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Rhode Island Library Association Bulletin



1984

RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

150 EMPIRE STREET

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The Bulletin is a publication for public, school, academic and special libraries of Rhode Island. Published by the Rhode Island Library Association, the Bulletin welcomes news and discussion of interest to RILA members. Articles contained herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the ideas of the RILA membership, or the Bulletin staff or advertisers. All articles about library and media matters will be considered. All should be signed and should not exceed ten double spaced typed pages unless the editor is consulted. Cover art should be done in black and white and should measure 7½ inches wide by 6 inches high.

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RHODE ISLAND LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
BULLETIN

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ROBERT FROST
March 26, 1874



TABLE OF CONTENTS



Editor's Notebook	2
Thoughts From the President	3
ALA Midwinter Report 1984	4
People in the News	7
Bulletin Board	8
RILA New Technologies Committee Survey of Microcomputer Use in R.I. Public Libraries . . .	9
URI Library and Services for the Visually Impaired: Kurzweil Reading Machine by Lucille Cameron	11
Online Public Access Catalogs by Eva Wadsworth	14
Jobline	20

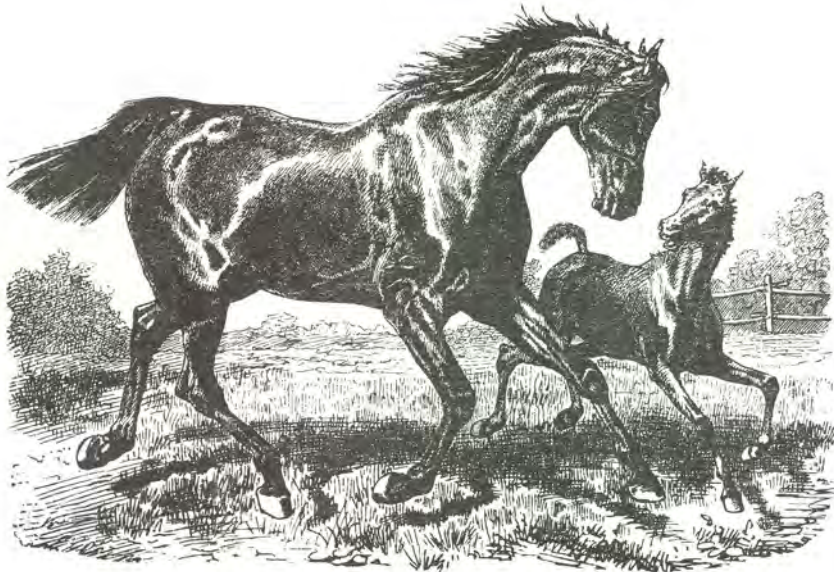


EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

This issue contains two informative and interesting articles: one, by Eva Wadsworth, on on-line public access catalogs; the other, by Lucille Cameron, on the Kurzweil reading machine (voice-reading for the visually impaired) at the URI Library in Kingston. Thanks to both of these authors for these two fine contributions to the Bulletin.

The Bulletin depends on its readership, people in the library community, and others for their contributions. If you have an idea for an article, long or short, please send it in (to Michael Vocino at the URI Kingston Library) or call someone on the Bulletin staff. Remember, the Bulletin wouldn't be what it is without your interest and contributions.

Chris Chapman
Editor





THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

... Now that we have an endorsed funding proposal, here are a few reflections on the issue itself and the process we went through deciding on it ...

Funding is a serious problem for libraries, and the intensity of our meetings showed the real concern that many librarians have about it. Despite the diversity of our views, and the disagreements we have had as to the relative merits of particular proposals, I remain convinced of this:

The underlying motive behind all of that discussion is a shared, solid commitment on the part of R.I. librarians to providing our citizens with the highest quality library service possible. I hope that we will all work especially hard at convincing our legislators to give us the means to act on that commitment.

.....

... Individual members of RILA have mentioned to me their interest in becoming part of RILA groups/committees/roundtables for 1) preservation of library materials; and 2) technical services. I'd like to get a sense of just how much interest there is association-wide.

If you're interested in the preservation issue, please contact Jennifer Banks at Brown University, Rockefeller Library, Acquisitions Department, 863-2173, by April 1, 1984.

