

## A Bold Plan for North Carolina

**N**orth Carolina librarians have been planning for over a year now for a bold new electronic library system for the state. This project, called NC LIVE, is a multi-type consortium of public university, private college and university, community college, and public librarians. The NC LIVE project will provide the goal of enhancing delivery of electronic library resources to the desktops of citizens throughout North Carolina. This consortium will be under the direction of the State Library of North Carolina, which is charged with coordination of all multi-type library activities within North Carolina. Patterned on the GALILEO project at the University of Georgia, NC LIVE is organized into four communities of interest (called COI). Representatives of these communities have been meeting intensively since the early summer to plan and implement this bold new system.

At the initial brainstorming session for NC LIVE, held in the fall of 1996, the following were identified as major goals and outcomes of the project:

- Provide a core group of electronic reference and research databases to the local desktops regardless of time, geographic location, or type of library a North Carolinian was using.
- Improve access to electronic materials through resource sharing and electronic delivery of information.
- Provide the technological infrastructure needed to access these online resources. (The infrastructure would be provided through two tandem linked electronic resources centers at two different "institutions of the University of North Carolina," however each community would be responsible for enhancing "access" for their members.)
- Expand access to state government information through electronic distribution of information via the State Library Documents Clearinghouse.
- Educate library staff statewide through a "comprehensive, systematic ongoing program of training for staff in participating libraries."

Following the initial fall 1996 informational meeting, a budget request for \$4.7 million was submitted to the North Carolina General Assembly for the 1997-98 budget. While this budget was not adopted until late summer 1997, work on organizing the NC LIVE project continued. A Steering Committee was formed in fall 1996 to direct the organizational efforts of the project. The Steering Committee heard presentations on the GALILEO project, formulated an initial governance structure, and developed a timetable for future NC LIVE actions. By June 1997 the Steering Committee had formulated a retreat, scheduled for July 30-31 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill. Each community of interest was asked to nominate ten representatives to the retreat. Public library representatives were selected by the NC Public Library Directors Association Board; community college members were selected by

the newly formed Council of Community College Library Administrators; University of North Carolina library representatives were selected by the University Librarians Advisory Committee (ULAC). The selection of the independent academic libraries community of interest was coordinated by the North Carolina Center for Independent Higher Education.

The meeting on July 30-31 was attended by over forty librarians from the various communities of interest. At this retreat these librarians adopted a project process model similar to GALILEO. Through this process an electronic library desktop would be within reach of all citizens of North Carolina. At the retreat the librarians also agreed on a core database profile, adopted a process model time line, and elected members of a Resource Advisory Committee. The core database profile will consist of an electronic encyclopedia, a full-text database abstracter and indexer, and a database aggregator. An aggregator is a vendor that supplies more than one abstract and index product using the same search engine. The aggregators were soon dubbed the "Alligators" by a member of ULAC. The process time line called for vendor demonstrations on September 11-12 to be followed by discussion on the part of the Resource Advisory Committee with a small group of selected vendors. The NC LIVE retreat librarians also adopted January 30, 1998, as the implementation date for the project.

At the time of the July retreat, the General Assembly had not yet passed the 1997-98 budget. Subsequent to the July retreat, but prior to the vendor demonstrations in September, the budget was passed, approving most of the requested funding for the NC LIVE project.

A large group of vendors showed their wares at the two-day presentation on September 11-12. Representatives of the communities were then instructed to take the vendor information back to their constituencies and to rank their preferences by September 18. These ranked lists were brought by the two elected Resource Advisory Committee members from each community of interest to a meeting at Chapel Hill on September 19. At that meeting, the Resource Advisory Committee developed a list of preferred vendors with whom to hold intense contract negotiations. Also in September an Ad Hoc Technical Advisory Committee traveled to Georgia to study technical aspects of implementing the GALILEO model in North Carolina.

This project is the largest currently under development at one time in the United States. It has great promise to deliver an enhanced level of quality electronic library services to the citizens of North Carolina. While many technical issues still remain to be worked out (such as authentication schemes for remote access, and transmission delays on the Web, now known as the World Wide Wait), NC LIVE is well on its way to serving librarians and patrons by its January 30, 1998, ribbon cutting. Stay tuned for more information on this important project.