MILSCC - 9/29/99 (revised 12/14/99, glh)

Chair: Richard Amelung
Minutes: Raleigh Muns

Attendance based on signup sheet:

Raleigh Muns (UMSL), Janet Jackson (MOBIUS), Win Shih (SLU), Richard
Amelung, (SLU), Ben Lea (UMR), Vianne Sha (MU), Gary Harris (LSO), Helen
Spalding (UMKC), Dennis Krieb (SLU HSC), Bob Heidlager (LSO), Randy Diamond
(MU LAW).

    RICHARD:

Objection to minutes?

NO OBJECTIONS

Review of Action Items. We had but four. (Displayed on Coordinator's Action
Items web page)

    GARY:

I found out that there were three web pages for coordinators. I'm entering
all the pages on the action items now. If you don't see them on the web
pages you'll need to let me know about that.

    RICHARD:

Campuses to set up IP address for LSO to use in contact for online
subscriptions.

Background: This ties into the linkbot program so that when we are asking
LSO to verify URL links to see if they are valid, LSO needs to know how the
site is set up, specifically based on IP address, in order to determine if a
link is really not working. The suggestion was that each campus set up an IP
address or include LSO when setting up IP address access so LSO can check
URL's. Following our MQCC meeting on this we're not sure if it is feasible.

Could we say "We know that this can't be done consistently, is it still
worthwhile doing this?"

GENERAL DISCUSSION

    GARY:

Understand, we can't check the URL's for validity unless we have access to
the resource.

    RICHARD:

I see this as two separate issues: first, my understanding was that LSO
would just check to see if we could get to the URL, or not - not actually if

you got in and got the material. My question is again, is it still worth doing this?

GARY:

We were going to check the validity of all URL's in 856 fields. We've been able to whittle this down significantly taking into account the GPO URL's. We can determine whether we reach the server, and not if the specific item is available.

JANET:

Yes, sometimes we get the server, but we don't get access to the data. I get "Unrecognized Server Response" and "Error 401 unauthorized" and "Error 404 not found."

RICHARD:

The "Error 404 Not Found" is the important one. My understanding is that we weren't asking LSO to do that much, just verify that there is a valid link (ignoring the fact that LSO may not be authorized to look at it). "Unauthorized" is ok, "Not Found" means a broken link.

JANET:

Also, we don't have that many bad URL's so it's pretty easy to check them on an individual basis when they do crop up.

RICHARD:

Can we assume that item 1712 on the Action Item list is done then? We can report this to MQCC that we don't need to give LSO IP access to certain resources, which is also impractical based on our discussion.

LSO update? Anything general?

GARY:

We had a problem with the mid-release 12 upgrade. I contacted Innovative because I received a message from the Union Database Comm. I contacted Innovative about the printing problem. Our machine has been upgraded to mid-release 12 with the fix.

VIANNE:

Our concerns are with upgrades - we'd like to know in advance when this is going to happen. When we see slowdowns we don't know if it's due to an upgrade or something else. We need LSO to let us know in advance about upgrades.

GARY:

We have always done this in the past. This is the first time I "seized the moment" and made a decision. I volunteered to do this and made the decision.

Had I sent a note, you wouldn't have received it until the next day. The vendor told us "You need to do this." This was a special case.

RICHARD:

I didn't know about the timing of this. I don't know the size of the upgrade or fix.

GARY:

This upgrade took about an hour.

Again, I considered this a special case. Next time, we'll do it the way I've always done it before. I knew I was sticking my neck out but went ahead and made the decision to proceed. Vianne's concerns are valid and you will be all kept informed.

VIANNE:

What were the reasons for the transaction file problem?

GARY:

They give LOTS of reasons for the problem. This was something that wasn't related to the upgrade ... could be a runaway process ... web servers spawning themselves ... we may have too many people doing too many things on a machine that is not up to the use load.

BOB:

No particular explanation has been given to me.

RICHARD:

It seems like there is a recurring problem with run away processes. We have these happen about twice per year?

