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# Migration: A Natural Growth Process for Libraries (Part Two of Two)

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## Notes

1. Donald S. Skrupsky & John C. Montana, *Law, Records and Information Management: The Court Cases* (Denver, Colo.: Information Requirements Clearinghouse, 1994).

2. Betty R. Ricks, Ann J. Swafford & Kay F. Gow, *Information and Image Management: A Records System Approach* 156 (Cincinnati, Ohio: South-Western 1992).

3. Richard F. Browne, "Components Necessary for a Legally Sufficient Records Retention Program: Records Retention and Privacy Issues Associated with use of Email," in *Proceedings: Information Management Linking the Past to the Future*, ARMA International Conference. Oct. 17-20, 1993, Seattle, Washington, at 392-94.

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# Migration: A Natural Growth Process for Libraries (Part Two of Two)

By GEORGIA BRISCOE, University of Colorado

Once the decision to migrate has been made, the planning begins. This is a vital part of the migration, whether it exists only in one person's mind or in a lengthy document with goals, timelines, budgets, etc. Often in law libraries, the plan is developed by the director or associate director and department heads. If the library is large enough to have a computer expert anywhere on its staff, this person should be involved.

It is wise to involve as many of the library personnel as possible in at least some phase of the planning and selection process. Larger libraries will set up committees or task forces. This all depends on the interpersonal dynamics of each library. But in general, the more people are involved in a decision-making process, the more they will buy into the decision and welcome the change the migration brings.

## Preliminary Steps

Any library manager should know the regulations of the purchasing department which may oversee the library. It is often wise to have a representative from this body sit in on all meetings and especially view all documents.

Planning decisions and progress should be communicated clearly and regularly to all those involved. This can be accomplished through regular meetings documented with minutes, newsletters, memos, reports or bulletin boards. Rumors, fears or unmet expectations are best handled with excellent communications.

To determine which system to migrate to, the library should begin with a needs assessment, sometimes known as wish list. This can be accomplished by compiling a list of desired features from each library department. When

the list is complete and refined, it becomes a checklist for comparing and contrasting systems. The needs assessment should include the basic statistics of the library, such as volume and title count, locations, hardware specifications, types of barcodes, etc.

If the needs assessment is a thorough, lengthy planning document it can be incorporated into a Request For Proposal (RFP). The needs assessment process can also be used as a tool for library staff development. Conversely, the needs assessment may consist of the few major changes one librarian knows must occur to make the existing system function according to expectations. Samples of planning documents and RFPs to facilitate getting the needs assessment process started are available from many sources,<sup>1</sup> including colleagues who have already been through the process.

When the RFP is prepared—be it a letter or a tome—the decision must be made on where to send it. Usually experienced library managers have several automation vendors already in mind. Lists of vendors are available in several major journals of librarianship, including *Library Journal* and *Library Technology Reports*. Visiting vendors at major conventions is another excellent way to scope out the automation market. Some institutional requirements are complicated and will require that numerous requests be solicited. A simpler process is to send the requests to only the vendors which prior research has shown can supply the criteria specified.

Paul Sybrowsky says libraries migrating their systems have second-time sophistication. Migrating libraries rely less heavily on quantitative evaluation of the RFP and are less concerned about money. They spend more time talking to users, visiting installed sights and thoroughly

investigating systems. Sybrosky says, "Overall, librarians who have been through system selection before have a much clearer idea of what they want and are thus better prepared to find the system that best meets their needs."<sup>2</sup>

When proposals from vendors are received, they must be evaluated or scored. This process, like so many others, may be dictated by regulations of a purchasing department. The more oversight a "buying and contracting" department has in a purchasing decision for the library, the smarter it is to objectify the scoring process ahead of time—that is, before the RFP is sent out. At a minimum, the broad evaluation criteria should be listed in the RFP and a detailed scoring system may or may not accompany it.

Decision making is not as difficult for law libraries as for other types of libraries. This is due mainly to the fact that one automation system vendor has taken a clear lead in providing a state-of-the-art serials module which handles legal serials better than any other system.<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, the serials system is part of a fully integrated, reliable and functional system which is used in more law libraries than any other system.

Nevertheless, once a decision is made, contract negotiations are necessary just as with any other major library expenditure. Stick to the organizational rules, get as much legal expertise as necessary and document every expectation and dollar. Contract negotiations can be more complex for a migration than for buying an initial system because care must be taken to specify exactly which data from the old system will be migrated and how it will be handled on the new system. Accurate timing and planning of this switch-over strategy should be itemized in the contract as well. The more detailed the contract, the less chance of problems later on.

### **Preparing the Library, Data and Staff**

Once the contract is signed, library managers may mistakenly think they will have some rest after the frenzy of planning and negotiations and before the new system arrives. This is rarely the case. Often the library building must be prepared by upgrading telecommunications, installing networks, recabling or upgrading wiring and procuring hardware not purchased from the vendor.

Another time-consuming job is mapping records from the old system to the new one. This must be done for every type of record to be migrated. Hallmark and Garcia state, "Librarians often did not fully understand the data file structure and the way the data were mapped into the new system. Thus, many libraries made indexing and migration decisions without a full grasp of the workings of the new system."<sup>4</sup> Time must be taken to study carefully how the new system handles data, as well as to know how data is stored in the old system. Often data has not been entered consistently in the old system, and this may not be discovered until after the migration. Non-MARC data is always a problem, as is partial and incorrect data.

