

**Report of the Executive Director
to the Triangle Research Libraries Network Governing Board
for the year 2000/2001**

Broad collaboration among the libraries at the four university members of the Triangle Research Libraries Network encompassed activities in resource procurement, sharing, and preservation, joint investigation of information technologies, and coordinated programming for staff development. The consortium also was involved in a major scholarly communication project during the 2000/2001 year.

TRLN has been known throughout the country for its early success in cooperatively developing traditional print collections. With area studies in particular, agreements have been forged over many years to reduce duplication of acquisitions, thereby providing a richer array of resources for student and faculty use. These efforts have continued in the past year and have been extended to include access to an expanded range of material in digital formats. Cooperating with the Triangle South Asia Consortium, main libraries on the campuses are acquiring publications in a coordinated, language-based approach. A project is underway to identify all past collecting agreements, formal and informal, that have been established among the institutions, with a view toward standardizing and more widely publicizing them. The consortium has negotiated licensing agreements for access via the World Wide Web to over 1500 full text journals, most of these in the sciences. Fully a third of the titles are new ones and all are being made available at significant savings to member libraries.

If collections are to be shared among clienteles found at locations as far as twenty-five miles apart require efficient methods of delivering requested items are necessary. In January, following a successful trial during calendar year 2000, the consortium formally established an expedited interlibrary loan service that targets delivery of books and photocopied articles within a forty-eight hour time period. To make walk-in borrowing by students and faculty easier, member libraries no longer require a separate TRLN identification card. A user from one TRLN institution need only show a valid campus ID to borrow books from libraries at other TRLN universities.

Access to collections is dependent upon knowing about existing materials in a subject area and whether the items of interest are available. For many years TRLN libraries have had in place sophisticated online systems for identifying, acquiring, cataloging, and providing teaching, learning, and research publications. With some of these systems now a decade or more old, staff are exploring options for their upgrade or replacement.

The enormous investment in book and journal collections—now numbering almost 14 million volumes—makes care and preservation of these valuable resources essential. Therefore, anticipating accidents or even disasters is an important part of library planning. Last summer the consortium staged a mock event in which personnel from all of the universities practiced recovery techniques on a variety of water-damaged materials. In a real disaster staff from each TRLN library are prepared to quickly assist their colleagues in a knowledgeable and coordinated way.

A symposium held in the spring considered collaboration in a changing digital environment, exploring new ways in which libraries around the country are working together and how their approaches might be applied in the Triangle. This symposium is an example of the continuing education, training, and information sharing programs sponsored by TRLN throughout the year. Twelve events attracting almost 600 staff were conducted on topics such as online systems backup and contingency planning, virtual reference software, stress management, XML, library security, interlibrary loan processes, technical information, and training techniques. Meetings at which vendors demonstrated online products being considered for licensing drew hundreds of other participants to TRLN gatherings. In the largest single event of the year, more than 140 individuals attended the TRLN annual meeting to hear presentations on consortial and campus programming and to interact with their colleagues.

In addition to educationally focused activities, staff from TRLN libraries meet regularly to conduct the business of the organization through committee, council, and task group structures. Over fifty meetings of these groups involved in program planning and development took place last year and there were numerous individual consultations and informal group sessions. Alternatives to physical meetings are being explored, with one TRLN committee testing desktop videoconferencing as a means of bringing together staff without the necessity of travel.

TRLN central staff traveled extensively in support of the consortium's work and on behalf of its members. At least one staff member participated in each of the continuing education, training, information sharing, and governance/organizational activities noted above, which required visits to each of the four campuses and to most member libraries at one time or another. Central staff also represented TRLN in a host of local, regional, national, and international settings.

In efforts to realize greater operational efficiencies, cataloging managers are considering a pilot project to direct foreign materials to libraries with relevant language expertise to avoid either long delays in processing or incurring duplicative expense for specialized staff. To free up much needed space science, technology, and medical librarians are exploring methods for retaining but a single consortial copy of seldom used, books and periodicals.

Over the year, as part of a continuing involvement in scholarly communication issues, TRLN pursued a partnership with the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), an international organization that seeks to build a more competitive marketplace for journals. The result of this collaboration was a 17-page booklet intended to acquaint editors of science and technical journals with alternatives to working with high-priced commercial publishers. In yet another attempt to influence in a positive way the direction of scholarly publishing, TRLN made its voice heard along with many others in the academic world protesting unwarranted and discriminatory practices on the part of the journal *Nature*.