

## Images as information resources

By Nancy Nuckles

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### *The 1994 INFORMA conference*

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**T**he theme of the fifth annual INFORMA conference held in Point Clear, Alabama, April 17-19, 1994, was "Images As Information Resources: Moving Ahead of the Curve." Over 180 people attended from around the world, including 65 library directors, 38 library automation directors, 14 university vice-presidents, 9 computing center directors, 38 IBM staff, and employees of the Library of Congress, the National Library of Canada, and IBM business partners such as NOTIS Systems, Inc.

I am a strong advocate of INFORMA, after attending all five annual conferences. I have never returned home without my mind full of new products, ideas, and projects. In days when regular budgets are flat and grant funding is disappearing, INFORMA reminds me of what *can* be done. My institution is often a couple of years behind those who demonstrate projects at INFORMA, but I am encouraged to dream when I see the possibilities technology offers.

This conference is organized and partly funded by IBM Academic Information Systems, and thus there is a bias toward IBM equipment and software. This serves to focus discussions rather than attempting to deal with the world of academic computing and emerging technologies at large. It is useful because of the diverse group attending. It provides a collegial forum for computing center directors, library directors, and systems librarians to discuss cooperating on issues in their academic arena.

### **New uses of imaging**

The idea most often repeated during the three days was how to resolve issues and challenges

related to scanning and delivery of images. Pre-conferences educated attendees on application areas and technical processes, and on the future of image technology. The First General Session following the theme of "Moving Ahead of the Curve" focused on three presentations of projects that represent the theme in different yet similar ways. Gregory Zick, chair of the Department of Electrical Engineering, University of Washington, looked at three different image projects: EDGAR, MARINER, and IKE, which show how different users present different needs for system design and implementation.

Richard Cerreta, principal, Worldwide Image Technology Consulting Practice, IBM, discussed the Vatican Library Image Project, an IBM-supported project that will develop a database of manuscript images from the Vatican Library, to be available for use by partner Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro (see *News from the Field*, page 335).

Maura Mulvihill, director of image collection and image sales, National Geographic Society, looked at the future of an image project based on the need to provide the Society editors with timely and effective research. In particular, she is faced with converting from analog to digital data, as the equipment for analog data is no longer manufactured.

The Second General Session introduced the topic "Imaging Solutions for Information Resources Management." John Heidbreder, director of image and work management, Consulting and Services, IBM, looked at the challenge to build a more capable and comprehensive distribution model.

The Third General Session looked at "Images on the Internet." George Brett, director of the Center for Networked Information, Discovery and Retrieval, took a look at where we are

and what might be the future. Using the kudzu—a plant well known for its capacity to grow large root structures at a fast pace—as a metaphor, Brett explored the intricacies of navigating through the Internet. The growth in complexity of moving through the Internet means we need to develop better tools for navigation and analysis.

Glenn Wilde, dean of the Learning Resources Program, Utah State University, shared the experiences of his institution's implementation of a new organizational structure for managing the information needs of the campus. His presentation, "Establishing the University-Wide Information Network or UWIN," gave a report from the cutting edge on progress in making our institutions adapt to the changing nature of information.

There were several elective sessions. In "Imaging & The Library of the Future," Kaye Gapen discussed imaging and the role it will play in developing the library of the future as well as its role in the development of knowledge management systems. "Imaging Technology in High Use Applications: Political, Ethical, and Legal Considerations," regarding an electronic reserve reading room was presented by Don Bosseau, university librarian, San Diego State University.

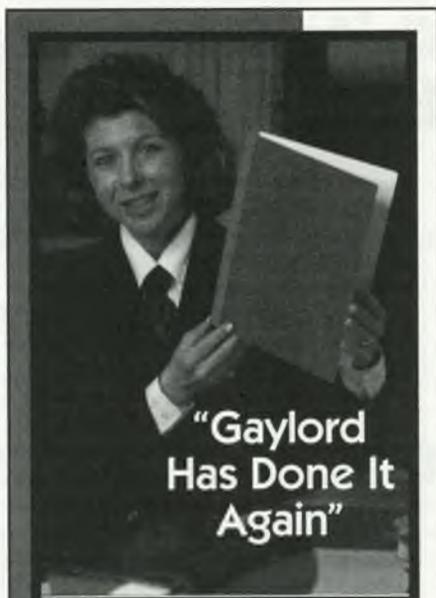
In "Creating a Demand for Image and Other Services" Bethany Baxter discussed ways in which individual units on campus can collaborate with other areas to identify campuswide needs for new capabilities. "Setting Up an Imaging Center" was presented by Richard P. Hulser, library museum consultant, Academic Consulting and Services, IBM, and Jim Barker, project director, Library Collections Services Project, Case Western Reserve University. Barker discussed Case Western's research and development imaging center.

In "Promenade: The National Agricultural Library and University of Pittsburgh Image Database Project," Stuart McLean discussed using 19th-century botanical prints and photographs of plant pests and diseases, presenting high-quality images to PCs over the Internet from a central database server.

### **New software demonstrated**

The "Academy at Work" is the exhibit hall for INFORMA and, as always, was full of exciting demonstrations of new IBM software and hardware offerings. The exhibits included the following: Los Angeles Public Library Photo Cata-

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