

October 19, 1999

To: DALNET Project Managers

From: Jenny Nolan, Chair, DALNET Collection Development Committee

At the first meeting of this year, October 11, 1999, MaryAnne Nagler was elected new Chair of the committee. The committee proposes to meet on an ad hoc, as needed basis in the future, having completed the procedures and prepared a statement of DALNET's role in future electronic resource Acquisitions. Those items are enclosed with this letter.

The Committee has found itself somewhat overtaken by events. With the emergence of the Michigan Library Consortium as an active force in procuring consortial agreements to purchase electronic databases, the committee has found its charge to overlap with MLC. MLC has drafted an RFP that is expected to greatly increase competitive bidding, by bidding out data and interface components separately, and opening up the bidding process to providers who have not previously participated.

It is the opinion of the committee that DALNET should not compete with the Michigan Library Consortium for pricing. In so doing, MLC's power to negotiate pricing is diluted. The diversity of the DALNET libraries makes it unlikely that a majority of libraries will want to subscribe to one database. For an example: last year's free trial of Expanded Academic resulted in one library wanting to subscribe; the trial of Electric Library had the same result. For Ovid's Cinahl database, two were interested. This is not the stuff of purchasing power. If the vendor is offering consortium pricing they should offer better pricing to more libraries, i.e., through MLC.

DALNET and MLC representatives have agreed to maintain open communication on database acquisition requests and plans. Over the past year, the chair of the DALNET Collection Development Committee has participated in the MLC Academic Group Licensing Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations for MLC database trials and purchases. MaryAnne Nagler will be joining this group, effective immediately.

The Dalnet Collection Development Committee has plans for conducting a survey this fall that would compile a list of the electronic resources of the DALNET member libraries. Although such a survey was conducted previously by the committee, the response was minimal. Collation of the results was postponed until further results were obtained.

The committee would like to ask that the project managers support the new survey. With participation, the DALNET libraries can help each other. The Survey should define for us the databases we have in common, and give the DALNET libraries a chance to see what other libraries in the system are subscribing to.

## **DALNET's Role in Future Electronic Resource Acquisitions**

**The Collection Development Committee views the future role of DALNET within the electronic resources environment as being one of facilitator in acquiring shared statewide agreements, of supplemental negotiator for databases not under consideration by the Michigan Library Consortium and of independent negotiator.**

The current electronic resource environment is highly volatile for a number of reasons:

- ◆ Many vendors are exploring new ways of pricing their electronic databases;
- ◆ Some vendors, accustomed to dealing with one institution type (i.e., public libraries), are experiencing difficulties in adapting to the needs of other institutional types;
- ◆ Price quotes for a particular resource may vary by vendor representative, or by pricing structure (i.e., FTE v. simultaneous users), so that an institutional agreement may be more advantageous than a consortial agreement;
- ◆ The Internet and WWW have created opportunities for a library or consortium to partner with other institutions regardless of geographic boundaries; as a result, acquisition efforts by individual libraries, as well as consortia, have overlapped.

As a result of this unstable environment, library administrators must be vigilant in pursuing all licensing possibilities in order to identify the most advantageous agreement for their institutions. At present, DALNET's role has been to act as one more consortium entering the confusing fray of the licensing world.

However, as the electronic resources environment evolves into a more stable arena, the licensing process should become simplified. Ideally, then, the Michigan Library Consortium (MLC) will act as primary negotiator for most electronic resources: because MLC represents a statewide effort, it should be able to provide greater opportunities for individual libraries to purchase electronic resources by partnering with many diverse and sometimes geographically distant institutions. MLC has also been working with other state consortia to provide an even larger purchasing pool for selected databases. In this capacity, DALNET can assist MLC by, in effect, by representing a large and diverse set of institutions.

Until that time, DALNET should keep its role as a purchasing unit. There is a role for DALNET to investigate pricing for databases that MLC will not be offering, and if an MLC offer is too expensive, to inquire about DALNET pricing. DALNET should not set out to undercut MLC's bargaining power by withdrawing DALNET's purchasing power from MLC.

## **Procedures for DALNET Electronic Resources Trials**

1. An opportunity to pursue an electronic database is presented to the DALNET Collection Development Committee (CDC) through contact with vendors, either initiated by the vendor or by a member of the CDC. The member institution suggesting the database should have already contacted the Michigan Library Consortium to see if they are offering group pricing. If MLC is offering consortium pricing, the institution should follow up with MLC. If MLC does not offer a subscription to a desired database, the committee will consider the database.

DALNET institutions that are not represented on the CDC but are interested in pursuing a group license for a particular database will forward pertinent information regarding that database to the Chair of the CDC.

2. If any 3 or more DALNET member institutions are interested in pursuing a trial, the CDC will contact the vendor and initiate a free trial period. The DALNET office will be notified of the trial by the DALNET office liaison to the CDC.
3. The CDC will notify the designated liaison from each institution about the free trial, including the trial period and access methods (i.e., IP address, password, etc.).
4. The CDC will distribute an electronic resources evaluation form to each collection development liaison, along with any documentation that is available for the product. Institutions are required to complete and return this formal evaluation to the CDC within one week after the trial period ends. At this time, institutions must determine whether they are interested in pursuing a group license.
5. Based upon evaluation results and interest from at least 3 libraries, the CDC will then forward to the DALNET office a list of interested member libraries, and the name of the contact person at the vendor. The DALNET office will then pursue group licensing for the product
6. Within two weeks from the time that the recommendation is forwarded, the DALNET office will negotiate with the product vendor and respond to the CDC, and to those interested in subscribing, with a status report on the negotiation process.