Sirsi and a Cast of Thousands

Sirsi has been a busy player on the technology stage recently—a very busy one. Early in 2005, Sirsi Corp. acquired Docutek Information Systems, Inc., which makes Docutek a wholly owned subsidiary of Sirsi. Press releases announcing the acquisition indicate Docutek's personnel and day-to-day operations will not change significantly. However, Nathan Vince, Docutek's President and CEO, as well as Slaven Zivkovic, one of the co-founders of Docutek and the VP of Technology, have left to pursue other interests. According to the reports, Docutek will be an independent business unit within Sirsi.

Docutek develops and sells a variety of services, including ERes, an e-reserves system used by more than 400 institutions of higher education; VRLplus, a virtual reference system used by 200 libraries of all types; and atSchool, an e-learning system containing course management, web portal, and communication modules.

"In the context of its virtual reference product, [Sirsi's] acquisition of Docutek [marks] the latest in a series of business changes that have reshaped the landscape," explains Marshall Breeding, *Smart Libraries* contributor and Library Technology Officer at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN. "LSSI, one of the pioneers of the virtual reference arena, sold its virtual reference division to tutor.com in June 2003, and the 24/7 Virtual Reference service was acquired by OCLC in August 2004. This sequence of events seems to indicate the development and support of virtual reference

Steering the Blogosphere

The blogosphere may be just a few nanoseconds beyond the big bang that created this new universe, but already there are several attempts to establish (and maintain) some bibliographic control over blogs.

Bloggernity provides classified arrangement of blogs. News blogs and cultural blogs outnumber by far the sex and teen blogs in this selective listing, which may signal some hope for Western civilization—at least until one spots the extensive list of personal and diary blogs. Via Bloggernity, readers can rate and review each blog as well.

Blog Search Engine does something similar. The blogs are classified for browsing, with a simple interface for searching. One must wonder how long "2004 Presidential Candidates Blogs" will last as a category.

Blogwise lists both blogs by keyword and by country (nearly 18,000 in the U.S., compared to one in Greenland). In addition to a classified directory of blogs, Blog-arama also includes links to articles and books about blogs and blogging. The Ageless Project sorts personal and diary blogs by the self-disclosed date of the blogger.

cannot be sustained within a small company; each of the major products has shifted toward ownership of large organizations."

Sirsi, a privately owned company, says the company hopes this acquisition will be another step toward providing a comprehensive information management system for libraries.

In addition, Sirsi recently announced it is participating in the Normative Data Project (NDP) for Libraries. "Designed to help libraries analyze collections and collections use across a large, normalized set of library data, the Normative Data Project represents a unique opportunity to standardize and amass a centralized data warehouse containing actual circulation and collections data from contributing North American public libraries," states the NDP Web site.

Sirsi and the NDP

"Simply put, NPD will assist library managers in uncovering patterns and trends in library use, with the ultimate benefit seen as better decision-making and better service to library patrons."—Normative Data Project Web Site

Via the Normative Data Project, or NDP, which Sirsi recently signed on to, Sirsi aims to build an extensive database of library transactions (extracted from libraries nationwide) that can be combined with GIS and demographic data to create a powerful resource that will reveal very specific trends of substantive interest to library decision makers. Ultimately, the NDP hopes to help enable these decision makers to shape their collections and distribute their branches in ways that will improve their services, i.e., better targeting of underserved patrons.

Information Extraction
The NDP relies on data-mining principles to produce results. Armed with circulation data, bibliographic detail, and demographic and GIS spatial data for item-level entries, the NDP can make it possible to show the titles popular across the whole population; to identify titles within given demographic groups or geographic regions; and/or to determine such patterns as the levels of use, in very specific detail, relative to each library's legal service area.

At the multi-institution level, the NDP relies on transaction data (contributed by libraries) from library automation systems. So far, more than 300 libraries have agreed to submit data from their ILS transaction logs to Sirsi for the project. The transactions fed into the project will include both bibliographic and circulation data, and Sirsi will not require—or even allow—any data that reveals any personal details.

To date, all the libraries that have contributed data use Sirsi's Unicorn library management system, though libraries that use other automation systems will be tapped as contributors as the project progresses.

To make this project possible, Sirsi is collaborating with the GeoLib Program. Led by Christie Koonze, GeoLib is research program of the Florida Resources and Environmental Analysis Center at Florida State University.

