
Opening a universitywide dialogue about electronic information resources

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Unilateral planning will not work.

An increasing number of articles in the professional literature assert that electronic information resources and the technological tools which provide access to them are radically changing scholarly communication. The changes are having a ripple effect which is impacting other information-related activities on campus. At the University of Michigan, the people most closely involved in planning for the future information needs of the campus have initiated a process whereby many of the complex issues related to the increased use of electronic information resources can be brought to the attention of this diverse academic community. The object is to start a broad-based dialogue which will lead to a practical consensus on directions and strategies for the institution.

The implications for academic and research libraries of the increased use of electronic information resources are being thoroughly discussed in the professional literature from the librarian's viewpoint. The multiple new demands which will be made upon already constrained budgets have been noted. The profession has focused on the shift in library services from providing on-site access to bibliographic units toward providing information from remote sites to remote users. Many

articles explore the need for an increased emphasis in teaching students lifelong information literacy skills. The new demands which will be made upon our cooperative systems are frequently mentioned. There is an active discussion of the potential for increased interaction and codependency between the library and other academic units because of the technology needed to provide access to electronic information resources. All of these issues are being explored in some depth in the literature of librarianship.¹

As librarians achieve a clearer theoretical vision about the future information needs of scholars, it behooves them to start planning and investing in the local framework which will enable their own campus to meet its future information needs. Here

¹Miriam A. Drake, "Management of Information," *College & Research Libraries* 50 (September 1989): 521-31; Dilys E. Morris, "Electronic Information and Technology: Impact and Potential for Academic Libraries," *College & Research Libraries* 50 (January 1989): 56-64; David W. Lewis, "Inventing the Electronic University," *College & Research Libraries* 49 (July 1988): 291-304.

may come the rub. Local faculty and university administrators may have quite different visions of the future information needs of the campus and different views of the impact which electronic information will have on the way they will perform research and teaching within their disciplines. Their views may be based on their own educational background in the pre-electronic days, on their experience in disciplines which currently make very little use of electronic information resources, or, conversely, on their experience in disciplines which currently have an extraordinary richness of electronic resources from which to choose. There may even be no vision at all, if academic colleagues have not been discussing these issues among themselves.

The job of forging a common understanding throughout the entire campus of the issues involved in exploiting the potential of electronic information resources is positively daunting. It goes far beyond the traditional budget dialogue between a library director and a university administrator. Yet an attempt to forge such an understanding is necessary if one hopes to avoid the political pitfalls inherent in any effort to accomplish significant change in academe. The implementation of a strategy for the complete integration of information technology and electronic resources into traditional academic structures, such as the library, the computer center, and other campus units, could deeply affect the work lives of a wide range of faculty, students, and staff. The scope of planning necessary for such a transition into the information environment of the 21st century is beyond the political power of administrative fiat to accomplish in most research institutions. How, then, can the complex and interrelated issues involved in planning for the local use of electronic information resources best be brought to the attention of a diverse academic community? How can a broad-based dialogue be started which can lead to a practical consensus on directions to take?

The committee is born

These were questions which the University of Michigan School of Information and Library Studies (SILS) Advisory Committee discussed with Dean Robert Warner during the fall of 1989. During this meeting, Douglas Van Houweling, vice-president for information technology at the university, proposed that the school sponsor an invitational symposium on the topic of information technology and its implementation at UM. The purpose of this meeting would be to stimulate discussion among all the various parties interested in this topic, and to build a multidisciplinary coalition which could develop a strategy for the University's use of electronic information resources.

On the recommendation of the advisory committee, Dean Warner appointed an Information Symposium Planning Committee (ISPC) composed of nine representatives from various schools and colleges, the University Library, and the Information Technology Division (ITD). The charge to the ISPC was to design a conference, lasting a day or a day and a half, which could explore the issues involved in developing a strategy for the use of electronic information resources over the next five years. Committee members felt that the environment of electronic resources is so volatile that planning for longer than five years would be extremely difficult. Yet some actions needed to take place soon so that the campus could begin to position itself for the 21st century.

