Congress kills ergonomics rule

With no hearings and little debate, Congress killed a major ergonomics rule by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) in the first week of March. President George W. Bush concurred in the action two weeks later. The rule could have forced employers to redesign workplaces and compensate workers for repetitive-motion injuries. Such injuries occur not only in offices but also at other jobs that call for repetitive motion, such as the grocery, trucking, restaurant, and medical care industries. Ergonomic injuries of the type the rule was designed to address affect an estimated 1.8 million workers a year out of more than 100 million the rule was designed to cover—64% of them women even though they are only 46% of the workforce. The cost of compliance was the major reason cited by those who led opposition to the rule.

The ergonomics rule, which was issued last November after 10 years of research and hearings and would have taken effect in October 2001, would have required employers to provide workers with information about possible injuries and risk factors, review each complaint to determine whether there is a musculoskeletal disorder, redesign the workplace if it was found to cause the problem(s), ensure access to medical care, and provide compensation for any disability.

Specifically, the rejected rule said that once an employee reports signs of an ergonomic-related injury, the employer will be required to determine whether the injury is a work-related incident. The employer would have had considerable latitude in making that determination. The irony is that the rule would not have required reconfiguration of a workplace until after an employer had determined that an injury had, in fact, been caused by faulty workplace design. In contrast, existing manufacturing work

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On the Web this month

Extra articles from this month's *Library Systems Newsletter*, full data from Dick Boss's annual survey of library system vendors, and excerpts from upcoming issues of *Library Technology Reports,* as well as original features and surveys about library systems and services, are on the ALA TechSource Web site, www.techsource.ala.org.

National Digital Library passes major milestone

The National Digital Library passed its goal of 5 million items on its Web site before the end of 2000. At year's end 5.6 million items were available, including 1.1 million items from collaborating institutions. More than 20 multimedia historical collections were added to the American Memory Web site, bringing the total to 90 collections.

The National Digital Program, including American Memory, should grow even more rapidly in the future because the Library has received $98.8 million special appropriation in its fiscal 2001 budget to develop a nationwide collecting strategy and repository for digital material. The money is available until expended.

Contact: www.loc.gov, www.memory.loc.gov

rules require redesign if potential problems exist before any injury is incurred.

Much of the rule was based on best practices already followed by many businesses and organizations. More than one-fourth of the 6 million workplaces surveyed by OSHA already have ergonomics programs in place. Among the companies identified in the research are 3M and the Stop & Shop grocery chain—companies that have found that educating workers about ergonomics and systematically studying the workplace and redesigning workstations reduces costs and prevents injuries and expensive disabilities.

Although compliance with the rule would have cost billions for employers, it would also have saved billions. A study by the National Academy of Sciences found businesses lose $50 billion a year on sick time, medical care, and decreased productivity because of workers suffering from repetitive stress injuries. It concluded, as did a 1997 report by the General Accounting Office, "private sector ergonomics programs yield positive results."

Library employees would have been covered by the rule. The most common type of injury in libraries is related to the use of computers. These injuries can be serious and costly. For example, a cataloger in a special library worked at a computer on a regular office desk with an old chair and suffered carpal tunnel syndrome. A request for a computer desk and adjustable chair had gone unheeded. The employer's costs to date include

$7,600 for medical expenses, including surgery; $28,000 in wages and fringe benefits for time off work; and in excess of $20,000 in legal expenses. Had the OSHA rule been in effect, the $20,000 in legal expenses could have been avoided and, more important, the workplace would have had to be redesigned. Instead, the employee will return to work at the same desk.

Both libraries and their employees can do a great deal to reduce the likelihood of injury and legal action. In the absence of an OSHA rule, library administrators should pursue a voluntary ergonomic program. A good place to begin is the following four-point program:

1. Watch posture

According to research from the University of California Ergonomics Program, employers should encourage employees to keep the body in a relaxed yet upright position when sitting. A backrest should support the inward curve of the lower back. The angle formed by the thighs and hips should be 90 degrees or more. The feet should be firmly on the floor. The employer's contribution should not only be information about posture but also a chair adjusted to each employee's height.