DENNIS:

What is a runaway process?

JANET:

Things that don't close when someone is using it. It could be someone turning a machine off without exiting. But, this doesn't happen consistently enough for us to figure out why it happens. It's probably a series of different things causing it.

GARY:

The most frequent answer we get is that we are doing too many bools (creating lists). But it doesn't happen all the time which one would expect if there were a definite bug. It's a combination of things - everything that happens on the Innopac has to pass through the transaction file. Notice we

don't have problems in the summer when we have less transactions.

JANET:

When we call and talk to Innovative they talk to us about the number of bools being too high.

RICHARD:

Seems like a fairly unique set of factors has to take place.

DENNIS:

Is the problem software, hardware, a combination?

GARY:

I think it's both. I'm not sure that an immediate hardware upgrade would solve our problems here. There's a lot we don't know about their software because we don't have access to it. That's the way turnkey software works.

JANET:

If we had faster hardware, the processes would go faster, but I also suspect the problems would not go away.

It has improved since operations have been prioritized. It used to take forever for Circ transactions to go through; those transactions have been moved up in priority. Things like email messages now run lower in priority.

GARY:

My view is that all functions should be available to all users at all times.

RICHARD:

When there are problems, is it difficult at that point in time to determine if the delay is a low priority process? Or is it just not going to come through because something's awry?

GARY:

If we see the transaction file processing, we know that things are going through. We have budgeted down the road for machine upgrade, and there is a possibility we could move this up. But, we need to verify that an upgrade will actually solve the problem before blindly proceeding.

JANET:

In this last round of difficulties, people were sending stuff, it was slow, and they kept re-sending which caused it to get slow so they kept re-sending ...

RICHARD:

I don't think users understand the hierarchy of processes when they see slow ups.

GARY:

>From last meeting's minutes: we were working on implementing the Action Request System from the REMEDY Corp. We've made a lot of progress. This application will be hosted on MORENET's REMEDY server. We've had one meeting with the folks at MORENET. I've asked Help Desk people here to evaluate and recommend. I think you will all like the end product. We have a lot of options on how to implement this.

I also guess you know that we have also advertised for another Library Systems Support Specialist.

Re: The Proxy Server - it is on hold. The reason is that Dave Martin had to turn it off, he found a problem with it. Dave is working furiously to ensure the LSO servers are Y2K compliant. Ovid, a very important system, the Ovid CGI system is written in PERL and Dave needs to install a new version. Once he gets past these problems he'll return to the proxy server.

RICHARD:

What you showed us in June on how the proxy server works raises the question: since this is based on Dave's work, is this going to be "non-Dave compliant?"

GARY:

Dave will be retiring in April. I'll let George talk about this and other issues.

Location of Ovid Databases: Axie is investigating moving our Ovid databases to Provo, Utah. This would involve installing a T1 line from there to here. She has not yet received a response on this.

DENNIS:

George sent an email asking about implications. Right now we have over 1000 Ovid accounts and my question has to do with "do we lose these accounts?" The other issue has to do with the local holdings information.

GARY:

You will lose the local holdings information.

DENNIS:

The way Diane talked to me was that we may still have that capability.

RICHARD:

Please note that SLU has a contractual obligation to our users to supply

access to these databases.

GARY:

We don't have the answers from Ovid yet. That's what Axie is working on.

DENNIS:

Do we need a "Renaissance man" like Dave to continue what we're doing? Can anyone do these same tasks.

GARY:

I think we do need someone like Dave. I don't think we can expect to get someone like him as a replacement.

DENNIS:

I think we need to let George Rickerson know about our concerns with a move of the Ovid databases.

RICHARD:

The whole issue is one of outsourcing things that LSO is currently doing. Your options are narrowed and you have less flexibility when outsourced. My biggest concern is that we have these user contractual obligations that aren't going to go away.

GARY:

You also have to realize that even to get, and retain, a programmer would take a 6 month cycle. The private sector will (and does) hire them at higher pay.