As the ISPC began its deliberations about the design of such a conference, its members discussed the growing disparity among the various schools and colleges in the degree to which faculty had integrated the use of electronic information resources into their teaching and research strategies. Since the University of Michigan is quite decentralized in most respects, an effort to coordinate such an integration across campus would probably not be successful. Yet the University Library and ITD felt that their responsibilities for developing pilot projects and for planning services for the campus as a whole required a consensus on several basic issues so they could build a framework for the future information needs of the campus. The question of how to generate informed opinion from a faculty so diverse in their experience and in the requirements of their disciplines was a difficult one.

Events which had been designed on other campuses to inform and stimulate discussion were reviewed by the committee. There was a lively debate about whether the primary framework for eliciting these recommendations should be theoretical or practical. Should this event be a "talking heads" conference with nationally recognized technology "gurus"? Should it be a "technology fair" with demonstrations of the latest in hardware and software for research and teaching? Or should it be a discussion among local opinion leaders as to their personal visions of the future needs of the campus?

The committee debated what might be the best approach for informing the campus and eliciting some sort of consensus. It decided that its charge, which requested recommendations for action, would be most fully served by focusing on the development of position papers concerning major issues that must be resolved before a campus framework can be built. Because the issues involved are so wide-ranging in their impact across campus, there would also have to be some public forum in which the drafts could be commented upon by the entire university community. A great

deal of education would occur as faculty, students, and administrators worked together with librarians and computer center personnel on the papers.

In order to involve many constituencies, the ISPC decided to recommend that three other committees be convened, representing the breadth of the university community. These three committees would work individually for six months, each drafting a paper expressing what might be the best guiding principle or course of action for a particular assigned topic. These papers would be widely disseminated, discussed in a public forum, and then used as the basis for an invited conference that would explore general recommendations for the campus.

The issues

A brainstorm of potential topics for the committees to work on underlined the broad and interrelated nature of the issues involved in the expanding role of electronic information. After some deliberation, the ISPC reduced the list to three issues of immediate concern which were fundamental to any progress being made on other fronts. Each of the subjects represented a nontechnical issue that would be influenced dramatically by the increased use of electronic information resources and that would be of immediate concern to all, whether they currently used electronic resources extensively or not. Change in any one of these arenas would affect different disciplines at varying rates of speed and with varying outcomes. Therefore, these were topics on which faculty, students, librarians, and administrators would need to collaborate in order to develop an effective campuswide strategy.

The topics chosen by the ISPC were:

1. Users' changing needs;
2. Funding for information resources; and
3. Library collection management and growth.

The parameters for each topic that had evolved during the ISPC discussions were reflected in the charges developed for each committee. Since no discussion of any one of the topics could be reflected as succinctly as the format of a committee charge demands, it was decided that the charges would outline the issues, but leave the details of depth and breadth to which the issues would be explored by the committee largely in the hands of that committee.

The ISPC recommended that each committee have two ex-officio members, one from the university library and one from the ITD, who would provide background information and generally serve as resource people. Committee members would be free to contact other experts as needed. Any workshops or lectures which they wanted to sponsor as part of their work to "generate informed opinion" would be theirs to organize and fund. The

ISPC also stipulated that meetings of these committees would be open to any interested parties who might wish to contribute to the deliberations.

When the work of the committees concludes, each of their drafts will be published in campus newspapers. The public forum for discussion of these drafts will be held about two weeks before the symposium, in order to allow adequate time for the comments and reactions generated during the public forum to be compiled and synthesized for the use of the conferees. Probably the invitees will primarily be administrators who occupy positions of leadership within the various schools and colleges. Librarians will continue to serve as resource people during the symposium.

The author has now been appointed within the School of Information and Library Studies as coordinator to facilitate the continued planning and organization of the symposium. The tasks of the coordinator will include working closely with the committees and their resource people from the university library and the ITD to ensure that an adequate context and appropriate background information are easily available as the committees undertake their work.

