



Management
Analysis
& Development

- **Consortium of MnPALS Libraries**

STRATEGIC PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The MNPALS Consortium of Libraries Executive Committee and User Council met over two days in November, 2006, to consider their current situation and develop a strategic plan to guide their operations over the next three to five years. Participants at the two meetings are listed below:

Nov. 16 Vision development

Ruth Anderson
Kathleen Ashe
Orrin Ausen
Bobby Bothmann
Jan Carey
Donna Davis
Bill De John
Todd Digby
Sonja Eilertson
Keith Ewing
Sandra Fuhr
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Cynthia Jorstad
Robbie LaFleur
Pete McDonnell
Dan Mollner
Kathleen Nelson
Linda Richter
Facilitator, Barb Deming

Nov. 28 Strategies development

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CURRENT SITUATION

Participants referred to Linda Richter's background data document, and information from user surveys, as they identified notable features of the current situation facing the MNPALS Consortium. Responses included:

- For most of our libraries we are not current with technology and access that most academic libraries have.
- User expectations are increasing and changing. We can't deliver resources that they expect in the way and form that they want.
- We need the collective voice of the consortia to tell funders and the legislature why what we do is crucial to the users.
- Users don't use the resources we have. They need baseline instruction about resources. At the state level we could have a library instruction requirement. The consortium could push this.
- We – our institutions – are often in such different places. We need to enhance the “All for one, one for all” mindset, and do a better job of helping each other out.
- How to offer help if people aren't asking?
 - People aren't participating in User Group like they used to.
 - They shouldn't have to ask permission – participation should be encouraged.
- A “more with less” idea pervades the document. It's hard to break away from the demands of one's own institution – hard to keep sight of the importance of the consortium.
- MNSCU needs to better use the technology we have.
- How can we better bring in more remote-location members? They need help the most.
- How do we marshal the human and technological aspects better?
- How do we get beyond even the consortium – include K-12 as future users?
- What role do academic and state libraries play in information literacy? Students come in not ready.
- Skill sets: Staff don't always have the skills they need (blogs, wikis, evolving protocols)
- ILS takes a tremendous amount of staff time and energy.
- If users are what we're all about, say: OK, we have the ILS, users can't figure out how to use it; What can we put on top of it to make it look more like Google, which users *do* use?
- Is the consortium of MNPALS libraries the place for this to happen?
 - We don't have enough just to support the ILS.
 - If larger institutions begin to provide this, what does it do to the rest of the consortium?
 - Only a few libraries could afford to do this on their own.
- Remember what the ILS is doing for us: It does things it used to take many systems to do.
- I support the idea of putting a layer on top, like Google.

- MNPALS started out to introduce consortium technology to libraries. Then the consortium started to think about other things we could do. The drop in participation may be related to the recent primary focus on the ILS.
- We've lost focus on users, and users forgot about the library – vendors did, too. But while we were doing what we were doing, Google, Amazon, etc. came on the scene.
- Libraries change slowly.
- In stores you can check the price with a scanner. Libraries don't allow easy card-scanning. In the commercial world, consumer expectations are changing.
- Do we want to let the ILS to continue driving the consortium? Users are finding out that libraries are out there. Are we as a consortium going to be in the driver's seat?
- The commercial world has gotten consumers to do some of the staffing work for them. Let's not go completely in this direction: so dumbed down that consumers don't know what to do. Remember our uniqueness: We help users determine what resources are credible. "We can help you find what you want."
- Think about checking out books: Maybe we should let users do this, so we can concentrate on adding value elsewhere.
- We can design an online catalogue.
- Google is absorbing libraries quickly.
- Google has more content than one library, but they can't help distinguish what's valuable. That's where the dumbing down happens.
- I remember the evolution from closed-stack to open-stack libraries. We have put more control with users. Remember the three As:
 - Access (Google does this well)
 - Assess (libraries do this well)
 - Apply (libraries do this well)
- My users are pressed for time. They want 1 – 2 references they can use *now*.
- We need to get out in front more: Be on screen or in their hands in a few minutes.
- How can the consortium address this? Many librarians are too busy handling the day-to-day stuff in their own libraries, and can't get out to where the users are.
- It might be time to restructure the governance of the consortium: Reference and other non-ILS may be parts of the new structure.

