

DPLD Presents: Geekfest '02

by Jamie LaRue, Director, Douglas Public Library District

Introduction

On July 30, 2002, DPLD hosted an event we called "Geekfest '02." This one-day panel discussion resulted from the Board's direction that I put together a technology plan for the next three years. We invited several key library technology experts. They were: Carson Block, Technology Consultant for the High Plains Regional Service System; Kevin Watkins, Network Specialist for the Douglas Public Library District; Bob Pasicznyuk, Information Technology Officer for the Pikes Peak Library District; Dave Hahn, President of Techangle; John Zacrep, Information Technology Director for the Jefferson County Public Library System; and Eric Sisler, of the Westminster Public Library.

We also extended the invitation to attend to two other groups: Board of Trustees and DPLD library staff, and the directors and staff of all the other public libraries in the state. I reached this group through the Colorado Public Library Directors electronic mailing list I maintain.

We arranged for box lunches for the attendees, but required that except for our panelists and DPLD staff, the attendees pay Plum Perfect Catering directly (a \$10 check, payable on arrival). We also provided Geekfest '02 T-shirt, and pocket protectors for all attendees. The T-shirts were donated by Techangle and AwardEx. Seven propeller hats were purchased for panelists. Total budget for this event: about \$200, for 5 hours of top quality technical reporting and planning.

Our response was positive. We arbitrarily limited the session to 50 people (in the interests of space). Finally, we had one Trustee (Steve Roper), 10 staff from the library, 15 people from the Western Slope, and another 25 or so from the metro area.

What we asked.

I moderated the session. After introductions, I asked several general questions. These were generally answered in round robin fashion, although sometimes, speakers went out of turn, or responded to audience questions.

What are you working on now?

Eric Sisler, Westminster

Moving from the same "Dynix" system used by DPLD to the next generation graphic version, "Horizon." Reasons - the existing software and hardware are aging. Westminster negotiated a price for the full data migration for \$155,000 (versus the \$250-300K) for a new customer. They hope to make the migration happen between mid-August 2002 to March 2003. They are also investigating a self check system - Vernon. They have found one that works with Dynix, described as "ugly," but it has held up well. Also working on moving from previous versions of Windows to Windows 2000. Looking at a Linux-based firewall.

Bob Pasicznyuk, Pikes Peak Library District

Recently installed something called "Patron management system (PMS)" -- also used by Arapahoe Library District to manage public use of Internet terminals. The system "authenticates" (checks that the patron is both in the database and in good standing) and tracks time spent, even keeps track of how large a print job will be, and how much it will cost -- gives the patron the opportunity to cancel a long print job. PMS tracks people waiting to get on; and if no one is, allows the patron to continue to use the machine. The system reduced paper waste. The vendor of the package is "Visionware." This also uses the same interface as their self-check system (note: PPLD is not a Dynix library). The system also allows patron to override any problems with the status of a patron. Patrons without cards may use a 15 minute express Internet station not on the system. Staff may also prepare a guest library card. It can also track which sites were visited if this options (called the "FBI option" by staff) is turned on. PPLD has chosen not to. It runs on a little Linux box -- "Microsofty" -- which has a hook to the library catalog SQL server. The system is also used in the children's area, although no card is required. Again, it does let people know how many pages they are about to print.

Carson Block, High Plains Regional Services System

ASCC - Automation System Consortia Colorado (<http://ascc.lib.co.us>) project. High Plain brokered a deal with epixtech to use the ASP solution (Application Service Provider) to give new generation library solutions over

the Internet, even to small and rural libraries. This is a very cost-effective solution for small libraries, and has spread quickly through the state. It, too, is a Horizon-based system. Participants pay for "seats" -- the number of active terminals. This system depends upon a "Citrix" server, provided by Expixtech, and has proven to be a fairly fast solution.

Dave Hahn, Techangle

Working on data integration for DPLD: the "one search" model for combing through the library catalog, subscription databases, library website, and the visible Internet. Local History Collection - Colorado Digitization Project - historic images available on our own storage systems. Internet connectivity - changing it and making more, better and lower price - using new (wireless) technology. Bring in more bandwidth, manage it better - provide more services - for staff and patron. Distributive web site maintenance - website is updated and maintained by one person - should be a patron and staff resource. Internet security - firewalls.

Kevin Watkins, DPLD

Installing iPAC - replacement to webpac. Will offer "RPA" - remote patron authentication by end of next month. This allows our patrons to search our subscription databases from home. By end of month - will be on windows for cataloging Biggest project - new Philip S. Miller Library - hope to implement an IP phone system - connects to the back of the computer - voice over IP - runs over IP - wireless training labs

Question: can a wireless PDA connect to your system?

Answer: not yet. Would love to be able use PDA to check out and view catalogs.

Question: how are you managing wireless security?

