Wyoming Library Roundup

Summer 2005

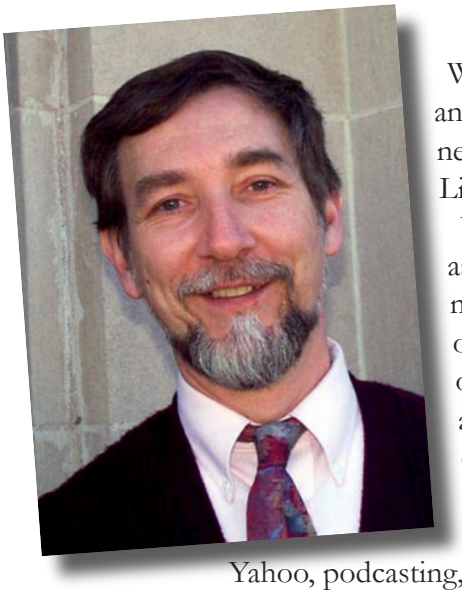
innovation!

WYLD - The Complete Story!

Wyoming Inventors

all the information at your fingertips

brian greene, wyoming state library



What an honor and pleasure it is to be addressing you in what is another fun issue of the Wyoming Library Roundup. This one is near and dear to my work in the WYLD Office of the Wyoming State Library.

Where would the improvements in library services in such areas as information access and seeking and in content and knowledge management be without an openness to innovation and the use of various technologies? For me, some of the earlier library tools or technologies included the typewriter, a Kardex, a catalog card alphabetic sorter, and the ingenious locking and unlocking of catalog drawer rods. One I wish we had then and just love today when its use is necessary is the self-adhering date due slip. Today we are learning to use the technologies found in Amazon, Google, Yahoo, podcasting, Skype, PDAs, smartphones, RSS feeds, blogs, wikis, and blikis to name just a few.

Innovation and the use of technologies do lead to change and are cause for exciting and challenging times. Some of us are filled with dread upon hearing it, others are eager to agree and others ho-hum it away down the halls of missed opportunities. All of us have seen the introduction of many technologies and tools. We would be fools to say that this won't continue and we know there will always be emerging technologies.

While the abacus gets credit for the earliest calculating or computing device I contend that the human body was the real source. Were not the first digital computations done on the digits of human hands? Isn't this where most of us started counting? Many of our ideas (with patents and without), tools, technological developments, and enhancements are extensions or improvements of the incredible human body and improve our day-to-day living. They make us faster, sharper, more efficient and so on.

Yes, change happens, but we can't have innovation without change. Jack Tramiel, founder of Commodore International, is credited with saying, "the minute you're through changing, you're through." His company was the maker of the first all-in-one home computer called the PET in 1977 which included a chip with up to 8 KB of RAM, a keyboard, screen and tape storage.

One of the ads I remember from the early days of Wired Magazine, stated, "To wire the machines is a job, to connect the people is an art." I don't remember what the ad was for but I've always tried to keep that principle in mind. The history of the WYLD Network echoes that thought. Early Wyoming library leaders called for cooperation and real sharing. It had to start with that desire, dare I say, that dream. It took appropriate tools and technologies to support these desires to bring this Wyoming library endeavor to fruition. There was what Lesley Boughton, our esteemed State Librarian, and myself like to call a confluence of opportunity. And the Wyoming library community seized the opportunity.

This issue will enlighten you, provide a few giggles, and for Millennials and non-Millennials alike stimulate some memories. The exercise of looking at where we came from and being aware of what we do today allows us to shape the future of our new dreams and actions.

To wire the machine is a job, to connect the people is an art, to serve those that we serve is a gift. Let's celebrate and with a great shout say, "Hello Future, here we come."

Brian Greene,
Manager, Wyoming Libraries Database (WYLD)
Wyoming State Library

Living in the WYLD WYLD West

How Wyoming's libraries led the nation

Wyoming residents now take it for granted they have a 97,000 square mile library. Even in the smallest branch, they can find any book or DVD in the state – choose from more than 3.5 million items – and get it sent to their home library with a few computer keystrokes.