DENNIS:

>From my perspective, services have been diminished. Bringing up the local holdings issue, this will be the third time we've had this happen.

An observation on the one database being accessed on a remote server (non-LSO maintained): Ageline is apparently no problem with bandwidth.

MORE DISCUSSION

RICHARD:

Re: Sequoia and tioga?

GARY:

I can't say when we'll be moving these machines. With tioga (Ovid databases) we have this ugly little problem where it doesn't like to start up after being stopped.

Let's say everything worked out and we move everything to Provo, we wouldn't need tioga (a much more powerful machine).We'd probably get rid of sequoia and move all other applications to the more powerful tioga machine. Before we do anything, we'll be planning and communicating. I don't have a date though. I DO know how important moves are.

Upgrade MERLIN Machine: Already discussed.

RICHARD:

MOBIUS: Where do things stand, and what is the administrative structure needed to be discussed?

GARY:

We're still in the process of implementing the first cluster, Central East. We only have the Lincoln University data on that machine, we're waiting for the other cluster members' data. We have a Dynix system, two DRA systems to deal with. The target date for that cluster to be online and circulating is still first day back after the new year. I don't think they plan to turn on the link to Innreach since they need time to get used to working on the Innopac before handling requests. First they'll have to learn how to do the "G" function in the cluster. Hopefully, delivery should be in place. The hold up is actually the availability of bags.

RICHARD:

Let the minutes show that we need more bags!

GARY:

Whenever we get these "vessels" we'll do a dry run on a Friday and begin delivery in earnest on the following Monday.

RICHARD:

I'm assuming that those people can send the bags back.

GARY:

As far as the MERLIN libraries go you can keep using your tubs.

RICHARD:

That wasn't my understanding.

GARY:

Things have changed - you can keep using your tubs. The standard is wide enough it seems like that they'll take almost anything.

RICHARD:

The other question that has come up has to do with the MOBIUS structure. At one point there was discussion of another committee system.

GARY:

My understading is that they are forming the MOBIUS Advisory Groups with one representative from each cluster, thus, MERLIN gets one representative. This is being discussed by the MOBIUS Executive Committee.

HELEN:

Would it make sense that the chair of this committee would be the representative?

GARY:

It makes sense that the chair of the appropriate committee might be represented there.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

RICHARD:

I didn't know how many groups are being proposed. It doesn't make sense to have a MOBIUS serials acquisitions group.

GARY:

I think four groups are proposed.

Right now there are 3 MOBIUS lists, one for the Central East Cluster, one called MOBIUS-L which is all of the MOBIUS Library Directors, and the third one is the MOBIUS-X for the Executive Committee. Yesterday we decided on a new list for all the MOBIUS participants that Bob will moderate.

HELEN:

So the MOBIUS members list would ideally have appropriate information forwarded.

GARY:

My experience is that some things are not being appropriately forwarded. Hence, the need for this members list.

RICHARD:

I'm getting this information from the CIRC Committee.

HELEN:

If someone on the Director's list could forward things. (Gary Harris is one).

GARY:

There is not much traffic. The only thing (so far) that would have been useful was the circulation information and I did get that information out appropriately. I'm also uncomfortable forwarding information from a closed list.

Once we have the MOBIUS users list established, Robin will forward things appropriately.

RICHARD:

Millennium: Since this is requiring some local planning with hardware upgrades ... do we have some ideas on implementation?

GARY:

We have said that we are going to upgrade the MERLIN and Wash U machines to the Millennium software next year. We've given you the requirements for running Millennium circulation - you don't HAVE to use the Millennium circulation module immediately.

Note that the first cluster will be running the Millennium software. We'll be getting experience directly once Central East comes on line.

RICHARD:

The question is, as it stands right now there is only one machine in my Library that has the capacity of running any of this. If we are proposing to roll this out in a phased approach, the number of machines that I need to acquire in order to take advantage of this ... I currently need 7 machines in serials to take advantage of Millennium. My question is "the schedule." If I know that we're planning to bring up Circ first, I don't want to replace the serials workstation. Do we know III's schedule for rolling things out?

