Videoconferencing:
A boon to rural libraries

By Dan Theobald,
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People in rural communities prefer the slower pace of small-town life, but often miss the cultural and educational opportunities available in big cities. Now California’s rural librarians, patrons, schools, businesses, and civic groups can have the best of both worlds. Thanks largely to the California State Library’s Rural Initiative, more than two dozen rural public libraries are using videoconferencing equipment for a variety of public programming, staff training, online research, and virtual meeting applications.

The technology - a combination of television monitors, cameras, microphones, and high-speed phone lines - allows people at two or more locations to see and hear each other in living color.

Rural librarians can save staff time, as well as travel and hotel expenses, by using videoconferencing for training. The InFoPeople project, a major provider of continuing education for public libraries, is offering videoconference workshops on Internet Filtering Policy, Customer Service, LAN (Local Area Network) Management, and Managing Change.

"Videoconferencing brings rural librarians face-to-face with top-quality trainers, consultants, and legal and policy experts," said InFoPeople coordinator Holly Hinman.

In addition to saving money, distance learning can also help with fund raising. After a videoconference workshop on how to identify rare editions, librarians at the Brawley Public Library paid more attention to the books donated for their sales. "We took a box of books to a rare bookseller in San Diego," said Director Marjo Mello. "He bought them for $400. Without the workshop, we'd have put them on our sale table for about $10."

Virtual workshops also let librarians exchange ideas with colleagues at other libraries. "It helps to hear that other libraries are having similar problems and may be able to share solutions," said San Luis Obispo County Librarian Judy Rohr.

Local business and civic groups also use videoconferencing equipment at rural libraries. Businesses use it for recruitment and meetings with out-of-state headquarters. Social workers and probation officers take video depositions and meet with clients, family members, and caretakers. Some libraries charge a small fee for the meeting room and the cost of the video call.

The Nevada County Library in Nevada City recently hosted a videoconference on Alzheimer's. Fifty attendees from the Family Caregiver Alliance participated in the meeting with doctors from Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District board spares the air by meeting via videoconference with members living in Quincy.

Although primarily a tool of rural libraries at this point, urban libraries are using videoconferencing too. Some of them serve as broadcast sites for the programming that's transmitted to rural libraries, while others, such as Sacramento Public Library, use it for video recruitment with out-of-state job candidates.

Two popular videoconferencing projects are Video Author Visits and Windows on the
First Asian and Pacific American conference for librarians to be held in San Francisco

The first conference for Asian and Pacific American librarians will be held at the Grand Hyatt on Union Square June 13-15 in San Francisco. Called "Shared Visions: the National Conference on Asian Pacific American Librarians," the conference will focus on how to improve library service to the growing, underserved Asian Pacific American community in California and throughout the nation.

The sponsors chose California as the site for this first-ever conference because California is home to an enormous population of Asian Pacific residents. Currently, libraries under-serve Asian Pacific residents, so promoting library services to Asian Pacific communities through training and education is one of the goals of the San Francisco conference.

Jointly sponsored by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA) and the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), this conference precedes the annual American Library Association conference and will feature leadership training, educational programs, poster sessions, exhibits, and keynote speakers such as Eugenie Prime, manager of the Hewlett-Packard Labs Research Library.

This conference is partially funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act, administered in California by the state librarian.

To register for the conference or to view the preliminary program, visit the conference web site at http://bioac.uky.edu/ncapal. If you have any questions or need further information, contact Ken Yamashita, APALA, at kyamashita@stockton.lib.ca.us, or Kathy Low, human resources consultant, CSL, at (916) 653-6822, or by email toklow@library.ca.gov.

Videoconferencing

World. Funded by the Library Services and Technology Act, a federal grant program for libraries, with additional support from Pacific Bell, Video Author Visits lets authors pay virtual visits to communities around the state. Each presentation is followed by discussion with the author, with all sites being able to participate. In Calexico - a small California town across the border from Mexicali, Mexico - for example, getting authors to visit via videoconference is quite a coup. Yolanda Nava, author of It's All in the Frijoles: 100 Famous Latinos Share Real-Life Stories, Time-Tested Dishes, Favorite Folktales, and Inspiring Words of Wisdom, gave a presentation that was a big hit with a local high school Spanish class.

