

Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

In the summer of 2003, the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship studied the use of projector technology in worship in West Michigan. Over 900 churches in Kent and Ottawa counties were surveyed, with a 36% response rate. The following summary includes the key survey questions, a summary of the response, and some additional questions for considering your own media program.

Questions	Summarized Answers	Thinking Beyond the Data
1. How many churches use projector technology?	Nearly 60% of churches use some form of projector technology at least yearly , with 46% using computer-based projectors weekly. These numbers reflect a national growth trend, from below 25% in 1998 to somewhere over 50% in 2003.	The use of projectors in worship is a growing trend nationally. Has your church struggled with the idea? What hopes lead you to use them, and what fears hold you back? Have your hopes been realized and your fears addressed?
2. What kinds of churches use projectors?	Mid-size churches were the most likely to use projectors, at or above 60%. Evangelical Protestants were the most likely to use such technology (66%), followed closely by Mainline Protestants (55%). Roman Catholic (19%) and Eastern Orthodox (0%) had lower usage rates.	These data reflect different approaches to culture by various traditions. Believing that all congregations are called to make discerning judgments about culture, how is your church “in” but not “of” the technological culture”?
3. What type of technology is used?	Computer and video technology are used more (over 57%) than overhead transparencies and film or slides (37% or less). Overheads are most likely to be used in churches with fewer than 250 members. In the next year, more than 41% of churches expect to increase their use of computer projectors, but less than 8% expect to increase the use of overheads. At least 18% do not expect to increase use of any projector.	Over 80% of churches expect to use more projection in the coming year. When considering projection, what would be good reasons to increase usage? To decrease? What are some inadequate reasons? Why?
4. What type of content is used?	The primary type of worship projection is text rather than short videos or animation. Over 72% of churches use some text-only media weekly, and over 56% use text combined with graphics. Slightly over 14% use animation, less than 9% use live video, and less than 4% use movie clips each week. This emphasis on text suggests a role for media in worship closer to a print hymnal or bulletin rather than a movie, TV show or even play	Text projection is the primary use of projectors in worship and should therefore be thought through carefully. What can projected text do that paper cannot? What can printed text do that a projection cannot? When might no text be most desirable? Are there more ways to use the technology you already have?

Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

<p>5. What role do projectors play in worship?</p>	<p>When asked what liturgical role churches expected projectors to play in worship, over 75% specified “to encourage participation” and over 59% said “to convey information,” again replacing print. However, over 55% cited “to create an environment,” which is not a common role for print media. Less than 6% use projectors as a stand-alone worship leader each week.</p>	<p>Creating an environment makes projectors different from print. What kind of worship environment are you trying to create? How is it related to the biblical purpose of worship? Does your use of technology fit with your worship space or does it “fight it”?</p>
<p>6. If not currently using projectors, why not?</p>	<p>Churches that had not used projectors tended to be polarized, either opposed or open to new technologies. Some had no interest while others were waiting only for the money. Budget, not theological or “political” considerations, was the primary reason for not using new technologies. Nearly 42% called “no budget” a very important reason, while over 20% cited “no interest” or “tradition” as very important. Less than 14% cited opposition from a minority of the congregation or lack of time as very important. When asked what resources might be most useful, increased access to equipment through cash or donation was called very useful by over 61%, while a discussion of the overall appropriateness of projectors was the least (over 10%). Resources of hands-on training and affordable services were only moderately useful.</p>	<p>Churches seem either to embrace projectors heartily or reject it utterly. Does your church have a sense of the middle ground? Have you articulated why this medium is a better investment than some other initiative? Have you set goals for media and ways to measure the success of those goals? What investment besides more equipment would improve your worship and fellowship?</p>
<p>7. What is your purpose in using projectors technology?</p>	<p>Those churches that have integrated projectors cite contemporary relevance (50%) and evangelical outreach to youth (40%) and to non-members (35%) as very important reasons, echoing the wider movements of contemporary worship and church growth. Avoiding print (29%) and exploring visual art (26%) are moderate reasons. Only 16% called using members’ gifts very important, but 43% called it somewhat important. Interestingly, while equipment access is the highest obstacle to integration, it was cited as the weakest motivation (15%). Lack of equipment prevents use of projectors, but having a projector does not motivate use.</p>	<p>Churches seem to assume using projectors will make them relevant. How does a projector make your worship relevant? Have you tested what kind of media youth actually respect? If you have a projector, when is it turned off? Why? Has your congregation considered any low-tech changes in worship?</p>

Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

<p>8. Who are the key decision makers?</p>	<p>Over 92% described the pastor as very or somewhat important in the initial decision to integrate projectors in worship. Over 83% said that a small group with technological interests was second in importance, along with the worship planning committee (76%). The church council (68%) and general congregational consensus (58%) played a secondary role in the decision. Interestingly, though evangelism is a key reason cited for integration, evangelism committees (28%) generally played a relatively weak role in the decision. External groups, such as consultants (13%) and denominational agencies or bishops (9%), had the least influence.</p>	<p>The pastor is the key person in a media program, but some group of laypeople is usually involved. Who drives your worship media program? Is the media aspect of worship reviewed by your church council just like other aspects of worship? Who decides what goes on the screen and how the screen fits with the other elements of worship?</p>
<p>9. What types of training do you use?</p>	<p>In developing a worship media program, churches rely on internal training. Most practitioners are self-taught, with over 90% of churches calling it very or somewhat important. Having church staff train others (70%) is secondarily helpful. Self-guided tutorials (49%) and having professional experience (45%) were moderately useful, while formal training classes were cited by 29%. Training in hands-on ideas and techniques were moderately requested resources for future usefulness, as are stock media goods and services.</p>	<p>Most practitioners receive little formal training, and almost never training in why media matters. What kind of training does your pastor, worship committee, technology operators, or others need? Do your media technicians learn about worship rather than just media technology? Do your volunteers see the bigger picture of good and fitting worship? Do you have a process for on-going learning? For internal discussion?</p>
<p>10. What resources are needed to prepare each week?</p>	<p>Media messages are usually prepared each week by two to four people in less than five hours. Volunteer time is often, though not always, a key resource; 18% use no volunteers while over 25% use all volunteers. More time from staff or volunteers is a commonly requested resource.</p>	<p>How are your volunteers recruited? Are projectors taking valuable time away from other ministries? Or is it enabling participation of people who probably would not otherwise participate?</p>

Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

<p>11. What evaluation does your projector program receive?</p>	<p>Most churches make some effort to evaluate their use of media technologies, most often on a yearly basis, including equipment, genre, liturgical role, and goals. Effectiveness is the most examined aspect, with over 25% evaluating it weekly, although it is unclear what constitutes “effectiveness.”</p> <p>In any case, projectors are strongly integrated into worship, with 58% saying the removal of projectors from worship would cause significant or substantial change to the way they do worship. Projectors are increasingly a defining force in how churches perform worship.</p>	<p>What parts of your media program do you evaluate? Your worship? How do you know if you are “effective”—or even what it means for worship to be effective? What would happen in your church if presentational technologies were removed from your worship? Do you evaluate not just whether people like media, but (more specifically) how it helps them worship or pray more meaningfully?</p> <p><i>Focusing on which uses of technology enable deeper worship can provide clues for which uses to develop and which uses to eliminate.</i></p>
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This document is available at:

http://www.calvin.edu/worship/research/tech_survey_summary.htm

For more information about this research, see the original thesis:

http://www.calvin.edu/worship/research/visual_tech.pdf

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Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

The following are open comments received from the participants in the 2003 survey

GENERAL APPROVAL AND INTEREST

-We have had our equipment for less than one year. We are still learning, excited, and motivated. Networking for creative ideas would be helpful. We are sure that we could be doing more but do not know what that is at this point. To hear how others use their equipment would be a creative source of information. We left the traditional service alone and use the LCD projector a lot less in the service. We added a contemporary service and use the LCD projector a lot in this service. The young people respond to it in a positive way. When I can find PowerPoint images that fit with my sermon, I use them. When I can find movie video clips I use them as visual illustrations. They help a lot. It is time for us to start looking at sensory worship; ways to involve all five senses and interact more with those in worship.

-Technology is a great tool. As culture is becoming more visual oriented, the church needs to provide tools for people to use to worship with that in mind. If it is done well, visual and using projectors can add so much to the worship experience. It's a huge change for a lot of people, but for the church to succeed in the future it is an important piece of the puzzle. Thanks for all you do.

-One of the questions we ask when using media is, Does this picture, graphic, presentation, etc. aid us in expanding our concept of who God is? We also see media as a way to involve other artists, such as writers and painters, in our worship.

-Projection technology has helped visitors feel more comfortable because they don't need to fumble/look stupid trying to figure where to go in which book. The singing volume improved remarkably when people were singing while looking ahead at the projection image rather than face down into a book. The older people like the Bible texts on the front wall because it is easier to read than the small print in the pew Bibles.

-We have been using a projector in worship for a few months. It has been such a positive change in the atmosphere of the worship service. We have gained freedom in expression of our worship (clapping, raising hands, etc.) and also greater spiritual depth. The congregation has welcomed this transitional time and it has worked well to offer contemporary and traditional worship styles in a spirit of unity. We hope to increase use of the technology with video, movie clips, song clips, etc. over time. With all of the technology in our society today, it is important for the church to maintain relevance, by seeker friendly, and be faithful to God's call and destiny. May His call and His glory be our heart's desire as we seek to serve Him with excellence.

