

DALNET Website

Investigation and Recommendations

May 1998

After submitting a summary that reviewed the DALNET website, I was asked by DALNET Project Managers on February 9, 1998 to investigate additional matters related to website development, including content changes and authorization procedures. The following notes will serve as my preliminary report:

1. **Web Development** - The DALNET website is currently maintained by the DALNET Office in a centralized, *ad hoc* manner. Due to numerous tasks involved in DALNET system migration to Horizon, I propose that *major* design and development changes to the website be postponed until a DALNET Webmaster is hired or until WSU's migration to Horizon is completed in April 1999. In the meantime, important technical information, announcements, and *minor* improvements will continue to be made to the site by myself or others in the DALNET Office, as time permits.
2. **Server Changes** - If WSU's Web Server Project plans are implemented, the DALNET website may be affected by a change from one UNIX server to two UNIX servers, whereby the first will be used as a "test" server and the second will be used as a "production" server. This change will not affect content, but may affect our decisions about possible decentralization of webpage creation, updating, and approval. Approval processes, if we decide to implement John Houser's Webtracker program (see Item #4), will be affected in a positive way, since Webtracker is designed to operate in a two-server system.
3. **Content** - Many suggestions were included in my review of the existing website, including the creation of a Website Mission Statement, a Virtual Library Collection, and a Technical Staff Guide. I also propose the creation of a DALNET Intranet for staff members at DALNET institutions. This Intranet would enable us to post DALNET committee contact lists, meeting minutes and agendas, procedures, and other sensitive documents in a secure area of the website. Security issues and maintenance of the Intranet will need to be further investigated at that time. Additionally, the creation of a consistent look and feel in DALNET's shared Horizon WebPAC and StafPAC may affect our decisions about the ultimate appearance and content of our website.
4. **Authorization** - Both external and internal information available on the website needs to be closely managed. John Houser of DPL has offered to provide his web authorization program, Webtracker, to DALNET free of charge to help us implement an authorization system. (Note: Webtracker was designed for a Windows NT platform, and so would need minor programming changes if used in a UNIX system.) Using Webtracker, the DALNET Office would be able to decentralize webpage

creation, sharing this responsibility with other DALNET libraries, and yet would still be able to ensure that pages are approved by a DALNET Website Committee or by Project Managers before they are transferred to production. The creation of a Website Committee is strongly recommended, if the Webtracker program is used. At DPL, where Webtracker is used, e-mail reminder and authorization messages are generated for a limited number of staff members (usually an Agency Manager, appropriate Service Director, and staff members in Marketing and Information Systems), in order to streamline the approval process. DALNET's Website Committee, if comprised of key DALNET personnel, could use the DPL authorization process as a model to approve changes or additions to website content and structure.

In summary, there are many exciting technological, system, design, and procedural improvements possible for our DALNET website, including an Intranet for staff resources and the implementation of Webtracker, a webpage authorization program that would ensure accuracy and improve the informational content on our site. A consistent look-and-feel with our shared Horizon WebPAC and StafPAC has the potential to further enhance our corporate identity as well. Given DALNET's focus on successful system migration to Horizon, however, I propose that major website design changes, content changes, and the implementation of an authorization system be postponed until a DALNET webmaster is hired or until WSU's migration is completed in April 1999.

Respectfully submitted,

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