GARY:

Just what they've told us about "next year" for the Circ system. The person who can answer these questions is at III.

DENNIS:

If we upgrade to Millennium, how will this affect laurel?

GARY:

I've asked that question (and all the others) too.

RICHARD:

Let's move on to the question of the purge of the patron file. Right now I know that we have plenty of space for patron records (we're not running out of "p" numbers). A lot of these patrons have graduated and gone on to other

things. I'm not sure if that causes problems in terms of doing statistical analysis because x number of more records need to be looked at (is this a drag on system resources?). So there was a question, first, about whether we have ever purged any records ...

GARY:

It was to be left up to the individual libraries to maintain their patron records. I have seen the size of the patron database grow and grow and am pretty sure such maintenance isn't taking place overall. So, I created a list of patrons who'd never checked out anything, had expired two years ago, owed no money, etc. The Circ people decided it was OK to go ahead. But, I haven't got an action item from the committee so it hasn't been done yet.

RICHARD:

The question in my mind is that initially the assumption was that each "circulating center" or institution was going to take care of getting rid of their own records.

HELEN:

Are you going to get an action item from Circ to do this?

GARY:

Yes.

JANET:

Is there, or should there be, an ongoing policy to do this?

GARY:

Frankly, I think some people are afraid to use the delete button. Also, we're just starting on this. We'll do this first (from an Action Item) then develop policies as appropriate.

RICHARD:

Unlike other things that we've scaled back on, like users licenses, these "p" numbers are not a problem.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

AXIE:

Re: Print Subscribers Program assessment

I have copies of the terms and the conditions of the various licenses. At some point we want to get these to your institutions. These are interim copies. I didn't send you the entire thing, rather, I included that which was most pertinent.

RICHARD:

Question out of the MQCC discussion on the frequent changes needed to handle these PSP records. The question raised was that the PSP program was being done on a trial basis. When is the trial over? I'm not sure that anyone discussed that.

RALEIGH:

Here's some background as an MRSC member:

First, the PSP program was pursued because of a short window of opportunity. We had available monies and an affordable product. MRSC decided it would be worthwhile to pursue this as a way to gain experience with regards to electronic journals. There was no discussion as to how long we would do this. In fact, we HAVE gained extensive experience (these discussions for example) that we wouldn't have otherwise gained.

Anyway, MRSC embarked on this independently and in good faith. At the same time, the cataloging units were engaged in appropriate activities to provide access to PSP (and other online) titles via URL's in 856 fields. It was one of those things where two groups were acting responsibly and we find ourselves here in this ambiguous situation.

RICHARD:

The questions being raised out of the MQCC are 1) is this no longer a pilot project? and 2) are decisions on handling these titles to be made are based on a long-term retention of these titles?

GENERAL DISCUSSION

RICHARD:

The other question that came up recently is one of the URL address. The short answer is something about how OCLC said "don't worry, we'll go through all the bib records and change the URL's" which doesn't help us because we've got our own bib records already with the wrong URL's.

AXIE:

Your interpretation is as good as any, and accurate. The good news is that the time period for changing URL's is extended.

RICHARD:

You can't just go in and go into OCLC and export and overlay - we have other data that would get wiped out. My assumption is that we really have to go through and change each one of our bib records.

VIANNE:

Unless someone at LSO knows how to change the domain path for the URL's - that's the only thing that is changing.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

RICHARD:

This will be an MQCC Action Item.

Any more on PSP program?

DENNIS:

How much are we paying?

AXIE:

$15 per title per institution.

RICHARD:

We need to share with the Collection Development group when it meets: the
use statistics. Also, we need to identify those responsible for promulgating
access. I'm not sure we're getting our value for what these cost, and for
the efforts we're expending.

AXIE:

Is the use low because of the particular collection, or the way we make it
available?

MORE DISCUSSION

GEORGE (LSO UPDATE):

(Richard: with the proxy server, is this going to be affected by Dave's
retirement?)

