

To: Margaret

March 10, 1989

From: Jean

You asked me to briefly explain DALNET/NOTIS and offer pros and cons concerning the Dental Library's involvement in the project.

DALNET is the consortium of area libraries that first got together in 1984 to plan and cost out the options of joint and/or individual automation. Whether or not there should be automation was never an issue. All parties realized it was essential to providing quality, cost-effective service. Stand-alone systems are very expensive. Control of bibliographic records is not just another inventory system. Loading bibliographic records requires a level of expertise not found in most libraries, so the cost and personnel advantages of joint automation were quickly apparent. The resource-sharing potential of a joint database and the availability of local information (such as circulation and check-in status of materials at another location) far exceeded anything available on OCLC.

DALNET members are WSU, Oakland University, Detroit Public Library, Wayne County Community College, Macomb Community College, Oakland Community College and four hospital libraries. The database presently exceeds two million records and is expected to grow to three million within the next year.

NOTIS is the software chosen by the group. It was developed at Northwestern University and has been the choice of many colleges and universities, including most of those in Michigan: the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Michigan Tech., Northern, Eastern, Western, etc. This compatibility of software should facilitate future state-wide access.

NOTIS software allows great flexibility in implementation. It is not a turnkey system where the purchasing library is often locked into the vendor's agenda and timetable. Because of the wide variety of choices open to the institution, NOTIS is not easy to bring up. Expert staff is required and has been retained by the network.

From the point of view of the Dental Library, the pros are:

-Availability of a much more sophisticated system than a library the size of UDD would ever be able to mount on it's own.

-Cost to the Dental Library would be very low compared to any alternative, even maintenance of the card catalog, since access costs are already supported by the University and equipment/implementation funds have been guaranteed by the Board.

-Advantages of belonging to a network with complimentary collections. There is a long history of cooperation within the medical library group. UDD cannot purchase or store all the peripheral medical titles our students may need.

-On-line location and status reports for the Dental Library, other University of Detroit locations and other network members. Students can access the database from any of the member locations and/or dial in from home to find out if the library has a book, whether that book is checked out and whether a journal issue has been received.

-PR, prestige and image considerations. No library can afford to be seen as a backwater in this highly competitive age. Also, research indicates a computerized library has a higher satisfaction rating with students than a non-computerized one. This is true even when they aren't getting any different materials or service.

The cons are:

-Level of complexity of some modules. Cataloging, especially, requires training and workflow reorganization. Cataloging into NOTIS as well as OCLC involves extra work although this is traded-off to some extent by relief of the burden of card catalog maintenance. However, similar training and workflow changes were required when the Dental Library switched to OCLC, so this is clearly not impossible. Another option is to continue having the Main Library input NOTIS records as is being done at present. Circulation also involves training and workflow changes, but since procedures are substituted, not added, this should be only a temporary problem.

-Increased outside traffic and interlibrary loan. The visibility of UDD would be enhanced. If this resulted in a legion of community college students doing term papers, the Dental Library would find it a burden even though not required to lend. The building is small and difficult to control. However, the first tape-load of UDD holdings was done in January and this has not so far resulted in increased patron or ILL use, so it may not become a problem.

-Number of records in machine-readable form. UDD is behind the Main and EBA Libraries in retroconversion of records which could result in increased labor at the time of check-out if older imprints circulate a great deal. Recent imprints (usually the more popular items) are already in machine-readable form.

-Loss of autonomy. Every participant in a network must give a little. Database standards and common procedures must be maintained for the stability of the whole. Representation on the Board where such issues are debated would be through the Main Library. This involves some loss of independence.

The Dental Library is part of the University of Detroit. As a minimum expectation, we should be able to pull together a union catalog of holdings in every building. It seems odd, to say the least, that our students should be able to access the holdings of the Detroit Public Library or Oakland University Library, but lack information about our own holdings.

The Board of Trustees has made a commitment to make our unique holdings available to others in the network as we are able to take advantage of their unique collections. The University of Detroit has the only Dental Library in the network. The fact that we have strong collections to offer is part of the reason we were awarded a \$125,000 Title II grant. Belonging to DALNET is good for the university. The community colleges are our feeder schools. We have a formal relationship with Macomb in this regard. Membership in the state-wide network is essential to our status as an institution. We should be fully represented.

cc: DALNET Team
Agnes Shoup