Conclusion

The expanding use of electronic information resources in both the academic and administrative arenas of higher education is just beginning. Librarians and computer center personnel have been among the first to comprehend the potential for sweeping change inherent in this new technology. However, the ability of librarians and computer personnel to play a leadership role in local campus planning for these resources has been hampered by many factors. Among these is the clear realization that many issues which need to be addressed are outside the boundaries of what either group can unilaterally change. The difficulty is compounded by the increasing fragmentation among the academic audiences to which librarians and computer center personnel must speak in trying to generate a consensus for local action.

The strategy proposed by the Information Symposium Planning Committee is to structure the necessary dialogue in such a way as to encourage the widest possible participation by members of the academic community in planning how to use electronic information resources. Certainly, a lot of heat will be generated by these discussions. Many suggestions will probably be made which serve only the smallest of populations on campus. But the benefits of group discussion include allowing all points of view to be heard and evaluated in a larger context.

Librarians and computer center personnel did not singlehandedly create the current information

structure within the university, and the history of most campus politics indicates that they will not be allowed to reorganize it unilaterally. Decisions on how to build the campus information infrastructure of the future must be arrived at collaboratively. The model devised by the University of Michigan's ISPC is one attempt to develop a collegial dialogue about the electronic future of a complex, diverse campus.

Author's note: This article was prepared on behalf of the University of Michigan Information

Symposium Planning Committee: Carolyn Frost, Chair, School of Information and Library Studies; Carol Hughes, Vice-Chair, School of Information and Library Studies; Kim Cameron, School of Business Administration; Colin Day, University of Michigan Press; John Jonides, College of Literature, Science and the Arts; Leslie Olsen, College of Engineering; Walter Panko, Office of Health Sciences Information Technology and Networking; Carla Stoffle, University Library; and Katherine Willis, Information Technology Division. ■■

Ten Library/Book Fellow positions open

Applications are being accepted through April 15, 1991, for the 1991-92 Library/Book Fellows Program. The joint program of the American Library Association and the United States Information Agency (USIA) will place approximately ten U.S. citizens overseas beginning September. While 17 positions are listed, funding will permit approximately ten placements.

Stipends for Library/Book Fellows are \$28,000 per year. Travel expenses (fellow and one dependent) to and from host country will be reimbursed, and health and life insurance coverage are provided. Some hosts will assist with housing. Eligibility requirements: U.S. citizenship; command of the language of the host country is desired; education and experience in library or information science, publishing or other fields directly related to the interests and needs of specific projects, with demonstrated competency as required. If selected for interview, a certification from a physician attesting physical and emotional soundness to conduct fellowship will be required. Persons who have lived abroad for a ten-year period immediately preceding application are not eligible.

A description of positions available and requirements follows. To apply, send resume with a cover letter briefly stating desired position, foreign-language skills, subject expertise and maximum placement service length. (No application forms are available.) Contact: Robert P. Doyle, Director, Library/Book Fellows Program, American Library Association, 50 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611; (800) 545-2433, x3200.

1991-92 Library/Book Fellow positions available:

American Republics

Lima, Peru: *Colegio de Bibliotecologos del Peru.* Fluency in Spanish is required. Eight months, February 1992 through September 1992: Development and teaching seminars on library methods and techniques, focusing primarily on outreach and library automation; and guidance in drafting a

long-term strategy for improving library training and services in Peru.

La Paz, Bolivia: *Banco del Libro.* Fluency in Spanish is required. Four months: In-service training for the host institution's staff in library administration, reference, reading promotion, and technical services.

Bogota, Colombia: *Judicial School of the Ministry of Justice.* Fluency in Spanish is required. Six months, February through August 1992: Promote the creation of an automated judicial documentation center; train staff in selection, promotion, organization, and management of materials; serve as a consultant on library automation.

Santiago, Chile: *National Archives.* Fluency in Spanish is required. One year, September 1991 through August 1992: Develop an automated system for control and access to all government publications; train librarians and archivists in the preparation of documents to be sent to the Archives; consult on current cataloging procedures.

