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Hendrickson agreed, but said he was optimistic that laws would be changed to promote the use of technology rather than to hinder it.

"There's a lot of thought going into changing it (copyright law) in the next five to 10 years," he said. The laws certainly "will have an impact on how fast some forms of information are being made available."

"I think there will be some bending of rules to accommodate electronic access."

In the next century, the library may even make house calls. The Strategic Plan for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that was presented to the regents in December called for expanded document delivery services on and off campus.

"Faculty will expect us to deliver the materials to their offices," Hendrickson said. Eventually, so will students, he added.

One step toward that library of the future would be the introduction of electronic publications.

Hendrickson said 20 to 25 percent of scholarly journals, a mainstay for the academic library, will be available electronically by the year 2000.

However, a futuristic scenario of computerized magazines is not to be expected, at least not by the 21st century. A large number of journals will remain available only in print, Hendrickson said.

However, if the use of electronic journals does become widespread, it may help solve, or at least lessen, the budget crunch libraries across the country are feeling and, indirectly, help the academic world in the process.

Davis said the skyrocketing costs of periodicals have forced many libraries to cut subscriptions. As a result, scholars who publish in those serials are not reaching the audience they need to — chiefly, fellow scholars.

"Pioneering efforts" in developing electronic journals may enable a wider dissemination of those materials, she said.

Both Hendrickson and Davis agreed that climbing prices of serials and other materials would create the need for more sharing of resources, through technology, between all academic libraries.

"Ownership will be less important in the years ahead," Hendrickson said.

Such sharing would take up less space than actual ownership, but Hendrickson said the library would continue to buy volumes, as well as pursuing electronic materials.

"We are going to celebrate the two-millionth volume this month," he said. "We'll probably reach three million in 15 years."



Ken Johnson/Daily Nebraskan

To house those materials, expansion of current library facilities is needed. To further that goal, plans for additions and renovations have been proposed.

Under the plan, two stories would be added to Love North, one floor to the Link and a partial addition under the Link.

Love South also is targeted for renovation. Better access for handicapped users is planned, as is a better ventilation system to control heat, humidity and dust. The current system dates back to about 1941, Hendrickson said.

Although Hendrickson said the library desperately needs the space, plans are not yet concrete.

"It has to get through the bureaucracy," he said. "The problem is obviously funding. Changing the air system alone is projected to cost several million dollars."

When the additions finally are made, he said, they must be constructed with new forms of technology in mind and be adaptable to progress.

"It's impossible to predict what new technology will bring us," he said.

But that technology will not mean the death of the book and the library. Davis predicts a long life for both.

"Until they make a computer you can kind of curl up with and read, I think people are still going to want some kind of print output."