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MINITEX

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Submitted to MINNESOTA HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COMMISSION

by Alice Wilcox

MINITEX

Minitex (Minnesota Interlibrary Teletype Exchange) attempts to provide maximum, equitable accessibility to all library resources in the state for any Minnesota citizen. It offers a system whereby all the academic libraries in the state, together with major public libraries and special libraries, cooperate to share their resources. Any citizen who has a need for information that cannot be supplied by his local library can have his request for it transmitted by teletype to the central Minitex office; from there state resources will be searched, and if the needed document is available, it will be delivered to the patron's local library, usually within forty-eight hours.

BACKGROUND

During the last decade, it has become increasingly clear that some form of cooperation among libraries is mandatory. The costs of buying, organizing, storing, and retrieving library materials have all increased astronomically. But federal, state, local and private funds available to libraries have decreased, so that librarians can no longer be certain of meeting these increased costs. Meanwhile, with the "knowledge explosion," there are an increasingly large number of materials that libraries are expected to provide access to; and there are an increasingly large number of people who find a need to use these resources. All of this has put a great strain on all libraries and has exerted compelling pressure for their cooperating with one another.

None of this is unique to Minnesota, but its configuration of libraries within the state is perhaps unique. There is the accident of a single university. There is a concentration of population and library resources on the south eastern border. Half of the population and close to three-quarters of the library resources are within the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. The responsibility for leadership and for resources clearly centered at the University of Minnesota

libraries, but there was no known example anywhere of a major academic library assuming such responsibility. The obvious solution in Minnesota to the above problems seemed to be a two-year pilot demonstration research project, independently funded, seeking documented answers to certain important questions about library cooperation, without making necessary an immediate, long-range commitment. Minitex, funded jointly by the Louis W. and Maude Hill Family Foundation and LSCA Title III funds, started as an attempt to find practical solutions to these three basic questions:

1. Service: Would it be possible to get material requested from another library in a format and within a time span that would be useful to the patron? Would it be possible for a non-faculty or an undergraduate student not oriented to research to select and cite the document that would serve his needs for information?
2. Economy: What would such a program cost? Who could and would permanently fund such a program?
3. Autonomy: What effect would this have on the host institution's ability to serve its primary users? Would it place unreasonable strains on the institutions?

In order to carry out the research, it was decided to hire a separate project staff instead of placing it with an existing library department. It was hoped that this would provide the opportunity to experiment in a working environment with various methods of communication, processing, and delivery and to measure performance, cost, and speed, all of which would have been difficult to accomplish in a traditional inter-library loan department.

First of all, it was decided to use an inter-library system which would make it necessary for each patron to work through his local library, although a system giving the patron direct access to the materials he requests was appealing. Then,

the following basic assumptions were agreed upon:

1. An individual patron should not be penalized because of the limitations of his local library.
2. Individual libraries should be strengthened in their ability to serve adequately their patrons' needs. Although the program would encourage liberal walk-in use and reciprocal borrowing arrangements among libraries, the thrust of the program would be to create a system that could stand as a surrogate for the individual library in securing the required document from appropriate sources.
3. The bibliographic responsibilities of screening and verification would be assumed by the borrowing library.
4. Materials for a school's basic curriculum and for frequently recurring needs are the responsibilities of local libraries and are best met by them.
5. The main concern of the project would be service, and in order to eliminate the expense of several stages of accounting ^Aand billing, all the costs of communication, processing (including photo-copying), and delivery would be born by the project.
6. Since this program would be one of several library relationships, careful attention would be given to designing it so that it would be compatible with existing and developing national library standards.
7. The system would be designed to accommodate the requirements of the largest, most complex member. It is easier to eliminate elements not applicable to a smaller participant than it is to expand a system to accommodate a larger, more complex member.

To set up the project, three things were done. A TWX communication network was installed among eleven selected libraries. An expanded and expedited inter-library loan service using project personnel and equipment was developed. A

system of delivery, involving first class mail, United Parcel, and courier services, was established.

