



October 4, 1999

Lana Porter, President
Ameritech Library Services
400 Dynix Drive
Provo, Utah 84604-5650

Dear Lana:

In anticipation of your meeting with the DALNET Board on October 11th, the DALNET Steering Committee reviewed progress on issues discussed with you at the July Board meeting. While there has been considerable progress on some issues, the Steering Committee found many significant issues still unresolved which we would like to share with you and the members of the DALNET Board.

Our top priority in July was **WebPAC 1.3** on the Solaris platform. Even though Detroit Public Library (DPL) now has the beta version of 1.3 in test and we installed it last week at Wayne State to be "stress tested" soon, it's still not clear when DALNET will have a production version. Detroit Public Library is planning to go "live" with Horizon in October. Their project has been delayed for a number of reasons, the latest being the sudden departure of their project leader, John Houser. DPL would be hard-pressed now to redo its WebPAC interface to version 1.2. What's more, if they did, they would lose the ability to display more than 7 collections on the brief view. With 26 branches and the Main Library, many of their titles are in more than 7 collections!

DALNET's first breakfast for health science community information providers in metropolitan Detroit is scheduled for October 15th. Invitations have been sent. DALNET needs to be able to demonstrate broadcast searching across traditional online catalog databases, index databases, and image databases to show them the power of Horizon to be a single interface for health science resources. We need WebPAC 1.3 to do this demonstration.

System performance, especially response time in WebPAC, was identified as a serious issue in July. We are now into the heaviest use time for our DALNET libraries. When Wayne State's fall classes began, we saw an immediate jump in WebPAC usage to three

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times what we had seen in the summer months. In order to improve WebPAC performance at WSU, we have had to turn off some features, including sorting of result sets. Now, users get the results in a seemingly random order. With the delay in Horizon implementation at DPL, more DALNET libraries' Horizon databases will need to be loaded on the server housed at Wayne State. This could further impact system performance. While we have received and installed some recommended improvements from Ameritech's experts, we still need much more help. We have been trying to work through support services to get that help, but haven't heard back from them on this in more than a month.

One area where Ameritech has been very responsive is in getting us a price quote for a firewall for Wayne State. Problems with hackers getting into the test and WebPAC servers could also have been negatively impacting performance. We have now, with Ameritech's help, rebuilt the test server and are working on the WebPAC machine. It is critical that Ameritech schedule the installation of the firewall as soon as possible to prevent further problems. Our current contacts tell us there is a 4 to 6 week wait to schedule this installation.

Since the July meeting, Ameritech has moved some DALNET libraries to **support services**. Our DALNET Project Leader, Scott Muir, has been working out the procedures to best use these services. So far, most critical problems get responses within 48 hours, however, other less critical problems require persistence on Scott's part to get answers. In this process, Scott has identified some problems that really need the attention of Ameritech's development staff, in order to determine how to make things work in our large, consortium site. The fact that Horizon is working as it was designed to work doesn't mean that it works for DALNET, or that it will work for other large sites. We see our role in the partnership as identifying these areas and working with Ameritech to figure out what can work for large sites. We appreciate Ameritech's willingness to work with us in this way.

Horizon release migration was discussed at the July meeting. At that time, DALNET was planning to get all libraries on the same release, i.e., Release 5.1.2. That has now been accomplished, with Ameritech's help. These upgrades will enable us to migrate Wayne State's acquisitions operations to Horizon in October and to initiate Horizon functionality testing with the largest sites. We still need technical guidance from Ameritech's experts with future Horizon migrations for DALNET. For a site as large and

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complex as DALNET's, we also need access to "off hours" support during migrations. How can we work together with Ameritech staff to most efficiently migrate to Release 5.2, for example? We will soon have 14 Horizon databases operational. Migration of all of them will not be a trivial task.

The area of least progress has been **DALNET's seven enhancements**. We are still waiting for revised delivery dates for all of them. The top three identified in July were the **shared patron database**, an authentication system, and the shared authority database. Each of these is still critical. While we have made progress on the specifications for a Unique Borrower ID (UBID) that is needed for the shared patron database, we very much need a plan for building that database from the 14 patron files DALNET will have. DPL's patron database--soon to be created--will be the largest. It would be ideal if we knew how best to construct that database in anticipation of building the shared file in the future.

The **shared authority database** still has no delivery date. In the meantime, DALNET is building and maintaining 14 individual library authority databases. As we said in July, we don't have the resources to clean up these files and maintain all 14 of them. With NOTIS, we had one large shared authority database and could do updates and fixes there for all DALNET libraries. We need Ameritech's help now with automating some of the work to maintain these files, for example, programs to delete and merge duplicate stubby authority records created in the data load process. The specifications DALNET has provided to Ameritech for normalization of headings could be used to create such programs, which will be needed anyway to build the shared authority database.

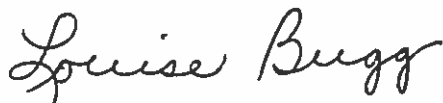
Finally, the DALNET Steering Committee wants you to be aware that AADS is having considerable difficulty delivering and supporting **DALNET's private frame relay network**. The frame relay is working at WSU's head end, in some DPL branches, and at the University of Detroit Mercy. The operational sites are not all being monitored. New sites have long delays in getting operational. Repeated calls must be made by Scott to Harry Masek, Ameritech's project lead. Harry then has tried to get these problems resolved, with little result. Not only does this impact current DALNET member libraries, who must now rely on their Internet providers for telecommunications, but it also impacts DALNET's ability to market Horizon to potential member libraries. We have difficulty finding a DALNET library that potential members can contact to hear a positive story about the AADS frame relay installation. This is not good for Ameritech Library Services or for DALNET.

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The DALNET Steering Committee wanted to let you know both the good news and the bad news in advance of your visit on October 11th. We hope that by sending this letter now we have given you a little more lead time to address the issues than you had in July. We look forward to discussing them with you at the Board meeting on October 11th.

Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,



Louise Bugg
Director, DALNET Online System



Scott Muir
DALNET Steering Committee Chair and
DALNET Project Leader

cc DALNET Board
DALNET Steering Committee
Harry Masek