

CODI'S CORNER

CODI Users Meeting

Report by Gretchen Freeman

CODI's annual membership meeting was held in conjunction with ALA on July 8, 1985, at the Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel. Approximately 15 CODI members participated. The meeting was conducted by President Penny Albright.

CODI bylaws were the first item of business. The bylaws were approved and accepted as proposed. Three representatives were nominated and elected as members-at-large of the Executive Board for 1985-86. They are Danny Hales (Suwannee River Regional Library, Live Oak, Florida), Virginia Erland (Burlington County Library, Mount Holly, New Jersey), and Celia Tomlin (American Fork City Library, American Fork, Utah). The Executive Board will propose a dues structure to the membership. They will also request that each CODI library designate a voting representative.

Discussion of the enhancement list for future software releases followed. DYNIX distributed this list in July. Special attention will be given to enhancements that users ranked highest in priority. When proposing enhancements, customers should specify exactly what they would like accomplished and why. Suggestions should be written and sent to both DYNIX and CODI.

The "new user" packet (a sort of "welcome wagon") was also discussed. Members recommended including sample screens, menu screens, circulation policies, library cards, publicity, training manuals and programs, and conversion techniques. DYNIX's program of using members for software testing was also presented and discussed.

Announcement was made about DYNIX's RECALL workshops on March 6-7, 1986. A ski trip is being organized for March 5. The next CODI meeting will be held after the workshops on March 8, 1986.

"The Great Stamp Debate"

by Claudia McCain

Every library contemplating the conversion from manual to automated services has to settle a myriad of procedural questions. One such question in Circulation is: "Do you stamp the due date in the book (on a date due slip, of course) or do you insert a pre-stamped or computer-generated date due slip in the book instead?"

It is surprising how much staff time and energy can be devoted to this subject and how much heat this simple question can generate. Holding to the pragmatic theory that people who actually do the work should help decide how it's done, I found myself embroiled in a lively debate among Circulation staff concerning slipping versus stamping. The arguments seem to run as follows:

PRO SLIP—Stamping is messy. Ink gets on hands, clothes, the counter top, and in the book itself. At Bellingham, we use three different due dates which means that workers must choose between three different stamps. The different stamps tend to clutter the counter top and slow down the checkout process. Besides, it seems reactionary to go back to the old manual stamps when we're installing a new automated system.

PRO STAMP—Putting slips in books takes as much time as stamping them. You still have three piles of date due slips to choose from so either way the actual motions are fairly equal. Slipping books means "unslipping" them when they're returned. Unslipping is time-consuming and patrons often lose the slips and then complain that they didn't know when the book was due. Date due stamps are a handy way to tell how many times a book has circulated. Finally, slipping is thought to be more expensive in the long run as stamps and book pockets cost less than the thousands of date due slips used monthly.

The Circulation staff at Bellingham Public Library (Slippers and Stampers alike) are reasonable people. They therefore desired more facts before making a final decision. In response, I informally surveyed nine libraries in Washington State that have automated circulation systems. All nine stamp the date in the book. One library does use a pre-stamped slip for a particular type of book, but stamps all others.

Several of the libraries surveyed had tried both ways and chose stamping because of the reasons summarized above. None reported any special problems with stamping. Staff whom I spoke with said it was easy to select the right stamp among several and that this didn't noticeably slow them down. And no one cried over spilt ink.

Bellingham Public therefore chose stamping. Our biggest problem turned out to be the stamp itself. We wanted a small, self-inking stamp which would be reliable and sturdy. Some libraries I surveyed use a simple pencil stamp with an ink pad, but we wanted to eliminate the ink pad. Some of the larger self-inkers cost up to 50 dollars. Since we needed to buy 18, that was more than our budget allowed. We finally selected the Zstamper Line Dater (\$22.95), which we found in a local office supply catalog.

Since settling the debate at Bellingham, I've heard that some libraries use a screen printout of the circulation transaction and place that in the book as the checkout slip. I haven't spoken to anyone who's used this approach, but it may be another alternative to consider. If your library is trying this, please let us know how it's working out. We'd also like to hear your library's views on the great "slip vs. stamp" debate.

CODI'S CORNER is always interested in your ideas, questions, problems, and solutions. Please share them with the rest of us by writing to: Claudia McCain, CODI'S CORNER Editor, Bellingham Public Library, P.O. Box 1197, Bellingham, WA 98227.