DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGINA LIBRARY INFORMATION NETWORK (REGLIN)

Shadowing the growth of individual library automation projects has been a growing interest in sharing large integrated systems by several libraries in the same geographic area. There are two primary reasons for this. The first is that each library wants to provide increased access not only to its own collection but also to the collections of the other libraries which are sharing the system. The second is to enable each institution better economies of scale in acquiring an automated system and reduced maintenance costs. The Regina Library Information Network was formed for these reasons.

REGLIN was officially incorporated as a non-profit corporation in May 1990. The idea for a consortium originated in 1987 when the University of Regina was preparing to issue an RFP for an integrated library system. At the same time several other libraries in Saskatchewan were within two years of requesting funds for on-line systems. Upon the suggestion from several smaller libraries, the University added an appendix to its RFP asking vendors to present proposals on how their systems could be expanded to incorporate a network of libraries.

The University of Regina chose the NOTIS system in 1988 not only for its capability for meeting the University Library's requirements, but also for its potential to serve a diverse group of smaller libraries. Within a year of signing a contract with NOTIS Systems Inc., we had also negotiated agreements with six external libraries to share the NOTIS system centred at the University Computing Centre.

The REGLIN consortium currently consists of seven libraries: the University of Regina, the Saskatchewan Dept. of Health Resource Centre, the Saskatchewan Legislative Library, the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, the Regina General Hospital, the Plains Health Centre and the Pasqua Hospital libraries.

The process of implementing an on-line system in several libraries is complex, expensive and demanding. It is hard to imagine six more unlikely partners for the University Library. Each is different in its level of technical knowledge - ranging from mastery of the UTLAS and CODOC systems to use of simple PC based databases, to total reliance on manual methods. Each has different numbers of staff from one person libraries to several staff in others.

The challenge facing the University Library Systems Office is to implement the NOTIS system in all the libraries so each can utilize it to its full potential for their particular needs.

A further challenge resulting from seven different implementation deadlines is the fact that the University has not increased its systems staff. To overcome this we have decided to implement all modules at the University first.

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in order to test the system before it is implemented at each of the other libraries.

As each module is brought into production at the University, staff who are familiar with the module train staff at the RegLIn sites. Procedures and manuals developed at the University can easily be revised and transferred to RegLIn members. To date the Cataloging, On-line Public Catalog (MURLIN) and Circulation modules have been implemented at the University. Cataloging and OPAC are operational at the Health, Legislative, and Gabriel Dumont libraries. We have also completed the tables and customization required to add the three hospitals to the system. They are scheduled for line installation in February at which time the General Hospital will be trained for the cataloging and OPAC modules.

Concurrent with database customization and training for the catalog and OPAC modules at each library has been the need for retrospective conversion of each of the collections. The University of Regina database now has 470,000 bibliographic records of which approximately 300,000 were converted over the last two years using UTLAS as the vendor. The final 10,000-15,000 records will be converted the first quarter of this year using UTLAS. The Legislative Library's file currently has 4,200 records converted from the existing file on UTLAS or added since they began cataloging on NOTIS. Although their collection is over 200,000 titles, funding constraints have prevented them from launching a full RECON project. Therefore the most heavily used parts of the collection may be selected and gradually added to their database as time permits. The Gabriel Dumont Institute had their records stored in dBaseIII format using a Novell network for the public catalog. These were extracted and sent to TKM Software in Brandon for comparison to their LC source files and conversion to MARC format. GDI's complete database of 18,000 titles is now accessible in the MURLIN public catalogue, including approximately 6,800 "no hits" from the dBase file which were converted to a MARC-like format (very short records). The Dept. of Health Resource Centre used Marcive (in Texas) for their RECON project and now have 4,500 titles in their database. Staff are manually keying in the "no hits" from the Marcive conversion. The General Hospital also used Marcive for their retrospective conversion and 1,700 records have been loaded to the Health database. The Plains Health Centre's conversion is in progress using Retrolink (in Utah) to convert their PC based database to MARC format.

As a result of the On-line cataloging and database loading that has taken place to date, we have defined four distinct databases on the NOTIS system. The University, Legislative and Gabriel Dumont databases are each separate and have to be searched separately. The Dept. of Health and the hospitals are sharing a database to make their records even more accessible to each other - i.e one search retrieves all records no matter which library owns the item.

The circulation module is now in production at the University after being delayed for a year in order to fulfil obligations to get the RegLIn libraries started with cataloging. Circulation is the most complex module to implement primarily because of differing policies at each branch, the large numbers of staff to be trained, and the need to barcode and link each circulating item with its matching record in the database. Each combination of location code, patron category and circulation policy has to be tested carefully to ensure it is being interpreted correctly in the NOTIS programs. As a result, the module is being brought into production in stages. The Main Library has been circulating books on the NOTIS system since October 11, 1990 and has been the test site for debugging the module. Training has been completed to phase in the Campion, Fine Arts, Luther, SIFC and Education campus libraries by the end of January. When I am sure the module is working according to specifications at each of the University sites, we will start implementing it at the other RegLIn libraries. The Dept. of Health is scheduled to be the first external site using Circulation.

Technically, one of the biggest challenges of implementing the RegLIn libraries is the need to install different pieces of hardware at each site.
NOTIS uses an IBM mainframe and we have standardized the use of IBM 3164 terminals at the University, the Dept. of Health and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. The RegLIN libraries are connected to the mainframe on a network which consists of a 3708 controller located at each library. Attached to it are the library's terminals and a modem connected to a dedicated SaskTel data line to the mainframe at the University.

Almost as soon as we started installing the lines there were exceptions to the standard which had to be tested and made to work. The Legislative Library had to use Digital terminals and PCs in order to conform to the DEC standards used in the Legislative Building. Another piece of DEC hardware called a Deeserver was installed between the terminals and the 3708 controller. The Deeserver monitors the total number of terminals which can access NOTIS at any given time. A further complication resulting from using DEC terminals is that their keyboards send different signals to the mainframe than do the IBM's. Not only is the layout of the keyboard different, the function keys have different default settings. Since NOTIS relies on the IBM function keys to speed up data entry, the function keys on the Digital equipment had to be mapped to match the required signals.

When the hospitals are added to the network they may be connected by other methods if they prove feasible. The Regina General Hospital has standardized its data entry equipment to IBM PCs so the Library wishes to use these to connect to NOTIS using the Hospitals existing AS/400 system rather than a physical connection to a 3708 controller. The Plains Health Centre and Pasqua Hospitals have recently signed an agreement for a DEC based hospital system, so when their libraries are connected to NOTIS, they will use yet another method still to be tested and implemented.

Once all the libraries and their diverse equipment are connected to the network the challenge will be to ensure each works consistently and that down time is kept to a minimum.

And what are our plans for the coming year? The next two big projects are to implement the Acquisitions module at the University of Regina by April 1, and to convert the CODOC files of the University and the Legislative Libraries to MARC format for loading to NOTIS. If all goes well we will also implement Circulation at the Health, Legislative and Gabriel Dumont Libraries and attempt to implement keyword/boolean.

Although RegLIN is not yet a year old much has been accomplished with very few staff. Libraries which are already using the NOTIS system have adapted well and staff are learning quickly. The continued success of the RegLIN consortium will depend to a large extent on the abilities of the individuals involved, their willingness to co-operate, and the amount of patience they have in coping with change and those unforeseen automation problems which always seem to occur no matter how well planned the implementation schedule.

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