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EXPERIMENT IN INFORMATION SHARING:

THE LLL-ATLANTA UNIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

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CONTENTS

Abstract	1
Introduction	1
Workshops for Atlanta University Faculty and Students	1
Selected Comments on the First Two Workshops	5
Workshop for Library Personnel from Other Small Colleges and Universities with Significant Minority Enrollments	6
Selected Comments on the Third Workshop	8
Conclusions	10
Acknowledgments	10
Appendix 1: Participants in the September 23-24 Workshop for Library Personnel	11
Appendix 2: Biographical Sketches of the Authors	13

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EXPERIMENT IN INFORMATION SHARING:
THE LLL-ATLANTA UNIVERSITY WORKSHOPS

ABSTRACT

A series of information retrieval workshops was held at Atlanta University during 1976 to acquaint library personnel from low-budget and/or minority colleges and universities with modern on-line information retrieval technology and give them hands-on experience with some of the equipment involved. Information retrieval specialists from Lawrence Livermore Laboratory conducted the workshops, with the assistance of the School of Library Service at Atlanta University. Enthusiastic response from the participants indicates that these workshops were highly successful in accomplishing their objectives. The workshops are briefly described and the responses of the participants to evaluative questionnaires are reported.

INTRODUCTION

Recently Lawrence Livermore Laboratory and Atlanta University have participated in a series of three information-retrieval workshops. These were designed, in part, to answer the question, "Can a large, multimillion-dollar, federally funded R & D laboratory share its knowledge and experience in the field of on-line retrieval with minority and/or low-budget colleges?"

The first two workshops were for faculty and students of Atlanta University, most of whom had little or no previous experience with on-line retrieval systems. The third workshop was for librarians and library administrators from a number of other small colleges and universities with significant minority enrollments.

WORKSHOPS FOR ATLANTA UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STUDENTS

The first workshop was held February 3-6, 1976, principally for the faculty and graduate students of the various schools and departments of Atlanta University. It was attended by about 150 participants, each of whom attended at least one 3-hour lecture and hands-on session.

The second workshop was held September 20-22, also primarily for Atlanta University faculty and students, and was attended by about 80 participants.

For the most part, those who attended these workshops had little or no previous experience with on-line retrieval systems. In particular, the workshops provided for the students and faculty of the School of Library Service at Atlanta University their first opportunity to translate their classroom concepts and theories of on-line retrieval into practical and "real" experiences.

Less than a month after the first workshop, one of the more immediate results was that the Chemistry Department of Atlanta University entered into a contract with an on-line retrieval system service. Other departments expressed interest in doing likewise, but were prevented by severe financial constraints.

Participants in these two workshops were asked to complete evaluative questionnaires on the workshops and make any comments they wished about the program. Table 1 gives the results of the questionnaire, and some of the comments about the program are reproduced after the table.

Table 1. Questionnaire responses by students and faculty attending the first two information-retrieval workshops at Atlanta University on February 3-6 and September 20-22, 1976. These participants represented various fields of study including business, biology, chemistry, education, and library service. Some 230 people participated in the two workshops, and 151 or about two-thirds of them returned evaluation questionnaires.

Questions	"Yes" answers		"No" answers		Undecided or no answer
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
1. Were the objectives of the workshop clear to you?	138	91	6	4	5
2. Were the objectives achieved?	129	85	2	1	14
3. Did the workshop stimulate your interest in modern technological advances in information retrieval?	147	97	3	2	1
4. Do you think you will become more competent in your profession, as a result of this workshop?	103	68	14	9	23
5. Was the workshop well organized?	134	89	6	4	7
6. Were the discussions too detailed?	26	17	118	78	5
7. Was enough time allocated for the workshop?	111	74	31	20	6
8. Was sufficient time given to each aspect of the workshop?	112	74	22	15	11
9. Would you like to attend another workshop of this type?	143	95	8	5	-
10. Was this workshop really meaningful to you?	132	87	6	4	9
11. Do you think all students in your school should be required to participate in such a workshop as this?	104	69	31	21	10
12. Did you find the workshop very interesting when it first started?	120	79	18	12	9
13. Was interest sustained for the entire workshop?	112	74	25	17	9
14. Was the coverage too technical?	26	17	119	79	4
15. Was the jargon too confusing?	27	18	123	81	1

Table 1. (Continued).

Questions	Answers					
	<u>Very stimulating</u>		<u>Stimulating</u>		<u>Boring</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
16. How would you rate the workshop?	68	45	78	52	2	1
	<u>Too rapidly</u>		<u>Satisfactorily</u>		<u>Too slowly</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
17. How were the new facts and ideas presented?	10	7	127	91	1	1
	<u>Very much</u>		<u>Some</u>		<u>Very little</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
18. How much did you actually learn from the workshop?	61	40	81	54	8	5
The following two questions asked for written answers:						
19. If your interest was not sustained for the whole three hours, at what point did you begin to lose interest? (Please write in.)	The vast majority of the participants indicated that they did not lose interest.					
20. If sufficient time was not given to each aspect of the workshop, what areas to you think should have been given more time? (Please write in.)	The vast majority of participants who answered this question suggested that more time should have been allowed for "hands-on" experience at the terminals.					

