

CIC Completes Large Scale Assessment of Z39.50 Applications



CIC COMPLETES LARGE SCALE ASSESSMENT OF Z39.50 APPLICATIONS

Champaign, IL, October 9, 1998: Thirteen major research libraries are demonstrating that the Z39.50 standard is effective in linking disparate library systems. The CIC member university libraries have completed a large-scale study of the implementation, which was initiated in 1993 as the key element in the creation of the CIC Virtual Electronic Library (VEL). The study, conducted by Mark Hinnebusch, Associate Director of the Florida Center for Library Automation and Chair of the Z39.50 Implementers' Group, will provide the foundation for additional work not only in support of the VEL, but for similar projects around the world.

"This report marks a significant step in our efforts to link a variety of online systems into a robust search and retrieval environment for our users," said Charlene Mason, Deputy University Librarian, University of Minnesota, and Chair of the CIC Library Automation Directors. "We believe that adjustments to our local configurations of the Z39.50 servers, coupled with the support of our systems vendors in further enhancing these systems, will dramatically improve search results across the CIC, and will demonstrate that Z39.50 is effective in creating distributed virtual libraries."

The VEL a project supported by the United States Department of Education through a \$1.2 million Title IIA grant links the separate online systems of the CIC libraries in a distributed search and retrieval environment using the Z39.50 protocol. Additional development has been initiated to create a document delivery and inter-university circulation system to complement the search and retrieval feature. For more information about the CIC VEL, visit <http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/cli/accessvel.html>.

"Z39.50 was developed to enable searching across disparate library and information systems, but the complexity of the standard, coupled with the differences in the way vendors have implemented the standard, has created significant challenges to realizing the promise of open systems," said Barbara McFadden Allen, Director of the CIC Center for Library Initiatives. "In addition, our research indicates that the standard is important and necessary in supporting information discovery and retrieval across many types of data repositories not just bibliographic databases. Our work serves as a successful model of

implementation, and as a reminder to vendors that this standard is not just important, but essential."

A copy of the report is available at <<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/CIC/cli/z39-50report.htm>>. The report identifies the search attributes supported by the various Z39.50 servers currently in operation within the CIC and notes discrepancies between vendor documentation, local customization, and client configurations. The report also describes indexing capabilities and includes a recommendation for a modified version of a configuration file for OCLC's WebZ, the most commonly deployed VEL client across the CIC.

Founded in 1958, the Committee on Instructional Cooperation (CIC), with headquarters in Champaign, Illinois, is the academic consortium of the Big Ten Universities and the University of Chicago. Member institutions include: the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, Indiana University, the University of Iowa, the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Cooperative ventures at all levels have arisen, giving the CIC a thirty-eight year history of effective voluntary inter-institutional cooperation among these twelve independent universities. For more information about the CIC, consult their web site at: <<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/>>.

CIC AND OCLC TRANSFORM INTERLIBRARY LOAN SERVICES WITH NEW AGREEMENT

Champaign, IL, October 16, 1998 -- The management of document delivery and interlibrary loan services will undergo dramatic change and improvement as a result of a new partnership between 13 major research libraries and OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc.. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) and OCLC, Inc., have signed an agreement for the development of an entirely new interlibrary loan and document delivery system as part of the ongoing development of the CIC Virtual Electronic Library (VEL).

Originally funded through a \$1.2 million Title IIA grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the VEL links the online public access catalogs of the CIC university libraries, provides a web-based patron interface, and allows patrons to initiate their own requests. For more information on the VEL, visit

<<http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/cli/accessvel.html>>.

"As we broaden and improve the resource discovery process for our users through other aspects of the VEL, it is critical that we provide users with

improved access to those resources -- wherever they are held," said Beth Forrest Warner, Interim Assistant Director for Technical, Access, and Systems Services, University of Michigan, and Chair, CIC VEL Technical Specifications Task Force. "It is equally critical that we find ways to streamline procedures and contain unit costs in order to keep pace with the demands of today's researchers. The combination of the CIC's vision for improved service delivery and OCLC's experience with interlibrary loan should provide libraries with new tools to achieve both these goals through the distributed system currently under development."

Building on the existing VEL implementation, the new system will manage interlibrary loan traffic between the CIC member libraries, other libraries outside the CIC, national bibliographic systems, and commercial document suppliers. The software will automate patron authentication; the initiation, processing, and tracking of requests; and will report on the call number, shelf location, and availability of any item at the point of request. Additional development will enable "remote circulation" of items, copyright tracking, financial transactions for fee-based access, and statistical reporting. The software is being tested in three CIC university libraries, this fall with delivery of the software to all CIC libraries scheduled for 1999.

"Our aim has been to completely redesign our interlibrary loan and document delivery services within the CIC to minimize the barriers of both time and distance between our users and the information they need," said Sharon Hogan, University Librarian, University of Illinois at Chicago and Chair of the CIC Library Directors. "Traditional interlibrary loan processes and tools just did not match our vision of the future of these services, and I think the system we've designed will meet not just our needs within the CIC, but the needs of all kinds of libraries. It truly is a milestone in the profession."

OCLC developed the system on a client/server architecture utilizing the ISO10160/161 protocol which meets system specifications and functionality identified by a team of CIC librarians. "By basing the new system on the ISO ILL protocol, CIC and OCLC will be leaders in the implementation of the international standard for ILL communication in the United States," said Mary Jackson, Senior Program Officer for Access Services, Association of Research Libraries. "CIC's requirement for building the new system using the ISO ILL protocol and OCLC's commitment to the protocol are the foundations on which other libraries in the U.S., and internationally, will be able to transmit ILL requests electronically."