Themes of the current situation

The group then identified common themes that had emerged in their discussion of the current situation:

- Users are a priority
- The role of the ILS in our work, and the services we provide
- Structure and governance of the consortium
- The role of PALS in relation to other consortia, and participation with other consortia
 - Is PALS the place to do X?
 - Integration still needs to occur.
- Importance of technical support:
 - Librarians don't have time to do effective education without support from PALS.

- ILS has been the focus during implementation, but we need PALS technical support to help do cool new things with what we have.
 - The next ILS won't necessarily be an OPAC.
- The library's role in information and with patrons: Impact on the consortium
- The need for other kinds of skill sets – Support from MNSCU is needed.
- People don't have time to do what they're already doing, much less add services and training.
- Funding is a real issue.

TRENDS ANALYSIS

The participants listed trends in the services libraries provide, in terms of whether they are *dying*, *established*, *emerging* or *cutting edge*.

Dying

- Print, journal, academic libraries
- Print reference materials
- Smaller, non-residential places, as well as state government libraries: people coming through the door (this depends on the services offered, facilities, etc.)
- Expectation that students will go through a complex system to get what they want. All users want fewer steps.
- Ability to find qualified people to do the mundane things that are needed: cataloguers, serials, systems
- Focus we used to have on locally owned physical systems
- Users' dependence on locally owned physical systems
- Old PALS' mindset
- Use of OPAC by patrons
- ILS as we've known it: trend toward disintegrated

Established

- ILS
- Agreement that we're trying to work together as a consortium
- Noncommunication within the consortium
- Dedication to the priority of serving the person in front of us
- Nature of end-user self service
- Reputation of good answers
- Shared collections, resource sharing
- Libraries have Web presence
- Some priority on information literacy
- Digital resources preservation – physical preservation, except in media
- Books on shelves
- Distance learning – expectation to access
- Users like online journal articles, but are less interested in e-books (they don't get the whole journal article; pressure from copyright law is coming)
- Within libraries in the state: core set of library databases, document delivery are available
- Dependence on U of M libraries
- Standards
- Virtual reference

Emerging

- Missing transition – digital environment
- Use of technology to bring materials together
- Research quick start
- Open access in scholarly publishing

- Open source in application and program development
- Communications technologies – blogging, chat rooms, etc.
- System support for user engagement
- Digital content management
- Systems integration of more modular systems
- Discovery tool that sits on top of the OPAC
- Institutional repositories
- “Podcast” and “vidcast” technology
- How virtual reference will be used
- Synchronous communication
- Evolution of online education: delivery of learning
- Users thinking they can manipulate materials on the system

Cutting edge

- Authenticity of digital resource
- Digital curation
- Deep searching
- Talking about a universal catalogue
- Librarians may not be the best to hire for future library activities (depends on definition of librarian)

Conclusions from trends

- What we’ve spent so much time focusing on is in the “dying” and “established” categories. We still have to do some of those things, but the power and influence of the consortium needs to focus on the emerging and cutting edge as well.
- We need to figure out how to balance our investment.
- We may need to decide to give up some things in order to do others.
- We need to pay attention to what our users want and what they’re using – *and what they’re going to use tomorrow.*

VISION

In small groups, participants discussed their ideas in response to the question, “What is our collective vision of the way the consortium will shape the future?” Meeting again as the full group, they reviewed each group’s ideas, and organized them into the following categories of vision. The heading of each category represents the group’s consensus about this vision element, the bulleted statements were the original brainstormed ideas from the small groups:

Innovative technologies focus

- Digital content management—Each library shouldn’t have to recreate the wheel. As a consortium, figure out best methods. Storage, management: What are the best practices?
- ILS → DLS – From integrated library to dis-integrated library system. Modular integration with open URL link resolver, electronic resource management system, content management system, user participation applications
- FOCUS: Technology, not content
- MNPALS will bring cutting edge technologies to member libraries.