GeoLib has been involved with studying library use trends for a decade; the program has created an extensive database that combines library statistics with GIS data and demographic information from U.S. Census Data. In return for the use of their resources in the Normative Data Project, Sirsi reports it will fund several activities that further the GeoLib's research initiatives.

The technology behind the NDP is the same as that used by the Sirsi Director's Station application. As a hosted application, the use of the technology is transparent to service subscribers, who will be able to access the system through the project's Web site with no need to load software locally.

A commercial service based on subscription fees, the NDP's business model will involve multiple layers of access. Some access to the NDP's information will be available without a charge, though full access to the system will be available only to paid subscribers. Annual subscriptions are expected to be priced as low as $500 for small libraries to approximately $10,000 for the very largest libraries. Since it involves the work of other organizations and partners, the project will not be labeled conspicuously as a Sirsi venture.

The initial data sets and reports gleaned from hundreds of participating North American libraries should be ready sometime during the second quarter of the 2005 calendar year.—*Marshall Breeding* (Tom Peters contributed to this report.)

Contact:
www.librarynormativedata.info
www.librarynormativedata.info/casestudies.html
www.geolib.org

(Another major sponsor of the NDP is the GeoLib Program at Florida State University. For more information, see Marshall Breeding's "Sirsi and the NDP," on p. 2.)

Sirsi to Present RSS, Wireless & EDI Too

Sirsi also appears to be the first ILS vendor to offer RSS feeds. The Sirsi Enterprise Portal Solution helps a library create a single interface to its online public access catalog, electronic databases, other e-content, RSS feeds, virtual reference, interlibrary loan, calendars, news, and other digital resources and online library services. Beginning sometime during Q2 of the 2005 calendar year, evidently, Sirsi OPAC search strategies, federated searches, Google search results, and other searches will be able to be converted to RSS feeds.

Sirsi also has partnered with Bluesocket to use wireless LANs to manage and deliver secure digital content. The Wireless Gateways system from Bluesocket, an open-system WLAN, will interface with Sirsi's patron authentication system to provide library patrons a simple and secure authentication process to the library's wireless network. "Patrons can enter the library with a wireless laptop and log on using a library card number and personal identification number (PIN) without modifying the laptop," states Sirsi.

Sirsi also is collaborating with Rittenhouse Book Distributors to enhance the electronic book ordering process via EDI (electronic data interchange) using the x12 protocol. This collaborative effort should enable libraries using Sirsi's Unicorn Library Management System to order, invoice, and receive materials electronically from Rittenhouse.—*Tom Peters*

Contact: www.docutek.com/company/Sirsi_Acquires_Docutek.pdf
www.sirsi.com/Newsevents/Releases/20050117bluesocket.html
www.sirsi.com/Newsevents/Releases/20050117rittenhouse.html

Blogosphere *from page 1*

The oldest blogger listed on this site will turn 80 come August. —*Tom Peters*

Contact: www.bloggernity.com
www.blogsearchengine.com
www.blogwise.com
www.blogarama.com
http://jenett.org/ageless
http://dir.yahoo.com/Computers_and_Internet/Internet/World_Wide_Web/
    Weblogs/Directories
Some Library Blogs of Interest: http://freerangelibrarian.com
http://scanblog.blogspot.com
http://blog.xrefer.com
www.tametheweb.com/ttwblog
www.theshiftedlibrarian.com
http://librarianinblack.typepad.com/librarianinblack
http://blog.librarylaw.com
www.plablog.com

YAHOO JOINS DESKTOP SEARCH TOOL FRAY

Joining Google, Microsoft, and others already sparring on the desktop search frontline, early this year, Yahoo released its Yahoo Desktop Search. Software to help users find files located on their own computers, Yahoo's beta version is available for downloading free of charge (it currently runs only with Windows XP or Windows 2000).

According to Yahoo, the software begins looking for those furtive files as soon as you begin typing a search statement. More than 200 file types are indexed, says the company, including full-text search of Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, Outlook Express, Adobe PDF, HTML, and Photoshop. The software also indexes the file attributes (name, type, size, etc.), of image, audio, video, and executable files; in addition, it Yahoo says it allows users to preview found files without launching a separate application. Searches can be saved for re-use or expanded to search the Web, adds Yahoo.