NOT UNIVERSALLY NEEDED

-Our worship style right now doesn't lend itself to requiring this technology. Our congregation does well with paper bulletin direction. It's been discussed and would meet some resistance but hasn't been completely thrown out yet.

-We do not use technology mainly because of a very traditional sanctuary. Also, we draw from many sources for music, liturgies, etcetera, and find that printing these in the bulletin are very effective and work well for us. We do video tape our morning service to air on our local cable channel on Sunday morning and afternoon. We use three cameras -- two wall-mounted and one moveable. This is extremely valuable in our congregation and our community!

-Our tradition doesn't call for 'visual' media. We use natural things in the environment, i.e. flowers, banners, bread, wine, water, oil, the Word, and the community

NEED FOR LEARNING

-As a worship director in a church, myself and a large portion of the congregation desires to grow in this area. We have a lot of technology know-how, but lack good solid doctrinal resources that appeal to many age groups -- not just teens or kids. I am glad you are doing this questionnaire and look forward to getting resource ideas from you in the future!

-I was initially skeptical about the use of video/projector technology within a worship service. My main concern was my understanding of the Reformed tenet of word-centered worship. However, I have been pleased to find that the visual aspect of video/projector-assisted worship is that it has enabled us to be more Word-centered (Scripture) in our worship, using the visual medium (sense) to complement the spoken/heard word.

Projectors in Worship Survey Summary

THEOLOGY OF WORSHIP AS GROUND FOR OPPOSITION

-Does not fit with what we are trying to accomplish in Lutheran worship: transcendence

-It is not in line with our understanding of Reformed and Biblical worship.

-My response of 'unBiblical' as the reason we do not use the mentioned media technology 'in worship' needs a little explanation. First, our church has all this equipment for use: video projector with computer hook-up, film projector, and an overhead projector....We use this equipment on a regular basis for teaching, presentations and to communicate mission work. The reason we do not use our equipment for putting songs on the wall is cultural. It is not a part of our tradition but I can see nothing wrong with such a type of reproducing songs. However, the thrust of your questions in Q3b and Q4b make it clear that your questions assume an unbiblical view of worship....In historic Reformed worship the visual is not focused on to create an environment for worship, reinforce concepts of worship, encourage participation in worship. Nor do we use media to replace a worship leader, to facilitate the use of member gifts during worship, to make worship relevant to members, to connect with youth, to increase evangelism, to explore artistic media as a mode of worship or to keep pace with area churches who do all these things. All of these practices violate Biblical principles of worship. None of these practices are inherently dependent upon media technology but have been part of 'worship battles' and the role of the visual in worship for centuries.

-We believe the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. Our worship was given by God and is not the result of human philosophy and gimmicks. If our religion was man-made then it would continually undergo change. We do not change the scripture, our tradition, or our worship as we see them all as given by God!

-Visual art is very important in the Orthodox Church -- these are the icons. Orthodoxy has a long established theology of art. Audio/visual might be used after a worship service, but not during a service. We have not given the matter much thought at this time. Hope this is helpful.

HOW TECH INFLUENCES LITURGY/WORSHIP

-I've only used a PowerPoint presentation two times in three years. We will be offering a new contemporary service on Saturday evenings this fall where I plan to use a computer projector weekly. So I have to catch up on the learning curve...*and guard against drifting into a 'how to' emphasis in preaching and worship theme, which this technological template seems very well adapted for.*

-We have a screen built into our wall we mostly use for PowerPoint, videos -- advertise vacation Bible school, missions, etc. We use DVD every once in a while. Use it for announcements. Would like to use it to prepare hearts (DVD -- Worship Together series) before service. We also used it for our Easter choir service with a picture presentation (PowerPoint). People loved the music with visual. My recommendation is not to use it all the time. Create variety; the old with new -- a nice mix (blend). Thanks for caring.

ARCHITECTURE AND COST

-Our church building is too light for any projection to be seen.

-Our worship committee has checked out the cost for computer screen projection. We are a small congregation and there is no way we could afford it. Also many of our membership are older and are not in favor of it. I personally cannot justify the cost for the value/non-value to a church's ministry.

-Budgetarily, we decided that upgrades in our sound system were a higher priority right now than video or computer projection. In a smaller church one must make such tradeoffs. As finances allow in two to three years we will probably do more with visual projection but we need another couple years to digest sound system costs. We'll experiment as time and money allow.

ENABLING ACCESS

-We are using the overhead projector and a screen for our choruses. We supply hard copies to our older folks because the screen is hard for them to see.

-We find that multimedia is especially helpful in a congregation housing a high number of educationally challenged people -- autistic, bipolar, ADHD, etc.