ALA Midwinter 2003 Report
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This is a brief report on new ideas and information gathered:

OCLC Institute Symposium: "Growing the Digital Library: From Project to Programs – Tips, tools, Collaborative Activities." Friday , Jan. 24

Geri Bunker Ingram, Consultant, Digital Library Development, spoke about desirable characteristics of individuals who "steward the transformation to the digital library." They will be mature individuals who have gone beyond concrete, abstract, and relational thinking to fourth-order thinking characterized by the ability to rise above a paralyzing array of ambiguities to reframe situations in multiple ways and objectively make ethical decisions. I'm not sure I followed her all the way but liked the concept that age = wisdom even in technological areas where youth seems to have the edge.

Mark Lawrence Kornbluh, Director, MATRIX: The Center for Humane Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences Online, Michigan State was the most interesting speaker. He is a historian, interested in applying technology to the humanities. Until recently MATRIX has worked mainly with faculty on a variety of grant-funded projects. He now sees such projects as dead-end since they are expensive, not interoperable, and not committed to maintaining and preserving digital information.   MATRIX is now working with archivists and librarians, who he believes have a broader vision than teaching faculty, to design and build digital repositories. These repositories will plan for long-term preservation and access, use interoperable, distributive systems, and use and develop national best practice. He described database software that MATRIX has developed to create modular projects. This software is based on open-source software and will probably be available for no-cost license to non-profits. He said a number of times that creating digital objects is the easy part. Organizing and maintaining them is the hard part.

On a similar theme, Sherry and I attended the following:

OCLC Digital & Preservation Resources: CONTENT:dm – An Overview Monday, Jan. 27
This was a sales pitch for OCLC's digital content management system. This seemed similar to the software above. It will import digital objects and facilitate creation of metadata and indexes. It is built on Web and Internet standards. Repositories can be combined for searching. OCLC speakers were followed by demonstrations of projects created by satisfied users at the West Point library and a Cleveland academic library. No prices were given out. I have the impression that this is a product developed outside OCLC for which OCLC acquired the distribution rights. OCLC acquired the distribution rights for ILLiad in a similar way. I have a great deal of respect for OCLC's acumen in promoting services that have broad appeal. I think that this is something the Digital Team should look into. I'm giving Jason my handouts.

Over the weekend I attended several meeting relating to RLG's dropping of RLIN ILL software on June 30. ILLiad is currently testing its ISO ILL messages with RLG's ILL Manager. We should not need additional software but I still don't know whether the RLIN database will be maintained. If not, we should rethink our membership. Donna feels that the searchability of the database is a major benefit to us. If it is no longer available the usefulness of our membership would decrease. RLG has sold its ARIEL software to Infotrieve. Since the software is used by thousands of libraries the quality of development and support provided by the new company is very important. Of course, both RLG and Infotrieve promised everything would be fine. ILLiad will be coming out with version 6.2 in March. I decided to wait for Atlas to update our software from our present version 5 to version 6 until March. Our move to Atlas as host of our ILLiad server is set for Feb. 8. On Monday, Feb. 10 Raul will need to change the URL on the clients but nothing else will change until March.

The only other item of interest was a discussion with representatives of Audible.Com of ways of making audiobooks available to our patrons. Audible.Com has a large number of audiobooks available for

download. The library would set up a deposit account and purchase a few MP3 players and then could download books on request or we could burn CDs if we wanted to retain them. We could set up a trial project for about $1,000. Since we've had few requests, though, I'm not sure it's worth the trouble.