Africa—Sub-Saharan

Eldoret, Kenya: *Moi University.* One year or six months: Develop curriculum and teach courses in the area of information technology; serve as adviser to the newly established Department of Information and Media Technology's development.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: *Addis Ababa University.* One academic year, mid-September 1991 through June 1992: Teach two courses in information technology; train and assist the university's library staff in introducing automation of library functions and services.

Lome, Togo: *University of Benin.* French is required. Six months: Conduct workshops in the areas of cataloging, reference, and public relations; act as consultant in the areas of planning, budgeting, and automation.

Near East Asia

Jerusalem, Israel: *Graduate School of Library and Archive Studies, Hebrew University.* Passive understanding of Hebrew would be useful, but not

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essential. One academic year, October 1991 through July 1992: Teaching and training projects at several locations on the topics of school libraries, reading promotion, story telling, and integrating the library with the school curricula. Emphasis will be on the elementary school level.

Calcutta, India: *Indian Institute of Management.* Eight months: Assist in implementing automation of the library's technical services operation, including serials, acquisitions, cataloging, bibliographic control, etc.; assist with the development and implementation of an in-country networking system.

Cairo, Egypt: *National Library of Egypt.* Arabic would be useful, but not required. Six to nine months: Survey the collection and assist in drawing up an honest and realistic plan and budget for preservation and conservation program.

Europe

Reykjavik, Iceland: *University of Iceland.* One semester, 13-15 weeks: Present courses on library services for children and young adults; introduce American children's literature; work with publishers to improve knowledge of the wealth of literature in the U.S. with the purpose of increasing the variety and improving the selection of children's books to be translated.

Belgrade, Yugoslavia: *Belgrade Public Library.* Knowledge of Serbo-Croatian would be helpful, but not essential. Four to eight months: Consult on a library automation project; train staff in the use of new technologies; assist in planning of curriculum

and resources at the school of library science; and assist in developing American Studies collections at the library and the future National Library.

Bucharest, Romania: *Central University Library.* Romanian or French is desired, but not required. Ten months: Teach courses in library automation, computerization, and cataloging; assist in reorganization and modernization of the cataloging department.

Warsaw, Poland: *National Library of Poland.* Polish is desirable, but not required. One year, September 1991 through August 1992: Provide in-house staff training in the fundamentals of library automation; assess current and future uses of automated applications and make recommendations for their implementation.

Moscow, USSR: *All-Union Library of Foreign Literature.* Russian required. Three months: Present seminars on the use of American reference resources; evaluate American studies collections and advise on how to improve collections and reference services.

Berlin, Germany: *Humboldt University.* German required. Six months: Teach courses in the following areas: management and administration of libraries and information centers; use of microcomputers in libraries; technology for information storage and retrieval, and electronic communication of information.

North America

Ottawa, Canada: *Dalhousie University.* Six months: Evaluate American Studies and U.S. Government Document collections; make recommendations for further acquisitions and distribution; present lectures and workshops on U.S. data base systems; provide guidance for bibliographies in American Studies and U.S. government documents for curriculum development. ■ ■

Wellcome records on OCLC

The collections of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, located in London, England, will be converted to machine-readable form by the OCLC Retrospective Conversion Division over the next year. The Institute has the largest and most comprehensive European collection of the history of medicine, containing more than 400,000 printed books dating from the 15th to the 20th centuries. Included will be 66,500 titles in the Institute's Early Printed Books Collection, which contains more than 600 incunabula and also includes early printed medical books in English and books of the continental scientific renaissance in a variety of Roman alphabet languages. Subjects in the collection range from anatomy to herbal remedies. Eileen Yandolino of OCLC estimates that approximately 39% of the collection will be added as new records to the OCLC Online Union Catalog.

Emory manuscript guide available

A newly compiled *Manuscript Sources for Civil War History: A Descriptive List of Holdings in the Special Collections Department* is now available from the Special Collections Department, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Emory University. The free guide contains entries for 243 collections with significant holdings relating to the Civil War. It is 49 pages long and includes a name index. Each entry in the guide includes collection name, span dates, physical extent, finding aids available, and a brief description of the scope and content of the collection.