If you'd consider becoming part of a RILA technical services group, please send your name - again, by April 1 - to Debbie Cohen, Weaver Library, East Providence, 434-2453.

.....

... In a related issue, the New Technologies Committee, which was begun last year and so ably and enthusiastically chaired by Jean Nash, Director of West Warwick's Library System, needs an infusion of new blood. Most of last year's libraries, including DSLS's Media Services, will be performing many of the tasks they had set for themselves, and the Committee would only be duplicating efforts. A small minority on the Committee believes that there are areas which it can and should address - areas which would not be covered except by the Committee.

At its January 31 meeting, the Executive Board decided to run a notice in the Bulletin to see if there is any interest among RILA members in joining the Committee. If response is poor, the Committee will be disbanded. Please contact me at PPL, 521-8728 if you're interested.

.....

... Somebody out there must remember when RILA used to have Annual Spring Business Meetings. I've been mulling over having one this year, in response to those who say that having one, just before lunch, at the annual Fall Conference, doesn't give members time to consider and discuss the many issues which may arise - to wit, the examples at this past Fall Meeting of the change in RILA's fiscal year, the nuclear arms resolution, the minimum salary standard.

What do you think, RILA members? Should we bring back the Spring Meeting? And if you're one of those "in the know" about why they were discontinued, please enlighten me. The Executive Board will be discussing this; it would be helpful to have membership input. Thanks.

Fran Farrell-Bergeron
President



A Nation at Risk and adult literacy, increased telecommunication costs facing libraries, reduced access to U.S. Government information, a membership dues increase, and publisher's trade discounts were some of the threads and themes of the Washington, D.C. Midwinter Conference.

Barbara Bush, wife of the Vice-President, credited libraries for their efforts to reduce illiteracy in the U.S. She introduced a discussion panel of varied but concerned speakers at the President's Program: Elaine Steinke Meyer, President of the National Parent-Teacher Association; Terrel Bell, Secretary of Education; James Fowler, President of Lions International; and Dorothy Ridings, President of the League of Women Voters. All speakers linked libraries, education and literacy in projecting the future of Americans.

Focusing on the reduction of services libraries would have to face as funds are reallocated to telecommunications, the Committee on Legislation introduced a resolution that asks ALA to call upon Congress and the Federal Communication Commission to "reject access charges for library telecommunications pricing, to create a library public-service tariff, and to implement any new tariff increases gradually over a period of years."

The same committee offered a resolution to Council that addressed the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) circular on Federal Information Management. Calling attention to the public's right to know, the resolution asked that:

- 1) ALA reaffirm its position that there be equal and ready access to data, and that this principle be included in the final policy circular.
- 2) The ALA Washington Office continue to monitor OMB's policy development process and to offer its assistance in developing such policy.

The Washington office has provided a chronology on restricted government information and publication: LESS ACCESS TO LESS INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT (III).

Council adopted a graduated dues increase (over the next five years) presented by COPEs. Concern for part-time librarians, school librarians (who must also belong to NEA) and librarians with low salaries were echoed in several resolutions. Particularly noted was the dues increases that PLA and other divisions are also proposing, which may prohibit membership for some in both ALA and a division. One resolution asked COPEs to investigate a salary-based dues structure.

A special ad hoc committee, chaired by Annalee Bundy, presented a report on publisher's trade discounts to libraries. The committee presented a resolution asking ALA to support "the concept of equal discounts on equal volume orders," and that publishers examine their discounts to libraries in an effort to implement such a policy.

An updated report on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) standards for federal librarians shows that this issue has not been resolved. OPM is not addressing the concerns previously presented to it. All librarians are urged to write their congressional delegates asking that Donald J. Devine withdraw the proposed standards and accept ALA's long-standing offer to participate in the development of equitable standards. The implications of these standards are broad, affecting librarians everywhere.


The arms race stays on the surface of librarians' concerns as they press for expansion of knowledge among citizens and profession-wide activity. ALA has also been asked by Council to support a second White House Conference on libraries and information issues in 1989.

A new issue that is emerging and may be of interest to many of us is the Public Lending Right issue. The core of this one is that authors are entitled to be compensated for the multiple uses of their books in libraries. The main question of course: will such money come out of library budgets? A symposium has been held at the Library of Congress. Keep a close watch on this one.