After two years, a careful analysis and evaluation of the last eighteen months of the project was made, and it indicated the following:

1. An overwhelming number of the patrons were satisfied that the relevant material had arrived in a format and within a time span to be useful to them; a little better than 75% of the requests were in the patron's library on the second working day.
2. The costs were surprisingly low; it was definitely cheaper to share resources than to duplicate collections.
3. There seemed to be negligible conflict between patrons in using library resources; approximately 75% of the requests were for photocopies of journal citations.

As a consequence of this evaluation, a proposal for a state-wide library network funded by the Legislature was submitted through the University Administration to the Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Commission. This support for academic libraries was granted by 1971/73 State Legislature, and MINITEX is now a line item in that Commission's budget. Further funding for public libraries has been granted by the Minnesota Office of Public Libraries and Interlibrary Cooperation using state and federal monies.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

A diagram of the current program would look like this:

PARTICIPANTS

- 6 STATE COLLEGES
- 16 PRIVATE COLLEGES
- 6 UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES
- 18 COMMUNITY COLLEGES
- 18 REGIONAL LIBRARIES
- 1 PRIVATE REFERENCE LIBRARY
- 4 STATE LIBRARIES
- 1 HOSPITAL LIBRARY
- 5 SEMINARY LIBRARIES



RESOURCES

- UNIVERSITY
- CLIC (COLLEGE LIBRARIES IN CONSORTIUM)
- MELSA (METRO. LIBRARY SERVICE AGENCY)
- MINN. HIST. SOCIETY
- BOARD OF HEALTH AND STATE DEPARTMENTAL LIBRARIES
- MAYO CLINIC
- WILS (WISCONSIN INTER-LIB. LOAN SERVICE)
- CRL (CENTER FOR RESEARCH LIB.)
- NUC (NAT'L. UNION CATALOG)

SERVICES

- COMMUNICATION NETWORK
- SHARED RESOURCES/DOCUMENT DELIVERY
- BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA BASE (MULS)
- COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT
- INFORMATION/REFERENCE NETWORK
- CONTINUING EDUCATION
- ON-LINE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHING

MINITEX attempts to make the resources on the right available to the participants on the left through the services listed on the bottom. Some of these categories need further explanation.

RESOURCES: When the system became a program, more libraries in the state were invited to participate. Participants all agreed to share their resources with one another, and an advisory committee was elected. Arrangements were made to use two existing Metropolitan systems for sharing library resources, CLIC, which includes the seven metropolitan private college libraries and the James J. Hill Reference Library, and MELSA, which includes eight public library systems. Queries are transmitted to both by telephone, in the case to CLIC by a direct line to its Union Catalog, and deliveries are made to the appropriate library through the CLIC and MELSA courier systems. In addition, a MINITEX staff member goes to the Minnesota Historical Society to retrieve and photocopy documents.

If a library requests an item not available among the state's resources, there are several means through which MINITEX can help to secure or locate it. One of these is WILS (Wisconsin Interlibrary Loan Service), which was modeled on MINITEX and therefore easily interfaces with it. Microfilm copies of the card catalog of each system's major and host library (that of the University of Minnesota and of the University of Wisconsin) have been exchanged, and requests for items not available in one state but available in the other may now be transmitted by TWX. Another means is CRL: smaller libraries which are not eligible for membership but which have an occasional need for items held by CRL may have their requests transmitted to CRL for filling. And finally, if a library requests an item that cannot be secured by MINITEX, the NUC at the Library of Congress will be searched to find the location of that item.

SERVICES:

COMMUNICATION NETWORK: All of the seventy-five participating libraries are

connected by TWX. When feasible, the TWX have been modified to DDD machines in order to transmit over existing WATS lines. Some of the smaller community colleges have access through MERITSS (Minnesota Educational Regional Interactive Time Share System) terminals, which transmit their requests to a central computer. There they are stored until retrieved on the MINITEX TWX. An in-WATS line allows all participating libraries to call toll free and speak directly with a reference librarian.