Selected Comments on the First Two Workshops

The evaluation forms included space to write in comments about the workshop in accordance with the following instructions:

Please use this space to "sound off" about the workshop. Anything that crosses your mind will be welcomed here.

Some representative comments are reproduced below.

"The workshop was very stimulating and should be included in the School of Library Service's Program."

"I found the workshop very very interesting and as a result I will be seeking further training in this retrieval 'field'. More should be given — a must for information scientists!!"

"Thank you for coming."

"The workshop was very stimulating and worth the three hours. It would be worthwhile for anyone to attend."

"The workshop recognizes a need for modernizing the AU Library Services..."

"The workshop was interesting. Things technical turn me 'off', but I'm fully aware that I must learn to live and work in this technological age. The terminology used was like Greek to me, but the vocabulary hand-out will be helpful when I go back and try to digest the material."

"This workshop stimulated my interest in the use of computers in the library. I am also interested in taking the course in library automation."

"This was a very good workshop but three hours are just not enough for a person new to this field. I personally feel we should have two or three times to visit and work not only with the computers but to also ask questions. It must be remembered that all this jargon is totally new and one feels overwhelmed when the lectures are first beginning. Also maybe lectures should be given around the computer. Slides are alright but since you have the actual computer why waste time. PLEASE COME AGAIN."

"As a whole, I believe the workshop was a success. There were many terms which were new to me but before too long I caught on well enough to be

able to handle a simple search myself. The more I see it, the more it makes sense."

WORKSHOP FOR LIBRARY PERSONNEL FROM OTHER SMALL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
WITH SIGNIFICANT MINORITY ENROLLMENTS

The third workshop, on September 23-24, was structured differently in that it was designed only for librarians and/or library administrators from small colleges and universities with significant minority enrollments.* (A list of participants is presented in Appendix 1.) The format of the third workshop was organized on the premise that low-budget colleges (most minority colleges and universities fit this description) are at a distinct disadvantage in providing high-quality library services to their users. Hence, an introduction to the techniques of supplementing their limited resources via on-line bibliographical sources would represent a vehicle for supplying more information to their users and thus provide better library services.

This workshop was held over a two-day period so as to give a complete overview of on-line retrieval systems and adequate time for hands-on demonstrations.[†] The results of the evaluations from this workshop are presented in Table 2. Even more important than the formal evaluations were the rapport and enthusiasm of the workshop participants as indicated by their comments. Several of the most representative of these are reproduced following Table 2.

* ERDA provided funds for travel and housing of the invited participants and other costs of this workshop. LLL provided travel funds for its employees and assumed costs in conjunction with the first workshop.

[†] The ERDA/RECON and SDC/ORBIT system were used for this purpose.

Table 2. Questionnaire responses by library personnel from small colleges and universities with significant minority enrollments who attended the third workshop at Atlanta University, on September 23-24. Twenty-four people attended the workshop, and 23 of them completed questionnaires.

Questions	"Yes" answers		"No" answers		Undecided or no answer
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Percent
1. Were the objectives of the workshop clear to you?	22	96	1	4	-
2. Were the objectives achieved?	21	91	-	-	9
3. Did the workshop stimulate your interest in modern technological advances in information retrieval?	23	100	-	-	-
4. Do you think you will become more competent in your profession, as a result of this workshop?	23	100	-	-	-
5. Was the workshop well organized?	22	96	-	-	4
6. Were the discussions too detailed?	4	17	19	83	-
7. Was enough time allocated for the workshop?	19	83	2	9	8
8. Was sufficient time given to each aspect of the workshop?	20	87	2	9	4
9. Would you like to attend another workshop of this type?	23	100	-	-	-
10. Was this workshop really meaningful to you?	23	100	-	-	-
11. Do you think all students in your school should be required to participate in such a workshop as this?	16	70	4	17	13
12. Did you find the workshop very interesting when it first started?	21	91	-	-	9
13. Was interest sustained for the entire workshop?	21	91	-	-	9
14. Was the coverage too technical?	1	4	22	96	-
15. Was the jargon too confusing?	-	-	23	100	-

Table 2. (Continued).

Questions	Answers					
	<u>Very stimulating</u>		<u>Stimulating</u>		<u>Boring</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
16. How would you rate the workshop?	22	96	1	4	-	-
	<u>Too rapidly</u>		<u>Satisfactorily</u>		<u>Too slowly</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
17. How were the new facts and ideas presented?	1	4	22	96	-	-
	<u>Very much</u>		<u>Some</u>		<u>Very little</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
18. How much did you actually learn from the workshop?	20	87	3	13	-	-

The following two questions required written answers:

19. If your interest was not sustained for the entire workshop, at what point did you begin to lose interest? (Please write in.)	Almost all the participants indicated that their interest was sustained throughout.
20. If sufficient time was not given to each aspect of the workshop, what areas do you think should have been given more time? (Please write in.)	A good one-half of the participants indicated that they would have liked more hands-on time at the terminals.

