SUNYergy
SUNY Libraries
Working Together

Adieu MultiLIS; Bravo LAIP
by John Schumacher, OLIS

All of us know that you can find good things and bad things about all library management systems. Likewise, we know that success for programs like the Library Automation Implementation Program (LAIP) and the SUNY*Connect* LMS is driven by the people involved, the community created more than by the software or the technology that is used.

With that in mind, I'd like to commemorate LAIP and the people involved in that program. Hudson Valley Community College was the last New York-based Multilis site to make the switch to the SUNY*Connect* LMS. So, LAIP ended March 23, 2005.

OLIS, the SUNY library community and a world-wide group of Multilis users thank the system librarians, system administrators and the other key people who made LAIP work. Special commendation goes, I think, to the SUNY librarians who were involved in both the migration to Multilis and the migration to ALEPH. You know who you are!

From the beginning (we're talking the late 1980s and early 1990s) the community surrounding LAIP created and sustained. Where would we have ended up if the community colleges had not been included in the program? At times all those cluster meetings seemed a bit too much, but this was where large parts of that community were forged. That spirit of cooperation and community was enhanced by shared projects such as the development of the Multilis Web2 OPAC and shared authorities among clusters. Some solace was had when we all shared the same growing pains; much help was to be had from those with early (and later) successes. A tradition and habit of working together to make an LMS more useful was preparation for SUNY*Connect*.

A couple of quotes come to my mind in thinking about LAIP, in thinking about the equity of the program and thinking about how it symbolizes the skill and art that librarians (SUNY librarians!) bring to collaboration.

The first quote is from Ellen Ehrig (recently retired from Alfred State College). "John, without LAIP it might have been 10 years before we were automated" (ca. 1993). LAIP brought network connections to any SUNY regardless of size or location. Think of the coming of the internet, students with an expectation of online, networked information and where a SUNY school would be without those components.

The second quote is from Patty Bentley (Plattsburgh). "Years from now when they have a great [interactive network], I hope they remember that it was librarians who got the thing rolling." It is not the technology per se, but how the technology is used. Along with a spirit of collaboration librarians have a focus on service and quality of service that continually requires emphasis.

So, where would be today without LAIP? All 40 of the LAIP libraries chose to be part of SUNY*Connect*. Jamestown, Ceramics and Alfred University were part of the Multilis user group, but not part of LAIP. All three are part of SUNY*Connect*. Now we have an even larger community sharing with one another and with the world. Good work people!

Celebrating LAIP!
Quotes from the Community

First of all, congratulations to all of our libraries and the OLIS staff, past and present, for working together so well.

And now, a comment: without this kind of system-wide cooperation, commitment and vision, many of our libraries would not be where they are today in terms of the services and information we are able to offer. Justifying our budgets and our need for technology and content in a community college library carries authority when we are part of a state-wide initiative.

Thanks to LAIP, OLIS, and now SUNY*Connect*, we have a much better package of library services and content to offer to our students at Nassau Community College.

You folks at OLIS are unbelievable in the leadership and key assistance you provide in helping us to move our libraries forward. You do so much with such a small group, and you always seem to be in the right place at the right time!

Nancy Williamson, Nassau Community College

Wow! what an achievement for all the OLIS folks - you deserve a hearty congratulations, a trip to Aruba, several stiff drinks, and perhaps a year of free counseling! We all really do think that OLIS did an amazing job - against the odds and, in my opinion, with not enough staffing. So a big CONGRATULATIONS to OLIS; you are an amazing team.

Greta Earnest, Fashion Institute of Technology

I think Plattsburgh gets to claim several Multilis/LAIP records, including the first to go live (January 20-someting, 1992, I believe). Though Cobleskill was scheduled to be live first, they had local network problems and we plugged our terminals in the night before classes began for the Spring semester. I was stunned after telling a student who walked up to a cluster of terminals that the system wouldn't be available until the next morning and he said, "It works now, I just found what I was looking for." Now, we are one of the last to leave. It was/is exhiliarating to think that this was the first cooperative, shared over SUNYnet, for live links to eleven very disparate and geographically scattered sites. I loved the experience and still have great affection for all the pioneers of LAIP Cluster 1. BUT, we couldn't have done it without our colleagues in OLIS.Congratulations.

