

Pacific Northwest Chapter/Medical Library Association Technology Committee Annual Report 2003

The Technology Committee was charged to increase the use of electronic document delivery (EDD) within the region. Respondents to our survey last fall (in which a Web form was used to learn about how current EDD users receive and deliver copies, what the positive and negative aspects of their experiences with EDD have been, how patrons have reacted to EDD, and what issues stand in the way of libraries' using EDD) cited "Not sure how to begin" most frequently as a barrier to use of EDD. 31 people cited this reason. To provide a low-stress starting point for EDD use, the committee announced the availability in January '03 of the opportunity for libraries to test their capabilities to read TIFF files. The TIFF format was chosen because Ariel documents are commonly transmitted in this format, and also because we assumed that most libraries have acquired the capability and skill to read PDF files via their everyday use of the Web.

For this test of ability to read TIFF files, we invited libraries to send an email to the Intercollegiate College of Nursing's Anderson Library requesting a test file. This test TIFF file was then emailed to participating libraries so they could verify that it could be opened. Libraries were then invited to update their DOCUSER records to indicate their willingness to accept email delivery via TIFF. We publicized this test via HLIB-NW and used the new Technology Committee section of the PNC/MLA Web site (<http://depts.washington.edu/pncmla/techcom/>) to provide information about what software is needed for reading TIFFs (including the fact that almost all users of Windows computers already have the software on their machines, as do many Macintosh users). Twenty-six libraries had requested test files by February 6, 2003 with three more requests trickling in by the end of March '03 (this included two out-of-region libraries: WYUJWY from Laramie, Wyoming and NDULEX from Bismarck, North Dakota). Four of these libraries were not DOCLINE libraries; four more had already indicated in their DOCUSER records-before the test was announced, as shown by the date last updated of the relevant DOCUSER screen-that they were able to receive TIFF documents. Of the remaining 21 libraries, eight updated their DOCUSER records in late January, indicating their willingness and ability to receive TIFF documents. A Northwest Notes article is in progress that will describe this test, let libraries know that it is still available, and remind participants about updating their DOCUSER records.

Respondents to our survey last fall also cited "Cannot afford scanner" and "Cannot afford software" as barriers to EDD use. In fact, these two combined comprised a greater number than "Not sure how to begin." The NN/LM Pacific Northwest Region plans to offer funding late this coming summer that will provide support for acquiring equipment and software for EDD.

Submitted by Susan Barnes, April 2, 2003