Jody Bush
ALA Chapter Councilor

A black and white illustration of an elderly man with glasses, wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants, sitting in a wooden chair and reading a large book. There are some papers or books on the floor next to him.

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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

- Rachel Carpenter, of the Reference/Reader's Advisor Department at the Providence Public Library, is joining the reference staff at Adams Library, Rhode Island College beginning March 12.
- Jody Bush, Chief of Branches and Community Services at the Providence Public Library, has accepted the position of Assistant Director of the Berkeley (California) Public Library. She will assume her new duties on April 2.
- Beth Perry, Assistant Director of the James P. Adams Library at Rhode Island College, has accepted the position of State Librarian (R.I.). She replaces Elliott Andrews, who recently retired.
- Anita Bologna has recently been appointed Director of the Rhode Island Library Film Cooperative. She is a Connecticut native and was formerly the Film Librarian/AV Consultant at the New Hampshire State Library. She most recently served as Senior Record Librarian at the Donnell Media Center of the New York Public Library. Anita had words of praise for RILA's efficiency. She joined RILA on January 3rd and by January 20th had already received her first issue of the Bulletin. Good work troops.
- William Pett, Subject Control Librarian in the Catalog Department at URI, is now the Health Librarian at the Rhode Island Department of Health in the Cannon Building in Providence.
- Robert H. Aspri, formerly Circulation Supervisor at URI-Kingston, is now Assistant Professor/Head of Circulation at CCRI Flanagan Campus.
- Marilyn Westgate, formerly of the Government Publications Office at URI, is now a library technician at the Extension Division of URI.
- John D. Lanigan has been appointed Children's Librarian at the Washington Park Branch of Providence Public Library. He holds his B.A. degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) in Plattsburgh and his M.L.S. from SUNY in Albany. He has served as an intern at the State Library in Albany and as manuscript researcher and library assistant at Feinberg Library at SUNY in Plattsburgh.
- Dominique Coulombe, Copy Catalog Librarian at Brown University, was one of three librarians in the country to receive a 3-M grant to attend the American Library Association Annual Conference.
- Barbara Briggs, Reference Librarian and Cataloger at Barrington College Library, retired at the end of December. Marcia Sessions has now become the new Reference Librarian and Cataloger.

BULLETIN BOARD

FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY: Foster Public Library is participating in a community effort to combat hunger. At the request of the ministers in the area, Librarian Mary Hearn is providing space and a convenient drop-off center for a collection of canned goods that are donated by the community to assist needy families.

NEW BRANCH REQUEST: Cranston Public Library Board of Trustees has approved the submittal of a \$353,000.00 request to the City Plan Commission for a new Auburn Branch. The present Branch is in rented quarters on Rolfe Street.

BOWL-A-THON: The staffs of the Warwick Public Library and the Cranston Public Library faced off on February 26 to support the Big Sisters Association of Rhode Island.

JMRT SCHEDULE: The Rhode Island Junior Members Round Table is planning activities for the coming months: March is a Joint meeting with SLA, probably a tour of two architectural libraries; April 28 is a trip to JFK Library with additional, optional fun in Boston; May is the annual picnic and fun bash; June is the annual business meeting, elections and dinner.

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM: South County Coordinator Kay Hearn is involved in a project to present workshops and programs on local and oral history. The project, "Echoes in America," is funded by a grant from the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities. A British group, Major Road Theatre Co., will be in the state from February 27 through March 7 to conduct four oral history workshops and six programs. These programs are being conducted in four states: Rhode Island, Connecticut, South Carolina and North Carolina.

DATASEARCH FEE WAIVED: Providence Public Library has waived the \$10.00 fee for individuals to use DATASEARCH until April 1. The library is offering the fee waiver to introduce users to the new service and to encourage its use. DATASEARCH has access to a broad range of topics on virtually any subject, including business, humanities, law, medicine, science and technology, and current affairs.