"Calexico's population is about 98 percent Hispanic, so we were happy to take advantage of the opportunity to hear a Latino author," said City Librarian Sandra Tauler.

Other "virtual" author visits for this project have included mystery writer John Lescroart, who made a virtual visit to California libraries on May 11. Gary Soto visited on May 24; Jeff Shaara and John Saul will visit in August; and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Chabon will visit in the fall.

Windows on the World, another project funded by LSTA, provides virtual tours of museums, zoos, aquariums, and research institutes. The interactive presentations are augmented by information posted on a Windows on the World web site, with links to the sites of each museum or content provider.

During a three-day arts festival in April, the Paso Robles Public Library took advantage of a Windows on the World program from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. A museum educator discussed American history as seen through the eyes of its artists. She showed how changes in society were reflected in art from the Colonial period to the 20th century.

"Her presentation was more like a private tour," said Paso Robles City Librarian Annie Robb. "It really added prestige to our programming."

In Chico, Library Assistant Oliver Allen finds that videoconferencing is a natural match for the inquisitiveness of children. Local fifth- and sixth-graders came to hear David Macaulay, author of The Way Things Work.

"A library volunteer took Macaulay's books to the school beforehand, so the kids were ready with lots of questions," said Allen. "If you can spark just one kid's interest, it's really worth it."

As the use of videoconferencing equipment proliferates throughout California, libraries are including the technology in their plans for new structures. Waynn Pearson, city librarian of Cerritos, is opening the "library of the future" this fall, and videoconferencing technology is a big part of the new facility.

For further information on the two videoconferencing projects, contact Dan Theobald, principal consultant with i2i Communications in San Francisco, at (415) 431-0329 or by email to dtheobald@i2icom.com; or contact Ira Bray, electronic information resources consultant, CSL, at (916) 653-0171, or by email to ibray@library.ca.gov.
Loan compensation under LoC to change beginning July 1, 2001

Under the Library of California interlibrary loan (ILL) program, academic, public, school, and special libraries can be compensated for the loans made to public and non-public libraries. Starting July 1, 2001, libraries must be members of the LoC in order to participate in its loan programs.

The LoC loan program is similar to the ILL compensation program available for public libraries under the California Library Services Act (CLSA). Both support resource sharing and use CLSA’s current ILL reimbursement rate. But that is the extent of their similarities. Under LoC, services and resource sharing are limited to LoC members. All the non-public libraries that have been approved by the LoC board, up to and including its April 26, 2001 meeting, will be eligible to participate in the LoC loan programs. Non-public libraries that submit their applications between April 1, 2001 and March 31, 2002, can participate in the LoC loan compensation program beginning July 1, 2002.

Public libraries can still be reimbursed for loans to other libraries under CLSA and are thus not bound by any LoC membership restrictions. However, the LoC board is anxious to remove any inequities between public and non-public library loan compensation, and therefore has started examining the transition of CLSA loan programs into the LoC programs. The California State Library is currently commissioning a major study - the first since 1983 - to determine the handling costs for California libraries that participate in the LoC interlibrary and direct loan programs. The results of this study will allow loan compensation rates to be set under LoC, and thus will help the board actively begin the transition process from CLSA to LoC. Since transitioning these programs involves a change in state budget line items, considerable lead-time must occur in advance of the fiscal year in which the CLSA program will be transitioned. Currently the LoC board does not envision a complete transition of CLSA loan programs to the LoC before July 1, 2003. When transition does occur, public libraries will have to meet the same membership requirements as non-public libraries in order to be reimbursed for loans.

The LoC direct loan program must follow the same membership requirements outlined above. The LoC board has not yet decided when to begin a direct loan program, which will allow non-public LoC members to receive compensation for direct loans they have made to the clientele of other LoC member libraries.

For general information about the LoC ILL program, see the August 2000 issue of Connection, p. 6. If you have questions or comments, contact Tom Andersen, CLSA program coordinator, CSL, at (916) 653-7391, or by email to tandersen@library.ca.gov.

