

EDUCAUSE '99

Library/IT Partnerships Constituent Group Meeting

Thursday, October 28, 1999

Twenty-seven people attended the meeting, coming from institutions all over the U.S., as well as Hong Kong and Melbourne. Under the general umbrella of library and IT center cooperation/collaboration, participants discussed various specific issues. Among them were:

Sharing of facilities -- in some instances, the library and IT unit physically occupied the same facility.

Another example was where the IT unit maintained a computer lab that was located within the library.

Joint projects -- related to the above, some libraries and IT centers were engaged in a common building project. Other examples included sharing responsibilities for development projects.

Overlapping responsibilities -- in some cases, library and IT center are not clear on where ultimate responsibility for something lies, particularly with regard to Web site development.

Mergers of IT centers and libraries -- a recurring topic. Institutions represented at this meeting covered the gamut: merged, not merged, thinking about it, was merged but now un-merged.

Cultural differences/organizational differences -- there is clearly a perception, whether real or not, that libraries and IT centers have quite different "personalities." These can be summed up by saying that librarians are more "service" oriented and don't understand why IT units "are so dictatorial". IT personnel, on the other hand, just do the best they can to get the job done with inadequate staff, and don't understand why librarians are sometimes intimidated by technology. These are stereotypes, of course, which tend to break down as the two units do more partnering.

One participant noted that many of the questions and discussions are not new and in fact have been debated for 4 or 5 years. Apparently it will be ongoing, as each library/IT center pair grapples with its own issues.