CNI: Optimizing public and private interests

By Tom Kirk

Keep up with CNI electronically

The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) held its eighth semiannual meeting on November 18–19, 1993, in the Washington, D.C., area. In the past, *C&RL News* has published reports on the content of the individual meetings and in the course of those reports provided background on the coalition and its purposes and activities. Those unfamiliar with the coalition should refer to these reports for background: *C&RL News* June 1991, page 385; September 1991, pages 751–53; January 1992, pages 10–11; February 1992, pages 98–99; June 1992, pages 399–401; and January 1993, page 18.

With an expansion in the areas of interest and the increased number of synergy, project briefing, and working group sessions, it is no longer possible to give a full report on the content of a CNI meeting.

Fortunately, there is another way to learn about CNI and to keep up with its activities. CNI has a gopher which is accessible from other gophers such as consultant.micro.umn.edu, uxl.cso.uiuc.edu, and gopher.msu.edu, as well as many other gophers across the network. Once the CNI gopher has been reached the user has access to many documents produced by CNI over the past three and half years. In addition, there is a full-text database accessible using BRS/Search for such electronic archives as the CNI Copyright and Intellectual Property Forum, the Coalition's TopNode Directory Project, the Public-Access Computing Systems Forum, the InterNIC net-happenings mailing list, NETTRAIN: BITNET/Internet Trainers Forum, and Current Cities, a monthly publication of UC-Berkeley.

CNI documents identified through the gopher can also be retrieved using the anonymous FTP to FTP.CNI.ORG.

To use the CNI gopher and anonymous FTP it is helpful to remember that CNI has several working groups (WG) which act as the focal points of CNI activity. The WGs cover the following topics:

- Transformation of scholarly communication;
- Legislation, codes, policies, and practices;
- Modernization of scholarly communication;
- Management and professional development;
- Directories and resource information services;
- Teaching and learning;
- Architecture and standards;
- Access to publication information.

These working groups do not do programs but they identify topics and activities in the field, facilitate dissemination of information, and stimulate discussion of the issues. The WGs often highlight activities or projects of coalition members and others which are in the WG's area of interest. WGs also seek to sponsor certain kinds of projects. The sponsorship of projects is usually the result of a call for expressions of interest in the project area. These calls as well as other announcements about CNI are distributed via CNI's ANNOUNCE service which is a 'broadcast' service from CNI. (To subscribe send the message "subscribe CNI-ANNOUNCE first name last name" in the body of an e-mail message to LISTPROC@ CNI.ORG.)

At the November meeting of the Task Force of CNI, all of the WGs held sessions to explore issues and to report on their activities of the last six months. In addition, there were some 25 other briefing and synergy sessions at which

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projects undertaken by CNI members and issues CNI members are exploring were presented and discussed. The meeting schedule and a listing of the session topics and speakers is available from the CNI FTP files at FTP.CNI.ORG in directories /pub/CNI/tf.meetings.

In addition to the project reports, WG meetings, and synergy sessions (which stimulate new ideas), the CNI meeting contains several plenary sessions which are focused around the meeting theme. This November's theme was "Optimizing Public and Private Interests" and explored the relationships between the two and how each can work effectively in a networked environment while minimizing the negative impact of one on the other.

Three plenary sessions were held on 1) the role of government, not-for-profit, and for-profit sectors in optimizing public and private interests; 2) optimizing public and private interest in the management of intellectual property which looked at copyright, contract law, and licensing developments; and 3) optimization of public and private interests in the last mile of the network. More detailed summaries than can be provided here will be available as a meeting report at FTP.CNI.ORG in directories /pub/CNI/tf.meetings.

There is probably no better summary of the work of CNI over the past three years than the words of William Y. Arms (vice-president for computing services, Carnegie Mellon University) near the conclusion of the meeting:

"Three years ago everybody [computer center people, librarians, administrators, etc.] thought differently; today we have a common vocabulary.

"The Coalition for Networked Information does not build the electronic library but has become a superb forum for those who do build and use it to meet and work together."

Although this topic was not directly addressed, there was a strong undercurrent of concern about the need to expand use of the network to all sizes and types of libraries. Libraries of all sizes and constituencies are encouraged to become active in managing and navigating the information world. The Working Groups, for example, often included presentations from libraries which only recently became involved with electronic resources, so it's never too late to begin!

The next meeting of the Task Force of CNI will be April 5–6, 1994, in Washington, D.C. ■

Letters

Tenure is important

To the Editor:

I read with interest the essay by Beth Shapiro (November 1993) in which she advocates dumping faculty status for librarians. A few years ago I would have agreed completely with her, but some empirical study modified my opinion. (See my article in *Library Administration & Management* (Fall 1990): 184–93.)

Faculty status without tenure is nothing. With tenure it is something of value, which I will here refer to simply as tenure. Note that tenure for general faculty is ubiquitous in four-year colleges and universities; it is not ubiquitous among librarians. Without questioning why this dichotomy exists, Shapiro misses the point of what faculty status for librarians represents. Answering questions about why tenure exists and [if] it should apply to librarians provides better rationale for a dump faculty status decision than our anecdotal experience.

Long justified as the way to secure academic freedom (the real myth), tenure exists primarily because it is the only quantitative mechanism that monitors quality in academics. The tenure process delegates the hiring decision to the faculty who use this mechanism as a means to assure themselves of quality among their peers. . . . At large research universities, the tenure process (i.e., faculty status for librarians) unfortunately imposes costs—in the form of diminished campuswide research productivity—which overwhelm its benefits. Shapiro is right in regard to those places. At teaching-oriented institutions (i.e., four-year liberal arts colleges) tenure helps to insure some level of scholarship, which makes it possible for faculty to teach better. . . . Therefore, it works to elevate quality. Fortunately librarians at teaching institutions often have more opportunity to help support the instructional program by working with faculty than they do at research institutions. And, tenure here helps elevate quality among librarians with positive return to the product of those schools. These differences in campus agendas taken together provide some explanation of why tenure is ubiquitous among teaching faculty and not among librarians.

Appropriate action: dump faculty status at Rice, keep it at Trinity.—*Richard W. Meyer, director of the library, Trinity University* ■