

Peer Review: CDAPL + CIN = Excellent Library Services

Grants [# t06351-00 and #T06355-00]

Karen Pettinger, reviewer

October 12, 2008

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Project Objective:

In 2006 the Coeur D'Alene Public Library (CDAPL) submitted a LSTA grant to help cover the automation costs of joining the regional consortium, the Cooperative Information Network (CIN), to better serve their city patrons with more materials and broader library access.

Project Method:

The initial project entailed merging the city library's stand alone Athena catalog with CIN's joint Voyager ILS. As the project advanced it became apparent that the merger created too many duplicate records and so a second LSTA grant was sought to cover the cost of an outside vendor de-duping the combined database before it went public.

The initial timeline was one year from April 2006 until March of 2007. However, Bette Ammon, director of the CDAPL asked for a two month extension because the added step of de-duping had set the project back several months. The request was granted with the stipulation that the final reimbursement request be submitted by June 15, 2007.

The Director, cataloger and IT tech from CADPL worked with the cataloger and IT tech from the Hayden branch library, home base of CIN, and the head of cataloging services at Gonzaga University who oversees and houses the servers for the Washington Idaho Network (WIN). WIN includes the Valnet database and the CIN database as well as 9 university databases.

CIN has a written standardized schedule for merging that they give to the incoming library. CIN staff than train the cataloger and IT tech to create

the location and item type (itype) codes in the database as well as the patron groups. In cases of smaller libraries without the expertise to do this, the Hayden Library cataloger actually does all the coding. Paula Foster, at Gonzaga University as head of WIN negotiates the contract with Ex Libras (the vendor for Voyager) and extracts and sends the databases to the Ex Libras programmers who do the actual merge.

Along with coding, the incoming library is required to fill out forms detailing mapping and matrixes of exceptions. Incoming libraries are required to follow standardized location/collection codes so that the end result to the patron is uniformity. For example, an adult fiction title will appear in the OPAC as Hayden Adult Fiction or Coeur d'Alene Adult Fiction and both will have a call number of Mitchel for Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind*. Copies of these forms are kept at CIN.

Duplicate book barcodes were caught in the test database and the numbers returned to CDAPL for changes. Both the IT tech and cataloger worked on these. It was decided after the grant was written not to try and merge the patrons from the city library into the ILS. Many of the city residents held a separate card already for the consortium so rather than create unnecessary duplication it was decided to start fresh and hand input patrons as they arrived in the newly reopened library. Those with consortium cards simply used those. CIN policy is one patron one card number for all libraries.

Monthly reports are run on the circulation of CdAPL items as well as the number of items loaned to and borrowed from other CIN libraries. Each library has a patron group code to track the number of patrons coming through the library. They can also identify taxing jurisdictions through the statistical categories used when registering patrons.

Monthly meetings are held to discuss cataloging and both directors and catalogers attend. All libraries in the consortia follow a three page memoranda outlining standardized cataloging procedures. Representatives are chosen from CIN who in turn represent the consortia at the WIN meetings. Thus, communications flow in both directions and the various entities can implement changes with a maximum of consensus.

For the deduping process an outside vendor, LTI, was chosen to remove duplicate titles from the combined database.

### Project Results:

Beyond the obvious result of achieving a combined OPAC for their patrons, the project generated cooperation between the staffs of the two libraries, many opportunities for training, and a sense of inclusion in the regional system for the patrons and staff alike. The IT techs from CDAPL and Post Falls Library, another member of CIN, worked together to add *Library Thing* programming to the catalog which the whole consortium now enjoys. Patrons unable to find a title in the CIN catalog can scroll to the bottom of the screen where a database tab takes them to an easy to use interface for the Valnet catalog and those of all area colleges and universities.

The once fiercely independent city library had fallen behind technologically and could not afford to compete as an independent service provider at the same caliber as consortia members. The patrons of the city voiced their displeasure early in the bond campaign at not being included in the seamless materials usage others in the area expected.

Project managers migrated CDAPL's records and unveiled their new ILS along with a regional courier system and expanded patron borrowing privileges. Ten months later the new Coeur d'Alene Public Library was opened, with the new services promised during the building campaign already in place.

The deduping component had mixed results. The catalogers instructed LTI to use the 010 (OCLC) field, the 020 (ISBN) field and the 035 (WLN) field. Many of the older books do not have ISBN numbers which made the matching process far less successful. And since paperback and hardback titles were attached to the same record in CIN, many of CDAPL's paperback records did not find a match in the deduping process. No libraries noticed if any of the matches attached items to the wrong MARC record.