Privacy Protection
In its FAQ section online, Yahoo Desktop states the program protects user privacy by *not* indexing the browsing history and caches of one's Internet Explorer Web browser, by using "smart defaults" about what and what not to index, and by enabling the user to change the indexing parameters. —*Tom Peters*

Contact: http://desktop/yahoo.com

The Year of ERM **(FINALLY!)**

Despite the fact libraries have been buried under the burden (for at least the last half-dozen years) of trying to manage the information tangle related to electronic content subscriptions, *this* is the year in which electronic resource management (ERM) software is breaking surface in a widespread manner. This past January in Boston—the 2005 venue for the annual ALA Midwinter Meeting—a number of vendors showcased their ERM offerings.

It should be recognized, however, that one library automation vendor has offered a product in this category since 2002. Innovative's ERM offering pioneered the commercial ERM path, and, to date, has sold to more than 120 libraries. Major libraries utilizing Innovative's ERM product include the Library of Congress, Cornell University, the State University of New York at Buffalo, and Utah State University.

Among the vendors showing an ERM offering at the ALA Midwinter meeting was Endeavor, which unveiled its Meridian ERM system at its semi-annual "Endeavor Digital Breakfast." According to Endeavor, Meridian is expected to be in general release by June 2005, but discounts are available to libraries that agree to purchase the product between January 1 and June 30, 2005.

Endeavor reports it will be working with information-management technology developer Cognos to integrate Cognos ReportNet software into Meridian. With the integration, the vendors say the ERM offering will provide libraries with "sophisticated" capabilities to produce and distribute detailed reports about the use of their individual electronic resources.

Ex Libris also took the Midwinter opportunity to demonstrate a prototype of its ERM system, an offering dubbed "Verde." Designed to operate as a stand-alone ERM system, Verde extends the architecture and data elements of its SFX link resolver.

In June 2004, Ex Libris made its Verde development announcement and reported the anticipated release of the initial version would come late in 2004. Though not yet released market-wide, by Midwinter this year, Verde seemed to be well along in its development, with a prototype operational at the two co-development sites, the Harvard University and the MIT libraries.

VTLS is also getting in on the ERM act; the company reports it's working with four libraries as development partners in preparing VERIFY, what the company calls its new, integrated or stand-alone ERM system. According to VTLS, three of these libraries—that were represented in the ERM initiative of the Digital Library Federation—currently are using a beta version of the product. General release of VERIFY is expected by Q2 or Q3 of calendar year 2005.—*Marshall Breeding*

Contact: www.iii.com/mill/digital.
    shtml
www.exlibrisgroup.com/verde.htm
www.endinfosys.com/prods/
    meridian.htm
www.vtls.com/Products/verify.shtml
www.library.cornell.edu/cts/
    elicensestudy/1104CharlestonDLFE
    RMI.ppt. (Report on the Digital
    Library Federation Electronic
    Resource Management Initiative,
    by Adam Chandler, Cornell
    University Library, at the Charleston
    Conference, November 4, 2004)

TLC Jumps into the PC Management Pond

One of a library's biggest headaches can be keeping its public access and staff computers in good working order. To the extent that library computer problems, the "headaches," interfere with the operation of automation systems, this pain can extend to the ILS vendors.

Incessant viruses, worms, spyware downloads, and other unwanted malware work to destabilize, even debilitate, library computers. Rather than taking up the futile effort to search out and remove the offending malware, usually it's easier—and faster—to roll back the entire computer to its original state. The problem with this approach, however, lies in preserving documents, settings, and preferences.

There are a number of "computer restoration" products—offerings that "repair" individual PCs by restoring each back to its original, unblemished state—popular for use in repairing public access terminals. But since they refresh the entire disk

at once, these are not well suited for staff computers, which likely contain saved files and customized preferences.

Aiming to relieve some of the pain that comes with library computer management, The Library Corp. (TLC) has entered a partnership with Leapfrog Software Inc. to offer a product called "ReClaim IT," a product its makers say takes "a more sophisticated approach" to system recovery. According to the vendors, Reclaim IT provides fast system recovery capabilities while preserving *all* user data and preferences.

Dubbed "data anchoring," the Reclaim IT "fix" pegs specific files and folders so they will survive a system recovery implementation. With the technology, says (TLC) and Leapfrog, library staff can take "snapshots" of a computer's operating system and applications software periodically, so that when a system problem does occur, the system can be restored to a recent but reliable image. In addition, its producers report it is possible to configure a computer (one protected by Reclaim IT) to return to its "pristine" state upon each restart, and unlike other recovery products, Reclaim IT is said to be designed to protect servers as well as desktop computers.

Leapfrog Technologies sells the technology to other markets under the moniker "FirstDefense-ISR." The company also has partnerships with Raxco Software and Software Pursuits (a company that distributes the software under the name "Bootback"). The Library Corp. is slated to be the primary software distributor for libraries.