MICROCOMPUTERS: NEMICRO (New England Microcomputer Users Group) is a new organization in New England. It offers a forum for librarians and information specialists who are interested in the use of microcomputers. It will focus on Library applications, but is looking for broad membership from all over New England, from all types of libraries with different hardware and software, in varying stages of automation. NEMICRO will have regular general meetings and small group meetings organized around a particular application, hardware/software configuration, or type of library. It will publish a quarterly newsletter with regular columns on new products, coming events, reports on meetings, and current awareness. The next general meeting is 9:30-3:00 on March 24, 1984 at Simmons College. It will include a demonstration of VISICALC, LOTUS, and DEMaster, followed by a panel discussion of library applications. For more information or to join, write: NEMICRO, c/o Dr. Ching-chih Chen, Professor and Associate Dean, Graduate School of Library & Information Science, Simmons College, 300 The Fenway, Boston, MA 02115.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS VISIT PPL: Providence Public Library's Board of Trustees hosted two events designed to acquaint public officials with the statewide services of Providence Public Library. The first on February 29 was for members of the R.I. General Assembly, statewide elected officials, and Presidents of the Boards of Trustees of public libraries throughout the state. The second reception on March 1 was for members of the Providence City Council and presidents of Friends of Providence Public Library representing branches throughout the city.

CHAMPLIN GRANT: Newport Library has received a grant from the Champlin Foundation and has added a new Apple IIe, a 3M theft detection system, and terminals to hook up to CLSI at PPL.

LIBRARY FACELIFT: Apponaug Branch Library in Warwick is being closed for two weeks to complete interior renovations. Plaster and insulation are being replaced in the second floor Budlong Room and other plaster patched. The interior of the building is also being painted.

RIEMA ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Tuesday, March 13, is the day set for the Annual Conference of the Rhode Island Educational Media Association. The place is the Flanagan Campus of CCRI and, as usual, under the reciprocal agreement, RILA members can attend the RIEMA conference at members' rates.



RILA New Technologies Committee Survey of Microcomputer Use in Rhode Island Public Libraries

The New Technologies committee of RILA conducted a survey of microcomputer use and interest in Rhode Island Public Libraries during the summer of 1983. Thirty-seven questionnaires were sent out, and thirty-three were returned. The committee feels that the large number of completed surveys indicated a high level of interest in microcomputers.

Of the libraries completing the survey, thirteen indicated that they do not have microcomputers in their institutions currently, but have definite interest in acquiring one or more microcomputers in the near future. Lack of funding was the principal reason given for delay in acquiring a microcomputer. Eight libraries indicated that they would probably seek funds in their regular budgets to purchase equipment in the current or next fiscal year. Some of these libraries already may have acquired microcomputers by the time this article is printed.

Ten public library systems indicated that they had no current interest in acquiring microcomputers for their own use or for public use. Most of the libraries that indicated a lack of interest gave their small size as the most important reason.

Ten public libraries confirmed that they have already acquired microcomputers. All of these are using their machines for internal administrative functions. In addition, seven of these libraries permit public use of microcomputer equipment. Of these seven, two have coin-operated computers available for public use. No other user fees were indicated. Six libraries specifically stated that their microcomputers could be used by children.

The most important administrative uses of microcomputers in libraries according to this survey are as follows:

- General file management. This includes maintaining periodical holdings, bibliographies, etc.
- Word processing. Used to generate reports, form letters, agendas, news releases, etc.
- Mailing lists.
- Information & Referral files.
- Statistics.
- Backup for CLSI circulation system.
- Catalog card printing. This includes producing full sets of catalog cards, labels for book pockets, book cards and spine labels.
- Overdue & bill notice processing.
- Storage of Special Collections. Includes Regional and Gift collections.

Most libraries with microcomputers reported little in the way of formal training for staff members. The Department of State Library Services sponsored workshops that were conducted by Russ Walters, and many libraries sent members of their staffs to these programs. Three libraries had formal training in micro-computer use for the public.

Conclusions to be drawn from this survey? Twenty-seven percent of the libraries polled are using microcomputers, and thirty-five percent have plans to use them. Some of the libraries reporting have valuable experience in the purchase and use of micros, including the development of forms necessary for public use of the computers. If you are interested in learning more about the librarian's newest tool, the New Technologies Committee suggests you contact any of the librarians at the institutions listed below for advice and information.