WYLD Timeline -

As computers, networking and telecommunications evolved, Wyoming's libraries put these technologies to work to make it easier for their users to find and get materials. This process of library automation vastly improved cataloging, circulation and interlibrary loan. Wyoming residents can now find millions of books around the world with a few searches from their computer keyboard – an impossible task in the days of card catalogs and printed book indexes.

1969 – U.S. Dept. of Defense builds ARPANET, the original basis for the Internet.

1971 – First email program

1975 – Microsoft formed

September 1976 – Wyoming State Advisory Council on libraries sets goal of a physical union catalog listing all books in Wyoming libraries.

1977 - "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home." *Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation.*

Sept. 18-19, 1978 – Advisory Council recommends a long-range study on library automation. (Above - Debbie Iverson, Ed Byers, Wayne Johnson, Paul Knoblich, Jean Johnson and Mary Sue Streeper)

Nov. 1, 1978 – State Library installs its first computer terminals.

When the physical library closes at night, they find that their library may be place-based, but it is not place-bound. Fire up the home or office computer and search the library catalog, renew your books or find out if any are overdue. Log in with your library card number and PIN and search thousands of full-text magazines and newspapers. Can't sleep at 3 a.m.? Stumble to the keyboard in your jammies, throw on the coffeepot and read last month's *Field & Stream* – it's in there.

If a library in Wyoming owns it – either physically or electronically – you can find where it is, see it or request it 24 hours a day, thanks to WYLD, the Wyoming Libraries Database. WYLD links nearly 100 libraries across the state, including all 23 county libraries and all 7 community colleges. WYLD has made it possible for every Wyoming resident to use the same vast, statewide library – even in the smallest communities.

Thirty years ago was a different story. Library technology was typically limited to telephone, typewriter and photocopier. As technology evolved, libraries automated: they used computers and telecommunication to do tasks that were time-intensive, inconvenient or even impossible in a manual card-filing system. Library services didn't just expand, they exploded – without a corresponding explosion in budgets.

No other state linked in one consortium as many of its libraries, as many different types of libraries and as early in the game as Wyoming did. It didn't happen overnight and it wasn't always a smooth process. It took vision, planning, dedication and cooperation. At times, the vision exceeded available technology but Wyoming's libraries worked together to make it happen.

"They didn't want to do that because they loved technology," said Brian Greene, WYLD Manager. "They were aware that this technology was out there that might actually help them provide more efficient services to the public."

"A dream of many Wyoming librarians… that Wyoming may have a statewide system using automation to provide the ultimate in library service… may soon come true." -1979

First steps: building the catalog

The heart of every library is its catalog, its collection of bibliographic records describing everything it owns. In the mid to late 1970s, Wyoming's libraries were looking at ways to share their catalogs so they could share their resources. In September 1976, the State Advisory Council on Libraries set as a priority creating a statewide union catalog to provide a single list of books available for interlibrary loan.

The Wyoming State Library (WSL) was the clearinghouse. When libraries received new books, they'd list the Library of Congress Control Numbers (LCCN) and send them to WSL. No titles, no authors, just sheets and sheets of identifying numbers. They were taken to the state's Dept. of Administration and Fiscal Control where information technology staff would keypunch them. The first two-inch thick printout union catalog arrived at libraries in August 1977.

Regional efforts were under way. The

April 1, 1979 – State Library, Archives, Museums and Historical Board (SLAMHB) approves plans for a statewide automation system.

June 1, 1980 – State of Wyoming signs contract with Cincinnati Electronics for a statewide automation system called CLASSIC: Circulation Library Automated System for Information Control. Cost: $750,000.

December 1, 1980 – CLASSIC installation delayed.

1981 - IBM PC introduced.

Wayne Johnson and Jerry Krois at the CLASSIC booth at WLA.

1981 – First "laptop" weighs 24 pounds, has 64 KB of memory and boasts a 5-inch screen. Cost: $1,795.

1982 – *Time* magazine names the computer its "Man of the Year."

January, 1982 – CLASSIC demonstrated at WSL.

Late September, 1982 – Cincinnati Electronics admits CLASSIC software doesn't exist. SLAMHB cancels contract with Cincinnati Electronics and settles out of court.