Someone else will be handling this.

RICHARD:

My understanding is that Dave wasn't going to be replaced.

GEORGE:

That's wrong. His position will be replaced.

GARY:

I was stating that we can't replace Dave Martin, not that we weren't going
to replace his position.

DENNIS:

My question is that when Dave leaves is there going to be a gap in services?

GEORGE:

Yes. That's why we have the open discussion on what to do with the Ovid
databases. That is a "threshhold" decision we have to make before we write
the job description for Dave's replacement.

RICHARD:

We had two open concerns: the status of individual accounts, and the
retention of local holdings information.

GEORGE:

Ovid has to have a mechanism for doing SDI's which assumes identifying an
individual for remote access.

RALEIGH:

In fact, it's the fact that Ovid requires an account for SDI's which gave us
the opportunity to offer remote access at least to Ovid databases.

DENNIS:

The second thing would be to carry accounts over ...

GEORGE:

All of that was done locally by Dave. We will try and figure out a way to
facilitate this.

AXIE:

This will be part of the evaluation of the possible changeover.

RICHARD:

I would hope we could create/transfer the accounts in Provo before we
transfer to that system (if we transfer to that system).

The other implication, the link to holdings ...

GEORGE:

The J-codes. They definitely will go away.

DENNIS:

That would be a major impact on our library.

GEORGE:

The process is that Axie is doing an analysis financially and functionally.
We'll look at that and make recommendations to the MERLIN Directors.

What I'm concerned about is the level of service that we have with our Ovid system. There is no way if we maintain a local Ovid server that we can maintain the same level of service that we do with Dave once he retires. My opinion is currently that the only way we can retain service is by moving to Ovid maintaining our databases.

One of the assumptions that Axie is working with is that we will have a dedicated T1 connection with Provo. The whole question of SLU's connectivity in the state is on the table.

DENNIS:

Are we certain that we're not going to lose any speed?

GEORGE:

That's why we're assuming a dedicated T1 connection to Provo.

Note: we are not comparing between what we have now (locally maintained server by Dave Martin), and going to T1 connection to Provo. Dave Martin will not be maintaining a server here. We are looking at two new scenarios. Locally maintained by ? with ? level of service vs. T1 connection to Provo. Proposing a move is based on this change at LSO, and not being done in a vacuum.

RICHARD:

Re: Millennium Installation schedule. Next year? More information? I need to know about phasing in hardware, and budgeting for that. My assumption is that I was looking at Circulation first quarter, serials machines second quarter ...

GEORGE:

Millennium upgrades for Wash U and MERLIN would be a summer event (a third quarter event). Mainly I make that assumption due to how (and when) major changes are generally implemented, hence, planning for summer.

In terms of precise scheduling, I don't have anything else.

It's one of those situations where there are too many options. The character interface will not go away. My sense is that Innovative's intentions are to not have two interfaces on one system. The point is that in terms of any individual campus planning when they are going to use java client interfaces is different from planning the Millennium upgrade. Right now the modules are Circ phase one and serials phase one. Acquistions phase one is in beta testing. When these and other phases kick in, and what will be in general release by next summer, isn't clear. Anyone who wants to use the java client at the time of the server upgrade should be able to do that. I think there is also a training step you have to consider. If you're thinking "when do we implement using Millennium Circ" you have to build in this training issue. The main thing is that it is time to think about your migration plan - it needs to be sooner than a 5 year calendar. I don't anticipate

any character interfaces being pulled in the immediate future, though.

I'll be putting out a note to the Directors and Board members so that they can come up with a plan of action to do the migration.

We've budgeted for replacing the laurel server in 2001 and we may advance that. Just thinking about the normal lead time, it's unrealistic to think about a fast replacement before the end of Winter semester (or even you wanting us to embark on this now). I had in mind that we replace laurel in the summer.

   DENNIS:

Re: Proxy server. What's the timeline? When can we expect an announcement.?

