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The global electronic village

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The joint Oregon-Washington ACRL conference held at Menucha, Oregon on October 20-21, 1994 provided an opportunity to hear the perceptions of several speakers from private and public sectors on the future development of the National Information Infrastructure (NII) - the "roadbed" of the Information SuperHighway. This infrastructure would potentially provide wide-spread Internet access to rural areas.

It was a sobering, but not altogether surprising, opportunity to hear the private sector's vision of a market-driven Internet delivery stream. The recovery of the costs associated with laying fiber-optic cable to connect rural areas and their desire to provide a wide array of pay-for-view type services to Internet users dominated the private sector perspective. There was an obvious difference in opinion between the public and private sector presenters as to whether the development of the NII will occur to meet the needs of private market forces (i.e. to be used as a vehicle for profit by providing primarily entertainment type offerings), and whether there will be room on the highway for public and nonprofit institutions, such as libraries and educational institutions.

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by Charles Piquett, o.c.c.c

The speakers included Joe Bonica (TCI Cable Vision), Jim Elias (US West), Bob Gillespie (Consultant to ACRL, ALA & EDUCOM), Eric Hood (NorthWest Net), and Joy Hughes (Oregon State University). The uncertainty of how the NII will be developed and what services will be available to the public were dominant themes in their presentations.

John Bonica (TCI Cable):
Expressed a need for educators to address the teaching of skills needed for students to successfully use the resources which will become available on the Internet. Students will need to have well developed critical thinking skills, as well as a strong understanding of history, logic, philosophy, political science and intellectual property law in order to become wise consumers of these resources.

Jim Elias (US West)
As librarians, we will need to use our skills as information filterers and organizers, and educational facilitators to help users grasp the concept of the "bigger information picture" in order for them to successfully navigate through the mass of opportunities which will become available through the new market-driven Internet. A lack of U.S. policies and standards has led to an unsettling situation in the competitive marketplace which won't lead to a lot of cooperation between public and private entities. The resulting entertainment and communications profits will drive the funding of future network infrastructure developments and applications.

Bob Gillespie (ACRL Consultant):
It is unlikely that the federal government will fund the future development of the infrastructure, but it can encourage NII development through changes in regulations which affect where and what services private and public entities can provide. He predicted that it will be at least three to four years before any significant legislative changes will occur at the federal level. There will be conflicting interests between private and public sectors. In a world where the NII development is profit driven, the public sector influence in this development is likely to be small.

Eric Hood (NorthWest Net):
The development of the NII should be guided by the principles of the right of equal access to the nation's information systems, ubiquitous access and universal inter-connectivity to our nation's information resources, continuing efforts to improve the reliability and performance of the networking infrastructure and developing the necessary policy and economic frameworks to permit commercial, educational and research clients to share the network and its resources. The benefits of the information superhighway should flow broadly to society.

Joy Hughes (OSU Associate Provost for Information Services):
Addressed the need for librarians to think of how libraries and librarians will change in order to meet students' and researchers' information needs resulting from use of the Internet. We will need to become active participants in the institutional changes which will result. The continuing networking of information resources will result in libraries and librarians being less "place bound."

The session on Friday responding to Thursday's panel started with the observations of a panel of librarians including Sarah Beasley (Oregon State University), Cynthia Cunningham (University of Washington), and Sharon Walbridge (Washington State University). All the panelists were concerned about how the future development of the Internet will affect a library's ability to provide Internet resources to the public, and whether

Local area Networks

As a tangential benefit of these technology-oriented meetings, a very human "wide area network" is developing, at least in the Newport and Florence areas. In discussing their specific technological needs, a broad range of organizations are learning a great deal about each other and are discovering, within the very local community, that they have a tremendous amount of information and expertise that could be shared to benefit their common constituencies. There is rising interest in using the fiber network not just as a bridge to remote sites and to Valley resources, but also as a way to connect the many existing LANs in the area and to open up e-mail and other kinds of conversation among organizations. There is considerable interest in forming a "communitynet" that will continue the contacts technological need has initiated and extend to provide the public with simpler, more integrated access to the whole area's resources. Whether or not that technological WAN emerges remains to be seen, but the discussion of it has catalyzed a stronger human network in which libraries play a significant role.

While the WAN idea is bubbling to the surface in a few communities, the smaller-scale LAN is satisfying desires for more immediate gratification in a good number of moderately-sized public libraries. West Linn, Newberg, Tigard, Cedar Mill, Canby, Newport, and Siuslaw Public Libraries, and probably others, have all installed or developed plans for LANs within roughly the past year.

LANs are likely to become the most essential and versatile "resource sharing" tool a smaller public library can have, the mechanism by which we can both make our resources available to the outside electronic world and better distribute those resources to our own more immediate users. Basically, a LAN links computers together to create multiple access points to large data files (like CDs) and peripherals (like printers and modems). Most of the libraries mentioned are using LANs initially to improve access to their growing CD-ROM resources. Especially in libraries where Internet and other online resources are either not available or not affordable, CD-ROM retains significant appeal as a means of expanding reference capabilities. However, as long as drives are attached to single stations, access to a particular CD is limited to one person. The LAN offers a rather elegant solution to this problem, making it possible to distribute access to the full menu of CDs out to multiple computer stations, and, with remote access software, to dial-in users. As we gain access to Internet, communitynets, and other electronic resources, the LAN can also distribute that access to multiple stations in a

building. More importantly, perhaps, the LAN also provides a means by which we can make library resources visible to other network users and thus become reciprocal participants in the new electronic world.