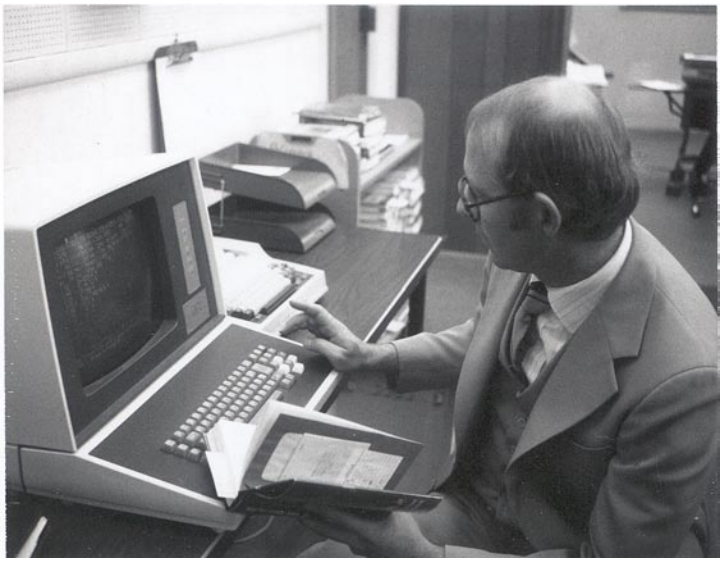
Bibliographic Center for Research (BCR) in Denver had been collecting catalog cards from regional libraries for some time and filing them in massive card catalogs for interlibrary loan.

Library automation systems were beginning to take hold nationally. Vendor representatives were approaching individual Wyoming libraries about possible purchases, but only the largest could afford it. Talk began about a statewide collaboration.

"This was back during the Boom, and the state had more money than they knew what to do with," Wayne Johnson said. Johnson, a Wyoming State Senator, worked at the State Library from 1973 to 1989 and served as State Librarian from 1978 to 1989. "I figured that all the libraries in Wyoming were about the same size as one of the urban libraries that they were selling these to, and if there was some way we could connect libraries together through phone lines, then we could have one database for searching and interlibrary loan and cataloging."

On November 7, 1977 the Wyoming State Library, Archives, Museum and Historical Board's (SLAMHB) five-year plan included the goal of developing and coordinating automated library services. The plan called for an online catalog with statewide interlibrary loan, cooperative circulation and online database searching.

Now came the process of retrospective conversion, converting paper card catalogs to electronic records. In 1978, the Wyoming State Library installed its first computer terminals and joined OCLC, the Online Computer Library Center.



Then State Librarian, Wayne Johnson working on an OCLC Computer at the State Library.

OCLC was founded in 1967 as the Ohio College Library Center, a group of colleges and universities that developed a computerized system of sharing bibliographic records to reduce costs. In 1977, OCLC allowed libraries outside Ohio to join and share records. Today, OCLC's WorldCat catalog has 57 million records in 400 different languages from more than 53,000 libraries internationally.

The Wyoming State Library began a three-year retrospective conversion of its own holdings into OCLC as another step toward a statewide circulation system.

Cincinnati Electronics and adventures in "vaporware"

In 1979, the State Library Board (SLAMHB) approved plans for a statewide automation system. The State Library newsletter, *The Outrider,* said, "A dream of many Wyoming librarians… that Wyoming may have a statewide system using automation to provide the

July 1, 1983 – Wyoming Computer Crimes statute takes effect.

November 4, 1983 – State of Wyoming signs $750,000 contract with Geac for a statewide automation system.

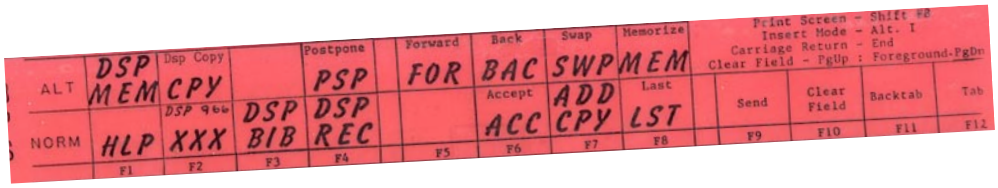
◀ Lesley Boughton, Wayne Johnson, Herb Allard, Ed Byers and Bill Stewart at Geac contact signing.