User-focused layers

- Improving access to research materials to users (from our shared collections)
- More equitable for end users to access electronic resources and technologies for users – link resolvers; APIs (Application Program Interface)
- Focus on activities that benefit users. (Do improvements benefit users, or just librarians?)
- Discovery to delivery system – Layer on top of ILS; rely on open resource software; transition current ILS to Discovery to Delivery; Federated search with Google-like interface; marketing our social computing space (MySpace, Facebook, etc.); Find affordable vendor, not necessarily ExLibris.
- Discovery tool – User participation (tagging, reviewing); simple, “user-friendly”; broad base of resources; access to content of interest/need based on individual (identity management) assisted leads, for example, Faceted retrieval, topic maps, etc.; supporting serendipity
- Balance quality of the existing ILS with developing new user-centered services.
- Electronic information literacy (Lib 2.0, 3.0, 4.0, 5.0)

Progressive funding

- Funding: a non-issue
- Sustainable funding – Have our own political voice to lobby; add more staffing to support/implement the ideas and technologies we are discussing; rely on more open source software
- Funding: Don’t starve the central office

Healthy consortium

- Collaborating consortium – Granular modular training; professional development ~ continuing education outside ILS; benefit from each other’s skills, knowledge and interests; comparable data collection; collective intellectual, human and political capacity of the consortium to support each other
- Fresh faces – new skills, adaptive, anticipatory, but need to retain collective wisdom and historical continuity; diversity – everywhere
- Communication: wiki, blogs, etc.
- Continue point of service training – Webinars, podcasts, make training available without having to travel
- Continued/increased staff – technical and training – simplification to users; decrease the workflow upon users – make it easier for library staff
- Work toward: less ILS work by individual libraries
- Change consortium communications (for example, user group meetings)
- Share advancements in service improvements by member libraries – best practices

Progressive structure that works

- Communication: new model of coming together (questioning current user groups)
- Governance structure – restructure user group activities
- Structure: governance; user groups; meetings
- Governance restructuring: increase participation among users
- Use more of the existing technologies we promote to increase participation (ITV; netmeeting; conference calls, etc.)
- Restructure User Group meetings to be more like an MLA/ALA format (one meeting a year “business,” the other meeting more big-picture annual-type meeting)

STRATEGIES

Small groups responded to the question, “In order to make this vision for the future a reality . . . What needs to happen? How could the MNPALS Consortium make this vision a reality?” Three groups were organized to focus on two parts of the vision: 1) Technology-oriented vision items *plus* funding; and 2) Organization-oriented vision items *plus* funding.

The full group reviewed the ideas that each small group created, and organized the individual ideas into the following broad strategies. Numbers in parentheses at the end of some statements indicate the number of votes given when each participant applied four votes anywhere they wanted among the strategy categories:

Strategic positioning of libraries within the larger structure

- Intersection between libraries and IT at MNSCU and OET (Office of Enterprise Technology) levels (9)
 - Has to happen at campus level too
 - Basic tools that all could use (discovery/delivery)
 - Specialized databases to support specific needs
 - Joint discussions at the same table: Ken Niemi, his staff
- Integrating resources we have (i.e. D2L, WebCT, MN Online, MN Digital Library)
- Establish working creative relationships with vendors.
 - Free up local people/time to test new products.
 - Determine appropriate expectations.
 - Reality: We will have technology changes forced on us.

