year. In four years the quantity sold per year may double again. At that rate one fifth of the world population may have a digital tablet by 2020. Will the tablet coupled perhaps with a projector replace the television and a VCR in the developing world?

These developments have immense implications for cross-cultural publishing. For instance, it might cost well over \$400,000 just to reprint 41 volumes of the revised edition of the Spanish *People's Bible*. Storage and shipping to Latin American countries can double the cost. Here's another problem: the *People's Bible* is intended primarily for national church workers. The comparatively small number of workers who need materials like the *People's Bible* means that some volumes will be stored for many years. Why not distribute on digital tablets the *People's Bible* together with many other Spanish translations, such as the *People's Bible Teachings*, *God so Loved the World*, *Our Great Heritage* and even items intended for a broader audience, such as *Bible Stories in Pictures*, the *Bible Teachings Series* and the *Road to Emmaus* film? Compared to the cost of printing and shipping, the savings would be huge, and the uploading of new publications or revisions of existing publications would be far cheaper.

The source re: internet usage:

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

The source re: mobile phone subscriptions and tablet sales: <http://mobithinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/latest-mobile-stats/>

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***Gonzalo Delgadillo wrote:***

How we define outreach?  
Is outreach done only by paid people? Is it done only during working hours? Is it a law?  
Retired people don't do outreach.  
What is the definition of technology?  
Do we have an exhaustive technology inventory?  
What do we mean by media?  
How we definite and understand the term large audiences?  
There is not such a thing as the best medium.  
The maximum output in regions with limited power sources can be achieved using THE BTS Books.

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***Terry Schultz wrote:***

Deep in the Peruvian Amazon, tribal pastor Tangoa sits on the thatch roof of the school house cleaning the briefcase-sized solar panel. A wire from the roof connects below to a truck battery connected to an inverter, a DVD player, and a screen. At night, Spanish language Bible story DVDs are played while the entire village (population 50) sits around the small screen. As the DVD plays, an elder translates the film's dialogue into the tribal language.

The technological challenge of putting an image on a large screen in remote areas of the world is being met. Two energy sources are most commonly available for powering projectors and laptops: solar-panel-charged batteries and gas-powered generators. While these two power sources are usually adequate they do have disadvantages. During the wet season in tropical climates, villages may go days or even weeks without seeing the sun, rendering solar panels useless. The obvious drawbacks to gas generators are fuel expense, maintenance, noise, and pollution.

Ideally, a solar-panel-charged battery and DVD player would be found in each village of an

evangelist's circuit. Solar-charged laptops with satellite Internet hookup open a huge array of evangelism possibilities. Tablets are beginning to appear. Affordable new technologies will take us beyond the media systems currently found in remote, often impoverished areas.

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***Ugis Sildegs wrote:***

In the fast paced and highly technological environment in which we live today, it is not easy to decide which medium is the most beneficial for the Gospel. One cannot do it all. Inevitably the decision has to be made, which way to go: TV, radio, internet or printed media?

When we had to make our decision in 1996, the internet was not yet an option. Since TV was too expensive, we had to choose between radio and print. We tried both. We made some radio programs, but discontinued it, because we felt our incompetence and that our voice got lost without any real impact.

Newspaper at that particular point seemed to be the most appropriate means of communication. Since papers in Latvia were widely read and there was a good niche for such a paper, we decided in favor of newspaper. We intended it not only as a paper for Church folks, but also as an outreach tool.

We were quite content with our choice. Even though it demanded pretty big efforts, we quickly acquired skills of production and distribution. Most of the work was done by our staff, except the printing itself.

In visual form and content we did our best to look up-to-date and contemporary. At the same time the newspaper gave us enough space to shape, articulate and formulate our message in such a way that allows avoiding traps of superficiality and reductionism, which are so wide spread in media today.

We also considered it important that a newspaper is a comparatively "slower" media which makes people to slow down as they read and think about the message. It is generally

acknowledged that in the process of reading, people perceive a great deal more and are more deeply involved than, for example, when watching TV.

Several times we contemplated the idea to change our newspaper into a magazine (according to the general tendency of the media business). Possibly, it would be an even better fitting form for our medium, simply because a magazine looks more solid, but it is also more expensive.

As the internet got more wide-spread and advanced, we made older issues of our paper available online. But we recognized that most of our audience is older people and they were not big online readers. Maybe now the situation is gradually changing.

Today as web technologies develop at a very rapid pace and most people become internet users, the online presence becomes more important. In the future, I predict, there will be a unification of all electronic media. TV, radio, internet and all printed sources will be available by way of one centralized medium, which will be easy to access and operate. And, of course, it will be much more easy and cheap to distribute throughout it.