January, 1984 – Wyoming has first physical union catalog on computer output microform: 420 microfiches, with 215,740 titles.

Jan. 24, 1984 – Apple introduces the Macintosh with the famous $1.5 million, Orwellian "1984" Superbowl commercial. (See it at http://www.uriah.com/apple-qt/1984.html)

February 1984 – Geac 8000 computer installed at WSL.

1985 – "Grolier´s Electronic Encyclopedia," released on the just invented CD-ROM.



A BPS keyboard template used with the Geac system.

ultimate in library service… may soon come true."

A request for proposals went out to vendors, with bids due back on June 13. An automation committee picked Cincinnati Electronics, and the board approved their choice, pending funding, on October 26. Cost would be $750,000: about one-third for the system itself and the rest for telephone hookups, retrospective conversion and system maintenance.

The funding request went to the Legislature during the 1980 budget session. The Wyoming State Library was also seeking a special appropriation for operations to replace the federal funds they used. Federal funds could then be granted to local libraries.

That winter, State Librarian Wayne Johnson stood before the Joint Appropriations Committee. Chairman Jack Sidi told Johnson to pick one or the other: an automated system or state funding of library operations.

"I wasn't even allowed to talk to the people there with me," Johnson said. "I thought to myself well, this is the point in history where nobody in Wyoming has a circ system. Two years from now somebody will … so let's go with that."

On Feb. 12, 1980, the Legislature approved a special appropriation to fund a statewide automated library system. The state signed a contract on June 1 with Cincinnati Electronics on June 1 for their CLASSIC (Circulation Library Automated System for Information Control) system. Installation would start at WSL and a handful of phase 1 libraries. Hardware was expected July 16. Johnson predicted, "by the end of the summer of 1981, every library in Wyoming will have a collection of one million books available to their users through this system."

The summer 1981 goal was not to be. While phase 1 libraries wired their buildings and converted their catalogs, CLASSIC racked up delay after delay. The system was finally demonstrated at the State Library in January, 1982.

Training was slated for July, but it never took place. Shortly afterward, Cincinnati Electronics did an in-house audit and fired staff. In late September, the company admitted the system as promised did not exist. Cincinnati Electronics had marketing materials, a contract, a plan and even an instruction manual. What they didn't have was CLASSIC.

At the time, State Librarian Lesley Boughton was director of Platte County Library. She likes to describe CLASSIC as "the ultimate virtual library – actually the ultimate virtual integrated library system. 'Vaporware' is what it was known as back in its day."

SLAMHB cancelled the contract in January 1983, settled out of court, reimbursed libraries for their expenses and put the remainder back into the till for a second try.

Back to square one and a half

"We were out four years and blood, sweat and tears," Boughton said. "On the other hand, there's a lot you can learn from failing. So we went back out in the market. I wouldn't say we were cynical, but you had to show us the goods."

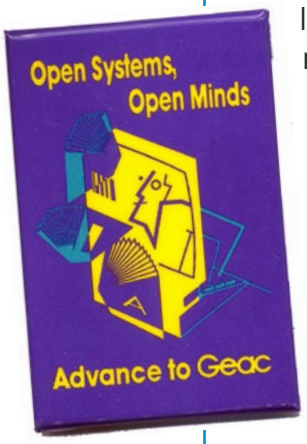
This time, they worked with consultant Hank Epstein and traveled on-site to Toronto and Salt Lake City to see systems already in place. A new RFP

Summer, 1985 – 528,721 titles from state's libraries loaded in Geac database. Libraries using email.

November, 1985 – Microsoft Windows released. Apple sues.

May 19, 1986 – Geac system passes final acceptance test.

October 1, 1986 - Laramie County Community College is first academic library to go live circulating materials on Geac.



December 10, 1986 - Platte County Library is first public library to go live circulating materials in Geac.

January 1987 – More than 600,000 titles in Geac and 750,000 linked items.

Late April, 1987 – Laramie County Library System shuts down for three days so volunteers can help relabel 150,000 books before going "live" on Geac circulation system on May 1.