Amigos Library Services to be offered to LoC members

As directed by the Library of California board at its April 2001 meeting in Sacramento, the Library Development Services bureau of the California State Library is working with Amigos Library Services to bring cooperative licensing services as well as discounts on library products and supplies to LoC members. A nonprofit organization, Amigos is one of the nation’s largest library resource sharing networks and a leader in providing information technology to libraries. The Amigos Membership includes over 650 libraries and cultural institutions.

LoC members who choose to join Amigos will receive services that are part of Amigos’ A-Plus package available to general members. A-Plus services include discounted pricing on electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books, e-dictionaries and encyclopedias, citation and full text databases, library supplies, document delivery, and barcode labels.

Amigos will also work with LoC members to create specific opportunities for discounted licensing and purchases for those databases and resources that are not currently available through the A-Plus Services.

It is anticipated that everything will be in place and LoC member libraries can begin signing up for Amigos services by the end of May 2001. An advisory group will work with CSL staff to assure that the services Amigos provides are responsive to the needs of LoC members. LoC regional library networks and their members will be notified once a formal agreement is in place and Amigos has begun providing services.

For general information about the A-Plus package of Amigos, visit their website at www.amigos.org/aplus.htm. For further information, contact Ira Bray, electronic information resources consultant, CSL, at (916) 653-0171, or by email to ibray@library.ca.gov.
Government data serves a clientele as varied as the population of California itself, ranging from private citizens and businesses to some of the most prominent education and research institutions in the world. However, the digital technologies that have revolutionized data distribution in recent years have also created unintentional problems. What was once a stable system of print materials has given way to a diffuse, constantly changing array of electronic media, each using different formats and access methods. The current situation often leaves many would-be users frustrated or bewildered; each new upgrade of software and web browsers only exacerbates the problem. Preservation and consolidation of historical, or time-series, data are similarly at risk. Government agency web sites often integrate new information, but may not follow any systematic plan to preserve historical data as each update supersedes the previous version.

The California Digital Library (CDL) of the University of California will be unveiling a new research tool this July called Counting California that is intended to solve this problem. It is a collaborative project funded by the Library of California and CDL, with additional federal funding from a Library Services and Technology grant. The purpose of Counting California is to enhance California citizens' access to the growing range of social science and economic data produced by government agencies. In a departure from more static formats, this database's interface will allow users to access the actual raw data compiled by federal, state, and local government agencies. Not only that, but users will also be able to collate and integrate data by topic, geography, title, and provider. Counting California also addresses the serious preservation dilemma posed by ever-changing technology and data formats, ensuring easy and continuous access to historical and current information.

How is this done? Counting California's goals respond directly to the challenges of accessing this type of data:

- To provide flexible, user-friendly access that meets the diverse needs of the California citizenry;
- To ensure uniform, continuous access to both current and historical government data;
- To foster the ability of government agencies and other members of the data community to work together so data can be shared.

Counting California is tentatively scheduled for public release on July 1, 2001. For more information on the database, please contact project manager Patricia Cruse, CDL, at (510) 987-9016, or by email to Patricia.Cruse@ucop.edu. For more information on the Library of California's collaboration in this effort, contact Tom Andersen, CLSA program coordinator at (916) 653-7391, or by email to tandersen@library.ca.gov.

An April 30, 2001 Los Angeles Times article tells about a "vexing shortage of public librarians" in Los Angeles. Reporter Sue Fox writes, "building more libraries and increasing hours of operation only worsens the crunch."

Fox says that World Wide Web online design companies, and similar organizations, are "hungry for info-savvy workers" and that the phenomenon challenges large urban libraries. With the high-cost of living in cities such as Los Angeles, entry-level librarians are likely to find dotcom jobs appealing.