- Westerly Public Library: Cindy Perry.
Commodore CBM.
- Woonsocket Public Library: Charles Moore.
Apple II+.
- Portsmouth Public Library: Rosemary Fennerson & Roberta Stevens.
TRS-80, Apple IIe.
- Pawtucket Public Library: Ellen Spilka.
Apple IIe, TRS-80.
- Barrington Public Library: Ruth Corkill & Howard Boksenbaum.
Apple II+.
- Lincoln Public Library: Earleen Gamache
Apple II+.
- Providence Public Library: Cynthia Neal & Doris Hornby.
IBM Displaywriter, Commodore 64, Apple IIe, and Apple II+.
- Cranston Public Library: Linda Archetto.
Apple IIe.
- Coventry Public Library: Helen Gustafson.
Apple II+, TRS-80.
- West Warwick Public Library: Richard Payette.
TRS-80, Commodore 64.





URI LIBRARY AND SERVICES FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED:
Kurzweil Reading Machine

by Lucille Cameron



For those of us who do not have a visual problem, it is difficult to comprehend the world without sight. Many blind people are not able to use a conventional library because of their handicap. Certainly most libraries make arrangements for the loan of talking books, but regardless of the fine quality of this service, there are materials which still remain unavailable. This unavailability is a deterrent particularly to students. They may be able to obtain textbooks on tape, but they must depend upon a reader, their family, or friends to read scholarly journals and other non-textbook material. With the invention of the Kurzweil Reading Machine, a sight-handicapped person has the opportunity to read almost anything on the library's shelves, and perhaps more importantly, they can do it independently.

Modern technology has produced an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) system which scans and recognizes printed characters and transmits the image in electronic form to a small computer within the machine. A synthetic voice is heard a few seconds later reading the material placed on the glass. Sound simple? Let's take a closer look.

Raymond Kurzweil, an MIT graduate, founded the Kurzweil Computer Products Company in 1973. Two years later he had completed the first working model of the table-top omni-font reading machine. These first machines were hailed as the most significant advance in reading for the blind since the development of braille. The first installation of a machine was at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, Massachusetts, to be followed by 44 others in schools, libraries, rehabilitation centers, and work settings across the country. One of these first generation machines is at Rhode Island College. Although this machine was a great gain for the sight-handicapped, the quality of the electronic voice was such that it took months of careful listening to the "voice" to understand what was being read.

In 1979, a new model was introduced at one-half the cost - now \$30,000 - and with increased capabilities. It is able to read most printed material such as books, photocopies, and typewritten documents. Although it can read many printed fonts, it is not able to read handwritten script, or newspapers, and it may have some difficulty reading small paperbacks. This inadequacy is a function more of the print on the page and the quality of the paper than the machine. The electronic camera must see each character clearly and distinctly to recognize it and transmit it to the mini-computer controlling the electronic voice. The Kurzweil Company is, of course, continuing to upgrade the machine's capabilities.

The machine actually consists of three physical units which are connected to each other by flexible cables. The first unit contains the automatic tracking system which houses the electro-optical system encompassing the camera. It automatically scans the printed material which is placed, print side down, on the glass much as one does with a reprographic machine and sends the image to a mini-computer in the electronic control unit.

The electronic control unit contains all of the electronics required for scanning, character recognition, and speech production functions. This computer handles the pronunciation which is accomplished through the use of a sophisticated, unlimited vocabulary. It reads only the English language at present and speaks with a touch of a Scandinavian accent. The program computes the correct pronunciation of each word and also adds the appropriate intonation pattern to each spoken sentence. The pronunciation is governed by the use of over 1000 linguistic rules plus 1500 exceptions to the rules which have been programmed into the computer.

A control panel of 38 push-button controls allows the reader to perform many different reading functions including speeding up or slowing down the rate of reading, repeating from the memory bank the previous 60 words read, spelling out words which may be difficult to understand or are obscure, announcing punctuation and capitalization, and marking certain words and phrases for future reference. The speaker is contained in the control panel, which also has a jack for earphones or a cassette-recorder.

A second software package contains the program for a highly sophisticated talking calculator. It performs not only simple arithmetic processes but calculates and announces complex logarithmic, trigonometric, and exponential functions as well.

