

MOBIUS Electronic Resources Advisory Committee (MERAC)

Minutes, Thursday, 22 January, 2004

Call to Order/Introduction. The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by the 2003-2004 MERAC Chair, Laurie Hathman from Rockhurst University (WILO). We have one new committee member, Jackie Burns, from Missouri Western State College, representing Towers.

Airing it Out. Members shared updates on various issues from their respective clusters and home libraries. Melissa Belvadi (Bridges) reported that Maryville University is implementing ILLiad. Laurie Hathman informed us that the Kansas City Art Institute is joining WILO. Lynn Cline reported that the Springfield-Greene County Library suffered a fire Monday evening (though they're not actually part of SWAN). He also reported that Southwest Missouri State University is getting TDnet, and has received a grant from Alibris to fill gaps in their theater collection. Jackie Burns said that Missouri Western State College has also received a grant to do some digitization. Lucia D'Agostino says that the Arthur cluster is still discussing their web catalog pages, and that Columbia College has hired a new systems librarian. Carol Antoniewicz reported that Washington University Olin Library's front door was moved Dec. 29, and they're about 5 months from finishing the total renovation of the building. Sheila Oullette reported that the director of the Forest Park Campus Library of St. Louis Community College has retired, and that SLCC Meramec will be trying Docutek's Virtual Reference Librarian. Jill Nissen stated that St. Louis College of Pharmacy is getting into INNReach borrowing and lending, but still has some bugs to work out.

Reconstruction of October 2003 meeting minutes. Jill Nissen volunteered to put together people's notes from that meeting. The minutes had been taken by Darrin Daugherty, who was called to active duty in Iraq.

MCO report. Terry Austin reported on both the Vendor Direct program and the Database Cafeteria program. For Jackie's Burns benefit, as our new member, Terry reviewed the definitions and purposes of both programs. See the handout that Terry passed out. For Vendor Direct, there are presently 11 offers; though some have expired, several have requested extensions of their deadlines. Oxford University Press is working on an offer for their electronic journals (not their electronic reference databases, which are already offered through MLNC). H.W. Wilson is working on a proposal for Readers' Guide Retrospective.

The two database cafeteria program databases for 2004-2005 are MLA Bibliography and Art Full Text. Requests for Bids have been written and submitted to the University of Missouri office that handles bids for MCO. For MLA, it will go to OCLC, Ovid Technologies, Gale Group, EBSCO, and SilverPlatter. For Art Full Text, it will go to H.W. Wilson, EBSCO, and SilverPlatter. Melissa pointed out that the full-text content of the EBSCO version is not the same as the Wilson version; they start with the Wilson *Index* and link to the full-text available in the other EBSCO databases. If 7 or more libraries decide to subscribe to either offer, the subscriptions will start September 1,

2004; if there are less than 7 for either offer, that subscription will not go forward. After some discussion, we decided to revise Terry's proposed timeline slightly; after a trial period of Feb. 16 – April 15, May 14 will be the commitment to purchase deadline. This was done as the MLNC commitment for FirstSearch subscriptions is likely to be mid-May.

Karl reported that he did a comparison of embargo periods. For EBSCO Masterfile Elite, about 35% of their full-text titles have embargo periods. For ProQuest Research Library, about 25%; for Wilson Omnifile Mega, only about 2%. But he emphasized he was speaking from memory, and had used the lists provided by the companies, not checking the databases themselves.

Terry asked us to let her know if there were databases we/our cluster libraries were interested in; she can see if the vendor is willing to do a vendor direct offer. It can sometimes be a better deal than what we're quoted individually.

Terry will add an unlinked list of past participating vendors to the Vendor Direct page in the MERAC section of the MCO website, so committee members will know what offers there have been in the past. She will also add to the Database Cafeteria page in the MERAC section of the MCO website the list of existing database cafeteria subscriptions.