DOCUMENT DELIVERY: Over 100,000 items are shared annually. MINITEX personnel search, retrieve, and photocopy in over forty-five Twin City campus locations, and prepare the documents for delivery. For the eight locations throughout the state that contain two or more nearby academic institutions, the items are batched and dispatched by Greyhound bus for overnight delivery to a local courier, who then delivers the items to the separate libraries. For single location libraries photocopies are sent by first class mail and books are delivered by United Parcel. Over 85% of the requests are filled, and 75% of these filled requests are received in the patron's library on the second working day.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA BASE: The pilot project established the need for a bibliographic data base. A serials list became the first priority when statistics revealed that 75% of the requests were for photocopies of journal articles. Such a base would allow patrons to select from known holdings rather than to guess at what might be available. Furthermore, it would simplify the verification and searching process for the borrowing library and the MINITEX staff. In fact it was demonstrated that it would pay for itself in cost savings in less than three years. At the first annual meeting in August 1971, the participants voted to spend a portion of their appropriation to begin the Minnesota Union List of Serials (MULS). One year later the preliminary edition, including the 39,000 currently received titles at the University, was issued. Today the base contains over 70,000 MARC II records and

lists the complete holdings of over seventy Minnesota academic, public and special libraries, which are located in over one hundred and thirty separate places.

This is a major accomplishment. For one thing, each serial publication in Minnesota has been given a single entry and under it many cross references that enable a patron to recognize the various titles and listings by which that publication may be cited and under which it may be filed in the different libraries. For another, each participating library submits regularly data about new subscriptions and cancellations. Complete updates are issued on microfiche monthly. Thus, a patron who needs information in a serial publication he cannot obtain locally can be directed immediately to an institution that has it, or he may have it secured through MINITEX.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT: The prerequisites for a collection development program are a viable sharing system, bibliographic knowledge of ownership, and documented usage patterns. With the institution of the Minnesota Union List of Serials, the way has been cleared for such a program in serials, and many of the serials librarians are now meeting together in monthly conference calls to discuss new subscriptions. They attempt to evaluate the need for the new title, to determine how many copies are needed, and to assign responsibility for its binding and retention. The potential savings from this cooperative endeavor are staggering. While it may have relatively little effect upon current subscriptions, it will certainly affect binding and retention policies. The binding and storage of long runs of little used materials are extremely costly. Such planning allows each institution to make judicious use of available funding for this purpose.

As a further step toward a collection development program, each library has submitted the titles of its unique and expensive sets. A clearing house file is maintained and may be queried by reference and acquisitions librarians.

INFORMATION AND REFERENCE NETWORK: When a patron has a need for information that his local librarian is not able to supply with available resources, he may place a toll free call to MINITEX. During regular working hours (Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm), the patron may speak directly with a reference librarian. The answer will either be telephoned or mailed directly to the patron. Weekends and evenings, messages are recorded on an answering machine and return calls are made the following morning.

CONTINUING EDUCATION: One of the more important aspects of the program is concern with the training and continuing education of librarians. This is to aid librarians to make maximum use of available resources with a minimum of effort. Regular workshops are held in the field, but the most effective in-service training continues to take place in the small groups that come to the central MINITEX office. Here they have the opportunity to visit the various libraries, use the special collections and become acquainted with new and expensive reference sets. MINITEX has sponsored several training and demonstration sessions on the use of new equipment including the use of terminals for on-line computer retrieval. Working sessions have been conducted by the MULS staff to assist in the coding, updating and use of MULS. Workshops have been sponsored on government documents and ERIC files.

ON-LINE BIBLIOGRAPHIC SEARCHES: Increasingly patrons are asking librarians to assist them in conducting information searches using the computer to search large data bases. Some participating libraries do their own computer searching on the TWX terminal, which can conduct searches in chemistry, education, agriculture, engineering, business and geology. If libraries do not have the required equipment or the trained professional staff to conduct the search, the MINITEX Reference staff will either conduct the search themselves or will help to make arrangements for the search to be conducted by skilled University staff. MEDLINE is also

available on this basis.

