Community College Libraries in North Carolina (CCLINC)

The CCLINC consortium has its origin in the long history of cooperative ventures among the North Carolina community college libraries. As library automation efforts began, several colleges cooperated to realize cost savings in a joint retrospective conversion and union microfiche catalog project. Many of the colleges that participated in this initial project were also the first to automate their libraries.

In 1984, the North Carolina Community College System consolidated the administrative reporting functions onto a single platform, the Prime computer. Accordingly, the libraries sought application software that would run on the Prime and would also meet an extensive set of specifications developed by the libraries to address their needs. The Dynix Library System was eventually selected by 24 of the 58 community colleges. Although these were "standalone" installations, the libraries again realized significant cost savings by working as a group and standardizing the library system setups.

Having a library software package in common produced new benefits for the users, primarily the sharing of library resources. Until this time, a college had only its local collection and a limited amount of interlibrary loan service available to meet the information needs of its students. Now, via the statewide telecommunications network, staff at "Dynix libraries" could set up and share public logins, allowing them access to the other Dynix library databases to locate materials requested by their students but not owned by the local library. The library databases also served as a collection development resource for colleges expanding or adding new curricula. These new uses reinforced the benefits of working as a group and making joint decisions for the good of all students.

During this early stage, the Dynix libraries formed a users group to further define their common needs and develop means for addressing them. By the early 1990s, when the North Carolina Community College System decided to move away from the Prime platform, the Dynix Users Group had matured into a strong cooperative. Security issues and scheduling of computer administrative activities were two of the reasons that the Dynix libraries began to look for automation options other than sharing the local administration's computer resources.

In 1995, the State Board of Community Colleges entered into a service provider agreement with Ameritech Library Systems, Inc. to establish a Dynix Automation Center (DAC) for 36 of the 58 North Carolina community colleges. The Dynix Users Group Chair appointed committees to review the choices and options related to implementation of the various DAC modules, and they developed a comprehensive setup profile to meet the needs of all participants. Every DAC library had input into the final decisions. Cooperation within this group had become a normal way of operating. Not all of the Dynix libraries joined the DAC, so the DAC libraries now formed the DAC Users Group.

The DAC host computer was located at the System Office in Raleigh and was accessed via the state telecommunications network. As part of the contract, Ameritech provided a System Administrator to run the library system at the central level. Each DAC college then had a local library system administrator that provided an interface between the local library staff and the Ameritech System Administrator. The North Carolina Community College System Office administered the contract and worked with the DAC Steering Committee and the Ameritech System Administrator to maintain and enhance the union database and to develop policies for the good of the group. Migration to the DAC began in September 1995. The last of the 36 libraries was migrated in March 1997.

During the DAC era, cooperation continued to flourish. The DAC libraries developed an active cooperative interlibrary loan network. The State Courier Mail Service was used to move interlibrary loan materials from one end of the state to the other (512 miles) within three days. Students at any DAC library had access to the library holdings of all the DAC libraries. Patron records were shared and library card privileges imitated the universal library card. As colleges began offering distance learning options, the DAC became even more important in meeting the educational needs of the students. Six additional colleges joined the DAC to share in the benefits of the cooperative.

In 1998 the DAC Users Group decided to change their name to reflect their cooperative nature rather than the automation system used. They became the ***Community College Libraries in North Carolina (CCLINC***) and developed a cooperative agreement to serve as a memorandum of understanding for operation of the shared library system. This agreement identified the consortium participants and defined their responsibilities.

Also in 1998, the N.C. Division of Purchase and Contract mandated that the North Carolina Community College System survey the marketplace to determine if a more cost-effective library automation option was available. The Chairs of the Council of Community College Library Administrators and the CCLINC Steering Committee nominated representatives to serve on the Library System Contract Team. Because the Division of Purchase and Contract requires that lease/service agreements be re-bid every three years, the decision was made to issue a Request For Proposals that would allow for purchase of permanent software licenses and computer hardware.

The Contract Team developed comprehensive system specifications that were reviewed by all 58 of the community college libraries. Upon final approval, a Request for Proposals was issued, proposals were received and evaluated, and the bid was awarded to Sirsi, Inc. in December 1999. The terms of the contract, signed in April 2000, required that Sirsi implement the Unicorn Academe Library System by July 1, 2000.

This requirement meant that on July 1, 2000, Sirsi was to have the public catalog, circulation, and cataloging functions operational for the colleges' use. To prepare, the CCLINC Steering Committee Chair appointed an Implementation Team and work began in March 2000. The team defined system options from which the colleges could select

to meet their individual needs. Sirsi staff provided training on system functions during May and June. Since acquisitions and serials functions had were not universally used in the DAC system, subcommittees of the Steering Committee were setup to make decisions about implementation of these two functions.

On July 1, the Sirsi Unicorn Academe library system went live with the public catalog, circulation, and cataloging functions operational. After an exciting first day in the new integrated library system, database migration problems were identified, so some activities had to be suspended for a time. Sirsi's migration and technical support teams analyzed the problems and developed plans for correcting them. The corrective measures recommended by Sirsi and approved by the CCLINC Steering Committee worked well to correct the initial problems. Inventories conducted by the participating libraries during the first two years revealed virtually no missing materials.

Now in the third generation of library automation, the CCLINC subcommittees have taken responsibility for conducting in-consortium training using peer trainers, writing procedures that are shared and followed by all, and serving as a clearinghouse for new ideas for policies and procedures. The consortium libraries realize that they do not operate in isolation and that their decisions and actions will impact all other CCLINC participants.

With each passing semester, the CCLINC library system and the CCLINC Steering Committee become more important to the future of library services in the North Carolina Community College System.