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ACCESS '98: SHOOTING THE RAPIDS: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TRANSITION

Jeanne Enright

Lovely autumn days greeted about 200 delegates from across Canada and the United States for the sixth annual Access conference. Access '98, hosted by the University of Saskatchewan Libraries, was held from 2-4 October 1998 in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, located on the scenic South Saskatchewan River.

For those unfamiliar with the Access conference, it originated in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1993 and has been held each year in the fall in various cities across Canada. The three-day conference is organized in a single-stream format and is intended for individuals managing or working with information technology in libraries.

The Access '98 Planning Committee arranged a program of high-calibre speakers who deftly guided delegates through the latest developments in information technology. As well, the program included some of the broader social issues related to the application of information technology in libraries, for example, privacy, censorship, and the law.

All Access '98 registrants were invited to a wine and cheese reception and early bird registration on Thursday evening at the Delta Bessborough Hotel, the conference location. This was an opportunity for fellow delegates to network, an important feature of this small conference with registration limited to about 200. Throughout the conference, coffee and lunches were provided in an informal and relaxed atmosphere that provided

further opportunities to talk with other delegates.

In his introductory remarks, David Fox, conference chair, described this year's theme, "Shooting the Rapids—Information Technology in Transition," as a metaphor for the turbulent but exhilarating period that we are living through in the development and application of information technology in libraries. Each day of the conference was devoted to a particular area of information technology.

Day 1: Integrated Systems and Local Infrastructure

The conference opened with keynote speaker, Roy Tennant, digital library project manager for The Library, University of California, Berkeley, manager of the Berkeley Digital Library SunSITE and owner of the electronic discussion groups, Web4Lib and Dig-Libns. A thoroughly enjoyable keynote speech entitled "Whitewater Wisdom, Technical Truisms, and a Kick in the Tail" offered some practical suggestions for those working with information technology in libraries.

The first part of his speech focused upon the lessons he has learned as a commercial white water river guide that can be applied to libraries, and was supplemented with images from his trips down the Colorado River. When white water rafting, one must understand the changeability of the river, climb on shore, "read the water," and know where it is going. Similarly, in libraries one must moni-

Founded in 1958, the Committee on Institutional Cooperation, with headquarters in Champaign, Illinois, is the academic consortium of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. Member institutions include the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, Indiana University, the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

CIC: c/o Barbara McFadden Allen, (217) 333-8475, fax (217) 244-7127, <http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/cli/accessve.htm>. >

DETROIT AREA LIBRARY NETWORK *To Build First-Ever Information Hub for Southeast Michigan*

The Detroit Area Library Network (DALNET) has unveiled plans to develop the "Southeast Michigan Information Hub," a dynamic user-friendly online information system that will house unique and valuable information from a variety of community resources such as government organizations, chambers of commerce, trade associations, and museums.

DALNET is a diverse consortium made up of 21 public, community college, university, medical, law, and art libraries located in Southeast Michigan. The consortium will team with Ameritech Corporation to build the hub using Ameritech Library Services' online library automation system, Horizon, and an Ameritech-managed frame relay network. The hub, expected to be fully operational by the year 2000, will offer access to traditional library resources as well as resources of economic development, healthcare, social service, and community information. It will be the first of its type.

Already serving over 500,000 people, DALNET plans to expand its participating institutions by including key government and business organizations as well as community resources. Plans are underway to connect the

Detroit Public Library and its 24 library facilities throughout the city to the system in Spring 1999.

Horizon will enable DALNET libraries to automate all the functions related to obtaining, organizing, retrieving, and delivering information to people.

The Detroit Area Library Network (DALNET) was founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1985. DALNET members include Botsford General Hospital, Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Public Library (including Highland Park), Detroit Public Schools Professional Library (contract pending), Detroit Receiving Hospital, Grace/Sinai Hospital, Harper Hospital, Huron Valley Hospital, Hutzel Hospital, Macomb Community College, Mt. Clemens General Hospital (contract pending), Oakland Community College, Oakland County Law Library, Rehabilitation Institute, University of Detroit Mercy, Veterans Administration Medical Center, Walch College, Wayne County Community College, Wayne State University, and William Beaumont Hospitals.

Detroit Area Library Network: c/o Rachel Huber, (313) 577-4149, <ab1623@wayne.edu>.

OCLC AND WLN *Begin Negotiations to Merge*

OCLC and WLN have signed a letter of intent that could lead, following negotiations, to their merger.

WLN, a nonprofit corporation, serves 550 libraries in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States and Canada from its office in Lacey, Washington. OCLC is a nonprofit corporation based in Dublin, Ohio, which serves over 30,000 libraries in 65 countries.

The letter of intent results from extended discussions, started in April, between board chairs and senior management of each organization. According to the letter of intent, subject to satisfactory negotiations and approvals by both boards of trustees, the merger would result in the following:

- new DALNET Body H*
- WLN users would migrate to OCLC cataloging and resource-sharing services, and the WLN union catalog would be merged with WorldCat (the OCLC Online Union Catalog).
 - WLN full-member libraries would become OCLC general members, with the opportunity to participate in OCLC's governance through the OCLC Users Council.
 - WLN would continue with its MARS Authority Control, Collection Analysis, and bibliographic services.
 - The WLN office would continue to be based in Lacey and would become an OCLC/WLN service center, providing support and training to libraries in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.
 - WLN's Information Technology Research and Development staff would remain at the OCLC/WLN service center where they would supplement OCLC's extensive research and development efforts and continue to develop authority control and collection analysis services. OCLC would make these services available to libraries worldwide through OCLC's sales office, U.S. regional networks, and international distributors.

The parties hope to conclude an agreement and complete the transaction by early 1999.

"The move toward a merger developed because of a growing realization by both WLN and OCLC that an increasing number of libraries were using the services of both organizations and that a carefully thought-out merger might best serve the needs of all of our libraries," said Paul McCarthy, president and CEO of WLN. "A merger can ensure the delivery of a greater number of products and services to each of our memberships on a much more cost-effective basis."

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