The American Library Association, in response to the crunch, has "launched a five-year campaign to promote libraries as cool places to work." And, according to the Times, urban libraries such as Los Angeles' are "working hard" to attract MLS grads to the field. The Los Angeles Public Library, for example, has set aside "$50,000 to help pay moving expenses for new hires." Los Angeles Public Library’s head librarian, Susan Kent, says in the article that new librarians "can build a really terrific career" in Los Angeles.
The Library of California Board (LCB) met in Sacramento, California, on April 25-26, 2001 to address a number of LoC program and service implementation issues and to chart a planning direction for the 2001 calendar year. For details on the issues and actions addressed at this meeting, please refer to the LoC Website at www.library.ca.gov/loc/. Click on "State Board>Agendas>April 2001" to identify documents from that meeting. Highlights from the meeting include:

1. Library of California Budget
The LCB approved the adoption of a budget allocation model for the regional library networks to use in fiscal year 2001/2002. The model would give each regional library network a base amount with the remaining money being divided among the networks based on the number of member and participating libraries.

The LCB also approved making an interim allocation of its fiscal year 2001/2002 baseline budget in the following categories:
- $675,140 for statewide services
- $3,312,860 for regional library network services with $200,000 being allocated as each network's base amount

The LoC board required that the funds the regional library networks receive must be spent in the following areas:
- Reference and Information Services (Sect. 18846)
- Delivery (Sect. 18842(c))
- Training (Sect. 18845)
- Administration including development and support of the network council (Sect. 18841)
- Public Relations (Sect. 18847)
- Telecommunications and online access (Sect. 18842 (a), (b), (d))

The LCB authorized spending the remaining fiscal year 2000/2001 statewide services funds to renew subscriptions for statewide services such as the Librarians’ Index to the Internet and the LoC Periodicals and Serials Database, and to support statewide full text database licenses.

2. Regional Library Network Development
The LCB did not approve the Plans of Service submitted by the seven regional library networks as explained in document 10, issue no. 1. The board instructed the chief executive officer to return them to the networks so the plans can be revised using the new budget allocation model and the interim budget allocation that the board adopted at the April 2001 meeting. They advised the regional library networks to submit their revised Plans of Service to the Library of California Director by May 25, 2001.

The LCB approved the 37 institutions listed in document 10, table 1, as members of the specified regional library networks beginning July 1, 2001. The board also approved 12 additional participating libraries included in document 10, table 2. State-funded benefits for these new institutions and participating library members of the LoC will begin July 1, 2001 once the board approves the fiscal year 2001/2002 Regional Plans of Service of these libraries.

3. Library of California Databases Program
The LCB authorized the allocation of $300,000 of fiscal year 2000/2001 funds to underwrite the workload of fiscal agents and the cost to administer the cooperative licensing services for LoC member libraries.

4. CLSA Interlibrary Loan and Direct Loan Programs
The LCB adopted the CLSA interlibrary loan reimbursement rate of $3.87 per eligible transaction and a rate of $.73 per eligible transaction for CLSA direct loans. The State Department of Finance must concur with these rates before they go into effect; the chief executive officer will notify all participants in this program of the 2001/2002 reimbursement rates once the Department of Finance's decision on these rates is known.

5. CLSA Statewide Data Base Program
The LCB approved a one-time increase in the allocation of CLSA Statewide Data Base subsidy so public libraries can pay for the ongoing costs of sharing resources via Z39.50. The subsidy will rise from $500 to $796 per library for the fiscal year 2000/2001, and it will be limited to those libraries that have already claimed the subsidy.

The LCB also approved a one-time increase in the CLSA Statewide Data Base subsidy to help the CLSA cooperative systems pay the ongoing operating costs of providing a regional resource sharing server. The subsidy will increase from $5,000 to $7,900 per system for the 2000/2001 fiscal year, and it will be limited to CLSA systems that have already claimed the subsidy.

6. Legislation
The LCB authorized the board president and the legislative committee chair to take appropriate action regarding a state budget augmentation for county law libraries once they are notified that a specific augmentation for county law libraries has been introduced into the fiscal year 2001/2002 state budget process.