The TLC and Leapfrog partnership provides advantages for both companies. TLC gains a product it can recommend to libraries in order to help them stabilize their computer systems and reduce support issues (and gain some revenue in the process). While Leapfrog gets a library distribution jump-start—into a market where a number of other PC management applications already are operating swimmingly—for its new product.—*Marshall Breeding*

Contact:
www.tlcdelivers.com/tlc/press/pr011105.asp
http://leapfrogsoftware.com/news/?newsid=12

EFFICIENT ELECTRONIC RESERVES COPYRIGHT COMPLIANCE

Libraries that manage electronic reserves know dealing with copyright issues is a BIG part of the job. To obtain permissions in order to use materials for electronic reserves as well as to manage fee payments, most libraries work through the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). The process of adding materials to the reserve list for a course generally involves toggling between the electronic reserves management system interface and the Copyright Clearance Center's Web-based submission system.

Through a recent feature developed by Innovative Interfaces, copyright permission requests can be initiated from within the electronic reserves system, without the need to toggle between two systems.

Streamlined Connection

When posting an item to electronic reserves, a "get permissions" link will appear; this link automatically connects to the CCC's permissions service, initiates an item search, and populates the request form with all the bibliographic and user details. The integration of the permissions function into the electronic reserves application streamlines the process, reduces mistakes inherent in re-keying data, which makes the process, overall, more efficient.

This functionality is made possible through the Copyright Integration Service the CCC developed in order allow external applications to interface with its request system and the capabilities of Innovative's WebBridge link resolver.

While other types of organizations have taken advantage of this service—such as course pack providers and stand-alone electronic reserves applications—Innovative Interfaces is the only ILS vendor so far to develop software that taps into the Copyright Integration Service. Docutek added similar integration with CCC to its ERES electronic reserves application in 2001.—*Marshall Breeding*

Contact: www.copyright.com/ccc/do/viewPage?pageCode=au94
www.iii.com/news/pr.php

Browser, Browser on the Wall . . .

Just which is the fairest browser of them all? Well, with younger, attractive options like FireFox, Opera, and Safari around, Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) may soon find itself in need of a facelift. A recent article in *PC World* summarizes several topical market analyses of browser software that reveal, in June 2004, IE had approximately 95% of the market. But by this past January, its share had dropped about five percentage points.

According to the article's author, Techworld.com's Matthew Broersma, the Mozilla Project's FireFox browser rose 0.9 percent to a total of five percent (also see "FireFox Blazing Along," *Smart Libraries*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, p. 2), followed by Opera and Safari, now reflecting slightly more than two percent of the worldwide market.

Opera especially seems to be singing an alluring tune to users in higher education. In January 2005, Opera began offering free site licenses worldwide to any institution of higher education.

But an FAQ on the Opera site contains this caveat: "However, fees many be incurred for support services and customization requests." Opera adds that several prestigious universities, including Harvard, Oxford, and MIT, already have taken them up on their offer.

Evidently, since 2002, Opera has offered free site licenses to primary and secondary schools, web design schools, and organizations that serve the physically challenged. The folks at Opera also claim that "…the Opera browser is the most accessible browser on the market today," adding that the software contains sound alerts for invoked functions, keyboard shortcuts, auto-completion, as well as other accessible features. It also claims to be highly compatible with major screen-reader software programs. —*Tom Peters*

Contact: www.pcworld.com/news/article/
0,aid,119369,tk,dn012105X,00.asp
www.opera.com/education

PatientINFORM:
CAUSE FOR CONCERN AMONG LIBRARIANS

When a pilot phase commences later this year, patientINFORM will be a free online service providing medical research information directly to healthcare consumers. PatientINFORM is a collaborative effort involving health organization (e.g., The American Cancer Society, the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association), more than 20 scholarly and medical publishers (i.e., Elsevier, Springer, Wiley), the Welch Library at Johns Hopkins University, and MedLinePlus, part of the National Library of Medicine from the National Institutes of Health.

According to those involved with the initiative, the initial release of the Web-based service will concentrate on three diseases: cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. The effort hopes to increase and accelerate public awareness of clinical research related to these diseases, including current information about prevention and treatment options.

PatientINFORM sponsors report the service will provide links to the free full-text research articles upon which consumer health information is based. Participating publishers have agreed to provide online access to their peer-reviewed biomedical journals with no lag time after publication. Sponsors add the subsequent phases of the project will expand to other medical conditions and research information from a broader group of publishers.

