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# With a little help from our friends

By Eileen Chalfoun

Coordinator of Research & Information Services  
Community College of Vermont

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## *Library services at the Community College of Vermont.*

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**I**n December of 1986, Vermont's governor, Madeleine M. Kunin, officially cut the computer ribbon which activated the state's Automated Library System. This momentous occasion marked a milestone in the joint planning efforts of the Vermont Department of Libraries, the Vermont State Colleges, Middlebury College, and the University of Vermont to bring the "online catalog" and automated circulation to the citizens of the state of Vermont. The Governor noted that the "machine age has begun in earnest."<sup>1</sup>

Community College of Vermont (CCV), one of the five state colleges, has awaited this event with great anxiousness, and yet a proper dose of scepticism. For the past three years the College has been trying to address the problem of providing library services to approximately 3,000 students, 400 instructors and 75 staff members located in regional sites and widely dispersed throughout the state. CCV has no central campus and no campus library. It is a statewide, open admissions, two-year school serving primarily adult learners through individualized programs of study. The College offers a self-designed associate degree and serves approximately 3,000 students each semester. Its academic program and student services are delivered through twelve regional offices located around the state. These regional offices are operated by College staff who coordinate the College's curriculum locally, hire part-time teachers, and advise students.

The regional offices, called "sites," are located in downtown areas easily accessible to students. Each site office is staffed by at least one Coordinator of Instruction and Advisement, as well as support staff. Site offices house classrooms and a small reference library, and most are near a public or regional state library facility.

The problem was obvious. How could library services be provided to such a decentralized assortment of patrons? Some librarians have prophesied that the "ways in which technology can and should be applied are fruitful topics for wide discussion. This is a classic case of more heads being better than one."<sup>2</sup> In CCV's case, with a little help from friends, three years of planning, and commitments to networking within the state, a unique and exciting system of library service was developed to serve our staff, instructors and students. And it could not have been accomplished without the wonders of modern technology.

In 1982 the State College Library project began quietly. A system-wide Assessment Group was assembled by the Chancellor of the five Vermont State Colleges to conduct a detailed assessment of library and information services. How to provide library services to Community College of Vermont students was one of the driving forces in this joint planning project. Assessment Group membership consisted of representatives of each of the five state colleges, and the assessment process took into consideration the quality and quantity of collections as

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<sup>1</sup>"Governor Cuts Ribbon on Computer," *Department of Libraries News*, January 1987, p.1.

<sup>2</sup>Karen Horny, "Managing Change," *Library Journal*, October 1, 1985, p.58.

well as ratings of how they support each college's general education program.

The assessment took nearly a year, and in July 1983 the Group produced a 38-page report for the Board of Trustees proving that the Vermont State Colleges' libraries were weak when compared to ACRL standards.<sup>3</sup> The next step was for the Chancellor to appoint a system-wide Task Force on Library Development in the Fall of 1983 to address the following recommendations:

1) there should be parity between on-campus and off-campus programs in requirements for and use of library/information resources;

2) the system will have a single, joint online catalog as one node in a network also including the University of Vermont, Middlebury College, and the State Department of Libraries;

3) increased reference services will include reference librarians for the Community College of Vermont;

4) a joint serials list will be developed;

5) there will be a five-year coordinated collection catch-up program to add 15,000 volumes per year to system holdings, including small reference collections for CCV site offices.

Costs were projected to be \$2.6 million in one-time (capital) funds and increments to the annual operating budget to total \$561,000.

It is now four years later, and Community College is able to offer an unusual variety of library services to its patrons.

The first step was collections. Twelve site reference collections were begun in the spring of 1985, and further developed during the following year bringing the volume total to approximately 7,000 in 1987 (about 600 per site office). They may be generally described as reference collections covering all sections of the Dewey classification system with special emphasis on business and human service materials to match program needs. With the exception of specialized materials, these are non-circulating collections. Specialized collections circulated on a rotating basis among sites include adult education, science, fine arts, Vermont history, sign language, cultural anthropology, and psychology. Each site receives subscriptions to general subject and business journal indexes, and one site a subscription to an education index. Non-print materials accessed through our computerized instructional resource and information system are housed in all sites.

The collections were never designed to be mini-libraries to fill all the research needs of students. Instead, they could be described as laboratories for learning library/research skills.<sup>4</sup> Small card catalogs are kept at each site. Bibliographies and in-

dexes provide a starting point for students beginning a search. Classes in research and writing skills are held in these reference library spaces.