September 1, 1987 – Wyoming State Library, Platte County Library, Laramie County Community College and Casper College all circulating materials on Geac.

October, 1988 – Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library tests Geac circulation in children's section.

1989 – World Wide Web invented.

March 1990 – Wyoming goes WYLD! Users' Council names the system the Wyoming Libraries Database, or WYLD for short.

went out, and bids were opened on May 5, 1983.

On Nov. 4, 1983, the State of Wyoming signed a $750,000 contract with Geac, a Canadian company, for an automated circulation and interlibrary loan system hardware and software. Included was a full maintenance parts supply and an on-site maintenance engineer. In February 1984, the main Geac 8000 computer was installed in the state's Emerson Building, just down the street from WSL.

The delays had consequences for member libraries. By 1985 or 1986, the University of Wyoming chose to withdraw for its own system. Uinta County chose not to circulate on Geac, although they did eventually rejoin WYLD.

The next year was filled with installing hardware, wiring, testing and building the catalog. "The main thing is – it was the only thing that counted then, it's the only thing that counts now – is that database of bibliographic information," Johnson said. From June to July 1985, they loaded the Geac database with 528,721 titles libraries could link to their individual holdings.

In December, *The Outrider* reported that libraries had been linking their barcodes to titles in the database since mid-October and were beginning to use Geac's email system. The database was growing by 7,500 records a month.

Geac passed its full load test in January 1986. Twelve of 14 member libraries circulated almost 4,500 in 70 minutes. Deputy State Librarian Jerry Krois said during these tests people would "play like they were at a circulation desk and check in and check out books. It was really a comedy of errors when that occurred, as I remember."

The first two libraries to go live actually circulating books on the system were Laramie County Community College on October 1, 1986 and Platte County Library on December 10, 1986. Boughton said Platte County had invited media and local officials to join them for what proved to be an anti-climactic event. "We invited someone important to come in and check out the first book," she said. "You had a hand wand and you scanned it, it went into the computer and the book was checked out. It was like, 'And now what do we do?' I mean it was so simple. We were all standing there expecting to have to do something and it was way too simple."

Laramie County Library System issued 5,000 new library cards and shut down for three days so volunteers could help relabel 150,000 books before they went live on Geac in late spring 1987. Director Ed Byers told *The Outrider*, "The library will be losing a basement full of 'carting trays,' and library staff will not have to file cards in between patrons. It will be a hell of an improvement."

Janis Leath and Lucie Osborn look on as an unidentified woman works on Geac.

April 3, 1990 – Campbell County Public Library System goes on WYLD.

July 1991 – Circulation and interlibrary loan up statewide; WYLD credited.

1993 – Internet connections now for sale to consumers. Use explodes.

April 1993 – Geac fails first response time test after $180,000 upgrade to Geac 9000. System passes in May after additional work.

October 1993 – Wyoming librarians rank WYLD their number one priority from the state library

1994 – Netscape Navigator written.

January, 1994 – "Interconnection of 10,000+ computer networks allows 10 million people from 100 countries to share resources." – *description of the Internet in The Outrider*

January 19, 1994 – Gov. Mike Sullivan cruises the Internet at the State Library.

February 22, 1994 – Wyoming Legislature updates now sent out daily on WYLD to county libraries.

Corky Walters and Marc Stratton moving in the new DRA system

August 12, 1994 – WYLD switches vendors to Data Research Associations (DRA). New system will let library users search the WYLD CAT online catalog.

Ed Byers, Gov. Mike Sullivan, Susan Simpson, Sandra Donovan, Lucie Osborn, Legislator Ellen Crowley and Legislator Rex Arney celebrating another WYLD milestone.

Libraries kept joining, and the database kept expanding. In early 1990, the user's council named the system WYLD – the Wyoming Libraries Database.

Making it work

In the early automated days, the main challenge was keeping everything running. Geac was a good system for its time, but ancient by today's standards. A 650MB hard drive was the size of a washing machine. Libraries used "dumb" terminals that couldn't do anything but run off the Geac system.