#### Questions:

The Internet gives seemingly unlimited possibilities. But are those possibilities real or illusionary? Isn't the world wide web similar to the general world we know so well, where everybody wants to speak, but nobody listens? And what, for instance, does the popularity of *Facebook* and *Twitter* tell us about the mindset of contemporary people? Pictures, very short messages, lots of noise. How does the Gospel fit in such an environment?

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#### ***Jas Lonquist and Mike Klebig wrote:***

During WWII, Hitler built a massive radio transmitter in Monte Carlo and pointed it at the USSR. The goal: broadcast Nazi propaganda. But no transmissions were ever sent. By the time it was completed, the Third Reich was in its

death throes. A few years later, the transmitter was purchased by Trans World Radio. Still pointed at the USSR, it began transmitting Christian programming. The station built to spread fear and hate spread peace and hope instead. Uplifting twist – and a smart use of technology.

**Technology goals:** This is a moment in time with unprecedented potential for messages to be *massively* and inexpensively shared. Ignoring today's technology is like scribes continuing to copy Bibles by hand once the printing press was invented. A few goals: (a) **Stay up-to-date** and equipped to seize new opportunities technology offers. (b) **Train** people so they can be independent, and use technology to create and distribute their own media. (c) Adequately **fund** technology as part of missions. While there may be initial hurdles, it's safe, cost-effective, efficient, and allows for ongoing communication and relationship building. (d) Provide ongoing **tech support** to missions.

#### **Ideas to consider:**

- **ONLINE FORUM:** Create an online forum with experts providing technology answers, troubleshooting, and problem-solving.
- **IT VOLUNTEERS:** Let IT people know they're needed and ask them to volunteer on a regular basis. Ask skilled professionals to "tithe" career skills – 4 hours of volunteering for every 40 hours in the workplace.
- **TRAINING:** Create detailed, thorough technology training DVDs for laypeople. Use (free) screen capture software like Microsoft's Windows Media Encoder 9 to demonstrate apps and capture training.
- **LIVE TRAINING:** Have regular conferences to discuss technology and media strategies, train, and provide fellowship for tech workers.
- **HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE VENDOR FORUMS:** Opportunities for training directly from manufacturers.

**SAMPLES OF WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING** (*For information only – not an endorsement of services or content*)

- **International Conference on Computing and Mission (ICCM)** [www.icm.org](http://www.icm.org)  
[www.iccm-asia.org](http://www.iccm-asia.org)

Tech conference with industry pros. Affiliation: Non-denominational

- **YouVersion** [www.youversion.org](http://www.youversion.org)  
Free online Bible, multiple translations, for smartphones and iPads – read scripture, create groups, share messages, answer questions. Established by Lifechurch.tv Affiliation: ECC (Evangelical Covenant Church)

- **Galcom** [www.galcom.org](http://www.galcom.org)  
Tools and partnerships in global Christian radio. Remote radio stations that fit in suitcases. Solar powered and fixed tune radios. Affiliation: Statement of faith on website

- **Bomgar** <http://bomgar.com>  
Remote helpdesk tools. Affiliation: Secular

- **TWR** (Trans World Radio) [www.twr.org](http://www.twr.org)  
Christian radio network reaching four billion people worldwide. Affiliation: Doctrinal statement on website

- **Teaching Challenge** page contains resources for specific devices

## TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES WORKSHEET: MEDIA TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

*For information, try: UN Least Developed Countries Report 2011 - [www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2011\\_en.pdf](http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2011_en.pdf) as well as resources provided in Culture Challenges paper*

1. Is electricity readily available to most of the people in this region?
2. What other sources of energy (solar, wind, hydro, generators) are used in this region?
3. Are vehicles used as a source of DC power for cell phones or other devices?
4. Is cell phone service available? What type? If not, how close is the nearest cellular service?
5. Is it possible to operate a radio station in this region? Is it possible to operate a TV station in this region?
6. What are the local standards for television and video? ([www.countrycode.org/tv-standards](http://www.countrycode.org/tv-standards))
7. Do people use social media in this region? To what degree?
8. Is the internet available and accessible in this region? Is it restricted?

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## *John Lawrenz wrote:*

The mission field of East Asia embraces a third to a half of the world's people. As such it is a microcosm of the whole. In large cities the technology is equal to, or exceeds, that of large cities in the United States. In rural areas, of course, the opposite is true. The technology is perhaps equal to, but likely falls short of, what is available in the most rural portions of America.