Answer: not an issue yet, but may be. John Zacrep, Jefferson County. Airpack for wireless pacs - Triple I (Innovative Interfaces Incorporated) is building a lot of stuff into their systems - Boulder can use a wireless PDA and get into their catalog. Internally - Library service center wireless tech - security is necessary - hackers can camp and do what they will if you are not careful - Jeffco is firewalled - can't even be pinged. Patron access to the internet. But, when you look at the possibilities of bandwidth being used by other wireless coming in and using it. Voice recognition - experimenting with software for staff doing a lot of typing. Ergonomic issues - use limited at present to staff with carpal tunnel syndrome. May have other applications. Exciting thing - CD emulation. This lets the library load a 50 CD-ROM set onto a hard drive, and have CD-ROM software see the hard drive as all 50 CD's, and work with them. Used for government documents, and for data used by catalogers. Currently have 548 Windows-based work stations, 30 servers and a few Macs. Web servers are all linux - we are finishing up moving everything to Windows 2000. Licensing issues with Microsoft. They replace 1/3 of machines each year to stay current. Academic for licensing for the next 3 years - \$50k - buys opportunity to get the cheap upgrades. Alterus - software product to clone machines - for backup and set up new computers. Load the clone. Allows for remote maintenance -- but also allows for snooping by staff. If such snooping occurs, staff are told that they will lose their jobs immediately. Time out software (same as PMS, above).

Where do you believe technology can be applied to best improve library efficiency and SAVE money?

John Zacrep, Jefferson County

Material control and material flow - automated cataloging and ILL, and background processes - ordering, acquisitions and distribution - automated. Cataloging - full cataloging - Resource sharing a big part of that - Jeffco cataloging records are freely available to others. Internet conductivity - all access to info, quickly. Linux and open source software - StarOffice. No licensing fees, no purchase price. Does a good job of translating to and free Microsoft Office. Receipt printers at circ desk. Self Check IN - machines - to help take load off circ desk Wireless - cheaper and faster. But security issues. Internet - used for shopping for technology -- rather than through purchasing departments. Digital bar code - for checkout and checkin - and inventory - patrons also need to have a digital code card. Roaming collections. All items stay where they are checked in, until requested elsewhere. This cuts down on all the travel time between branches for items just heading back to be checked in. (Note: PPLD also does this.)

Kevin and others (in a general free for all)

Drop Shipping - all pre-processed ordered from vendor - cataloging and all processing is outsourced. Giving up individualized cataloging - but we're all just copying from each other anyway. Charlotte Mecklenburg - high percentage of books being processed that way. JL - Tech services - need to work on transferring data from one place to another. (Automatic on order record put into database at time of order, updated with barcodes when

shipped. So it would just be a matter of checking in barcode.) May make a philosophic decision not to have the "best" cataloging database - focus on speed and general standards. Part of patron service - you can download records and they are crap - will the patron ever find it with those records? Get acquisition system to be your cataloging system - though marc records will need to reviewed, and may be fewer modifications. COMMENT (from audience): Tech services - need to work with the library - tech services dept here is everything we can do for you - what do you want first? Continual dialogue to get the patrons what you need - need to think of it as a system - people have moved to outsourcing because the dialogue has broken down within the system. Jeffco - tech services run by the public services administrator

How do we save money?

Bob - I don't think we do. IT - value added services - not money saving. Bob - one thing that saves money \$50k a year in postcards to tell about holds - we do email now and save. Eric - Linux guru Cost savings - Open Office (Microsoft Office alternative) Linux-based browsers and make them browsers - will save money on running things on linux servers. Mailman - mail list software to send out email announcements for library info, events and programs Calcium? Meeting room scheduling. Deepfreeze - Image cast to roll out new machines Rotate machines every 4 vs 3 to save money Telecirc or holds and overdue - to cut printed notification Doesn't get cheaper - gets more efficient and but not necessary cheaper. Dave Linux - save money through efficiency or tools - Tech is an ever moving target. Open Source - stuff that makes it go. Licenses are going up - we don't make money on Microsoft software. Open Source you don't have to keep paying for it again and again. Spend time in education and learning - Jamie - hedge his bet - Linux and Microsoft - one foot in the open source to keep ourselves safe from being held hostage to Microsoft. Carson - Integrate different solutions is important - integrate philosophies - have staff on hand to do. Infinite variables in how to do things in computer land - have someone on hand who have your best interest on hand.

What exciting new things are you seeing on the horizon? Carson peer to peer (P2P - file swapping furthernet.org - John Digital bar codes Libraries will have more and more emphasis from contact from without. Electronic Text to be fully available would change library world forever. Kevin Personal PDAs - library as an environment where they can make choices rather than choices being made for them. Dave Information from one system to another system. Smaller pieces of data identification Building of online communities. E-communities and relationship between them. Tech becomes a social tool

Question: what if English won't be the language of the Internet?

Answer: Our emerging global society has more social implications than just language. Carson Web subverts dominate culture idea.

Question: what uses of instant messaging?

Dave uses to facilitate conversations with communication. Instantaneous. Good use with reference questions - no cost for low cost for the software. Bob- Patrons get personalized services from us. Customized for people. Click on cd and hear a clip of the music. Amazon driving libraries. Eric - CLC Questions about Open Source movement: Usability and Compatability Linux can look and function just like Microsoft - or Mac - or other. A user choice. Eric - server end - system admin - different approach than microsoft. Editing - can put noted to yourself - can make quick changes - John -

Question: How user friendly is linux and open source - compared to microsoft? Answer: all operating system are difficult to install, get drivers to work. But once installed, all about the same, with a few exceptions. Linux far more stable than others.

What do you folks read to stay current? Kevin Tech Republic.com Wired magazine Network World magazine John Maximum PC magazine Dave Maximum Linux magazine Register Slash dot.org Carson eWeek <http://www.eweek.com>