   GEORGE:

I don't have any more information here.

October 8th is the dry run for testing the delivery system with the new cluster.

I did see Sandy Westall last week and would like to pass on a couple of notes. There were 3 development items between MOBIUS and III. One was dealing with printing spine labels, another with the export formats in the OPAC, and finally the creation of the "agency field" which should be a step towards making the scat tables work. These will be in release 2000.

The agency field is an item record data element which is another level of location specification. It will probably contain an identifier for the campus. Obviously that provides a mechanism for gathering information at the campus level for item records (again, in release 2000).

I also talked to her about the update queue to the MOBIUS catalog and what happens when updates get large. She said that when there are a lot of updates (heavy load on system) that it can take overnight to get a queue processed. She said that they are always looking at ways to make that update process faster. One thing has to do with a technique for de-duping the file. Right now it is FIFO (first in first out).

   VIANNE:

When is release 2000 going to be out?

   GEORGE:

We expect by November.

LUNCH BREAK

   RICHARD:

Regarding the Collection Development Committee ...

It was my understanding from a conversation with Dr. Benham who is chair of the MIRACL Board of Governors that among the Directors there was differing understandings of what the Collection Development people would do and that they had to hash that out before nominating people for the committee. This was some time ago.

RALEIGH:

MRSC had invited the proposed members to an MRSC meeting; only a couple were able to show due to scheduling conflicts at that time.

RICHARD:

There was the possibility that MRSC could do some of these things ... but, that wasn't considered feasible.

OK, let's move on to the LSO Service Level Agreement.

GARY:

This past year, for the first time I received annual assessment forms from UMSL, UMR, MU, UMKC, MU LAW (nothing from UMKC Law, nothing from SLU - this was an optional assessment).

I devised this assessment tool and wanted you to have the option to comment on this for revisions. On this instrument I used a point system where there was 70 points.

Overall LSO got 64.5%. I found 13 not applicables (N/A). When I scored those as "5" each LSO got a more respectable 85%.

I scheduled meetings with all of the libraries and in fact visited them (except SLU and UMKC Law). I met with staff and various department heads. >From what I heard it sounded like we were doing better at that time. Some things were determined to have gotten better.

HELEN:

We thought things were getting better when you came on board. Our assessment was based on the previous year, our experiences and expectations improved when Gary came on board.

DENNIS:

Are you our advocate to George?

GARY:

I try to be.

DENNIS:

I see you as our representative to George.

When this comes around next time you may be judged negatively based on things not under your control. Those who should be given positive credit, should be given positive credit.

EXTENSIVE GENERAL DISCUSSION

VIANNE:

Re: The Service Level Agreement. There is a bit of inconsistency in that sometimes you are evaluating services, sometimes you are asking about the standards.

GARY:

This was our first pass. We'll be evaluating your comments and revising the form.

VIANNE:

See section 5.4 it says see section 6.6 and it should be section 6.8. This is an error to be fixed.
See section 6.1 is says see section 6.5.2 and there is no section 6.5.2.

RICHARD:

We added and subtracted things and some numbers got out of sequence.

Our next meeting is scheduled November 3, 1999, then December 1, 1999 for the next meeting.

GARY:

I'll polish these up, re-read comments, bring them to the next meeting.

HELEN:

If the SLA is the only thing to be considered, we can discuss this via the list.

VIANNE:

I forgot to ask George about Millennium training.

RICHARD:

There are some options under consideration. I don't think that training actually comes with purchase of the product.

GARY:

Which puts us in the potential position of purchasing MORE training. But, once Central East has Millennium up and running we'll have access to it directly which will help us understand the issues more clearly.

RICHARD:

I understood that the options were 1) do we want to send someone to Emoryville? or 2) do we want to pay someone from III to come here?

HELEN:

My understanding is that Mark would get the training, and he would be the trainer for all the rest of us.

RICHARD:

We'll meet again on November 3rd if we need to. I'll solicit agenda items and let you know if we'll need to meet.

MEETING ADJOURNED

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