PARTNERING WITHIN:

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT IN THE IVY TECH STATE COLLEGE LIBRARY SYSTEM

by Susan Mannan and Allen McKiel

INTRODUCTION

Ivy Tech State College comes from a tradition of separate campus libraries that in the past operated independently and had little contact with each other. In recent years, developments have led to a college-wide system of campus libraries that, while retaining their unique nature, have built an effective partnership that has made the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Rapidly evolving library information technologies have been a primary impetus for cooperation.

The librarians in the 13 regions of Ivy Tech State College have coordinated efforts to take advantage of the changing information and communication technologies by creating a virtual library. The core functions of these academic libraries are taking on new shapes and forms in the context of the new media. One of the most interesting aspects of the change integral to Ivy Tech's implementation of library information technology is the development of a consensus style of decision-making. The complexity of the implementation process along with the need to share expertise, purchasing, processing, and infrastructure requirements has promoted the creation of a cooperative decision-making environment.

The Ivy Tech State College library system provides a unique example of the transition from the traditional to the virtual library. The librarians chose to develop a virtual library in the belief that it would provide the optimal library services for the funds available. Many of the current Ivy Tech libraries rely more heavily on the virtual aspects of their resources than their counterparts in more traditional higher education settings where the hard copy collections are still the dominant collection. The increasing reliance on electronic media in the Ivy Tech library system provides a more thorough integration of the new information and communication

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technologies into the daily operation of the libraries. For this reason, Ivy Tech libraries provide a unique environment in which the changing nature of the core functions of academic libraries can be viewed. Integral to the change has been the increased participation of a larger and more diverse group of individuals in the decision-making processes essential to every aspect of library functioning.

PARTNERSHIP BEGINNINGS IN LIBRARY AUTOMATION

In the late 1980's the separateness of the Ivy Tech libraries was leading to a proliferation of independent micro-based catalog systems at several of the campuses. Recognizing the problems that such separate systems would present for future cooperation and communication, the librarian at the Indianapolis campus successfully sought a federal Title II grant award in 1991 to create a shared statewide automation system using NOTIS software. The project director for the grant traveled the state delivering computers and initial training and spent time developing a relationship with the technical staff in the central Computing Services Department who would be supporting the project. It was these personal connections that laid the foundation for the unique decision making group that would form around the implementation of library information technology.

In 1992 the librarians began to meet regularly and develop a sense of shared purpose. Initially the focus of effort was on the implementation of the automation system and a supporting interlibrary loan system. Interlibrary loan became important as each campus could now see what the other libraries in the system had in their collections.

Statewide cooperation was needed to implement an integrated library automation system. The unique capabilities of technology enabled the partnership and

made many things possible. A side benefit of the implementation of the library system was e-mail. The librarians had been introduced and connected. Thus technology not only, in part, created the needs; it provided the means to fulfill them. From the beginning, the approach of the leadership and the group was one of openness and sharing to make more things possible together.

SELF-STUDY EXPANDS THE PARTNERSHIP

Shortly after the automation project took shape, the College launched its first statewide self-study as it sought to be re-accredited as one statewide college rather than campus by campus. The Automation Committee became the Library Self-Study Committee and its purpose broadened as it looked at all aspects of the libraries in the system. Out of this effort came a long-range plan that touched on all aspects of the libraries from mission to staffing to collections and services. The importance of this was more than just the existence of a plan. The plan represented shared experience and commitment to the future and to some common goals. Through the process, the librarians had formed an identity as a group of peers and initiated a consensus style decision making process.

The North Central Accreditation team enthusiastically acknowledged the work of the committee and noted the areas of library need in its report, thus giving support to the need for further cooperative work. The college recognized the success of the committee's collective work and gave it "life after NCA." The committee lived on. Its accomplishments became of such interest that minutes of the Library Committee meetings were widely read by campus administrators around the state. The committee now had a broader mandate than just the library automation system. With the development of information technologies relevant to the core functions of the library, more of the activity of the group focused on the creative use of technology to respond to the library needs outlined in the self-study.

In addition to a general Five-year Plan associated with the self-study, the Library Committee wrote a statewide Library Automation Plan setting goals for a common central system and standards for local campus development. While the plan was initially co-written by two members of the committee, it was reviewed and adjusted until it met the requirements and expectations of all thirteen librarians. It was an important process that developed in these negotiations—one of consensus and consideration of each for the other's needs and the good of the whole. Everyone realized that together they could accomplish what none could do alone. And this realization plus the camaraderie that developed during the monthly meetings went a long way towards establishing a cooperative climate that would lead to more cooperative projects and accomplishments.

Although the official chair role of the committee has remained with the Indianapolis campus, efforts have always been made to share the load and seek out talent in the group and put it to use. Each librarian has played a part in the statewide development of the Ivy Tech libraries and most have had a project to lead at some time or other.

