News and Announcements

Programmers Discussion Group Meets: PL/I, the MARC Format, and Holdings

Twenty-two computer programmers, analysts, and managers met on June 29 in San Francisco for the formative meeting of the LITA/ISAS Programmers Discussion Group. In an informal and informative hour, the group established ground rules, started a mailing list, planned the topic for Midwinter 1982, and found out more about practices in fifteen library-related installations.

Programming Language Usage

What programming languages are used, and used primarily, at the installations? Nine languages turned up, excluding database management systems (and lumping all "assembly" languages together)—but one language accounted for more than one-half of the responses:

Language	Users	Primary
PL/I	14	13
Assembler/Assembly languages	8	5
COBOL	4	2
Pascal	3	1
BASIC	1	1
C	1	1
MIIS (A MUMPS dialect)	1	1
Fortran	1	0
SNOBOL	1	0

Note: some installations use more than one "primary" language.)

A second round of hands showed only four users with *no* use of PL/I.

MARC Format Usage

These questions are asked on an agency-by-agency basis. One agency made *no* use of the MARC communications format. None of those receiving MARC-format tapes were unable to recreate the format.

Eight of the fifteen agencies made *significant* internal-processing use of the MARC-communications-format structure, including the leader, directory, and character storage patterns; this question was made more explicit to try to narrow the answers. Thus, the MARC *communications* format is used as a *processing* format in a significant number of institutions.

Only three agencies use ASCII internally, most use of MARC takes place within EBCDIC. (All but three agencies were using IBM 360/370 equivalent computers—the parallel is clear.)

Computer Usage

As noted, all but three agencies use IBM equivalents in the mainframe range; three of those use plug-compatible equipment such as Magnuson and Amdahl. The other major computers are CDC, DEC/VAX, and Data General Eclipse systems. Smaller computers in use include DG, DEC 11/70, Datapoint, and IBM Series/1 units.

Home Terminals and Computers

Four of those present currently have home terminals. Three have home computers.

Future Plans for the Discussion Group

The Midwinter 1982 topic will be "Holdings," with some emphasis on dealing with holdings formats in various technical processing systems (such as OCLC, UTLAS, WLN, RLIN). An announcement and mailing list will go to all those on the mailing list, as will an October/November mailing with questions sent to the chair.

Those interested should send their names and addresses to Walt Crawford, RLG, Jordan Quad, Stanford, CA 94305. It is anticipated that papers on the topic may be ready by Midwinter; questions and comments are welcomed. *NOTE:* There will be no set speakers or panelists; this will be a true *discussion* group. The topic for the Philadelphia meeting will be set at Midwinter 1982.—*Walt Crawford, Chair, The Research Libraries Group, Inc.*

CHANNEL 2000

A test of viewdata system called CHANNEL 2000 was conducted by OCLC in Columbus, Ohio, during the last quarter of 1980. An outgrowth of the OCLC Research Department's home delivery of library services program, CHANNEL 2000 was developed and tested to investigate technical, business, market, and social issues involved in electronic delivery of information using videotex technology.

Data Collection

Throughout the test, data were collected in three ways. *Transaction logs* were maintained, recording keystrokes of each user during the test, thus allowing future analyses and reconstruction of the test sessions. *Questionnaires* requesting demographic information, life-style, opinion leadership, and attitudes toward CHANNEL 2000 were collected from each user in each household before, during, and after the test. Six focus-group interviews were held and audiotaped to obtain specific user-responses to the information services.

Attitudes toward Library Services

Forty-six percent of the respondents agreed that CHANNEL 2000 saved time in getting books from the library. Responding to other questions, 29 percent felt that they would rather go to a traditional library than order books through CHANNEL 2000, and 38 percent of the users felt that CHANNEL 2000 had no effect on their library attendance.