We all know that technology leapfrogs. We have seen the TV rabbit ears sprout on grass huts in central Africa. Countries without land-line telephones are today awash in hand held devices. Technology spawns flash mobs. Technology links together strangers regardless of space, but it also reduces the majority of messages and interpersonal relationships to sound/visual bytes. Emotion rides high. Meditation and reflective thought fall casually to the 24/7/365 pulse of instant connectivity. The trivial triumphs.

All media are potentially available in East Asia. What we Christians need to employ re: the modern media is (a) training, (b) insight into what is cost/benefit effective, (c) the resources to deploy the media of our choice, and, above all (d) good content that honors our calling as Christ's ambassadors.

First of all, let's examine training. No one person can aspire to be a "universal man" though I have seen a few gifted individuals who stand out as impressive. It will take a tech team. If biblical believers needed scribes to make the scrolls that the Apostle Paul requested from his pupil Timothy, we will need "tech scribes" on our team to help us prepare the media that fit our audience. It will take research to learn what media are in use. In Hong Kong all media are present. Parts of rural China are not like Hong Kong. We can be ready to leapfrog if the culture is less advanced. Yet I would caution against adopting the latest tech gadget if our target audience isn't where we are. Where literacy is low, the spoken word remains the best technology. Where people are highly visual, we will employ pictures. At the same time, if we

have been sent to people who are downloading apps, we will find a way to create an attractive and informative Lutheran app as soon as possible. We may find that a failure to do so will drive our audience into the fellowship of those who have stolen a march on us. We have the spoken Word, the inspired Word, the translated Word, the worship Word in Word and sacrament, the printed Word, and the radio/TV/digital Word. Each of these is a different “technology.” Each requires planning, production, and marketing to roll it out and do it right. The more complex the technology, the more extensive and intensive the training.

Second, we must ask what is cost/benefit effective? A major caution is not to try to do everything at once. It’s a formula for doing nothing well. Pick the medium that reaches the most people in the clearest way. Match it with capable people to shape and deliver the message. Follow up! Keep at it until the Lord provides additional insight, peoplepower, and finances. Make sure that the tried-and-true media don’t hang around long after their effective time is over. Make sure to bridge the old and the new. Be absolutely sure that the content overshadows the “wow factor.”

Third, resources are people. . . the team! Without people you don’t have sufficient time to assign to needed tasks. People using media should be Christian when you look at the team overall. Outsiders can help, but should not drive the enterprise. If they do, opt for something simpler. Resources are also the dollars to buy good equipment. Equipping includes maintenance. Using a system that breaks down and can’t be fixed for lack of time and money is demoralizing. Settling for a tech system that is outdated or out-moded—because it’s cheap—is a trap certainly to avoid. Again, I believe it is better to pursue a lesser technology and do it well, than to aspire to a higher-level technology and do it badly.

In regard to all media, the most important thing for me is content. Clear, simple, and direct are basic if God’s truth is to be known. I’ve also found that new or emerging Christians can be, and will be, touched by emotions. If the teacher

is not excited about the content, he soon will be found out. We need to coach each other to tap into the full range of emotions that communicate conviction, urgency, love and joy. More than that, we need to know enough about our target audience to know what taps into their emotions. The Holy Spirit doesn’t need emotion. Nor does he need lack of emotion. Both, however, can stand in the way of the Spirit whose process of conversion, spiritual sanctification, and growth must remain mysteriously wonderful and unique for each of us. Thus neither the teacher’s spirit, nor the learner’s spirit should overshadow God’s spirit. We ought not design things around “hype” or “excitement,” but rather let the excitement of the Gospel in us show through and press the urgency of what God has to offer without getting in the way!

What new technology offers great promise in 2012? If I would venture a guess to say what looms large it is the emerging digital world that will allow us access to everything, everywhere, all the time. Here’s a staggering statistic from China. There are 538 million Internet users today in China. Half of them have access to the Internet only via a smart phone. The first clunky mobile phone made its appearance in 1973. The clamshell phone came in 1996. I-phones debuted a year later. Computer power doubles every eighteen months! Satan will surely make use of such miracles to his glory. Can we equip ourselves to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ instead, putting the same miracles to a far better use?

We can and we will, if we bind ourselves to two necessities. First, we need to embrace the fact that the tech world is our world today and cannot be ignored. Second we need to cultivate discernment in ourselves and in our mission audience to sift what is good from what is bad. The first is attitudinal. The second is all about being mature Christian brothers and sisters through faithful use of Word and sacrament. The challenge is huge. But the one who can work miracles is behind us.

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