

MERLIN Coordinators Minutes 23 July 2003

In attendance: Richard Amelung (SLU-Law), Brenda Dingley (UMKC), Raleigh Muns incoming chair (UMSL), Judy Maseles (UMC), Ben Lea out-going chair (UMR), Nancy Stancel (UMKC-Law), Karen Darling (UMC), Gary Harris (MCO), George Rickerson (MCO)

I. Appointment of new chair for 2003-2004 year; Raleigh Muns accepted nomination and was approved by the Committee.

II. With the resignation of the library director at SLU-Law, Richard Amelung is the acting director, until the search for a new director is complete.

III. Paul Callister has begun as library director for UMKC-Law.

IV. General discussion of the merger of Northwest Missouri State (NWMSU) and the impact that merger could have on libraries.

From a political standpoint, the plan is to spend this year gathering support in the legislature for the merger. With the IT plan in place as of August, they intended to introduce the bill in January of 2004, with the idea to have the merger effective for the 2004-2005 academic year. One drawback to the IT plan is that NWMSU has just implemented Banner, a competitor for PeopleSoft; as this was a significant financial commitment, NWMSU doesn't want to flush away that money this quickly.

Some information about NWMSU. They have approximately 6000 FTE, with somewhere in the neighborhood of 250,000 monographs & 27,000 journal volumes. Their offerings are something of a hodge-podge, with perhaps the most unique offering being a Ph.D. in Quality. As an institution, they are more focused on applied fields than research.

The primary impact of the merger will be in terms of databases and licensing. GR did not report a figure on what the cost for adding NWMSU to the MERLIN database licenses would be, other than to say that it wasn't financially feasible at this time. Thus, NWMSU is prioritizing the list of databases, deciding which ones they need the soonest.

GEORGE:

The system is committed to having NWMSU get access to all the databases ASAP; however, finances may not make that possible. So, NWMSU may get the databases over time. A concern is that UM System may see that as a way to save costs: piece-mealing the databases to individual campuses, rather than allowing everyone access to everything.

The current plan is to keep NWMSU in the Towers cluster. With only 4 libraries, the departure of NWMSU from Towers would make the cluster no longer viable. Indeed, if may not be possible to move NWMSU's records from Towers onto Laurel. III doesn't want to move the records, it would cost a lot of money, and NWMSU's librarians might lose some of the work they've done.

There are, however, some concerns about leaving NWMSU on Towers:

JUDY:

Loan rules are different; UM patrons requesting books from other UM campuses get them for 4 months, but to or from NWMSU, it's only 3 weeks.

Circulation statistics aren't available to MERLIN libraries for Towers materials. So, a UM librarian couldn't see how often a particular book had been checked out from NWMSU before they ordered a copy for their library.

BEN:

User education issue as well; there's a difficulty in explaining to patrons that if they want a book from a UM campus, they should use MERLIN, unless it's at (and only at) NWMSU, in which case they need to use MOBIUS.

GEORGE:

"Philosophically, if they're going to be a UM campus, they should be a UM campus."

(Committee consensus was that it was obviously philosophically desirable to integrate NMSU as a full-fledged UM campus, but that there are obvious barriers to doing that.)

RALEIGH:

There may be a way to resolve these issues, by creating a shadow system somewhere, transparent to users. In other words, there could be an intermediary search, unseen to the patrons, that looks at a UM patron's library first, then UM + NWMSU (replacing MERLIN, for these purposes), then MOBIUS. I'm wondering if a software approach could be used to keep NMSU in Towers, but create by software the transparent interoperation as part of MERLIN (yes, I know this is confusing).

MCO will look into this possibility.

ACTION ITEMS:

1

Raleigh (in his capacity as chair) will contact Pat Danner, the coordinator at NWMSU. He'll begin a dialogue with her, asking if she wants to be added to our listservs, see the archived messages, invited to our meetings, etc.

2

Coordinators will begin to consider which MERLIN committees should have NWMSU representation. Because the records won't be on Laurel, having them on all committees is unnecessary. But, which committees would benefit from NWMSU representation (and which would NWMSU benefit from joining)?