Training is necessary to operate the machine. As the URI Library's liaison for the handicapped, this writer received formal training on the machine. The training at the company's headquarters in Boston consists of two all-day sessions. Three trainees work with the Kurzweil training staff. Basic information about the machine is provided, including its strengths and weaknesses, but the bulk of the time is devoted to learning to manipulate the 38 button control unit which is the heart of the operating device. The world as experienced by blind people was simulated through the use of nightshades during this manipulative learning process. Although the control buttons are unmarked, one quickly realizes that they are only part of the problem. If a person has no vision, how can he/she tell which side of a piece of paper has the printing? Most of us were not successful the first time in placing the material on the glass so that the camera could scan it. We soon began to appreciate our own eyesight and what the world of darkness is like. We were provided with information on how to train people, as well as material useful in public relations.

The Kurzweil Reading Machine which is housed in the University Library was a very generous gift from the Xerox Corporation which now owns Kurzweil Computer Products. Grants were solicited by Xerox from all degree-granting institutions in the United States with programs of two years or longer. Machines were awarded to 200 of the 3,000 such institutions based on selection criteria developed in consultation with organizations serving the blind.

Some of the criteria were the number of blind or visually impaired students, the existence of an active program of service and support for these students, the ability to provide housing and maximum hours of accessibility for the machine, and geographic dispersion. Thanks to the URI Coordinator of Handicapped Services, we were awarded one of the 200 machines. Although the majority of people who will ultimately be willing to spend the twelve to fourteen hours for training will be students at URI, the machine is available to anyone in the State.

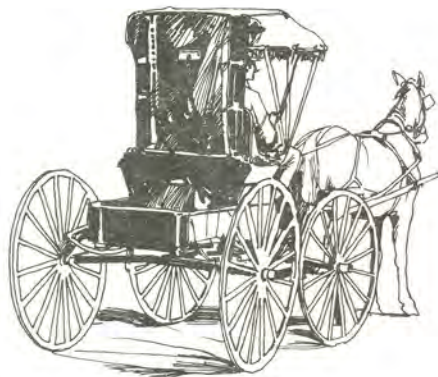
In addition to the Kurzweil Reading Machine, the University was also the recipient of a very generous gift of two Visualtek Machines from a Newport resident. One of these is housed in the Library at URI's College of Continuing Education in Providence and the second one is in the Library on the Kingston campus. These machines also provide the means for someone with partial vision to read more easily.

Compared to the Kurzweil Reading Machine, the Visualtek is far less sophisticated but it does not require any training beyond a brief introduction. The sole function of this machine is the magnification of ordinary print placed on the viewing table onto a screen or monitor. The resultant image can be adjusted so that the letters on the screen are about two inches high. The viewing table on which the reading material is placed moves from side to side as well as up and down so that a page may be read. The process is somewhat slow, and it does require that a person have some vision, but, again, it does allow people to become more independent.

With a flick of a switch, the image on the screen is reversed. This now allows for a portable typewriter to be placed under the glass and a person to type material. It again is enlarged onto the screen. The user is able to proofread his or her typewritten pages. The University is indeed grateful for the donation of these \$2,500 machines.

Further information and training may be arranged through Lucille Cameron, Reference Department, University Library, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, R.I. 02881-0803, or by calling 792-2653.

Lucille Cameron is Head of Reference at URI Library.





ONLINE PUBLIC ACCESS CATALOGS

By Eva Wadsworth

One of the flourishing products of libraries' growing databases is the online public access catalog (OPAC). These systems are designed to allow library users to access a library's database by means of a computer terminal. Drastically different in design, online public access catalogs may be provided in place of or in addition to a card or book catalog.

Online Public Access Sources

Online public access catalogs are provided by a variety of sources in both the profit and non-profit sectors. Washington Library Network (WLN) and the Library of Congress (LC) are government supported sources which provide online public access in member/subscriber institutions (13). WLN provides COM (Computer Output on Microform) services as do other institutions like the Los Angeles County Public Library (3:82). Over one hundred institutions that subscribe to OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) use it as an online public access catalog. Stanford University uses the RLIN II (Research Libraries Network, formerly BALLOTS) database; the Library of Congress has two systems, MUMS (Multiple Use MARC) and SCORPIO (Subject Content Oriented Retrieval for Processing Information On-line).

