

Partnerships and convergence

By Laverna M. Saunders

The 1995 CAUSE Conference in New Orleans

Following the theme "Realizing the Potential of Information Resources," programs and contributed presentations at the recent CAUSE Conference in New Orleans addressed issues and case studies relevant to academic libraries. At the opening session, CAUSE President Jane Ryland announced that the organization had a new breadth of focus which now includes information resources. This emphasis is highlighted in the new CAUSE mission statement: "to enable the transformational changes occurring in higher education through the effective management and use of information resources—technology, services, and information."

Synergy and collaboration

Certainly these elements dominated the discussion of the Library/IT Partnerships constituent group. Libraries no longer have a monopoly on resources, and concurrently Information Technology (IT) no longer controls the technology. The group examined a number of areas in which libraries and IT differ. For example, IT has a tradition of charging back for usage but libraries have free access; IT focuses on tools and libraries are more user-oriented. Despite the differences, there is synergy and collaboration out of need. Nonetheless, turf issues continue at many institutions due to campus politics and personalities. The realm of greatest interface is training, with an increasing number of patrons who want to use computers to search for information on the Internet. Other commonalities between the two sectors include the shared vision of campus networks, the shortage of staff and funds, and the struggle to cre-

ate or adapt flexible facilities with adequate infrastructure.

Information, technology, and services were recurrent subthemes throughout the conference. According to Ann Rhodes, the first keynote speaker and vice-president of human resources for Doubletree Hotels, "culture and attitude have as much effect on service as skill." One technique used by Doubletree to improve service is "care committees" in which staff discuss organizational culture and how to implement policies. Rhodes advocated an employee-centered culture as opposed to a customer-centered one because happy employees will produce satisfied customers. She also spoke of a passion for service and an environment where "not all people are treated equally, just fairly."

In the second keynote address, James Johnson (Emory University) outlined the dream of IT as "to use computer technology to solve problems, to access information, to enhance learning." The current digital age is the confluence of computers, communications, and information (content). Johnson declared Netscape to be a breakthrough technology because it is changing the way people think and making it possible for the global community to use the information that we have created. Information has no value unless it is communicated and shared.

Producing a vision

Participant presentations were clustered into eight tracks, including user services, client/server, policies and standards, new technologies, networking and telecommunications, professional development, and academic computing and libraries. Carolyn Snyder (Southern Illinois University) illustrated joint library/IT projects with an excellent video. Librarians from Vanderbilt University and Western Michigan

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University showcased their collaborative efforts with computing to develop discipline-specific Internet training. At Vanderbilt, librarians now provide the campus Web pages, and the IT consultant became the library's liaison to the computer center. Lance Query (Western Michigan) expressed his vision for training as providing "every student equal access to resources on the Internet."

In the strategic planning track, Maureen Sullivan (ARL) and Patrick Calhoun (University of South Carolina) gave a case study. As a result of severe financial constraints, the University of South Carolina combined central computing, libraries, distance education, and media production prior to beginning formal strategic planning. Broad staff participation in the planning process produced a vision, clarified values, and new unit objectives.

A popular topic—the Web

One of the most popular topics at the conference was the World Wide Web. Several pre-conferences provided tutorials about the Web and how specific institutions are using it. The implementation of campus Web sites and the development of homepages was yet another model of library and IT collaboration. Rob Aken (University of Kentucky) said that users expect to find relevant material quickly on the Web. Librarians know the needs of users and are well suited to compile information and establish links to Web sites. New roles for subject specialists include searching, evaluating, and organizing Web information, making presentations to user groups, and maintaining local site content.

A synthesis of the presentations indicates that libraries, as an integral part of campus information systems, are part of a new paradigm which includes many elements and challenges. Client-server technology is necessitating system migration from mainframes. The Web allows the expansion of information services in broader ways. To support the new environment, we need multimedia facilities and electronic classrooms that incorporate a cable infrastructure that facilitates data, voice, and video. Politically,

networks belong to the whole campus, not just computing or the library.

A knowledge organization

Institutions are continuing to make large capital investments in technology, and the technology changes constantly. Strategic planning is es-

sential to manage change and guide organizations that are expected to deliver services on demand anywhere, anytime, to anyone, with a minimum of staff. The partnership of libraries and computing (IT) produces a "knowledge organization" which better serves the institution.

CAUSE is the professional association for managing and using information technology in higher education. It concentrates on administrative computing and offers programs and publications relevant to academic librarians. One service is *Campus Watch*, a free electronic newsletter covering campus IT innovations. Subscribe by sending e-mail to: mailserv@cause.colorado.edu with the message: subscribe campuswatch. Back issues and other information are available on the CAUSE servers: <http://cause-www.colorado.edu/> and [gopher://cause-gopher.colorado.edu/](http://cause-gopher.colorado.edu/). The 1996 conference will be held in San Francisco. Program proposals supporting the theme "Broadening Our Horizons: Technology, Services, Information" may be sent to Linda A. Chiappe, Emory University, islac@emory.edu. ■

Internet compilers sought

C&RL News seeks compilers for subject lists of Internet resources. Since 1993 the *News* has published lists of Internet resources by subject area to serve as a handy guide to Net users. Articles have covered a variety of topics in areas such as religion, politics, and engineering. While listservs dominated the articles in 1993, today lists are a compendium of World Wide Web sites, electronic journals, and listservs. Eleven compilers are sought for articles to be published from September 1996 through July/August 1997.

If you're interested in compiling an Internet resource list for *C&RL News*, send an e-mail message to Mary Ellen Davis at mary.ellen.davis@ala.org describing your suggested subject and your expertise in the area by April 22, 1996.