The statewide plans were the fulcrum holding the statewide library system together. They were approved by higher level administrative groups both statewide and at local campuses and drove the funding and development at both levels. The plans also gave the large system commonality and initiated the development of a level playing field at the diverse local libraries. Some of the twenty-three libraries in the system had been in existence for many years and were well developed. Others were brand new. They varied in size, in collections, and in staffing. What they now had in common was a coming together around technology issues to build a system that would strengthen the statewide college as well as the local campuses. The technology associated with the plan at that time revolved around CD-ROM information resources, particularly the full-text periodical offerings of EBSCO and IAC.

FUNDING AND COOPERATION

The college affirmed the importance of developing its libraries through a special fund raising campaign. In 1994 the Ivy Tech Foundation began a "Virtual Library" campaign to raise money for development of technology, collections, and databases. Over a period of two years monies raised in the Foundation campaign were used to establish a common base and to begin acquiring the computer workstations that would be needed to develop the "virtual library". The Library Committee worked to develop lists of core collections in reference and curricular subject areas that should be common at all libraries. These special funds could have been used independently by each library but the partnership process brought agreement about establishing a consistent resource base before unique needs were met. It was a form of quality control by consensus. A statewide collection development policy was part of the effort. Neither this document nor the earlier core collection lists were quickly or easily agreed to; but this and other early projects allowed the group to develop a consensus-based model of getting things done where everyone's voice was heard and everyone's talents were drawn upon.

Efforts were made to keep all the work and discussions of the committee focused, positive, and productive. This kept everyone enthusiastic about driving to Indianapolis for what had become regular all-day

monthly meetings. The librarians soon began to feel that they could not afford to miss one of these meetings because too many important things happened. The synergy created in the Library Committee became central to establishing first-rate services for Ivy Tech students.

VIRTUAL PARTNERS

During the early 1990s as the librarians built their common core collections, they also began to realize the need for expanding their electronic collections, especially in the journal index/full text area. They set about the exploration of options and agreed to use a substantial amount of Foundation funding to purchase some of the Ebsco web-based databases. This was a giant leap forward for some of the smaller libraries in the system that had never had access to a sizable journal collection before. It created a level playing field statewide and built enthusiasm for adding more. Most of the libraries could not have afforded the array of databases that the group could purchase collectively. As the Foundation monies were expended, regions readily agreed to contribute local funds to joint statewide purchases on an ongoing basis. Because the statewide Library Committee had built a solid reputation for success, local administrators felt more confident committing funds to projects the statewide committee was undertaking. As the state of Indiana channeled funding into INCOLSA for databases and Inspire was initiated, Ivy Tech was able to redirect the funds formerly used for databases now included in Inspire. The committee used the freed-up funds to broaden electronic offerings.

The purchasing partnership continued, but as the core needs were satisfied, it became harder to agree on things every library wanted. Individual regions opted not to join in the purchase of a particular database. However, there was still leverage in smaller groups that worked with vendors on price breaks for multiple library sites. And in the usual partner-sharing tradition, various librarians have taken on individual vendor negotiation roles.

While the databases were being added, the Web was developing, the Web-based catalog was on its way, and libraries everywhere were trying to integrate all these tools and make sense of them for patrons. Ivy Tech was no exception. Individual effort supported by the consensus of the group provided for the development of the Ivy Tech Virtual Library, the college Web interface. The challenge of this development was to allow a one-college approach, while providing for the unique needs of the thirteen regions and twenty-two campuses. Efforts have resulted in the ongoing provision of a central statewide entry page and individual regional pages. The Ivy Tech Virtual Library has a common look and access but allows for local links and

databases not always available at all campuses.

The Library Committee has had many discussions to help shape the product and countless hours on the part of one individual were spent creating it. One of the librarians has assumed the task of Web master. A shared piece exists in the program links section where there are appropriate links to sites for the degree programs at the college. Each program has been adopted by one of the regional librarians, who was responsible for its development and ongoing updates by forwarding information to the Web master. The entire group also contributes to the subject links area and to local links for their own campus page.

PARTNERSHIP IN CATALOGING

Another area where it was quickly realized that some cooperative effort was needed was in creating the cataloging for the automated union catalog. Rather than creating thirteen separate databases within the catalog, the Library Committee decided to create only one, attaching holdings records to one bibliographic record. This appeared to be the most efficient and economical approach to a system-wide collection. A system of shared and distributed work was developed. Region 8 in Indianapolis, the largest library in the system with the largest staff, offered the services of the Library Technical Services Assistant to import new records from OCLC and do the copy cataloging work. A librarian at the Lafayette campus took on the original cataloging tasks. The two have developed a "distance" partnership over the years via e-mail and phone, assisting each other and working out problems in the cataloging arena. This assignment eliminated the need for librarians in all thirteen regions to take on full-blown cataloging duties; although each library agreed to be responsible for adding its own holdings.