Many libraries have created systems for online public access using their own bibliographic records or adapting records of other systems like OCLC. Pikes Peak Library District in Colorado, The University of California, Free University of Brussels, Dallas Public Library, Mankato State University, and Case Western Reserve University are among those who have developed their own. The Jefferson County Public Library in Lakewood, Colorado, developed a prototype of the OPAC in 1978. All library systems, including acquisitions, ordering, data control, weeding, and public access were included in their computer. That system was recently replaced by a smaller, less expensive house-designed OPAC when the library's budget was reduced (6).

OPAC Design Features

Frederick Kilgour has identified seven variables that play a part in the design of any catalog, and are of particular importance in online catalog design: usability, availability, completeness and up-to-dateness, personalization, size, flexibility, and productivity (16:34).



Author, title, subject and other search key designs unlock the library's store of resources. With proper instruction a patron can use the online catalog with greater precision than card or book catalogs, making full use of an increased number of access points (23:1067-71). Online terminals can be placed throughout the library, in other buildings, as well as linked by telephone and television (7:103-08). Maggie's Place, the computer system for the Pikes Peak Library District, serves 300,000 people and is accessible by owners of personal micro-computers and modems. This system provides one hundred access locations within the library system, including schools, homes, and offices (10:53). Because of the speed with which new entries are made available on computers, an online catalog can be complete and up-to-date in its accessions.

Advanced programming makes online catalogs responsive to user requests in a way that other catalogs by their static nature cannot. Physical size of traditional catalogs poses problems of use and space; however, vast holdings can be stored in the matrix arrangement of a computer. Not only does this increase the potential for storage but it decreases search time (17:37) and enhances user productivity in its broadest sense. By the same token, staff productivity increases to include acquisitions, circulation and serial control by computer. Online catalogs can reduce substantially or eliminate card catalog maintenance costs (24:1067-71).

House Developed Systems: MELVYL and VUBIS

Several of the house-developed online public access catalogs already mentioned stand out for their utility and ease of use. The University of California and the Free University of Brussels are good examples of such user-friendly systems. At the University of California an online union catalog (MELVYL) was developed which allows patrons and staff to access collections at all nine campuses (26:358). General design principles in the development of MELVYL included patron searches with a minimum of instruction, full and easy access across campuses, "transparent" cross reference structure to allow thorough searches (26:358).

In an attempt to accommodate users with little knowledge of library catalogs as well as those with extensive online search experience, MELVYL was designed with several guidelines in mind. Among them were consistent system responses; clear results of requests and subsequent options; elimination of lack of response and too much information which cause user frustration; and clear, concise, informative system messages that are neither intimidating nor condescending (26:359).

MELVYL currently allows searches through six primary indexes, a secondary index, and three number indexes. The six primary key word indexes used to initiate a search include personal author, corporate author, title, series, uniform title, and subject. A new author command is planned which will eliminate the need to distinguish between personal and corporate authors. Exact searches will also be possible for corporate author, title, and subject key words (26:371).



VUBIS, the online system of the Free University of Brussels, is a meticulously conceived and executed example of a user-friendly OPAC. General requirements of the system were explicitly planned with an eye on current capabilities of all library resources, including staff needs, and particular attention to public need. The system had to be integrated, online, interactive, and developed to maintain most current cataloging rules. While maintaining all the academic library functions, it had to be simple enough to be efficient to operate.

VUBIS' design is extraordinary because the reading public's needs were made the central concerns. The computer system has been programmed to assess the nature of its user. Speed of patron response after beginning a search allows the computer to determine whether an experienced or inexperienced user is at the keyboard. "In the case of a slow response, the system, before presenting the next question, displays in the chosen language some basic information ..." (2:208).

Such evaluations on the computer's part are primitive at best, and other variables besides experience can affect rate of response. Nevertheless, the consequences of the computer's subjective judgement err in favor of the user. An experienced patron to whom the terminal has flashed instructions appropriate for an inexperienced user can simply proceed with his or her search. Any system represents an acceptable compromise between varying and conflicting user needs, but VUBIS has made great strides in public access to its computer catalog.