2. Protect neck

Employees should also be advised that the head and neck should be in a neutral position as much as possible to avoid headaches and shoulder problems. The chin should be lined up with the middle of the screen or with the material from which

Gaylord offers online PAC demo

Gaylord Information Systems has made a demo of its Polaris patron access catalog available online. The demo highlights four features: genre searching, bibliography building, Z39.50, and Polaris "OneView."

The Polaris demo shows how a keyword search can be conducted by genre in addition to author, title, subject, general notes, publisher, and series. The keyword search need not be entered in any particular order. Users can narrow genre searches by location, type of material, date, language, and audience.

Once an item is identified, a click adds it to a title list. When a bibliography is completed, Polaris allows it to be saved and printed in formats defined by the Modern Language Association, Chicago Manual of Style, or the American Psychological Association. Bibliographies can also be reformatted in any of the available formats because of the incorporation of XML style sheets.

The Z39.50 feature allows users to search any library catalog or Z39.50-conforming database.

data is being keyed. Turning the neck down and to the side should be avoided. An employer can minimize problems by attaching clips to the sides of monitors to keep papers raised and level with the computer screen.

3. Stretch

Sitting in one position for a long time can tighten muscles, and, according to exercise physiologists, hinder normal motions in the long term. Employees should be encouraged to perform simple stretching exercises every two hours. To ease neck strain, the head should be turned slowly from side to side. While sitting, the lower back should be stretched by slowly bending down between the knees and touching the floor. Fingers and hands should be relieved by opening and closing them 10 times, spreading the fingers wide apart.

4. Drink water

Employees should be urged to keep a bottle of water at the workstation and drink regularly throughout the day. Each person should consume a minimum of one quart at work each day. Cola or other caffeinated beverages are not a substitute for water because they dehydrate the body.

Ergonomics is more than these four tips. Because the topic is important and timely, *Library Technology Reports* has commissioned a report on ergonomics for libraries. Publication will be in November 2001. ◼

"OneView" allows users to view heading, bibliographic information, and item availability on one screen, eliminating the need for clicking from one screen to another to find information.

A demo is available at www.gaylord.com/automation.

Contact: Gaylord Information Systems
P.O. Box 4901, Syracuse, NY 13221-4901
tel. 800-272-3414

NISO releases DRAFT FILE SPECIFICATIONS for the TALKING BOOK

The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) has received comments on a draft standard for file specifications for digital talking books (DTB) and is working on reconciling the comments and completing the standard.

For many years, talking books have been made available to print-disabled readers by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and other organizations on analog phonograph records and audio cassettes. Although suitable for fiction, the analog audio is less useful for reference books, textbooks, magazines, and other materials not usually read linearly. Analog talking books do not allow a user to place bookmarks, highlight material, or check the spelling of a word. And analog audio does not allow a user to decide when to consult footnotes. A DTB overcomes all these shortcomings.

The standard does not concern itself with the distribution medium. It could be CD-ROM, DVD, tapes, or via the Web. The key is the standardization of the file structure so there will not be multiple formats that require a variety of equipment types. The standard is also designed to support not just audio but also output to a Braille display.
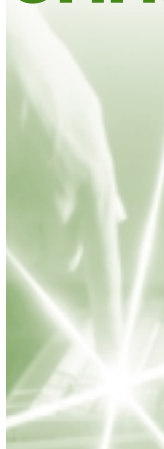
The draft is subject to further revision before balloting takes place. When the standard is adopted, considerable time and money is needed to move from the present talking books to DTB as hundreds-of-thousands of analog players and millions of analog items are in use.

Were DTB to become available via the Web, the role of libraries for the blind and physically handicapped might be significantly changed. That, too, will take time.

Current information about the status of the standard is available on NISO's Web site. When completed, the standard will be available for downloading without charge.

Contact: www.niso.org

SIRSI enhances iBISTRO

Sirsi has broadened the content of its iBistro e-library to meet the needs of academic and research libraries. Syndetic Solutions Inc. is furnishing Sirsi with 150,000 additional cover images and 140,000 annotations for academic titles. It will also supply some 10,000 book excerpts or first chapters of up to 20 pages in length selected from the 100 or so new titles each week that receive featured reviews in major newspapers and magazines. The additions complement the 60,000 tables of contents, 300,000 book summaries, and 30,000 author notes already available.

