

February 18, 1998

MEMORANDUM

TO: LRC Directors
Community Colleges

FROM: Grant Pair
Library Resources Section

SUBJECT: Report on Ameritech Contract Meeting, February 5

NCCCS Library Resources Section sponsored a video conference for all community college library directors and library systems staff on Thursday, February 5. Matt Shill, Southeast Regional Representative for Ameritech Library Services, presented Ameritech's product development plan for the next several years as well as a proposal for a new three-year contract for the Dynix/Data Automation Center (DAC) to begin July 1, 1998. Enclosed you will find a copy of the presentation slides. The following is a synopsis of the discussion at the meeting with some additional clarification of issues involved.

Ameritech's new product

Early in 1999 Ameritech is planning to debut a new product, as yet unnamed, which will eventually replace its Dynix and Horizon products. It will have the same client/server architecture which Horizon currently uses, but it will have functional features from both Dynix and Horizon. The product will require networked PCs running Windows 95 in the local library. It will have a graphical user interface (GUI) and will not be subject to the limitations of terminal and telnet access as Dynix currently is. It will operate in an open database environment rather than requiring Recall statements to retrieve data and generate reports. This will make it possible to extract and manipulate data from the system using readily available spreadsheet, word processing, and database software from other vendors such as Microsoft.

What are the implications of a transition to client/server architecture?

Client/server architecture functions by distributing the workload of the system away from a central machine and toward the individual libraries' networked computers. While it makes greater local demands, a client/server system also provides a number of benefits. The client software gives the library considerable flexibility in configuring the user interface and in retrieving and displaying records. Since these changes are made locally, they do not affect other users of the same database who access it from other sites. The master data records can remain unchanged while local libraries can format the appearance of that data to suit their needs. In addition, other services, such as Internet and CD-ROM, can be more easily integrated into the client software, providing the user with a single starting point for accessing many online resources. The use of a

PC-based client also eliminates terminal emulation problems while allowing better printing functions and the use of common Windows features like cutting and pasting text between software applications.

In a client/server environment the individual computers are more important to the system than in the current Dynix environment, and therefore more care must be taken in managing them. Libraries planning for migration to a client/server product should consider that such a system can function well only if adequately configured PCs and sufficient network connections are in place. Each library would also need to have access to support personnel to help manage the PCs. Ameritech is considering ways to offer this kind of support and management for an additional fee if personnel not available locally.

The proposal

For the upcoming three-year contract Ameritech is proposing a three-step process. The first year would be devoted to cleaning up the current DAC database to improve current quality and avoid migrating errors to the new product. The second year would be spent preparing for the new product, making sure the necessary hardware, network connections and support are in place. The third year would be devoted to migrating to the new product. This would include profiling each college for indexes, locations, and item and patron types, developing a customized migration path, and providing training on the new system. However, Ameritech is willing to go at the pace the colleges require, and if technology and support concerns dictate another approach, no one will be forced to make the transition according to this particular schedule.

Costs

No specific costs were presented. Ameritech has committed to continuing its current yearly pricing structure in which costs are based on the number of concurrent users. The per user fee will go up slightly, perhaps in the range of 2%-4%. Depending on the cost, the System Office may be able to find funds to pay for migration to the new system. Training costs would include 4-5 days of profiling (2 onsite, 2 in Uta), one setup day, plus any additional time required for the various modules, totaling between \$20,000 and \$30,000. The goal will be to "train the trainers" so that subsequent training can be done by college and system personnel. Some form of incentive pricing will be offered so that training costs for our colleges will be less than new Ameritech customers would pay.

Questions and answers

Q. What plans are being made for database cleanup?

A. NCCCS Library Resources is currently assessing the database situation and is working with Ameritech to formulate a plan for cleaning up errors in the DAC database. Some form of computer-automated cleanup (rather than a manual record-by-record method)

would be desirable, but the costs, logistics, and implications will have to be considered carefully before a final decision is made.

Q. How will these changes affect current Horizon users and other colleges who are not members of the DAC?

A. Ameritech will offer all colleges the same advantageous prices to move to the new product. There will be an advantage for current Horizon users since they will be familiar with the client/server architecture. In addition, migration costs for Horizon users would be lower since less training would be needed to prepare them for the new products. All colleges would also be included in any NCCCS allocation of funds to pay migration costs, should that be feasible. Ameritech will also offer incentives to all colleges not currently their customers to join the DAC during this contract term so that all their data can be cleaned up as part of the larger cleanup project before moving to the new product.

Q. Is the new product like an improved Horizon?

A. Yes, but with a qualification: the new product will use the same architecture, operating system, and database environment as Horizon, but it will be augmented with Dynix functionality not currently available in Horizon. Neither Horizon nor Dynix users will be charged to relicense the new software; in that sense it is considered an upgrade to both, not a completely new product.

Q. Is this move to the new product an international one for Ameritech?

A. Yes. All divisions of the company will cooperate in launching the new product, except for the former Pacific Rim divisions which are not owned by Ameritech.

Q. Will the new product support VT100 terminal emulation?

A. Right now they're saying yes.

Q. How different will the serials module be in the new product?

A. Serials is the strongest module in Horizon. The workflow (i.e., the sequence of actions and the logical layout of process) in the new product's serials module will not differ much from Horizon or Dynix, because Horizon's serials module was developed using the Dynix serials model. Indiana University is currently working with Ameritech to develop consortium functionality for serials, which will be implemented in the new product.

Q. Should those DAC colleges who haven't used the serials module continue to wait?

A. That depends on when you want to migrate to the new system. If you are

encountering significant problems with serials, it would probably be best to wait.

- Q. Will colleges who don't participate have access to the new system?
- A. The new product will be searchable using any Z39.50-compliant client or Internet browser. Anyone will be able to see catalog records and holdings.
- Q. Wouldn't it be advantageous for non-Horizon non-Dynix libraries to consider joining the NCLITN Horizon consortium instead of considering only the DAC?
- A. That would depend on individual circumstances and would need to be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Q. If our college is moving away from using a Novell network, will that have any effect on our using the new product?
- A. No. The new product will not depend on a particular local network operating system.

Feedback

The conference was videotaped, but cost and logistics have prevented the provision of copies to all who asked for them. Instead a videotape will be sent on loan to the colleges who requested to see the video, in the order they originally responded. However, there will not be enough time for everyone to see the video before we will need to know your reaction to the proposal.

If you would like to respond to the information presented here, please send me your remarks in written form by February 27. You may use any of the following methods:

Internet e-mail: pairg@ncccs.cc.nc.us
GroupWise: choose my name from the user list if available
Fax: (919) 733-0680
Courier: 56-50-00
US Mail: NCCCS, 200 W. Jones, Raleigh 27603

Your responses will be collated and distributed to the members of the Ameritech Contract Team.

Attachments

cc: Presidents
 Brenda Rogers
 Bob Blackmun

CC-98-058