

## **Report of the Executive Director**

With the addition in 1995 of North Carolina Central University to membership in the Triangle Research Libraries Network and subsequent forging of a new memorandum of understanding concerning library cooperation among the four major universities in the area, TRLN made a significant change in program direction. Since its formal founding in 1977 the organization's central staff were largely engaged in software development. While to the outside world TRLN represented perhaps the best example in the country of collaboration for building library collections, library staffs at the four institutions saw the consortium as largely a technical support operation. It was TRLN that developed an integrated online library system for its members, led the libraries through a migration to commercial software, and prototyped automated identification and delivery of materials. TRLN was undoubtedly successful and innovative with its technical programs, but the consortium's leadership recognized the need to broaden the organization's base, build upon cooperative structures developed over decades, and capitalize on the enormously rich information resources of its members. Technology would remain an essential part of the TRLN effort, enabling and enhancing it, but a wide-ranging program of collaboration among the institutions would be created, a program beyond the ability of any one of the universities to carry out alone, one resulting from the expertise resident in the individual libraries and facilitated and focused by central staff. The past year is the first to offer full opportunity for TRLN to pursue that new programmatic emphasis.

During 1998/99 TRLN brought to a close the document delivery software project that had been funded in previous years by federal grants. The project resulted in significant learnings about the elements necessary for successful implementation of a document delivery system among the libraries, learnings which were essential to a delivery service now being planned. This past Spring a TRLN presentation on document delivery in a consortial environment was made at the national conference of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Staff resources devoted to the project now have been redirected into other areas of priority.

In keeping with TRLN's objective of collaboration for greater gain, a number of workshops, meetings, presentations, and teleconferences were conducted during the year to further train staff members and develop their skills and with the purpose of informing faculty and others about programs and services available. Offerings ranged from report writing associated with the online library management system and capabilities of electronic reserves systems in use at TRLN institutions to desktop support for technological applications and issues surrounding the year 2000 problem. Vendor presentations on acquisition approval plans for consortia and on electronic books were organized by TRLN and the services of the Center for Research Libraries, an international library cooperative, were highlighted at an April event. Staff development workshops promoting better customer service and improvement of supervisory skills were conducted in the summer and the fall.

Collections working groups in six broad areas have been created to bring together bibliographers and reference librarians for the purpose of reviewing cooperative agreements currently in place and for designing new arrangements. Committees are at work studying collections overlap, standardizing and extending library loan periods, and setting up plans for joint action in the event of disasters such as fires and floods. Joint licensing of electronic resources is an effective way of leveraging available dollars. Where appropriate TRLN pursues subscriptions to digital materials on behalf of its members. Recently a licensing time-line based upon successful models used in other consortia was created.

A promising development involving cooperative collections building and sharing of staff comes from a proposal of the Triangle South Asia Consortium to be named an undergraduate national resource center for South Asia activities. TriSAC, a collaborative of the same set of institutions which make up TRLN,

intends to work with the libraries in creating a single collection of materials distributed among the four institutions for support of South Asian instruction. In addition to acquiring items in vernacular languages, grant support for a shared bibliographer is anticipated.

In the area of scholarly communication TRLN has created a database of faculty members at member institutions who have some editorial affiliation with scholarly journals. The lists encompass hundreds of individuals and will provide target audiences for conferences and other meetings through which faculty can be engaged in a discussion of scholarly communication issues and identification of solutions to mutual problems. In a related effort the consortium is pursuing possible partnerships with the Duke University and the University of North Carolina Presses for electronic publishing projects and possibly the development of a scholarly publishing resource center in the Triangle.

In addition to facilitating the work of standing committees and organizing the programs planned by them TRLN staff have engaged in an outreach effort to better acquaint personnel in the libraries with the programs and services of the organization. This outreach has taken the form of presentations at libraries, production of an electronic newsletter, and creation of a TRLN web site where minutes of meetings, program materials, committee rosters, and governance documents can be found. The effort will carry over into the new fiscal year when for the first time in nearly a decade a meeting of staff members from all of the TRLN libraries will be held.

Cooperation among the TRLN libraries and collaborative planning was furthered in January through a retreat of the Council of Directors at which a set of principles of cooperation were considered. The principles are seen as the underlying basis for consortial priorities and practices and will provide important guidelines for organizational activities in the coming years.

The range of activity continued and newly embarked upon during the past year is a direct consequence of the "reconceptualization" that occurred in 1995. TRLN is no longer a software development enterprise, although technology is integral to what it does. It is not only engaged in traditional cooperative collections development, although coordinated acquisitions remains a critical endeavor. Instead it is a full-fledged information consortium drawing upon the capabilities and strengths of each of its partners for the overall benefit of the university clientele.