VALE Steering Committee

Minutes of the September 14, 1999 Meeting

Present: John Cohn, Judith Cohn, Gaboury, Gaunt, Getaz, Price, Simpson, Sweeney

1. Marilyn Martin, Rowan University, was welcomed in absentia as a new member of the Steering Committee for the current year representing the state college/universities group. A new/updated list of Steering Committee members should be distributed in paper and/or online.

2. A respectable number of institutions have agreed to purchase the databases being offered for the current year: 23 institutions will subscribe to the Softline products, 13 libraries subscribed to Wilson's Biographies Plus, 10 to Art Abstracts and 1 to Art Retro; 7 libraries subscribed to Gale's Literature Resource Center. While there were a few changes in the institutions subscribing to the original 4 Vale databases, the total number of subscribers is essentially the same. Invoices for the Wilson, Gale and original 4 Vale databases will be mailed out this week. The list of institutions subscribing to each database is being sent separately.

3. The Interface Committee is still working on how the new databases will be presented on the Vale page. Gaunt circulated 5 samples that appear on the test database for comment. There was a mix of opinion on whether it would be acceptable to have the complete list of databases appear on the Vale page. Most felt that a text explanation regarding access to databases not subscribed by an institution would not be read/understood by patrons. An alternate might be a list where non-subscribed titles were "greyed out." Another suggestion was to go directly from the initial Vale page to the "remote" databases. Gaunt will relay the information to Dave Hoover and the Interface committee. Our target is to have either a final or an interim presentation no later than the end of the month. Specific dates when the databases will be available will be announced shortly in a separate communication.

3. Kudos to Joan Getaz and her committee for the additional communication on the Corrado List serve. Communication from the Steering Committee to library heads/directors was discussed and some ideas for improvement were noted.

4. Statistics were distributed to Council members recently. Spreadsheets for all libraries were shared with the Steering Committee but the data remains confidential. It was agreed that aggregate information that demonstrates Vale's success should be included in the annual assessment; but because the data from the first year of any consortium is not necessarily an exact indication/predictor of ongoing use, we should be careful with both interpretations and distribution of the data.

5. Gaunt distributed a copy of a potential user survey prepared by Paul Rigby for the Assessment/Evaluation committee to which he had requested feedback from the Steering Committee. After discussion of the target audience for both the survey and the results, the committee suggested that we make the survey available to both front line librarians and directors, but that we replace "name" with "position" information. Directors would probably have a different perspective than front-line librarians. We should eliminate "librarians at your institutions who could help Vale improve." Librarians should be encouraged to contact committee chairs if they are interested in participating on one of the committees. The form

should be short and the results easily compilable. To that end, written comments are useful, but they should be combined with a scale or check-off. Changes were suggested for the introductory sentence that focus on future direction/planning rather than "concerns." A question related to priorities would be useful-- either asking to prioritize some suggested topics/issues and/or specifically asking for ideas. The second question regarding impact on information provision should be reframed to elicit more than a yes or no answer.

6. At the last Steering Committee meeting several members volunteered to review various other consortia websites for information useful to Vale. This is still a work in progress and Anne hopes to have all the data received and consolidated in advance of the next Steering Committee meeting.

7. Ten librarians have volunteered to work as 4 teams to address the development of documentation for the initial Vale databases. The target date for completion is November 1 At that point the Training/Help Desk committee can focus on training for librarians on these databases. Training for the new remote access databases was discussed at a recent committee meeting and plans are under development. Vendors will be providing training as part of the purchase of the databases.

8. We encourage the Electronic Resources Committee to be proactive in soliciting input for new databases. Many members have inquired about the process for database selection and the need for user input. The committee members and a call for input should appear on the List Serve. A request for INSPEC has come in and their willingness to work with consortia was indicated.

9. Fund raising strategies are under development as we believe this will be a good year for funding. Gaboury, Gaunt, and Livingston will be meeting next week with some legislators about the possibility of Virtual Library funding. The State Library is also pursuing supplemental funding for this year. NJLA will be supporting the Virtual Library as a priority for this year. The $100,000 grant from the State Library will be going for infrastructure support for Vale-- staffing, training, equipment. We are hoping to find funds for a long-term planning consultant.

10. OCLC/Palinet staff met with Gaboury, Gaunt, Ciliberti, to discuss continued collaboration. Hand-outs from the meeting were distributed to the Steering Committee. OCLC discussed the improvements in SiteSearch 4.1 to be released in late September. It would provide enhancements for the development of local databases, and OCLC may be very interested in some of these. Based on the current status of the Vale infrastructure, we would probably not be able to manage a migration to 4.1 before January.

11. Getaz distributed a letter from Middle States asking for response to a survey regarding the necessity of traditional library support in the virtual environment. It was recommended that this will be a topic for an upcoming Council meeting.

12. The next Steering Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for Oct. 12 at 10 am at Rutgers. Alternate dates are Oct 21, 22 at 10 am.

Minutes prepared by Anne Ciliberti