REGIONAL SHARING: While MINITEX did not invent library cooperation in Minnesota, it certainly has accelerated activity among local libraries. In the eight areas where there are several closely situated academic institutions, local couriers have been established and are supported by MINITEX. They deliver the batched MINITEX requests and regularly transport materials between the local libraries. Regional serial lists are printed, and the TWX equipment is used to transmit bibliographic hard copy requests. Most of the local consortia are engaged in cooperative collection development.

FUTURE PLANS

There are some obvious developments that should be made in the MINITEX program. More participants should be included in the network, notably the vocational and technical schools and additional special libraries. Also, nothing has been done about sharing non-print materials, nor about cooperative processing of library materials. Only the beginning steps have been taken in cooperative collection development, resource sharing, and the building of bibliographic data bases. Ultimately a state-wide network will become a reality and this network, it is to be hoped, will then interface with many other state networks to form a national network, that in turn part of an international network. For reciprocity is a simple and workable concept. It implies that there are two parties and that each has something that is desired, however, infrequently, by the other; mutual access would be mutually beneficial. This has proved to be the case in Minnesota. Even the University has found this mutual access advantageous. It can now secure quickly replacement copies of missing pages and have access to a journal while its own set is temporarily inaccessible. It can easily secure needed items from local institutions like the Minnesota Historical Society, and even its under-

graduates can now benefit from the interlibrary loan system instituted in the reciprocal arrangements with WILS.

Without a doubt, a very valuable aspect of MINITEX is its use in making decisions and in planning. Each library has a documented record of its legitimate unfilled requests, which can be used to aid in deciding what items to purchase. Furthermore, MINITEX has maintained records of all the items that have been requested and have proved impossible to secure. This information should be invaluable for providing these resources in Minnesota. In addition, because MINITEX requires the local librarian to ascertain that the resource is not available in the patron's own library before sending his request into MINITEX, local resources are more frequently used; and this has drawn serious attention to the need for additional public service librarians to aid users in local libraries. Finally, the program has generated good will and demonstrated what can be done cooperatively. Minnesota librarians are hopeful and constantly thinking of new and additional opportunities for cooperative action.

MINITEX

EXPENDITURES

	1971/72	1972/73	Total
Communication network	\$23,943.90	\$35,744.16	\$59,688.06
Photocopy	14,286.49	19,293.57	33,580.06
Delivery Service	8,409.90	7,189.77	15,599.67
Supplies and equipment	5,448.56	3,051.39	8,499.95
Workshops and meetings	244.50	1,203.83	1,448.33
Personnel	75,500.72	126,284.39	201,785.11
MULS (Minnesota Union List of Serials)	<u>69,756.48</u>	<u>124,593.73</u>	<u>194,350.21</u>
	197,590.55	317,360.84	514,951.39

Note:

Communication network includes TWX linkage between 68 Minnesota Libraries, the MERITSS (Minnesota Educational Regional Interactive Time Share System) interface, and the direct telephone line to the CLIC (College Libraries in Consortium), in addition to regular telephone expenses.

Delivery Service includes US Mail, United Parcel and courier costs.

MULS includes production and distribution of the three volume preliminary edition to all participating MINITEX libraries and fifty service units at the University.

INCOME

MHECC (Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Commission)	\$300,000.00
OPLIC (Office of Public Libraries and Interlibrary Cooperation)	190,977.55
MULS (Minnesota Union List of Serials)	8,300.00
INFORM	<u>15,899.75</u>
	515,177.30

encumbered balance carried forward \$2368.18

MINITEX FINANCIAL REPORT

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July 1 to December 31, 1974

EXPENDITURES

Communication network	\$26,226.62
Photocopy	9,107.05
Delivery Service	7,602.11
Supplies and equipment	10,556.93
Workshops and meetings	434.70
Personnel	49,338.67
MULS (Minnesota Union List of Serials)	<u>58,655.40</u>
	\$161,921.48

INCOME

Balance carried forward	\$225.91
OPLIC	95,246.65
INFORM	1,242.50
	<u>\$96,715.06</u>
Due from MHECC	<u>248,600.00</u>
	\$345,315.06