

## **DALNET'S SYSTEM SELECTION PROCESS**

### *New Vision*

By the Year 2000, DALNET plans to develop a metropolitan information hub that goes beyond the LUIS online catalog to provide:

- an easy to use, customizable interface for all types of library users;
- a gateway to information worldwide;
- access to unique digitized local collections of members and their communities;
- more resource sharing capabilities.

The DALNET Board developed this new vision at its strategic planning retreat in winter 1996.

### *Old System Inadequate*

DALNET's current shared computer system, the NOTIS system licensed from Ameritech, could not serve as the foundation for the new information hub. Developed in the 1980's, it is based on old technology that is costly and difficult to enhance. The mainframe DALNET uses is barely adequate now and is expensive to upgrade. NOTIS was designed for use by dumb terminals. The DALNET Board did not want to invest further in this old system.

### *DALNET Team Created*

In Spring 1996, the DALNET Board appointed a 5-member team to:

- define essential system requirements for a new system for the information hub;
- arrange structured demonstrations for leading systems;
- explore partnership with Ameritech for a new system.

### *System Requirements*

After an environmental scan, these user requirements were identified: Web-based, customizable interface; desktop delivery of full-text, images, sound, and video; remote access; integration of local and global resources for one-stop shopping; digitized local resources; user-initiated control.

These general requirements were identified: proven track record of vendor; dedicated telecommunications network; client/server design to take advantage of desktop computers; meets/exceeds current performance and availability for a large system; and affordability.

### *System Evaluation Process*

During the summer of 1996, the committee identified 8 potential library information systems. Three were selected for 2-day structured demonstrations in the fall: Horizon (Ameritech Library Services); Innopac (Innovative Interfaces); and Unicorn (SIRSI). For the structured demonstrations, the DALNET committee gave each vendor the same set of tasks to demonstrate.

The tasks were prepared by 32 experts from 7 DALNET libraries. The 3 demonstrations drew over 80 attendees from 17 DALNET institutions. The attendees were asked for qualitative and quantitative evaluations for each session.

### *Conclusions*

The conclusions of the system evaluation were that no system offered all the critical features required by DALNET. Ameritech's Horizon system emerged as the first choice because:

- it is a proven client/server system installed in \_\_\_\_\_ libraries;
- it is scaleable for large installations;  
Note: it was benchmarked for Indiana University with 7 million records and 850 users.
- the proposal includes a dedicated frame relay telecommunications network designed for DALNET's Horizon installation; and
- Ameritech is committed to developing the critical capabilities DALNET libraries need by the Year 2000.

### *Partnership Proposal*

A DALNET/Ameritech partnership proposal was presented to the DALNET Board on May 16, 1997. The proposal recommended jointly developing and implementing an open, integrated library and information system as the central component of a metropolitan information hub. It included business guidelines to ensure goal achievement, a project plan with strategies, tasks, and broad timelines, a description of the Horizon enhancements needed, and preliminary cost information.

### *Partnership Advantages*

Advantages to the partnership with Ameritech include:

- support for system migration from the vendor of both the old and new systems;
- joint development of system enhancements;
- Ameritech's telecommunications expertise;
- a full-time vendor project manager located at a DALNET library;
- DALNET as a showcase for a metropolitan information hub.

### *DALNET Board Decisions*

The DALNET Board decided to proceed with the next steps in the partnership, which were:

- to charge the DALNET Finance Committee with developing a new cost-sharing plan, which was accepted by the Board in September, 1997;
- to appoint a negotiating team to bring back a contract for approval in October, 1997; and
- to ask DALNET libraries to review the proposal and contract and send letters of their intent to participate by December 15, 1997.

All DALNET members except Oakland University have indicated their intent to participate.