CIN is a regional powerhouse that is building on its' successes. Since CDAPL joined two more libraries have applied for membership in the consortium. With the expertise afforded them from WIN they have an experience and technological advantage over other consortia in the state.

#### Project Impact:

The local impact for CDAPL has been a surge of community support and usage. From a practical point of view the stress on their materials budget has been eased. As Bette Ammon explained to another director, when purchasing for the collection, especially when ordering the middle book in a set, she does not feel obliged to buy all the books since her patrons will see those titles in the collection and have them in 2-3 days with the courier that delivers 3 times a week. Also, since Best-sellers are not interlibrary loan, but intralibrary, they are not barred from circulating to the CIN libraries immediately. This helps keep the need for many multiple copies down.

On a statewide basis, CIN is developing standards, working out procedures and modeling regional and multi-consortia cooperation which may help future consortia develop more smoothly if the lessons they have learned can be developed into a 'best practices' document for others to refer to. If a statewide catalog was to develop, the excellent management structure of CIN and the area libraries' understanding that cataloging and IT

personnel are required professional positions, would make it a natural leader for this project.

### The Project in Retrospect – Project Director and Staff perspective:

What worked well: [1] The depth of technical knowledge; layers of IT staff and catalogers at the library, at CIN headquarters, at Gonzaga with the WIN server and in the Voyager User group made the merger a routine event. [2] Good organizational structure. Each library sends representatives to CIN meetings and CIN elects a representative to the WIN board. [3] Active participation in monthly meetings. Bette Ammon explained “The monthly meetings bring collaboration and cohesiveness and when problems arise they can find a solution with compromise and constant training occurs.” Furthermore, nowhere in the state has a university library taken the leadership initiative that Gonzaga University has in spearheading the WIN consortia. Lewis-Clark developed Valnet in the early '80s but never housed multiple databases on the same server. The experience accumulating in northern Idaho far surpasses that in any other part of the state, in terms of consortia operations.

What didn't work: [1] Because there was duplication in the patron files CDAPL decided not to migrate its patron records but chose to add patrons as they came to the library after it reopened. Those already in the database did not have to be re-added. Statistical codes for home libraries and taxing districts are used to track patrons. [2] Deduping on the 020 field did not work for paperback records. CIN chooses to lump paperback and hardback copies of books onto the same MARC record to ease patron searching and hold requests. Even though the paperback 020 field is added it is not the first one and the match did not occur in the merging. Also, this practice has

precluded CIN and Valnet from merging as a single database. Valnet policy retains separate MARC records for different editions of a title.

Changes: Neither the director nor staff could think of any changes they would make except possibly a different vendor to dedupe. I believe that at this point the merging process has been refined to a point that it runs smoothly with no surprises and most contingencies have been worked through. The CIN decision to mix paperback and hardback records on one MARC record may prove problematic in the future since this is a nonstandard procedure. From a practical point of view, one lesson learned from this grant is that future merger applications should include deduping as part of future database merging grants.

Planning Time: Before the grant was written, John Hartung met with the CDAPL staff and explained the process, what to expect and outlined what had to be done. Kari Wilson, the Hayden Branch cataloger who spearheads the training started with a survey of what the incoming library had for location codes and types and explained to them what they would have after the project was completed. Though the learning curve is steep for the incoming library, one year was enough time since most of the planning and discussion took place before the grant was written.

Additional resources: The library has a large Friends Group and Foundation as well as an organized volunteer program so extra help was readily available. Publicity though a minor part of this grant was adequate since the drive for this project was actually community generated. Training on the catalog is done on a one-to-one basis by staff. CDAPL's IT tech and cataloger did the bulk of the technical work required in-house. There was a depth of

experience from CIN/WIN and the Voyager User Group for CDAPL to rely upon to lead this project.

Did the Commission provide adequate assistance throughout the project?

Yes. In talking to Bette, she was not aware that there is a barcode registry kept by the commission on its webpage. Barcode structure, location codes, check digits and an algorithm that creates them are still not clearly understood and barcodes are a hodge-podge driven by the vendors. A Standards Committee for consortia cataloging might help to standardize practices so that future mergers were dealing with consistent designations and spacing. A blog on the subject might be well received.

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