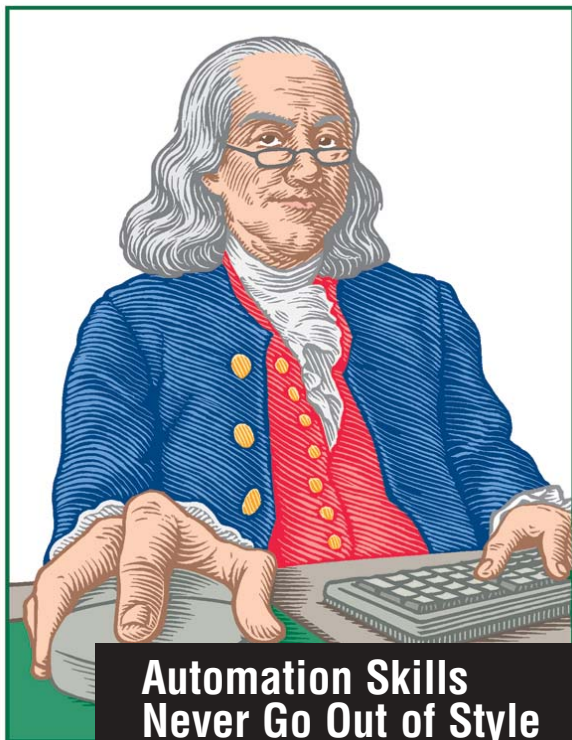


Everything Old Is New Again

Second- (or Third-) Generation Automated System Challenges

by Naomi Goodman



**Automation Skills
Never Go Out of Style**

After we bring up our first library system, after we no longer fear the word *automation*, another word comes to haunt us, *migration*. As far as I know, there is no migration in my immediate future. But I felt it would be tempting fate to miss the program "Everything Old Is New Again: Second- (or Third-) Generation Automated System Challenges." I learned that the skills we had to use when we brought up our system will be used again if we are involved in a migration. The key to a successful migration is careful planning and communication. This seemed even more important than the speakers' interesting details.

The presentation during the program was very helpful as the speakers discussed the principles to consider when embarking on a system-review process from three perspectives: selecting the appropriate bibliographic utility (based on a comparison of the Online Computer Library Center and the Research Libraries Information Network), migrating data from one local system to another, and adding a second library to an existing system. Using recent library experiences, the speakers provided clear

examples of how to identify a problem, create criteria for decision-making, communicate between departments and create a calendar for a complex project.

Dianne Schaefer, systems librarian at Social Law Library, emphasized that evaluating the library's system, whether the first or second, is a continuing process to make sure staff and users are benefiting from its full functionality. Monitoring developments in other systems, even after the new system has been installed, helps give a complete picture of how well that system is serving the library.

Most important, the new system should redress previous problems, by providing a module that is superior to one that was performing poorly, by saving money or providing greater value, or by allowing the library to become part of a wider shared system. Special issues for moving to a new system include planning migration of data in such a way that none of the information contained in the old system is lost. Identifying related projects — such as cleaning records, de-duping, authority work and creating a gap tape — is also necessary.

Richard Jost, assistant librarian for technical services at the University of Washington's Gallagher Library, received a request to reduce costs for the library's bibliographic utility use. The library became an "RLIN-only" facility after a previous review in 1995 indicated that RLIN had the best Chinese-Japanese-Korean interface and was a good value for the library compared to other utilities.

The library contributes to Cascade, a statewide union list based on Online Computer Library Center records, but adding Gallagher's records was a problem because RLIN uses a different MARC field when overlaying. With cost-reduction and

a better way to add records to Cascade as major goals, a committee with members from technical services, interlibrary loan and the East Asian law departments identified criteria for evaluating bibliographic providers. In order of importance, they were: cost, hit rate for copy cataloging, a solution to the union-list overlay problem, documentation, continuing education and training, and authority control.

The committee found that OCLC's CJK interface had improved since 1995, and that the hit rate for RLIN and OCLC was almost identical. It decided that Gallagher Library could maintain high-quality cataloging, contribute records easily to Cascade and save \$5,000 per year by using OCLC as the main utility. RLIN was retained for some interlibrary loan and Japanese vendor records.

Susan Goldner, technical services librarian at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock-Pulaski County Law Library, found the experience of adding a similar library, the Arkansas Supreme Court Library, to its system was like bringing up a new system. Cons, such as time spent setting up the shared system and the added complexity, didn't outweigh the pros, including access to a larger collection, cost-sharing advantage, and service to the state, in this instance.

Communication between the two libraries is essential. Goldner recommended having a partner with a sense of humor. (I liked *her* clever use of cartoons.) "Expect complications," she advised. Her project complications included having to persuade six parties with authority over the two libraries to sign off on the sharing agreement (contract). More daunting, the new database contained every librarian's nightmare, "MARC-like" records that required laborious manual de-duping.

But the planning, communication and hard work paid off with an enhanced collection and increased interaction for both libraries.

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