Marc Stratton, WYLD Systems Manager, joined the state library in February 1988 and said he spent most of his time at first fixing the Geac terminals that broke down regularly. Geac's field engineer, Dave Gonce, had created a box that would let them use personal computers instead. Thinking this might save money, Stratton bought a couple of boxes from Gonce. He took one apart and decided he could build it himself.

"I'd build them in my basement, and in fact, I'd build them out of parts I could get at Radio Shack, but cutting the holes in the things was the hardest part," Stratton said. "One night I was in my basement building a box, and I was using a box knife and cut myself on the finger and got like eight stitches. So I've got some stitches to show for the history of WYLD."

Stratton and others hauled PCs and boxes to member libraries, installed them and pulled wires. Maintenance costs dropped and WYLD no longer needed an on-site field engineer.

Telecommunications could be a nightmare. Without Internet, libraries either had to dial in or be hard-wired in on a phone line – and phone lines in Wyoming were less than state of the art. Every time WYLD added a library, someone had to add another serial port and modem to the Geac machine and run more wires to it. Dial-up libraries had blocks of time when they could connect to the main Geac computer and catalog their new items or look for books from other libraries. The WYLD

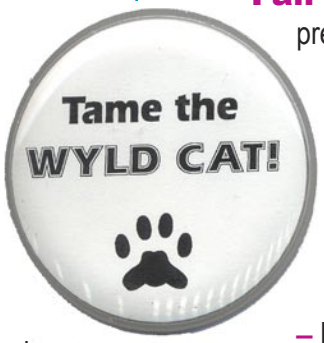
February 1995 – 53rd Wyoming Legislatuare approves $1.3 million to upgrade all county, academic and some branch libraries to DRA

April 20, 1995 – WYLD goes live on new DRA system and users start learning to look up books on the screen instead of in the card catalog.

State Librarian Helen Meaders, Gov. Jim Geringer and Orval Meier at the WYLD ribbon cutting.

June 14, 1995 – Gov. Jim Geringer attends "Follow the tracks of the WYLD CAT!" open house at State Library and praises WYLD growth and cooperation.

August 22, 1996 – East High School in Cheyenne is first school in state to have full access to WYLD. Database now lists three million books and 1,500 magazines.



September 1996 – Electronic access to 1,400 magazine titles added. Nearly half are available in full text.

Fall 1996 – Libraries preparing to go from text-based public catalog to DRA's graphical user interface (GUI) system, WEB2.

May 11, 1997 – IBM's Deep Blue beats reigning World Chess Champion, Garry Kasparov.

office had to play "time police."

Trish Palluck, WSL library specialist described it: "It was so funny because they'd call and say, 'All right, it's my turn and whoever's on before me isn't off! I can't get in!' And you would just have to unplug them. You would unplug the modems and cut them off."

File management was difficult on Geac. Nightly backups took reels upon reels of tape. The after-hours WYLD office pager went off frequently. "I don't look back on those days with a whole lot of fondness, quite honestly," Stratton said.

Even with upgrades, Geac was hitting its limits. "I don't think it really was designed to support as many libraries as we wanted to hang on there," Stratton said.

Back to the RFP process

After another round of planning and opening bids, the state signed a contract with Data Research Associates (DRA) for a new system to replace Geac on August 12, 1994. The big new feature was an OPAC, an online public access catalog. The days of card catalog drawers were numbered.

Fifteen libraries were expected to go online with DRA in spring 1995, with others phased in from 1996 to 1998. In February 1995, the Wyoming State Legislature sped up the process with $1.3 million to upgrade 21 libraries to DRA immediately. Outgoing Governor Mike Sullivan and incoming Governor Jim Geringer had both recommended the funding.

DRA went live on April 20, 1995 – less than a year after the contract was signed. That summer, library users saw a major change as computer terminals first sat beside the old card catalogs and eventually replaced them. The online catalog – WYLDCAT – used text commands, and instructions were by every keyboard. On June 14, 1995, Gov. Jim Geringer officially cut the ribbon at a "Follow the Tracks of the WYLD CAT" open house at Wyoming State Library.

"Wyoming was into the 21st century long before the 21st century arrived, and with technology and hardware and software it's only going to be different and only going to be better,"
-Wayne Johnson

Advances in telecommunications

Instead of serial communications, DRA used Ethernet, which is still standard today. Geac had a modem in the rack for every library linked to WYLD. DRA had one modem, and one line to replace a hundred or more.