First released in October 2000, the iBistro e-library has now been installed at more than 60 libraries.

Sirsi has also launched www.infobistro.com, a Web site devoted to familiarizing librarians with electronic libraries. The site provides information and links to information about establishing and maintaining a variety of library services via the Internet. Its links include libraries that have already created e-libraries.

Contact: Sirsi Corp.
101 Washington St. SE
Huntsville, AL 35801
tel. 256-256-7000
fax 256-704-7007
www.sirsi.com

RECENT

SIRS enriches functionality of Mandarin M3

SIRS Mandarin has added many features to its Mandarin M3 automated library system. Its new "session save" feature allows librarians to save an inventory session for future retrieval. Libraries now can also produce a list of items inventoried that were shelved without being checked-in. An enhanced barcode label printing utility has also been added. The number of preloaded reports, generally known in the industry as "canned reports," has been increased to more than 100.

Mandarin M3 operates on Windows 95/98/2000/NT. Although it is sold primarily to school libraries, an increasing number of small public and academic libraries are purchasing it—especially public and academic libraries outside the United States.

Contact: SIRS Mandarin
P.O. Box 272348
Boca Raton, FL 33427-2348
tel. 800-232-7477
fax 561-994-4704
www.sirs.com

REPORTS

OCLC and RLG publish digital preservation metadata report

OCLC and RLG have collaborated to produce a report identifying common goals and approaches to digital preservation metadata titled *Preservation Metadata for Digital Objects: A Review of the State of the Art.*

The 50-page report includes a definition and illustration of preservation metadata for digital objects, high-level requirements for a metadata framework, a review and synthesis of existing approaches, identification of points of convergence/divergence among existing approaches, and the Open Archival Information System Reference Model—a potential starting point for developing the preservation metadata framework.

The report concludes that "the effectiveness of digital preservation will ultimately depend in large part on the ability of information managers to achieve consensus on standards and best practices relating to the long-term retention of digital objects."

The report can be found at www.oclc.org/digitalpreservation. ∎

NCIP update

The National Information Standards Organization (NISO) released a draft standard for trial use of its NISO Circulation Interchange Protocol (NCIP) Jan. 15, 2001, three days after *Library Systems Newsletter*'s February press deadline. (Unfortunately, the next two issues couldn't report the information because they were devoted to the annual survey of the library automation industry.)

The draft standard, designated Z39.83-200x, has been released for trial use for a one-year period ending Jan. 15, 2002. The standards committee (NISO Committee AT) said the many practices in circulation and interlibrary loan precluded the adoption of a standard for exchanging information among systems without submitting a draft for trial use and identification of problems.

After one year, the committee expects to revise the standard and submit it for balloting. The industry hopes the standard for exchange of information among circulation systems, between circulation systems and patron self-charging systems, and between circulation and interlibrary loan systems will be adopted and published in the second or third quarter of 2002. For more information, see www.niso.org. ∎

& Sagebrush & Sirsi pursue partnership

Sagebrush, a vendor specializing in the school library marketplace, has added Sirsi's Ecole to its product roster. Ecole is a school library version of Unicorn, the best-selling multiuser, multifunction automated library system on the market. Sagebrush has made some enhancements to Ecole and has renamed the product "Accent." It will continue to market its own Athena and Spectrum products. Accent will be marketed to potential customers who want a district-level or centralized solution.

Accent will be offered solely for the Windows NT server platform. The available modules are acquisitions, serials control, cataloging with authority control, circulation, materials booking, a Web-based Internet Public Access Catalog (IPAC), Z39.50 client/server and management reports. The IPAC has the advantage of requiring no updating of client software on individual workstations. Several foreign language interfaces are available for the IPAC.

Although Sirsi will continue to work with Sagebrush on development, help desk support will be provided by Sagebrush staff.

Contact: Sagebrush Corp.
tel. 800-533-5430
www.sagebrushcorp.com
Sirsi Corp.
101 Washington St. SE
Huntsville, AL 35801
tel. 256-256-7000
fax 256-704-7007
www.sirsi.com

NEWS& UPDATES

ALA AND ACLU FILE **SUITS CHALLENGING CIPA**

The American Library Association (ALA) and American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) have filed suits to challenge the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), a federal act to withhold federal funds from any school district or public library that fails to filter access to Web sites that may have content inappropriate for minors.