7. LoC Board Goals and Strategic Objectives
The LCB amended the date on the Board Strategic Plan 2000/2003 six-month objective to draft a mission/purpose statement for each committee. The completion date for this objective has been moved to the June 2001 board meeting.
Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper

In the newly released Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper, author Nicholson Baker criticizes libraries for destroying precious primary texts, newspapers particularly, in the name of saving space. Baker sees newspapers, whose strengths librarians test by what he perceives as an inconclusive "double fold" process, as history. In Baker's view, microfiche is history once removed, a poor substitute for the lost culture embodied by destroyed newspapers.

Double Fold is a readable book. Short versions of Baker's Double Fold argument appeared first in the New Yorker, where Baker is a staff reporter. Though full of preservationist jargon and citations, Nicholson shapes his point - that newspapers are of the most cultural value as newspapers, not as microfiche - shrewdly and with the quirky eye of an accomplished novelist. And critics and scholars concur that Baker has a point. The Los Angeles Times (April 22, 2001) calls Double Fold "an important book," even if Baker "could have made his argument more succinctly."

Baker's controversial piece is sure to raise some eyebrows in and around California's libraries: library staff may have to field comments or questions about Double Fold. Luckily, the New York Review of Books (April 26, 2001) has a lengthy and informed review of Double Fold by Robert Darnton, a Professor of History at Princeton University. Darnton calls Double Fold a "tour de force and a great read" but he demurs that one should read Double Fold as "a journalistic jeremiad rather than a balanced account of library history over the last fifty years."

Professor Darnton outlines Double-Fold as he analyzes. Darnton "strips" Baker's argument of writerly rhetoric, and breaks the argument into Baker's "set" of nine propositions, or points, which range from "paper holds up well" to "librarians may have had good intentions, but they acted in bad faith." Darnton concludes by asking the New York Review of Books' readers to consider Double Fold's policy recommendations, with which he agrees.

California State Librarian Dr. Kevin Starr says of Double Fold: "Through the force of this jeremiad, Nicholson Baker has challenged the library profession to take a second look at its preservation protocols. We librarians stand for free enquiry - even when it is painful. Baker's enquiry is exactly that - painful and challenging."

Four California students honored by First Lady Davis

First Lady Sharon Davis paid tribute to four California students in the governor's office on May 22. The four students were the first- and second-place winners in the Letters About Literature competition, sponsored by the California State Library Foundation and the California Center for the Book.

The First Lady praised the students for their excellence in writing and encouraged them to continue reading. Dr. Kevin Starr introduced the First Lady, noting her steadfast devotion to the cause of literacy.

Awards were given on two levels. Level I was for students in grades four through seven. Level II included students in grades eight through twelve. Winning first place at Level I was Min Lee, 11, of the George B. Miller School in La Palma. Min wrote to E.B. White, the author of Charlotte's Web.

Min's letter opened: "When I was young, I lived by the mountains in Korea, so I liked insects very much. However, I didn't like spiders, and I was very afraid of them, partly because of their long, creepy legs." When he came to the United States two years ago, Min spoke no English, but he learned rapidly, and his letter was judged to be the best of more than 600 others submitted at Level I.

Winning second place in Level I was Juliana Friend, 12, of San Francisco.

First place in Level II went to Minh Huynh, 17, a junior at Gabrieleno High School in San Gabriel. He wrote to Ray Bradbury about the novel, Fahrenheit 451. Natalie Cole, the assistant director of the California Center for the Book, presented the letter to Ray Bradbury, who read it and signed it. The letter was presented to Minh at the ceremony in the governor's office. Minh runs cross country for Gabrieleno High School and wants to attend either Claremont McKenna or Pomona College.

Second place in Level II went to Benjamin Soifer, 14, of Altadena. Benjamin wrote to Michael Shaara, the author of The Killer Angels, a novel about the Battle of Gettysburg.

Angela Morales, Min Lee's fourth-grade teacher, accompanied him, his aunt, and his mother to Sacramento for the awards ceremony. Each of the first-place winners received a check for $250 from the California State Library Foundation. Each second-place winner received a check for $150 from the California Center for the Book, which also paid for transportation for each child and one parent. The California State Library Foundation and the California Center for the Book also shared the expense of producing a booklet containing 21 of the best letters written for the competition.
LII founder Carole Leita to receive ALA award

Carole Leita, creator of the Librarians’ Index to the Internet, is the recipient of the 2001 Isadore Gilbert Mudge-R.R. Bowker Award. The $5,000 award, donated by R.R. Bowker, recognizes distinguished contributions to reference librarianship. The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), will present the award on June 18, 2001 at the RUSA Awards Ceremony which runs from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and is part of the ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco.