VOYAGER IMPLEMENTATION

As the system of cataloging refined itself, the second generation integrated library system was due. The College purchased and implemented Endeavor's Voyager in 1997/98. The virtual library required a client/server system that permitted Web access to the catalog. In usual partnership fashion, an implementation team was created drawing on the talents of librarians from around the state. Each member of the team assumed a special role and also took on responsibility for training and implementation coordination for the various regional libraries.

FUNDING PARTNERSHIPS

Cooperative purchase of databases has already been mentioned; however, there were other funding arrangements worked out that were unique in the college. There were costs for importing the OCLC records and personnel costs associated with the
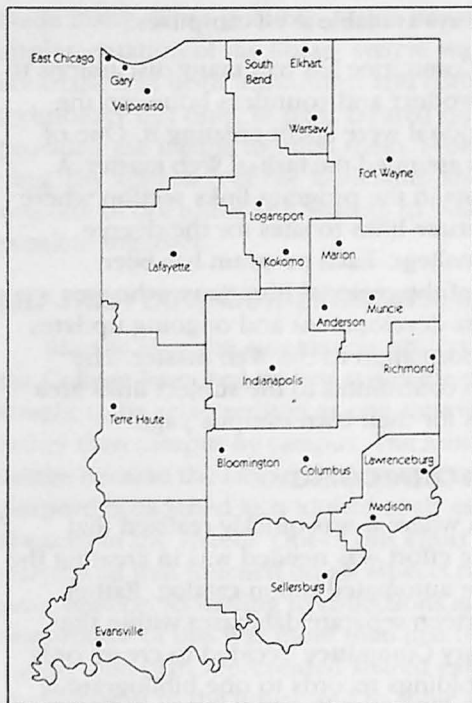
Ivy Tech State College Sites in Statewide System

advanced information on exact costs and follow-up paper work similar to that generated locally to make a purchase. This strategy has been used several times since to fund other cooperative projects such as sending individuals to the Voyager Users Group annual meeting. Divided by thirteen, the cost was minimal and made the experience possible to the benefit of the group.

The Library Committee also began to see a need for teaching about the growing electronic library resources. The librarians again turned to their cost-sharing model to finance a statewide online information literacy project that will be making its debut in the coming months.

PARTNERS IN COMMUNICATION

Over the years the librarians developed a close as well as a cooperative relationship; but after each monthly day-long meeting, they all returned to their separate corners of the state. A way was needed to continue dialogue and communication between meetings. The listserv technology met this need. The librarians were the first group at the College to set up a listserv and have undoubtedly been among the most active users of this approach to communicating. The listserv has been used to conduct interim business and make decisions, to group edit papers, to collect data for reports, to get help on unique campus needs, and to provide instruction on

cataloging work. The Library Committee readily agreed to share these costs via transferring funds electronically from the budgets of the various libraries into one statewide account. Care has always been taken to respect the needs of the local librarians and campuses by reaching advanced consensus and providing

how to perform a variety of tasks such as updating OPAC clients. It has even been used by the group to edit a paper on academic freedom and censorship.

FINAL OBSERVATIONS

This article has used a historical approach to demonstrate how a group of librarians within a state-wide system, separated by organizational structure, tradition, and miles, came together and accomplished things they could not have done separately. The group has used a model for partnership that is driven by a consensus approach that stays focused on common goals and common benefits. Frequent meetings, on-going listserv communication, respect for individual effort, shared responsibilities for project leadership, institutionally sanctioned authority for group decisions, and written plans have all helped the group stay on task and optimize their separate limited resources in the ever-changing environment of library information technology.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

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Ivy Tech State College Statewide Library Committee Members

Region 1:	Gary, East Chicago, Valparaiso	Barbara Burns
Region 2:	South Bend, Warsaw Elkhart	Allen McKiel John Fribley
Region 3:	Fort Wayne	Sharon Hultquist
Region 4:	Lafayette	Dennis Lawson, Evelyn Samad
Region 5:	Kokomo, Logansport	Kris Junik
Region 6:	Muncie, Marion, Anderson	Susan Clark
Region 7:	Terre Haute	David Barton
Region 8:	Indianapolis	Susan Mannan, Donna Funk, Sue Gulesian
Region 9:	Richmond	Jamie Davidson
Region 10:	Bloomington Columbus	Susan Catt Karen Nissen
Region 11:	Madison, Lawrenceburg	Margaret Seifert
Region 12:	Evansville	Saundra Voegel
Region 13:	Sellersburg	Alexa Bartel