Implement new and improved technology

- Technology needs assessment (4)
 - Inventory of licensed databases
 - Scan and collaborate within and without consortium
 - What is the consortium going to support at a minimum level?
- Technology toolkit – minimums for members
- Technical efficiencies
- Plan for an integrated modular technology
- Technology plan
 - What do we need to buy?
 - What do we need to learn?
 - Flexible because it changes quickly
 - Grants
 - Implement digital asset management
 - Create a sandbox method to test innovations (2)
 - o Leverage existing technologies
 - o Operate on multiple levels of testing and innovation.
 - o Restructure the PALS office staffing to free staff for a sandbox-type project.
 - Integrate open source products as appropriate

Marketing and assessment (3)

- Statement of benefit of membership; including monetary value (8)
 - Information we can provide to our own campus administrations, our funding sources, and new members
- Annual report
 - Focuses on value-added services
 - Focus on cost of running system
 - Showing off accomplishments
 - Present to stakeholders and users (marketing)
 - Entice new members
 - Unique resources
 - MNPALS library legislative day, also MNSCU office and MNSCU board
- Encourage movers and shakers to advocate for libraries
 - Individual environmental scans
- Local buy-in; new-member orientation
- Market assessment consortium-wide (who are the users, what are they using, etc.) (10)

Effective member participation (7)

- Task focused groups using member expertise and office staff
 - Successful example: Lib Proxy group
 - Create a reports group (training)
- Identify what will make user group meetings meaningful (2)
- MNPALS 101 . . . mentoring
 - New member orientation
 - Skills survey of members
 - Are you willing to mentor?
- Keep consortium participation as equal as possible
- Members have permission to participate because of advocacy from top leadership
- Develop base technology knowledge toolkit for all consortium members

Effective use of resources (2)

- Additional staff to perform more advanced ILS tasks centrally (9)
 - For example . . . XSL, Tables
- Task focused groups using member expertise and office staff
- Find more technical efficiencies to be accomplished centrally.
- Examine consortial cataloguing opportunities/expansion.
- Information literacy tools
- Document innovations to share successes and best practices.
- Improved internal communications (in office), for “global” problems; improved dissemination of information to members regarding problems (Example: OPAC anomaly)
- E-mail management
 - Better and more consistent subject headings
 - Better targeting to reduce duplication

ACTION PLANNING

The participants worked in small groups to develop action plans for five of the strategies. Their initial drafts are printed below. Given the short amount of time available for this activity, the group asked the Executive Committee Steering Committee to review these drafts and decide where to proceed and where to spend more time developing a plan of action.

Action planning worksheet

Title of this action step: Implement a discovery tool

Strategy this action would help to implement: Implement new and improved techniques

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

HOW	WHO	WHEN
1. Review charge and membership of MATF; identify discovery-tool task force	UC	December 2006
2. a) Literature review b) Explore current implementations c) Determine what systems integrate w/Aleph	MATF MATF MATF + PALS	December 2006 – February 2007
3. Survey members to determine what resources will be searched	MATF	December 2006 – February 2007
4. Vendor fair – demos	MATF + PALS	April 2007 User Group meetings
5. Features and capabilities: What do we want as available features	MATF + PALS with consortial input	December 2006 – April 2007
6. Determine how to fund	Executive Committee	February – March 2007
7. Create RFP	MATF and PALS	March, April 2007
8. Vendor selection	Consortium + Exec Com	April – May 2007
9. Purchase and implement	PALS	Post-May 2007

Milestones:

Names of people who worked on this proposal: Linda Richter, Kathleen Nelson, Sheila Hatchell

Action planning worksheet

Title of this action step: Effective member participation

Strategy this action would help to implement:

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

HOW	WHO	WHEN
1. Design a more productive and appealing user group format to give attendees new ideas and renewed energy	Deans/Directors + Users Council create a task force to pilot a new format in Spring 2007	February create task force; Spring 2007 meeting
2. Identify topics that could be explored and dealt with by task-focused groups, and solicit interest.	PALS Central staff would distribute lists of topics based on the strategic planning process, to solicit interest	Post-EC/User Council meetings in February, those groups could prioritize themes/projects.
3. Take the information gleaned from the assessment to develop a technology knowledge toolkit.	Todd, Bill, reps from various size libraries	Post-assessment, Spring 2008
4. Develop a skills identification tool (wiki) to enable effective mentoring among members. Use a session at the Spring User Group session to design and actually create the tool.	We need: a small task group to design the session + one wiki expert to create it in real time.	EC/User Council make small task force, identify expert, TBD by EC
5. Todd, Linda, small group should meet before the EC/User Council meetings to identify actual agenda items to propose and approve or change.		