The next piece is reference. Direct reference service is provided to students scattered around the state by means of a WATS line into the office of the College's library coordinator. No fee is charged to students for this service, now in effect for two years. Another electronic library service which the College provides is telefacsimile transmission of information from seven site offices to four state college campus libraries. Students are encouraged to use serials' indexes to locate bibliographic data, and then request journal articles which are sent directly to them. During the first semester of operation (with three FAX machines in use), approximately 200 requests were made to Vermont State Colleges' libraries for information, and print materials were sent to students for research purposes at no direct cost to them. This service is illustrative of the continuing effort toward library cooperation among the five Vermont State Colleges.

A third step is I.R.I.S. (Instructional Resource and Information System), a newly developed computer program designed to assist the College's instructors in sharing successful and exciting teaching techniques, classroom materials, exercises, books, videos, films, filmstrips, journal articles, bibliographies, and guest speakers. Each site office library is equipped with a microcomputer, printer, and software to enable instructors to access information at their convenience. Fortunately, the amount of information contributed to the system has grown so quickly that plans must now be made to maintain a central storage system accessed from each site through the use of modems. I.R.I.S. has been particularly useful in providing a continual stream of new teachers each semester with materials and methods in a systematic and convenient way, and in helping them to lose the sense of isolation endemic to working in a non-campus college.

Finally, of special interest is a bibliographic instruction manual, *Biblio-tech*, planned and written by CCV staff in 1985 especially for students in a non-campus setting. All students are encouraged to purchase a copy of the manual to help them with their own degree planning, and with courses having a research component. The book covers topics such as retrieving and using information, helpful hints for conducting research, information search strategies, computers in the library, research terminology, and library research facilities. The book is addressed to students and allows them to follow the steps in careful research without the strict guidance of an instructor.<sup>5</sup>

The College's Coordinator of Research and Information Services has been the orchestrator of

<sup>3</sup>Dennis Lindberg, *Vermont State Colleges Library Assessment Report* (Waterbury, Vt., 1983).

<sup>4</sup>Eileen Chalfoun, "Off Campus Library Services Community College of Vermont," in *The Off-Campus Library Service Conference Proceedings*, Reno, Nev., October 23-24, 1986, p.61.

<sup>5</sup>Dennis Lindberg and Eileen Chalfoun, "Development of Off-Campus Library Services in the Vermont State Colleges," in *The Off-Campus Library Services Conference II*, Knoxville, Tenn., April 18-19, 1985, p.123.

these various library services, and bibliographic instruction has been a challenge. During the academic year, orientations and workshops are held at site offices around the state to explain the College's library system. Specific courses in research and writing are listed in the college catalog and arranged for students. Staff development days are held on a yearly basis. Site coordinators work with instructors to incorporate research objectives into course descriptions and plan formal library instruction periods for students each semester. BI remains the largest goal in the library planning, and the staff continues to experiment with ways of providing information electronically without sacrificing the value of close human interaction and the serendipity of traditional library browsing.

Until three years ago there was very little resource sharing among the Vermont State Colleges libraries. Interlibrary loan was available from the Vermont Department of Libraries and most often

took from two to three weeks for delivery of books. Times have changed dramatically, and 1987 finds all five of the state colleges working together on the tasks of collection development, a joint serials list, increased use of online searching, retrospective conversion, a joint online catalog, and a common policy for online searches.

When the Governor cut the computer ribbon in December, many librarians' hearts beat just a little bit faster knowing that the plunge into the world of "electronic libraries" was imminent. For Community College of Vermont, it means that for the first time in its history, students will be able to access the online catalog from any site office, and then receive materials directly. It is expected that this phase of the library project will be available to CCV students by fall 1987. The truth of the matter is that the College could not have come this far without a little help from its friends. ■ ■

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## ALA candidates on ACRL

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### *The three candidates for ALA vice-president/president-elect share their views on academic and research librarianship.*

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Recently the ALA presidential candidates were asked to give some thought to ALA/ACRL relations and academic librarianship in general for this special *C&RL News* feature. Their statements may aid you when you vote for ALA officers on this spring's ballot.

#### **Linda Anne Dougherty:**

My recollection of academic libraries is very much based on my school days at Indiana University where I worked in both the Undergraduate Library and in the Law Library. Point of service librarians who have been active in the ALA Library Instruction Round Table have told me of their con-

cerns for the future of academic libraries.

The mission of academic libraries can be no different from that of any library—we all must serve our communities, providing the greatest access to all. I value "halls of residence libraries," and I believe that undergraduate collections and staff can provide a special teaching resource to the "entry level" college student. These ideas relate to my contention that a librarian's involvement with lifelong learning ties us into a continuum of learning. Those of us interested in user education know that the academics have clearly led the way in this discipline. We do have to question, however, if we wait to educate only the college-bound how elitist and narrow our instruction has become. Within academic