If the library staff does not have enough expertise to do this work in house, and neither the old nor the new vendor is willing to sort through this most important mapping, then a separate conversion vendor or conversion consultant may be necessary.

The best scenario is to present the new vendor with carefully selected samples of data from the old system and let them work with it to show how well they can migrate it onto the new system. If this is not possible and a conversion vendor is necessary, the migration will be greatly complicated.

If bibliographic data from the old system is "dirty," it should be "cleaned" before migrating. Dirty systems have no authority control, that is, their headings or forms of entry (authors, conference names, corporate names, uniform titles, series and subjects) have not been authorized by comparing them to an authority file. Authority control also provides a system of cross-references from forms of entry not used to the form used. To "clean" records may require another set of specification and contract negotiations with a vendor of authority control services.

If a library is part of a consortium or alliance from which they must divest in order to migrate to a new system, an entirely different set of hurdles must be navigated. Perhaps, as was the case with the University of Colorado Law Library, the library must purchase its own records from the consortia. The University of Colorado Law Library decided that the prices for bibliographic, item, serials, circulation and acquisitions data were too high and the quality too uncertain to purchase more than the bibliographic and item data.

Most libraries will want to migrate as much data as possible. When it is not possible to migrate all files and much data will need to be manually keyed into the new system, then it is advantageous to run the old and the new systems simultaneously. For instance, a library could begin circulating by checking in on the old system and checking out on the new system. Serial records can be consulted on the old system while new issues are checked in on the new system. This type of planning must be detailed before the new system arrives.

Another important task in the interim period between selecting the system and installing it involves the staff. Staff should be prepared just as thoroughly as the site is prepared. Staff should be involved as much as possible in all the above decisions regarding technical considerations, site preparations, timing and planning. The more thoroughly they understand the new system and the more experience they have with the new system, the easier the migration will be for all involved.

An easy way to provide staff the opportunity to become familiar with the new system is to give them Internet addresses of other library systems similar in size and content to their own. Ask staff to select some of their most difficult titles and investigate how various libraries

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processed the records on their systems. (For example, how is the *Canadian Abridgement* or *Code of Federal Regulations* checked in?)

Other tasks to consider during the interim period are weeding the collection, inventorying the collection or converting OCR (optical character recognition) labels to barcodes.

### D-Day

When the new system is installed, the staff may feel like a new parent who has just given birth. The anxiety of wondering whether the new baby is healthy and robust can be severe. But it should be tempered with the knowledge that this baby can usually be sent back for a make-over if the final product is not up to expectations. The make-over will be as good as your contract allows from the testing requirement written into the contract. The more testing that is done before any money is paid the vendor or any papers are signed off on, the greater the chance of birthing a baby as healthy as possible.

Testing procedures should have been itemized in the contract or RFP. There are three things to test: hardware performance, software performance and the completeness and exactness of the data that was migrated. Specifications for hardware and software performance are usually easy to test by comparing what the vendor's proposal promised and what it actually does. To see if the data migrated properly, a systematic comparison of sample shelflist records or printouts of records from the old system must be undertaken. Checking the indexing capabilities is especially important.

No matter how careful all preparations have been and how good the old and new systems are, there will still be clean-up work to do to bring the new system up to expectations. An example of what can be expected includes missing bibliographic records in whole or part. Any part of the record could be missing, such as call numbers, authors, subject headings, fixed field codes, etc. Also, information in the records could be wrong or in reverse order or with wrong MARC tags. Bibliographic records could also be migrated which are not even from your library if the records were removed from an alliance or consortium. Item records may have similar problems and be attached to the wrong bibliographic record. Anything is possible and has probably happened to a library at some time before. Don't despair. Get the vendor to help

fix the problems. The more that can be done by program fixes and machine processing, the better. When the manual clean-up begins, remember that the only way to eat an elephant is one bite at a time.

### Conclusion

Migrating is often compared to divorce and remarriage.<sup>5</sup> This analogy conjures up so many negative connotations in most people's minds that I prefer not to elaborate on it. Instead, let's close on a quote from Frank Wojcik, manager of training services for a major automation vendor: "Migrating from one system to another is not always simple. It can require patience, flexibility, planning, commitment, and creativity. A positive outlook on the entire process also helps."<sup>6</sup>

When a library chooses to grow by migrating automation systems, it provides itself with a chance to reconsider all service objectives, policies and procedures. Karin Begg suggests you ask yourself, "Why do we do this?" and "Why are we doing it this way?"<sup>7</sup> With self-analysis and planning, a knowledgeable and motivated staff and an experienced vendor, a smooth and successful migration is very likely. Most libraries will end by only wishing they had done it earlier!

### Notes

1. *Library Technology Reports*, Jan./Feb. 1992, and *SPEC Kit 185: System Migration in ARL Libraries*, June 1992, are two good examples.
2. Paul Sybrowsky, "Changing Systems: The Vendor's Perspective," *Information Today*, July 1990, at 34.
3. This system is Innovative Interfaces Incorporated, Inc., 5850 Shellmound St., Emeryville, CA 94608.
4. Julie Hallmark & C. Rebecca Garcia, "System Migration: Experiences from the Field," *Information Technologies and Libraries*, Dec. 1992, at 7.
5. Mary Lou Goodyear, "Migration: A Public Service Perspective," paper presented at the eighth Texas Conference on Library Automation, Feb. 21-22, 1991.
6. E-mail on Innovative User Discussion Group, Nov. 10, 1994.
7. Karin Begg, "Changing Systems: Putting It All Together and Making It Work," *Information Today*, July 1990, at 31.

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