No-Book Library? BiblioTech is Coming

A book-less library.

It sounds like an oxymoron, but come the fall of 2013, San Antonio's Bexar County is going to be home to the BiblioTech, the country's first book-less public library. Of course, there will be books -- just e-books, not physical books.

The 4,989 square-foot space will look like a modern library, Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff, who was inspired to pursue the project after reading Walter Issacson's Steve Jobs biography, told ABC News. (A glance at the photo shows that it’s inspired by Apple in more ways than one.) Instead of aisles and aisles of books there will be aisles and aisles of computers and gadgets. At the start, it will have 100 e-readers available for circulation and to take out, and then 50 e-readers for children, 50 computer stations, 25 laptops and 25 tablets on site.

"We all know the world is changing. I am an avid book reader. I read hardcover books, I have a collection of 1,000 first editions. Books are important to me," Wolff told ABC News. "But the world is changing and this is the best, most effective way to bring services to our community."

Library goers will be able to take out books on any of the devices in the library, take out one of the 50 e-readers for a period of time or bring their own e-readers to the library and load books onto their own devices. The library will also be partnering with e-book providers or distributors to provide access to over 10,000 titles. The hope is to add to that collection annually. The county is still figuring
out who will provide the equipment and has requests for proposals out for the e-readers and other equipment.

Currently Amazon and Barnes & Noble offer services on their respective e-readers which work at libraries. You can take out books on the e-reader devices and then check them back in to the library remotely.

"You will be able to check out a book, read it on-site. It will be a learning environment -- you'll be able to learn about technology itself as well as access a tremendous amount of information," Wolff said. There will also be a children's area with interactive tables and interactive walls. Wolff also said the library is exploring adding other media to the library, like movies and music.

"That could be a real possibility. This is a new venture -- we are starting with the basics -- but we will have the opportunity to add on to that," he said in a phone interview.

But it won't be a completely paper-free library. "The only thing I believe we will charge for is if you want to print out something," Wolff said. "We will charge for the copies you would want to print out."

Conceptual renderings of Bexar County's digital-only BiblioTech library. (Bexar County Commissioners Court)
Comprehension questions – answers may be in phrases.

1. What computer company is this library inspired by?

2. Who authored Steve Job’s biography?

3. What will be available at the book-less library in paper format?

4. What is the approximate size of the proposed library?

5. How many e-readers are going to be available for circulation?

2. Answer each question in one or more complete sentences.

Define “biblio-tech” as used in the text.

How are library books checked back into the book-less library?

Name at least three other options aside from just books that may eventually be available in the library.
3. Using evidence from the text, describe the resources available at this new library. Be specific; include more than just the number of devices. Explain what the consumer can obtain here.

4. Webster’s Dictionary defines an oxymoron as a combination of contradictory or incongruous words. Examples include “Jumbo Shrimp” and, in the case of this article, “A Bookless Library.” Create at least five oxymorons in the space below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.