Tuesday, January 21, 1997

To: Louise Bugg, Interim Associate Dean
From: Birong Ho, Chairperson
        DALNET Database Standards Committee
Re: **RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DALNET POLICY AND
        STANDARDS DOCUMENTATION**

The DALNET Database Standards Committee asks that the following recommendations regarding the documentation of DALNET *database-related** policies and standards be presented for discussion at the next Project Managers' meeting.   (*The qualifier *database-related* is intended to limit the scope of documents collected and distributed).

1. That from this point forward, all DALNET database-related policies and standards documents, regardless of origin, be collected and maintained in a single location at the DALNET Systems Office;
2. That someone from the DALNET Systems Office be appointed DALNET Documentation Coordinator with responsibility for collecting, maintaining, and distributing DALNET policy and standards documents;
3. That the first task of the Coordinator be to contact the chairpersons of all DALNET committees with a request that they a) identify any existing documents that could be considered as policy or standards papers; b) review and update as necessary these documents; and c) submit these to the Coordinator by a given target date;
4. That the Coordinator also identify and contact other possible DALNET bodies that generate database-related policy and standards decisions (besides DALNET committees). For example, policy and standards decisions may originate from Project Managers' meetings;
5. That, once collected and collated, the Documentation Coordinator prepare and distribute loose-leaf binder copies of DALNET policies and standards to each member library;
6. That the Chairpersons of the DALNET committees (or other identified persons) be responsible for ensuring that new or revised policies and standards be submitted to the Documentation Coordinator; and
7. That the Documentation Coordinator distribute copies of new and revised policies and standards to member libraries on an as-needed basis.

Why this request? In reviewing its own standards documents, the DALNET Database Standards Committee discovered lapses in the collection and maintenance of policies and standards. Although individual standards documents were found to exist, only one person on the committee had a complete set of these; moreover, it is quite possible that some policy and standards decisions remain buried in committee minutes. It is also probable that no DALNET member library has a complete set of these documents. There is currently no provision for a periodic review of the documents to ensure their currency.

What problems do these recommendations address? For long-term DALNET committee members and librarians, the lack of access to current documented DALNET policies and standards may not be a problem – this knowledge resides in their memories. However, new committee members or new library managers may find themselves at a disadvantage without convenient access to documented up-to-date DALNET policies and standards. Documentation helps to ensure consistent practices across member libraries. It also helps new managers, particularly those in technical services, to get up to speed quickly on local practices. Furthermore, it provides library staff with a reliable resource to help with problem resolution.

Speaking for the DALNET Database Standards Committee, we would certainly benefit from the acceptance and enactment of these recommendations and would be among the first to submit documents to a Documentation Coordinator. How useful these provisions would be for other DALNET committees or bodies would have to be determined; it may be that not all committees have a need for these measures.

The DALNET Database Standards Committee hopes that Project Managers have an opportunity to review these recommendations at its next meeting. If you wish, I can arrange for a representative of our committee to be present at the meeting to answer questions.