

DALNET

Marquet

DALNET - Ameritech Meeting  
November 9, 1995; 10:00 a.m.-12:00 noon  
WSU Dean's Conference Room

Present: P. Breivik, L. Bugg, G. Clark, M. Klein, E. Marks, M. Sheble, N. Skowronski, F. Young

Representatives for each type of DALNET library (academic, community college, hospital) met with Marvin Bailey, Ameritech VP of State Technology Programs and Tom Burns, VP of Sales, Ameritech Library Services. The following summarizes my notes from the meeting. I assume that more complete notes from the meeting via WSU will be forthcoming.

P. Breivik opened the meeting by talking about the impetus behind the Ameritech visit. She connected with Ameritech representatives during her visit to the opening of the Indianapolis Children's Museum, where the role of technology in enriching the lives of children was the focus of informal discussion. P. Breivik believes the future of our country rests on our ability to address the needs of the "have-nots." One of those needs is certainly information access. P. Breivik commented on the high percentage of students attending WSU from low-income, single parent homes. She said that DALNET was a major attraction that led her to accept her WSU position and that she is committed to building a strong community information infrastructure for the Detroit Metropolitan Area through DALNET. The new technology to support DALNET will need to be an information management system, as opposed to a library management system.

T. Burns discussed some of the directions that Ameritech is pursuing. Ameritech has reorganized for better customer support. The marketing division that provides product information and information on future enhancements will be divided by library type (academic, public, corporate). Customer support for technical problems will be divided by type of library system (Horizon, NOTIS, and Dynix). L. Bugg expressed the need for customer support for assistance with system migration details.

Ameritech's original plan to dump Dynix and NOTIS have been placed on hold. Libraries have devoted many resources to Dynix and NOTIS, and are unable to purchase the technology required for Ameritech's client-server library information system (LIS), Horizon. Corporate and public libraries are the main customers of Dynix; NOTIS continues to be a primarily academic library system. T. Burns spoke about the number of public libraries that have Dynix and need the convenience of a turnkey system. Ameritech plans to develop enhancements for NOTIS, Dynix, and Horizon. T. Burns commented that it will be difficult to support three systems, but last year, the company decided that everyone will not be able to move from mainframe technology and that support/development of all three systems (Dynix, NOTIS, Horizon) is necessary.

Developments for all three systems will be directed toward the end-

user and will be directed toward simplicity. Menu-based searching will be targeted. Horizon will try to address the needs of all library types and should address the needs of library consortia, like DALNET. Ameritech is looking into the possibility of developing bridge products. One possibility is integrating NOTIS with Horizon so that both could be integrated into the same OPAC. Another possibility is developing "TERMPac" -- the development of software that will allow dumb terminals to use client-server technology. N. Skowronski commented on the large investment that DPL has in terminals and the inability of the library to purchase workstations to replace the terminals. Development of bridge products will depend on user demand.

Ameritech representatives discussed some work that is being done in Indiana to develop a system that will address the needs of everything from small rural libraries to large academic libraries.

T. Burns commented on the difficulties created by the current chain of development for enhancements. Ameritech incorporates suggestions of libraries, works to develop a beta model, and then asks libraries to test the beta model. If there are problems during beta testing beyond the technical stage (i.e. customers just don't like the working model), it is very difficult for Ameritech to go back and make massive changes because so much time and money have already been spent. This development chain needs to be changed.

P. Breivik asked L. Bugg to give a short overview of DALNET. There was some discussion about the information needs of DALNET patrons. Perhaps developing strategies to address the needs of multi-levels would be a good direction to pursue, rather than developing different OPACS for different library types, since most libraries have patrons that span a broad range. UDM, for example, services community groups in addition to faculty, students (of different academic levels), and staff. Following this discussion, P. Breivik asked all of the DALNET meeting participants to talk about the needs of their patrons/libraries.

Top concerns that emerged: Acquisitions module that interfaces with vendor programs; ILL functions that are compatible across library platforms; full-text delivery and search capabilities; compatibility with other Z39.50 databases (i.e. OCLC); ability for patrons to charge out materials on the system; menu driven basic-to-complex searching capabilities; maps on catalog to take patrons to specific place in building where materials are located; easier tech services functions (maybe the development of online tutorials); location based catalogs.

Probably the top concerns were expressed in relation to the difficulty of the current NOTIS OPAC for patrons. Some concern was also expressed over costs -- if a LIS is developed that does everything we want, will we be able to afford it? P. Breivik mentioned that she would like to see county and state information drawn into the consortium and made available through the LIS. Some

concern was expressed that Horizon will not be enough of an improvement over NOTIS that it will justify the investment in new technology. Horizon may be more of a gateway than a comprehensive information management system.

The meeting concluded with remarks by the Ameritech representatives. Horizon has been very successful in Europe. They believe that Horizon will address the needs of multi-type libraries and consortia.