

## DALNET Focus Sessions--Summer 1995

### SUMMARY

During the summer of 1995, focus sessions were held with DALNET Board members and other key staff from all the DALNET libraries. Detailed notes of the comments and suggestions received at each session are available. This summary identifies the key issues raised, the highest priority needs, the ideas that were mentioned in several of the sessions. The goal is to develop a document to help DALNET plan for service improvements and system enhancements that are the most critical to member libraries over the next few years.

#### I. DALNET service improvements

In general, DALNET library staff need more training opportunities and options, more communication services, more consistent help desk services, and more technical support.

##### A. Training

Training needs range from orientations for new Board members and project managers, to regular refresher sessions on NOTIS LMS modules, to "on demand" training for key staff. Library staff see the benefit to pooling our training in areas other than NOTIS functionality, including email and Internet, microcomputer basics such as Windows, and communications software such as TCP/IP. They would like more technical training not only for project managers, but also for staff maintaining NOTIS equipment and networks. They are willing to contribute staff with expertise from their libraries to conduct training sessions.

##### B. Communication services

DALNET library staff would like easier access to basic information that could be made available online, e.g., via a Web server, so they can access it independently at point of need. They see potential in using our DALNET listserv more to get answers to questions and communicate among the group. They would like faster and more regular notification when there are system problems. They would like more detail available with the budget documents to help them explain costs to their administrators. One need coming within a year is a replacement for the Wayne State University's PROFS email system for DALNET. Communication via email is well received.

C. Help desk support

In general, DALNET library staff need faster response to their questions and problems. One recommendation was to establish a more formal problem tracking system, to ensure that all questions get responses. Another suggestion was to provide a "frequently asked questions" (FAQ) document on a Web or Gopher server.

D. Technical support

Most DALNET libraries were unable to get local technical support as quickly as they needed it. They would like more such support from the DALNET Office to supplement their local support, including LAN services, cataloger's workstation advice, user access station development. They would like demonstrations and tours arranged to see how new equipment works and to find out the technical details of its setup.

E. IDs

DALNET library staff requested new IDs, for both NOTIS and PROFS, be assigned more quickly, ideally, within 2-3 days.

II. System enhancements

One NOTIS LMS system enhancement clearly emerged as a top priority for DALNET libraries, and that is location based searching. Library patrons need to be able to retrieve just the holdings of the institution and, in several cases, of the library building in which they are standing. They also want the union catalog (DCAT) display to see the resources of the Detroit metropolitan area.

The other enhancements discussed at most sessions were the following. The group needs a method to prioritize them for further action.

- A. Full-text delivery, especially NOTIS DocDirect with UMI's PowerPages system
- B. Improved statistical and management reports, especially a serials/periodicals list, but also some specific needs by institution. Some libraries were willing to do more report creation locally if they could have the machine readable data extracted and sent to them.
- C. More access to databases, both locally mounted on MDAS-- such as BIP, Business and Company Profiles--and remotely

linked via the Internet--such as OCLC FirstSearch, CARL Uncover. In general, there is a user need for more abstracts in the citation records.

- D. LUIS enhancements to make it as easy to use as we can, to enable continuous printing and downloading, and to develop a "front end" that enables users to access not only LUIS but also other information servers both local and remote.
- E. PACLink (Z39.50) interfaces to other library and commercial databases are needed, including to local public and academic library systems, to key library systems throughout the state such as the Library of Michigan and other large academic libraries, and to lending partners outside the state.
- F. The new NOTIS LMS circulation release is much needed to improve circulation functionality and to bring new capabilities such as a single library card among DALNET institutions.
- G. The DALNET system needs to be made fully accessible with all NOTIS functionality usable via Ethernet TCP/IP communications protocol.

### III. Future directions

Participants began to expand their thinking to future directions for DALNET now that we have a large shared OPAC and citation databases upon which to build. Directions discussed included:

- A. Resource sharing, to improve access to each other's resources for the citizens of the metropolitan area. Some ideas included honoring each other's library cards and developing new borrowing agreements.
- B. Community outreach services to develop broadly based databases of local resources to meet the needs of our community.
- C. Delivery of all types of information directly to the desktops of our users as a major goal of our next generation system.
- D. Cooperative collection building as a logical step as we develop shared full-text databases. Libraries could agree to be repositories of the paper or other archival copies for the group.

- E. Cooperative buying to further leverage our size with vendors, not only of databases but also equipment, software, and supplies.

In conclusion, these sessions were extremely valuable in giving us a "snapshot" of our current needs to help us plan for the next few years.

Louise Bugg  
September 14, 1995