Currently Leita works as an instructor and consultant to the InFoPeople Project of the California State Library, where she continues to coordinate the LII. For further information, visit the ALA web site at http://www.ala.org/news/v7n5/mudge_award.html.

Training Corner

Provider: InFoPeople
- InFoPeople Distance Education Program
InFoPeople will offer at least eight Web-based courses during 2001. For this year, these courses are offered free of charge to participants. They are being fully supported by a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant from the California State Library.

1st Course: Intermediate HTML: Setting the Table
Dates and Locations:
Web-based courses during 2001
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/52

Provider: Cuesta College, San Luis Obispo
Course: LIBINF1 - Introduction to Library Services
Dates and Locations:
(8) week session - October 22 to December 17, 2001
Mandatory meeting:
Saturday, August 25, 2001 12:00-2:00pm, room 6304
San Luis Obispo Campus
http://www.cuesta.cc.ca.us/campus/pubs/00_02/degrees/libtech.htm>http://ww

Provider: InFoPeople
Course: Introduction to HTML: Tag You’re It!
Dates and Locations:
- John F. Kennedy Library Branch
- Robidoux Branch
Thursday, August 23, National City Public Library
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/53

Provider: InFoPeople
Course: Getting the Most from Microsoft Word
Date and location:
Tuesday, July 10, Vallejo
- Solano County Library
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/24

Provider: InFoPeople
Course: Law on the ’Net: A Workshop for Non-Law Librarians
Dates and locations:
Monday, June 11, San Francisco Public Library
Monday, July 9, Riverside County Library
- Robidoux Branch
Thursday, July 26, Sacramento County Office of Education
Tuesday, August 14, National City Public Library
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/8

Provider: InFoPeople
Course: Common Sense Project Management
Date and location:
Thursday, September 13, Belvedere
- Tiburon Public Library (SF area - North Bay)
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/48

Provider: InFoPeople
Course: Internet Policy and Filtering Update
Dates and Locations:
Monday, June 11, Sheraton Ontario Airport Hotel
Thursday, June 21, Sacramento County Office of Education
Tuesday, July 10, Courtyard Old Pasadena by Marriott
http://infopeople.org/WS/workshop/Workshop/50

Provider: Council on Library/Media Technicians Annual Conference
Course: Library Support Staff: Still Moving in the Right Direction
Dates and location:
June 13-16, 2001
Hyatt Regency San Francisco/ Embarcadero
San Francisco, California
http://library.ucr.edu/COLT
2001

June

June 9-14, 2001
Special Libraries Association Annual Conference, San Antonio

June 13-15, 2001
First National Conference on Asian Pacific American Librarians, San Francisco

June 14-20, 2001
ALA Annual Conference, San Francisco

June 15, 2001
LSTA fiscal year 2001/2002 year due

June 27-29, 2001
Library of California board meeting, Fresno

July

July 14-19, 2001
American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) conference, Minneapolis

August

August 15-17, 2001
Library of California board meeting, San Diego

August 16-25, 2001
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) General Conference, Boston

October

October 14-20, 2001
Teen Road Week

October 31-November 2, 2001
California School Libraries Association (CSLA), Annual Conference, Long Beach

November

November 2-5, 2001
California Library Association (CLA), Annual Conference, Long Beach

November 5-7, 2001
Library of California board meeting, Long Beach

November 14-18, 2001
American Association of School Librarians (AASL) National Conference, Indianapolis

2002

January 18-23, 2002
American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Meeting, New Orleans

March 13-16, 2002
Public Libraries Association (PLA) National Conference, Phoenix

April 14-20, 2002
National Library Week

June 13-20, 2002
American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference, Atlanta