



Wayne State University

Computing Services Center

Office of the Director
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January 18, 1985

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Wayne State University
Library Office

Peter Spyers-Duran
Director of Libraries
Wayne State University
5244 Gullen Mall
CAMPUS

Dear Peter:

I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the GEAC versus NOTIS decision that is before the Library. The Computing Services Center has had senior staff members involved in your system selection process. We have carefully examined issues involving computing and data communication. My comments here relate to these issues. We have deliberately ignored the functional issues of the two systems, since that is outside our domain of expertise.

There is no question in my mind that NOTIS is the system of choice considering equipment, software, maintainability, flexibility, reliability, networking and implementation issues:

Equipment

NOTIS will run on the new IBM 4381 series. This is the most reliable general purpose computer we have ever seen. It is the latest in computer technology. The disk and telecommunication equipment that support this system are equally reliable. For example, the mean time between failure of the telecommunication equipment is two years. The disk units have been installed in our computer room with no hardware failure in the past six months. This is not the case with GEAC. The software can only run on the GEAC-supplied, existing technologically-aged equipment.

Software

GEAC is a totally turn-key system. (This means that any problem with the software can only be corrected by GEAC.) NOTIS runs under an IBM general purpose operating system. (This means a major portion of the software is maintained by IBM.) The availability of the NOTIS source code makes it possible for university personnel to maintain the NOTIS code. This is impossible with GEAC.

Equally important is the ability to expand the NOTIS functions since it runs in a general purpose computing environment. For example, should the library wish to collect certain usage data and statistically analyze it, appropriate program can be added to the system by the Library or CSC personnel. This is only possible with GEAC through a special arrangement with GEAC.

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Maintenance

IBM personnel have an office on this Campus and will maintain a major portion of the NOTIS hardware and software. The availability of the NOTIS source code makes it possible for University personnel to continually monitor the system and provide 24 - hour maintenance as is done with our other systems. I know this will not be the case with GEAC. There is also a serious concern about the stringent requirements of the Canadian government on export of technology. It is possible that major future improvements in GEAC system, made available in Canada, may take a long time before they are exported to the United States.

Networking

The NOTIS system upon installation will automatically become a part of our network. This network consists of existing or planned nodes in every campus building and Detroit suburb. Through MERIT network we are connected to University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Western Michigan University campuses, with plans for connection to Oakland University this Summer. Through TELENET we are connected to all major population centers in Michigan and throughout the United States. Through planned BITNET connection, many universities will have connection to our network (see attached maps).

The cost implication of not having to duplicate the networking is obvious, but there is a greater implication. The terminals in the library will have access to NOTIS, electronic mail, statistical packages, administrative systems, graphic systems, typesetter, and all the other capabilities on the Network.

Implementation

The NOTIS implementation can begin with the existing hardware and operating software of the university with no need for up-front expenditure except for the NOTIS code. Dial-up access or dedicated access to the system can be gradually increased. This means that a library in an area covered by the network, can begin the use of NOTIS by investment in a single work station.

The issue before you seems to be a choice between a dedicated single function library system or the inclusion of a library system in a rich statewide computing and telecommunication milieu.

Sincerely,



M. A. Rahimi
Director

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Attachment
cc: W. Jones

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