On a wider scale, the mid-1990s saw the explosion of the Internet, the demand for bandwidth and the State of Wyoming's response to the need for more telecommunications. Boughton represented libraries on the new State Telecommunications Council from 1994 to 1998. At the time, there were serious gaps in telephone service; some places still had party lines. The State of Wyoming wanted to plan for all its agencies' needs and lay down a telecommunications backbone.

"Libraries were really ahead of most agencies in Wyoming," Boughton said. "We were on the cutting edge. We were the only agency that had a network of

Summer 1997 – Marcive project puts records for 100,000 federal documents dating back to 1976 in WYLD CAT.

June 1997 – Wyoming ranks fourth in the nation for library use.

October 1997 – WYLD changes its name to LASSO, Library Automated System and Services. The name doesn't stick.

1998 – Google launched.

February 1998 – Legislature approves $839,920 to upgrade libraries to WEB2.

Summer 1998 – WSL adding bandwidth for WEB2. Libraries upgrading computers to at least 66 MHZ, 16 MB RAM and Windows 95. Six Alpha sites chosen for initial migration.

1999 – Napster created

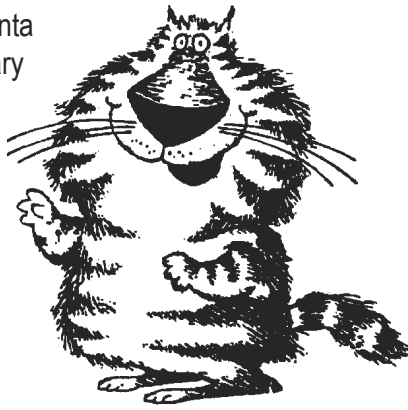
1999 – The term "blog" is coined and blogging spreads in popularity

Early 1999 – Telecommunication issues delay WEB2 and slow Wyoming's Internet access

February 1999 – WYLD posts library guide to Y2K on the web

July 1999 – Telecom resolved, and libraries get green light for WEB2.

2000 – Uinta County Library migrates to WYLD. All 23 county libraries are now full members.



March 2000 – Legislature approves $240,000 to license several full-text article databases for use by every resident of Wyoming.

customers we wanted to connect."

In fall 1996, WYLD libraries began preparing for WEB2, a catalog with a graphic user interface (GUI). It promised point and click ease for patrons, but also a need for more bandwidth to support graphics. The Legislature approved more than $800,000 to upgrade libraries in February, 1998. Libraries began adding bandwidth and upgrading PCs, but by early 1999, Wyoming's continuing telecom difficulties delayed WEB2 and slowed Internet access.

Telecommunication improved over time. By summer 1998, libraries got the green light to go graphic.

Delays at DRA and a new migration

DRA offered significant improvements and cost savings over Geac, but the next generation of library software was evolving. DRA had a new system in the works, TAOS, but it had multiple delays and difficulties. UCLA was one of the first to implement TAOS – with disastrous consequences. On April 17, 2001, WYLD's governing board decided to seek bids for a new system. Sirsi (now SirsiDynix) was chosen from seven vendors, and the contract was signed on February 7, 2002.

Every implementation had gotten faster, and this was to be the most aggressive schedule yet. Between February and July, WYLD staff installed software, transferred or "migrated" the database, tested it and trained library employees statewide. On July 1, 2002, every WYLD library moved from DRA Classic to Sirsi UnicornConsortia – the first time they migrated in one shot instead of in phases.

Chris Van Burgh and Jim Nations getting the word out about WYLD at an exhibit booth.

Unicorn had a friendlier face. The "iBistro" front page ("iLink" at academic libraries) had hot links to best seller lists. Catalog records often had book covers, reviews and summaries. Users could log in, set their preferences, check on their accounts, place holds and renew materials, all using the Internet. All WYLD libraries run on Sirsi today.

One last piece went in spring 2003. WYLD added Fretwell-Downing's VDX software for interlibrary loan. VDX was not made by Sirsi, so they had to figure out how to make the two software programs work together. Now library users could request a book from any library, any hour, any day from their own computer.