Forty-one percent of the CHANNEL 2000 test group felt that their knowledge of library services increased as a result of the CHANNEL 2000 test. In addition, 16 percent of the respondents stated that they spent more time reading books than they did before the test.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents felt that public libraries should spend tax dollars on services such as CHANNEL 2000. Although this might suggest that library viewdata services should be tax-based, subsequent focus-group interviews indicated that remote use of these services should be paid for by the individual, whereas on-site use should be "free." Sixty-three percent of the test population stated that they would probably subscribe and pay for a viewdata library service, if the services were made available to them off-site.

Purchase Intent

Respondents were asked to rank-order the seven CHANNEL 2000 services according to the likelihood that they would pay money to have that service in their home. A mean score was calculated for each CHANNEL 2000 service, and the following table shows rank order of preference.

Rank Order	CHANNEL 2000 Service
1	**Video Encyclopedia** Locate any of 32,000 articles in the new Academic American Encyclopedia via one of three easy look-up indexes
2	**Video Catalog** Browse through the videocard catalog of the Public Libraries of Columbus and Franklin County, and select books to be mailed directly to your home
3	**Home Banking** Pay your bills; check the status of your checking and savings accounts; look up the balance of your VISA credit card; look up your mortgage and installment loans; get current information on BANK ONE interest rates
4	**Public Information** Become aware of public and legislative information in Ohio
5	**Columbus Calendar** Check the monthly calendar of events for local educational and entertainment happenings
6	**Math That Counts!** Teach your children basic mathematics, including counting and simple word problems
7	**Early Reader** Help your children learn to read by reinforcing word relationships

The final report, mailed to all OCLC member libraries, was published as CHANNEL 2000: Description and findings of a viewdata test conducted by OCLC in Columbus, Ohio, October–December 1980. Dublin, Ohio: Research Department, Online Computer Library Center, Inc., 1981. 21p.

NOTIS Software Available

At the 1981 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco, the Northwestern Univer-

sity Library announced the availability of version 3.2 of the NOTIS computer system. Intended for medium and large research libraries or groups of libraries, NOTIS provides comprehensive online integrated-processing capabilities for cataloging, acquisitions, and serials control. Patron access by author and title has been in operation for more than a year, and version 3.2 adds subject-access capability as well as other new features. An improved circulation module and other enhancements are under development for future release.

Although NOTIS, which runs on standard IBM or IBM-compatible hardware, has been in use by the National Library of Venezuela for several years, Northwestern only recently decided to actively market the software, and provided a demonstration at the ALA Conference. A contract has been signed with the University of Florida, and several other installations are expected within a few months.

Further information on NOTIS may be obtained from the Northwestern University Library, 1935 Sheridan Rd., Evanston, IL 60201.

Bibliographic Access & Control System

The Washington University School of Medicine Library announces its computer-based online catalog/library control system known as the Bibliographic Access & Control System (BACS). The system is now in operation and utilizes MARC cataloging records obtained from OCLC since 1975, serials records from PHILSOM serials control network, and machine-readable patron records. Features of interest in the system are:

1. Patron access by author, title, subject, call number, or combination of keywords. The public-access feature has been in operation since May 1981.

Online instructions support system use, minimizing staff intervention. User survey indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the system.

2. Low cost public access terminal with a specially designed overlay board.

3. Barcode-based circulation system featuring the usual functions, including recalls for high demand items, overdue notices, suspension of circulation privileges, etc.

4. Cataloging records loaded from OCLC MARC records by tape and from a microcomputer interface at the OCLC printer port. Authority control available on three levels: (a) controlled authority, i.e., MeSH or LC, (b) library-specific assigned authority, and (c) word list available to user.

5. Full cataloging functions online, including editing, deleting, and entering records.

6. Serials control from PHILSOM system. PHILSOM is an online distributed computer network that currently controls serials for sixteen medical school libraries. PHILSOM features rapid online check-in, claims, fiscal control, union lists, and management reports.

7. Five possible displays of the basic bibliographic record, varying from a brief record for the public access terminal to complete information for cataloging and reference staff.

8. Two levels of documentation available online.

The software is available to interested libraries, bibliographic utilities, or commercial firms. Contact: Washington University School of Medicine Library, 4580 Scott, St. Louis, MO 63110; (314) 454-3711.