User Experience and Expectations

Keeping in mind that the function of a library's catalog is to allow patrons to find out if and where a library has a particular book or other item, it is important to consider user experience and expectations of online public access catalogs. While the VUBIS catalog just described is not part of a known user study, an important report of a study of online catalog use has recently been released by OCLC. Similar studies have been done in the past to assess online catalogs, but this project under the direction of the Council on Library Resources in Washington, D.C. is by far the most comprehensive study. Twenty-one library systems participated in this study in the spring of 1982. The majority of participant libraries are college or university systems; some are public libraries; one is a state library; and the Library of Congress is included.

Through self-administered questionnaires and focus group interviews data was collected and subsequently evaluated to determine user and non-user perceptions of online public access catalogs. "Over eighty percent of surveyed users and non-users had favorable attitudes toward the OPAC" (20:s:5). Several reasons for these favorable attitudes became clear to researchers during focus group interviews. Searching a computer is fun and saves time. New services like printouts of citations and searches of other branch catalogs from one terminal are provided by OPACs. Other new features like author/title searches and component word searches are considered valuable (20:s:6).



Patrons who had not used the OPAC blamed lack of knowledge about computers and lack of training in the use of particular systems, along with lack of time to learn the necessary skills rather than the system itself. Others responded that they had no need to search any catalog for information or materials. Patrons take advantage of new systems and features when they know how to use them (20:s:8). Results of this study indicate that patrons need instruction on several different levels and in many different ways in order to use online public access catalogs efficiently. Terminal instructions, assistance from library staff or trained volunteers, computer training workshops, and printed instruction materials can and should be used in a combination of ways to reach a public with different skills and attitudes. Once trained, users are successfully searching at a rate of eighty percent (20:s:5). Subject searches remain the source of greatest difficulty in accessing materials online. OCLC has issued a comprehensive report which addresses subject access at some length (21:1:137).

Users were equally vocal about their expectations of online access catalogs. A number of features including hard copy printouts, automatic hold on retrieved materials, automatic delivery to home or office, shelf designation, contents of periodical indexes, newspaper articles, subject bibliographies, and library reference works were cited as desirable for inclusion in OPACs to make the systems more responsive to user needs. Some of these requested features are already available on a limited basis through MARC records and CONSER in the case of reference literature and periodical indexes. The Academic American Encyclopedia is available online through BRS. Home delivery of library books ordered through television-linked computer terminals is a feature of the QUBE project (7:103-08).

Videotex and Teletext

Online public access has become an interactive process which includes the opportunity to select information as one might select items from a supermarket shelf. Videotex and teletext are gaining in small test markets in several places throughout the United States. In simple terms, videotex allows interaction between the user and the system. Teletext is a one way function which displays information to the public.

The Tacoma Public Library has an interactive cable system based on the Canadian Telidon system which allows home television selection from menu screens. Home patrons can browse the library's catalog, view listings of public events, library programs, best sellers and read book reviews along with a changing humorous story selection (25:276-77).

In late 1980 OCLC began a three month experiment in videotex (System Channel 2000, renamed Viewtel) which introduced a wide variety of commercial and library services to 200 Columbus, Ohio residents by means of a cable television and telephone link (1:206-11). Vital to the success of such a system is effective interaction between the user and the remote computer.

In an attempt to deal with an annual thirty-six percent increase in reference service, the Chicago Public Library augmented its reference services through a commercial teletext system. Kiosks throughout the library system and in other public places provide information on local activities and events as well as library information such as lists of heavy-demand items (1:206-11).

CONCLUSION

User experience with online public access catalogs generally is quite successful. User expectations are markedly high. Patrons request features that demonstrate their technological awareness as well as enthusiasm for the machines and the potential for increased access to information.

It is clear that more work must be done in educating users to search online public access catalogs successfully. Library staffs must plan effective means to instruct patrons as well as play an active role in self-education. The online catalog, though it may lure users in increasing numbers, has the potential to be "...as uncommunicative and as unhelpful as the card catalog ever was" (18:84). The growing number of online public access catalogs, along with a growing number of online services to which libraries of many kinds and sizes are subscribing, make continued study and improvement of online access imperative.

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