MAROON Update. Terry reported that the MAROON database has been brought in-house to the MCO office. She, Melissa Belvadi, Mary Slater, and Karl Suhr are working on updating the database format, which will include a number of drop-down lists of options to standardize data input (such as names of databases). Melissa requested the addition of a date-last-updated field for each record in the database – in part so committee members can tell which institutions in their clusters have done their updating, and which haven't – and thus will know which Electronic Resources Contacts to send reminders to.

Hardy Pottinger of the MCO staff has the update on his task list; they hope to have a test version in April, and to go live in June. The plan is that we will be able to access and update it using our MCO site passwords. The price paid for a database will be suppressed for everyone except MCO administrative staff; they need to know whether or not a vendor's offer is actually a good deal for existing subscribers.

Digital Reference: Reports from MERAC members on consortial digital reference.

The MOBIUS Executive Committee had asked this committee to gather information on existing consortial digital reference products. Several committee members had volunteered to investigate and report back on one such product. Four committee members presented their reports: Laurie Hathman reported on the Keystone Library Network Virtual Information Desk, in Pennsylvania. This is staffed by 2 librarians, working part-time, and provides email reference only – no live chat. Lynn Cline reported on the Utah Academic Library Consortium; for them, usage of live chat tends to be higher than email transactions. Dan McGurk reported on Illinois Libraries: MyWebLibrarian; since the grant that funded it initially expired in the summer of 2003, the hours of service have been reduced; they do use a commercial service called Night Owl to cover late evening and weekend hours. Jill Nissen reported on virtual reference at Washington Research Library Consortium; they have enough activity that they double-

staff during some of their service hours. Mary Slater then summarized and updated the Digital Reference report prepared by the MERAC subcommittee she chaired in the spring of 2003. Copies of all the reports will be posted to the MERAC section of the MCO website (click on the Governance tab). Lucia D'Agostino reported verbally on the Maricopa County Community Colleges, and Karl Suhr reported briefly on OhioLink; both will send their reports to Terry to post as soon as they are finished. Carol Antoniewicz reported on how Docutek's Virtual Reference Librarian software has been implemented and is being used at Washington University.

We discussed what to do from this point. A number of consortial projects are ceasing as grant funding expires. Funding – initial and ongoing – is of course a major concern. So are staffing, training, sustainability, and evaluation. Karl Suhr volunteered to draft, by February 16, a summary of the individual reports, including a features grid and action plan, to be presented by Laurie Hathman to the MOBIUS Executive Committee on March 5. Laurie will give an information update to the full MOBIUS Council on January 30.

We discussed each committee member asking their cluster libraries these questions: 1) are you interested in participating in a cooperative digital reference pilot project? 2) If so, are you interested in donating money as well as staff, or just staff, and project participants will pursue grant funding (so any project would be probably a year or more from now)? Participants would have to work together to organize, define policies, set up the pilot and staff it, etc. After this discussion we decided that we needed to make the report to the Executive Committee on March 5 proposed above, and see if they wish us to survey the cluster members.

Other Issues. Carol Antoniewicz reported on the implementation of Article Linker, Serials Solution's OpenURL product. Most journal indexing and abstracting services have been linked to it, based on Washington University's existing Serials Solutions profile of ejournal holdings. The Article Linker results window displays links to online holdings – at the article, journal, or just database level, depending on the title – plus links to the online catalog (by ISSN and journal title), and a link to ILLiad. It has been very well received by their users – who don't realize this is actually magic!

Meeting Date/Evaluation. The next meeting of MERAC will be 10 a.m., Wednesday, 21 April. We will investigate meeting via videoconference; those who do not have access to such facilities can attend at MCO. Please let Terry Austin know (or email the MERAC-C-L list) what videoconference facilities are available on your campus.

Attending: Carol Antoniewicz (Washington University), Terry Austin (MCO), Melissa Belvadi (Bridges), Jackie Burns (Towers), Lynn Cline (SWAN), Lucia D'Agostino (Arthur), Chris Dames (Merlin), Laurie Hathman, Chair (WILO), Dan McGurk (Lance), Jill Nissen (Archway), Sheila Oullette (Archway), Mary Slater (Quest), Karl Suhr (Galahad).

Carol Antoniewicz, Meeting Recorder