All of this sounds useful, but the context and timing of the announcement of the initiative has raised some concern from librarians and library-related organizations. For example:

■ The patientINFORM initiative may deflect focus and attention from broader initiatives to provide open access to all publicly funded research literature, such as the proposal by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to make the research it funds freely available via PubMed Central;

■ It privileges access to a subset of biomedical research literature from the participating publishers; and

■ It focuses, initially, on only a few diseases. —*Tom Peters*

Contact: www.patientinform.org
http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/
guide/notice-files/
NOT-OD-04-064.html

MY FIRST TIME

by Teresa Koltzenburg, Editor

Boston, MA, mid-January 2005: It was my first ALA meeting—ever. What I saw: Many rooms of full of astute-looking individuals, intently taking notes, or, just as intently, discussing business; a bevy of meeting topics that caused me to feel conflicted as to what exactly I should attend; trade show floors (the Hynes' venue is multi-leveled) with vendors and publishers and their wares, their information, their books (being a lover of literature and technology, I did feel a bit like I'd arrived home).

What I didn't see (that I really should have): the LITA Top Technology Trends discussion (admittedly, I just couldn't get a handle on the schedule until it was too late). After all, I'm the new editor of ALA TechSource.

But I did meet Karen Schneider (as well as some of the library world's other technology gurus), and via our meeting, was turned on to her blog, Free Range Librarian, which features a February 1, 2005, Podcast, free-verse style, of the top technology trends that were discussed.

And thanks to Leonard Kniffel, *American Libraries* magazine editor/publisher, I did possess the wherewithal to attend RMG's *packed* "15th Annual Presidents' Seminar: The View from the Top" panel discussion, titled: "The New Integrated Library System: An Enterprise Solution," held Friday, January 14, at the Hynes Convention Center. I'm sure glad I did!

Not only did the full-house provide me with a great venue for people watching (one approach I utilize when writing for a new audience), but it also provided me

the opportunity to observe many of the ILS vendors, all at once (a list of the vendor panel members is posted on the RMG Consultants' Web site), as well as librarians that utilize their technology.

Amid the discussion of the enterprise resource plan (ERP) concept as it applies to libraries, web services, and "open source stuff," as Andrew Pace put it (when I called him up for some post-commentary), there was, eventually, his incisive question: "If I gave you the dollars for what you say I need [in terms of technology], what would you do with them?" Honestly, I'm not sure if any of the vendors directly answered Mr. Pace's question during the remaining time of the three-hour-long session.

However, there was much discussion that followed—some of it enlightening, some of it tangential—but in the blogosphere at least one vendor panel member, Ken Chad, executive director of Talis, addressed (on the Panlibus blog) Mr. Pace's blunt query directly (see "Contact" for URL).

An award-winning librarian and head of the systems department at North Carolina State University Libraries (as well a sought-after and frequent contributor to the industry's various publications, including ALA Editions, *American Libraries*, and formerly ALA TechSource), Mr. Pace feels, overall, over the years "the ILS vendors have squandered our money doing what we asked them to do. We continue to harp at them so they will make minor improvements to the integrated library system," he explains, "and those minor improve-
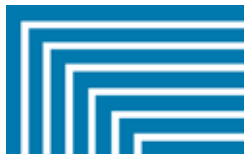
ments are more and more expensive with less and less return."

During our follow-up conversation, Mr. Pace also mentioned he thought RMG panel member Bob Walton, now on Dynix's board of directors (see February 2005 *Smart Libraries*, Vol. XXV, No. 2, p.5) brought to light the importance of library technology customers. Walton stated he thinks libraries represent the savviest customer base among the panel members' current (and future?) customer bases (e.g., academic institutions as a whole).

Walton's commentary subsequently elicits even further analysis of the ERP concept and how it applies, realistically, to libraries. But that's material for another discussion, which may or may not find its way to ALA Annual this June in Chicago.

Please feel free to contact me, Teresa Koltzenburg, with comments, questions, and ideas about library technology, at tkoltzenburg@ala.org.

Contact: www.lita.org
http://freerangelibrarian.com
http://freerangelibrarian.com/
    archives/podcasting/freeverse.mp3
www.rmgconsultants.com/
    seminar2005.htm
http://panlibus.blogspot.com/2005/
    01/meditations-from-ala.html
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    01/blogging-from-boston.html
www.ala.org/al_onlineTemplate.cfm?
    Section=alonline&Template=/
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