11 May 1984

Ms. Jane Hale Morgan, Director
Detroit Public Library
5201 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202

Dear Ms. Morgan:

I would like to take this opportunity to recap the progress that has been made by a Library Automation Planning group, chaired by Louise Bugg, Acting Assistant Director of Library Operations of Wayne State University and several talented librarians representing a distinguished number of Detroit area institutions.

We have reached a "Request for Proposal" (RFP) stage. This is a significant development where further commitments are necessary. But first let's take a brief look at the last nine months.

Automation of library functions has become increasingly important as the cost of organizing, maintaining and delivering information increases and as computer capabilities improve. It also provides cost-containment possibilities which were previously unattainable.

In September 1983, Wayne State University's (WSU) Library System began intensive planning for comprehensive computerization under a mandate to develop an integrated library system for all University libraries. Detroit Public Library joined the planning group in November 1983. In January 1984, realizing that the project had exciting regional implications, Detroit area-based libraries with active automation plans, such as the University of Detroit, Wayne County Community College and several hospital libraries were also invited. The group informally agreed to cooperate and began active participation in weekly planning sessions. It is tentatively named the Detroit Area Library Network (DALNET); the host institution is Wayne State University.

The benefits of creating a computerized library network in the Detroit area became more and more apparent. Major advantages include:

o   A shared online catalog for all libraries identifying resources available at each library;

o   A shared circulation system enabling users at each library to know immediate availability of materials in the catalog;

o   Shared cost of central site preparation, system personnel operation, and hardware and software;

o   Enhanced capability for cooperative collection development and resource sharing;

o   Capacity for flexibility and customization impossible for any library to achieve by itself, within the realms of financial reality.

Wayne State's commitment to automation of library operations is evidenced by a $500,000 encumbrance to the project's activities. This commitment, however, must be viewed as primarily looking toward meeting its own needs. In addition, each institution must clearly demonstrate its intent to participate fully in the project planning and implementation but at a later date.

We have reached the point where it is appropriate to formalize this concept by a declaration of intent to participate in the planning stage. The DALNET Planning Team has now completed a preliminary draft of an RFP and realizes that more formalized approvals and commitments are needed to proceed in an orderly network planning process.

We, therefore, ask administrative approval to:

1. Share network planning costs. DALNET needs consultant evaluation of the RFP and vendor responses. DALNET requests each institution to contribute $500.00 for this purpose;

2. Confirm that each institution is willing to continue to commit staff time necessary to develop and revise the proposal and evaluate vendor responses;

3. Include each institution's library statistics in the network portion of the Wayne State University's RFP to be sent to library automated system vendors.

I hope it is clear that this letter of intent asks you to commit only to support this necessary next planning step. As the planning evolves, we shall ask for further approvals as needed.

This joint automation project offers the prospect of real cost and accessibility benefits to the community as a whole if it is regarded as the core of a multiple-library network rather than as an entity unto itself. The hard work of the librarians who have been working with Louise Bugg has helped produce an RFP that reflects the library automation needs of representative libraries in the Detroit area. Moreover, it allows for expansion that, in the future, can accommodate more libraries as they see the benefits of participation by their own institutions.

I hope approval from your institution will be forthcoming. If you have any questions whatsoever, please feel free to call me at 577-4020 or Ms. Bugg at 577-4058.

Yours very truly,

Peter Spyers-Duran
Director of Libraries

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