Milestones: 1. Agenda published by Spring User Group meeting; 2. Actual groups formed; 3. Have toolkit developed by Spring 2008; 4. WIKI up!

Names of people who worked on this proposal: Robbi, Donna, Bill

Action planning worksheet

Title of this action step: Centralize technical issues to central office

Strategy this action would help to implement: Effective use of resources

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

HOW	WHO	WHEN
1. Identify which issues/tasks could be done centrally (i.e. XML, batch processing, etc.), probably by survey	PALS staff/library staff	By Feb. 8 UC/EC meeting
2. Determine staffing needs – evaluate current workload and staff level – evaluate number of staff needed to provide services	PALS	By Feb. 8 UC/EC meeting
3. Identify cost for issues/tasks for both central office and libraries.	PALS/library staff	By Annual Meeting
4. Identify various cost models: 1) contract; 2) fee per service; 3) part of existing dues; 4) based on FTE	PALS staff/library staff	By final EC/UC meeting for year
5. Prioritize cost models and recommend best solutions	PALS staff/library staff	By final EC/UC meeting for year
6. Make a decision	PALS/EC/UC	April UC/EC
7. (optional) Personnel paperwork	PALS	Late Spring – Fall 2007
8. Implement	PALS/Libraries	Early 2008

Milestones: 1. Issues identified; 2. staffing needs determined; 3. Costs defined; 4. decision; 5. Implementation

Names of people who worked on this proposal: Adam, Kevin, Becky

Action planning worksheet

Title of this action step: Statement of benefit of membership (including monetary value)

Strategy this action would help to implement: Marketing and assessment

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

HOW	WHO	WHEN
1. Collect what has been done in the past	PALS staff; Ask the membership	ASAP
2. Appoint task force from membership with PALS liaison. Charge to task force: Create impact statement (example from MINITEX) that would demonstrate value of MNPALS membership (including specific monetary value) to funding sources or partnerships. This would include any funding bodies (legislative, campuses, MNSCU) and new members.	Exec. Committee officers	January 15, 2007
3. Task force report	Task force	At annual meeting in March 2007
4. Plan for distributing and updating – to be integrated in annual report	MNPALS Exec Director or Todd	Annually

Milestones: Status report at Executive Committee in early February

Names of people who worked on this proposal: Barbara Golden, Sonja Eilertson, Kathleen Ashe

Action planning worksheet

Title of this action step: IT-MNPALS planning integration

Strategy this action would help to implement: Strategic positioning of MNPALS; relationship of MNPALS, MNSCU IT; Delivery of services to users

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

HOW	WHO	WHEN
1. Exploratory conversation with Linda Baer, to determine receptiveness to idea	Todd, et al	ASAP – 2 months
2. Meeting of power brokers in IT-MNPALS to identify levels and areas of interest and participation	Todd, Linda	
3. Larger icebreaker IT-Libs CIOs		
4. Library/MNPALS participation in IT task forces	TBD	One year

Milestones:

Names of people who worked on this proposal: Todd, Joan, Sandra, Keith

NEXT STEPS TO CONTINUE THE WORK BEGUN HERE:

1. Communicate results of these meetings to the consortium as a whole (mailing list and directors)
 - Share draft meeting notes from Barb Deming
 - Seek feedback, saying, “These are our initial plans; we’re planning to move forward and would like your input.” Ask for responses before Feb. Executive Committee/User Council meeting.
2. Participants in this strategic planning submit feedback/refinements/cautions to Linda Richter via e-mail. Linda and the Executive Committee Steering Committee will decide where we’re ready to move ahead, and where further work is needed.

Final thoughts

- We have a lot to do.
- It’s not that we’ve taken on so much new work. This has all been out there. We’ve just organized our thinking about how we’re going to approach the future.