The outcome of any suit is difficult to predict. Most of the recent case law is at the state level. The most recent decision was handed down by the First District Court of Appeals of California on March 6, 2001. The court ruled in upholding two lower court decisions, that the Livermore Public Library can't be penalized for content posted to the Internet by a third party. "There is a crucial distinction between providing minors with harmful matter on the one hand, and maintaining computers where minors may obtain such matter, however easily, on the other . . . . A public library does not affirmatively place minors in danger by allowing them unsupervised use of computers linked to the Internet," wrote the judge.

The plaintiffs hope that the federal government will be restrained from imposing penalties on libraries while the matter is before the courts. ■

Geac's search for buyer fails

Geac Computer Corp. disclosed on March 27 it has not been able to find a buyer and is now putting together new cost-cutting plans. It contemplates a substantial reduction in workforce. The Library Division, which markets PLUS, ADVANCE, and VUBIS, was not seriously affected in a previous cutback of 12%, but avoiding reductions may be difficult in the next round, as the goal will be to improve profitability in all business units.

The company is also looking at selling some of its vertical business units. The cutbacks and other restructuring moves are expected to be completed this spring.

Contact: Geac Computers, Inc.
tel. 800-825-2574
fax 800-759-0126
www.geac.com

Digital reference library prototype planned

The Library of Congress (LC) and OCLC have agreed to develop a prototype for a new 7x24 reference service based on the Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS) pilot that LC and 16 other libraries began early last year. The service will provide reference service to users with Internet connections anywhere in the world, including both individuals and librarians who may not have the resources to answer a patron's question.

Reference librarians will search electronic resources at hand and electronic files maintained by CDRS institutions, find authoritative information from Web sources, or forward questions that can be best answered by the expert staffs and specialized collections of CDRS institutions around the world.

LC will coordinate development and do much of the design; OCLC will provide technical support, including the development of a database of profiles of participating CDRS institutions and a question-and-answer database. Marketing, training, and user support will also be the responsibility of OCLC.

Contact: Library of Congress
www.loc.gov
OCLC
www.oclc.org

SUPREME COURT HEARS **DIGITAL COPYRIGHT CASE**

Oral arguments were presented before the U.S. Supreme Court March 28, 2001, in the case of *The New York Times* versus Tasini. The case pits *The New York Times* and several other publishers against six freelance writers led by Jonathan Tasini. Much of the hour-long session centered on whether articles that appear in electronic databases or on CD-ROM constitute a revision of an original collective work, a term used to classify stories in newspapers and magazines. Under the Copyright Act of 1976, publishers maintain the right to revise entire collective works but not to reproduce individual works.

The New York Times' legal counsel argued that the entire content of the newspaper, less advertisements and photographs, was sent to the databases, therefore, the entire work was being revised. Subscribers to the databases pay for access to the entire publication, not for individual articles.

The legal counsel for the writers argued the articles were individually coded, therefore, they were intended to be treated as individual works. Since the case was filed in 1993, most publishers have revised their freelance contracts to include specific rights to reproduce their works in databases. Nevertheless, a win for the writers could cause 100,000 or more articles to be deleted from databases and will give writers greater leverage when negotiating contracts. ■

PC **PRICE** **WAR** UNDERWAY

Compaq has announced a cost-cutting program to become more competitive. Layoffs are among the strategies. Although declining demand for PCs was given as the major reason for the layoffs, the announcement also acknowledged that the industry is in a PC price war and that Compaq will not allow others to increase their market share at the expense of Compaq.

The industry's plight is an opportunity for libraries to purchase PCs at attractive prices. For example, a Pentium III rated 866 MHz with 64 MB of memory, 20 GB hard drive, 15-inch color monitor, 48x CD-ROM Drive, 56 Kbps modem, Microsoft Works Suite 2001, and one year of on-site service is priced as low as $799 from Compaq, Dell, or Gateway. Even with a memory upgrade to 128 MB ($60) and monitor upgrade to 19-inch ($140), the price comes in below $1,000. ■

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