Patty Bentley, Plattsburgh

I wanted to note that one big reason for the success of LAIP and MultiLis has been John Schumacher's excellent support of the MultiLis system for many years.

Andy Perry, Binghamton

It has been quite a ride. Morrisville was the host site for Cluster 3. It was an interesting experience being on the host campus. I remember long trips to Potsdam and Watertown for cluster meetings. It has always been a great experince because of the people. Trying to write reports in a programming language written in French was a real experience. Documentation translated literally from the French was always fun as well. Congratulations to Hudson Valley [on their 3/23/05 STP] and thanks to all of the LAIP participants and especially to OLIS.

Bill Drew, Morrisville

Well, speaking as the "LAIP Librarian" from the former Big Apple Cluster back in the day, I always equated LAIP and OLIS, so I congratulate both on a great achievement. Seriously, our library will always be grateful for the LAIP initiative -- it moved us into automation, it got our administration to make a commitment, and it made the library a technology pioneer on our campus. (That may not be saying much, considering our network growing pains, but still... we had the computers before most other departments did, and it's all thanks to LAIP.) I can't thank the OLIS staff enough for all the help you've been to us right from the get-go. I'm raising a virtual glass of champagne to Carey, John, and all the LAIP librarians. Well done!

Lorraine Weberg, Fashion Institute of Technology

I, too, was in the old Big Apple Cluster ("Cluster 4") and I have very fond memories of John, Carey, and others from the LAIP Office. And I even miss multiLIS a little! Thank you so much for the invaluable support [from OLIS] over the years. Congratulations.

Mark E. Smith, Purchase

Congratulations on migrating the last site. That is such a huge milestone. Believe me, I know, from my years in implementation... All my best to you and Carey and the gang. Please remember me to everyone.

Barbara Cormack, formerly of SUNY Office of Library Services now at Innovative Interfaces in California

Here's to the fabulous contributions that Carey Hatch, John Schumacher, Robin Manley, Laura Murray, Barbara Cormack, Holly Rossi, other OLIS staff I've not named, the NYSmUG organizers (Natalie Sturr, Tim Hartnett, Andrea Weas, and others), LAIP Advisory Council members, the LAIP Enhancements groups, the NYSmUG participants, and especially the SUNY library staff who made the SUNY implementations of multiLIS start up, run, and get better over time! I'll put in a special word for Joanne Reid of multiLIS, who seemed to transcend the vendor barrier and support the SUNY needs, though even she could ask the technology and the vendor to go only so far. And finally, one cannot leave ruminations of multiLIS without the "larger-than-life" personalities of director Madeleine Balcer, merger mogul Michael Mellinger, and the French report generator (commonly referred to as J@!#%**!). Lorraine has encapsulated the important campus contributions that LAIP promoted -- most notably a beneficial forcing of our campuses into the networked age with fiber-optic cabling and extending networks to our libraries. The pioneering spirit co-habited with the collegial necessity for all LAIP participants. We did SUNY proud. Salud!

Dave Ritchie, Cortland

I guess this spells "fin" for the report generator ... we must accepter = vrai.

David Moore, Schenectady

I would like to echo Lorraine and Mark's comments. John, Carey and the other original OLIS and LAIP librarians, as well as the members of our "Big Apple" cluster, exemplified the best meaning of the word "consortium." They were always supportive and helpful and truly "there for us" when we needed them. Their vision and efforts helped with our first library automation system. We will always have fond memories!

Janette Rozene, Fashion Institute of Technology

Quite often with technology projects we tend to focus in on software, hardware and features. The reason why LAIP was so successful was the great support we received from OLIS and the collaboration between campuses. I am happy to see this continue with ALEPH and SUNY*Connect*. Keep up the great work!

Kevin McCoy, Suffolk Community College

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