"When we turned VDX on at midnight, there were patrons at home that were already placing requests for interlibrary loans by 12:30," Palluck said.

More than just a library catalog

Wyoming's libraries have more than physical holdings. Even before Wyoming State Library had computers they were finding ways to make licensed databases – fee-based electronic

Jan. 15, 2001 – Wikipedia launched

April 17, 2001 – WYLD starts looking for new vendor after multiple delays of DRA's latest software

May 2001 – GoWYLD! (http://gowyld.net) portal page launched

January 2002 – State Library asks Legislature for funds to connect last 27 libraries to the Internet

February 7, 2002 – State signs contract with Sirsi for UnicornConsortia software

July 1, 2002 – Entire state migrates from DRA to Sirsi. Library users find hot web sites, bestseller and recommended reading lists, book jacket pictures and reviews in "iBistro," and can log in to "My iBistro" to track their library accounts and preferences

Summer 2002 – Gates Foundation gives 100 computers and 10 servers to Wyoming libraries; 56 locations benefit

Brian Greene, Frank Galeotos, Marc Stratton, Bobbi Thorpe and Lesley Boughton signing Sirsi contract.

information sources – available to Wyoming libraries and residents. Magazine article and indexes were added over time, available at libraries.

In March 2000, the Wyoming State Legislature appropriated $240,000 to license several full-text databases for every Wyoming resident. These contained thousands of magazines, news articles and other information sources. Any resident could go on the Internet, log in with their Wyoming library card and PIN and search these from their home or office. (*Access at http://gowyld.net/dbases.html*)

"The Wyoming Legislature has been absolutely wonderful in understanding the importance of providing information to every resident of Wyoming without regard to where they live," Boughton said. "So whether you lived in Lusk or Cheyenne or Wheatland or Meeteetse, you got access to those resources. If you put the money into the licensing, every person gets equal value. It's pretty amazing."

Conclusion – put desperation & people reasons

It's a misnomer to call VDX the last piece because the WYLD office, librarians around the state and SirsiDynix still look for ways to improve library service through technology. WYLD may not be on technology's bleeding edge, taking nicks and cuts, but they try to stay just behind it.

From building computer hardware in the basement to making two programs play nice, WYLD has a long history of innovating, of making things work. The biggest innovations were not the technology, however, they were how people worked together.

Even in the late 1970s, some libraries were beginning to band together in consortia. What set WYLD apart is no other consortia at the time included different types of libraries. No other consortia went statewide with as high a participation rate. It took wrangling and consensus and commitment to achieve this. Maybe Wyoming had few enough libraries to all sit down in one room, or maybe it was the desperation of librarians who wanted their patrons to have more, but knew they couldn't do it alone on limited resources.

"We knew that all libraries needed to participate to make it truly a statewide resource sharing system, and that is a commitment that really came from Wayne Johnson and his vision," Boughton said. "It's done more for Wyoming residents in terms of their access to information than could ever have been imagined at the time we started. I think Wayne had that sense, Wayne had that vision and he was really able to pull us together and have us understand."

The WYLD team in 2000: Bobbi Thorpe, Marc Stratton, Corky Walters, Desiree Saunders and Trish Palluck with the Hasenpfeffer the rabbit.

The end result: "Wyoming was into the 21st century long before the 21st century arrived, and with technology and hardware and software it's only going to be different and only going to be better," Johnson said.

"It was the people," he added. "It was the librarians of Wyoming, the library boards of Wyoming and some legislative leaders who could look forward, who could look ahead and who trusted the library community in Wyoming. When something's accomplished, especially something like this that is major – and this was *major*, the only state in the Union that ever did it – it's always the people."

-SUSAN VITTITOW

Spring 2003 – addition of VDX software allows library users to place their own interlibrary loan requests through the computer

2004 – Nearly 100 participating WYLD library locations include all 23 county libraries and 7 community colleges, as well as many school libraries and special collections. The system has more than a million bibliographic records, 3.6 million item records and 355,000 registered patrons. It is searched nearly 1.7 million times a year.

March 2005 – Trish Palluck of the Wyoming State Library receives "Paraprofessional of the Year 2005" from *Library Journal*.