There are, of course, problems with LANs in smaller settings. Having the technical capacity to provide multiple access points to databases is useless if one can't afford the licensing required to do so. Charges for multiple station and remote access licensing range from minimal to prohibitive; fortunately, LANs allow tailoring of menus and access restrictions at different stations that can help libraries comply with their licensing arrangements. Of course, it takes some training and time to use these LAN management tools; technical support can be an issue. LANs are also not necessarily cheap, but their design is very flexible and can be adjusted to fit a wide range of situations and budgets. Newport, for example, is looking at around $35,000 to cable and install a 9-station Novell network including a significant amount of new hardware; networking three existing PCs in a simple peer-to-peer network, though, could easily come in under $1,000.

Applying the resource-sharing concept within their own domains, a good number of smaller public libraries are using LANs to distribute their own resources more effectively. In creating LANs, they are also developing resources to plug into wider area networks as they Jdevelop, and are becoming more significant players in community-wide conversations revolving around technology. While perhaps not leaping into cyberspace with quite the same liberty and abandon as their larger, more metropolitan counterparts, they are nonetheless leaping, discovering "appropriate" technological applications and laying the groundwork for wider connectivity as it becomes possible.

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libraries will continue to share resources when profits are involved.

A lively discussion followed the presentations in which key question and concerns were brought up including: How are we going to ensure universal access to both the "rich and poor"? Who's going to determine the content of the resources available on the Internet? Who's going to organize the content? How are security and privacy concerns going to addressed? How are we going to teach students to effectively seek and find information in the myriad of information resources which will become available?

A break-out session followed this discussion in which small groups were asked to come up with actions librarians could take to help keep the profession involved in the development and use of the Internet. Suggestion included:

* Develop a concept of ourselves as information consultants and facilitators.

* Market the kinds of Internet support services we can provide to the campus community.

* Encourage library schools to teach the concepts of our roles as consultants, facilitators, and marketers.

* Train students how to evaluate the information they find on the Internet.

* Educate the faculty as to the difference between their information needs and a student's needs.

Written by Charles (Oregon Coast Community College) with help from Loretta Rielly (Oregon State University) and Carolyn Gaskell (Walla Walla College).

Dull People

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you've never taken the time to visit.

"Knowing I loved my books, he furnish'd me, from my own library, with volumes that I prize above my dukedom" Tempest, Act I, Scene 2.

In these words Prospero, explaining to his daughter, Miranda, the circumstances under which they came to the deserted island on which they live, shows how a friend made his life there more bearable. These books enabled him to educate his daughter and to weave the magic spells and potions that causes the tale of The Tempest to unfold. We have booked a bloc of tickets for Friday night in the Winningstad Theater in Portland's Performing Arts Center - literally only a block away from the Hilton. The Tygres Heart company which is putting on this production have made their name performing Shakespeare in this very intimate theater - only 300 seats; so the experience will be very different from Ashland. The evening starts with a buffet supper at the Hilton at which two speakers from the Tygres Heart company will give you an insight into the company, the play, and their production. This should be a very exciting evening, so take the opportunity of being in Oregon's big city and have a night on the town!

After you've read of all these exciting offerings, and been tempted, go back to your conference packet and look for the flyers which give you full details of how to register for the tours and get to the play.

Academic Database

their intention to join the union catalog project as soon as possible.

What is the relationship between Orbis and local library systems and how does Orbis work?
Orbis does not replace the local systems at participating libraries nor is it an unconnected catalog. Links are established between the local catalog and the union catalog which allow real-time updating of information and transactions. The interactive nature of Orbis means that when an item is cataloged and the bibliographic record posted to the local system of a participating library, the cataloging data is also automatically posted to the union catalog within seconds. It also means that when an item is checked out at a participating library, the information about the loan of the item (or its return) is automatically posted within seconds to the union catalog. Order records and holdings information for periodicals are also posted to Orbis shortly after being keyed into the local system.

Patrons can choose to search for materials in the local catalog first. If too few or no matches are found or the needed items are checked out, they can pass through the local catalog to search the union catalog by entering one keystroke. The search is repeated in Orbis without the need for re-keying the data. Patrons can also choose to go directly to Orbis and search for materials in the combined database.

Although the circulation module is not yet available in Orbis, the status of all items held by member libraries is displayed in conjunction with the bibliographic record. Patrons can use existing interlibrary loan services to retrieve the items displayed.

How is Orbis governed?
Orbis is governed by the Orbis Council which consists of the library directors of the participating institutions. Each has signed a "memorandum of understanding" contract which outlines the shared governance structure of the project and details the rights,obligations, and responsibilities of the member libraries and the University of Oregon Library (the host site).

What are the benefits of Orbis for Oregon?
The goals of the Orbis project are to support instruction and research by making it easier to search library holdings at member libraries and, importantly, to support resource sharing. As Orbis grows, it will become Oregon's equivalent of a virtual research library, easily accessible, comprehensive, and tied to a responsive document delivery program. It will also promote cooperative col-