Selected Comments on the Third Workshop

The evaluation forms included space to write in comments about the workshop in accordance with the following instructions:

Please use this space to "sound off" about the workshop.
Anything that crosses your mind will be welcomed here.

Some representative comments are reproduced below.

"The workshop was stimulating, informative and challenging. Thanks for the opportunity to participate."

"The Consultants were very knowledgeable. Participants were congenial. Atmosphere was conducive to learning."

"There was enough interest generated that I am most anxious to get to learn more in depth about the retrieval process, to be able to learn to work independently, and to be able to complete projects of meaning."

"I think the workshop was great."

"I have attended an ERIC Workshop in the past but it all sounded like Greek to me. They only had the indexes to show you how to search. In this workshop each participant got the chance to actually do the On-line searching and it definitely has more meaning. We were also acquainted with other systems which certainly enlightened my knowledge about Information Retrieval."

"I would like to see other workshops presented at other locations in addition to the continuation with Atlanta University. Contacts should be made with other minority schools that are considering computerizing, and ones that have Library Science/Library Media programs. The specialists did an excellent job in conducting the workshop. They are to be commended for a job well done."

"Excellent presentation and explained in language simple enough for a novice to understand."

"Being a participant in this workshop was a very enriching experience. Since our library is completely non-automated the direct exposure to automation and its significance in research will prove invaluable to me as I attempt to justify our needs to the administration. The most unique feature was the 'hands-on' segment because it allowed me an opportunity to actually operate — for the first time in my life — a computer. Equally impressive was the dedication of the consultants and the insights they provided. I have attended many workshops in the past but I would rate this one as the most successful and meaningful one. There was not a single moment in which my interest ceased and I feel that I accomplished a great deal. I am very grateful to LLL for providing me with this unique opportunity to explore this new informational innovation. I was completely unaware, prior to this workshop, of the many different types of bibliographic access the computer provides."

CONCLUSIONS

We feel that, on the basis of the data collected, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a large, multimillion-dollar, federally funded R & D laboratory can successfully share its knowledge and experience in the field of on-line retrieval with minority and/or low-budget colleges. Moreover, this experiment was a huge success, and a great need for further workshops of this type is indicated.

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Dr. Virginia Lacy Jones, Dean, The School of Library Service, Atlanta University.

Ms. Louise Morrison, Assistant Director, Atlanta University Center Computation Center.

Mr. Grover Simmons, Director, Atlanta University Center Computation Center.

Mr. Casper Jordan, University Librarian, Trevor Arnett Library, Atlanta University.

Mr. Tom Hughes and Ms. Carol Alexander, Office of Public Affairs, U.S. ERDA, Washington, D.C. 20545.

Miss Judy Wanger, SDC Search Service, Systems Development Corporation, 2500 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90406.

Mr. Manuel Perry, Equal Opportunity Administrator, OEO, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, P.O. Box 808, Livermore, CA 94550.

Mr. Scott Buginas, Library Manager, Technical Information Department, Lawrence Livermore Laboratory.

Mr. Leon Yount and Mr. Ray Plemens, ERDA-RECON System, ORNL.

APPENDIX 1

PARTICIPANTS IN THE SEPTEMBER 23-24 WORKSHOP FOR LIBRARY PERSONNEL

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APPENDIX 2

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE AUTHORS

H. Leonard Fisher (M.S. Physics) is a Technical Information Specialist with the Research Information Group at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. He has conducted various information retrieval workshops and seminars including a one-week workshop at Atlanta University, February 1976.

In 1975, he was guest speaker at both the Department of Defense Annual On-Line Users Meeting and the Special Libraries Association (S.F. Bay Area Chapter) Education Seminar on Networks and On-Line Searching.

Previous assignments at LLL were as research physicist with the Biomedical and Theoretical Physics Divisions where he authored several papers on the transport of radionuclides.

Mr. Fisher is a past chairman of the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of the American Society for Information Science and a current member of both RESA/Sigma Xi and Sigma Pi Sigma.

Isom Harrison, Jr. (M.S. Chemistry), is a Technical Information Specialist for the Research Information Group at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. He has conducted various information retrieval workshops and seminars including a one-week workshop at Atlanta University, February 1976. He has also several times been guest lecturer at programs presented by the University of California system-wide campus information service. Mr. Harrison is active in community and civic organizations such as the South Stockton Youth Athletic Program and various church groups.

Mr. Harrison is coordinator of the Technical Information Department's Co-op program in information science jointly sponsored by Atlanta University and the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. He was instrumental in the establishment of a Summer Institute Program in Information Retrieval and Library Science for small minority colleges and/or colleges with significant minority enrollment to be held in the summer of 1977.

Lorene Brown (Ph.D. Library Science) is an Assistant Professor in the School of Library Service at Atlanta University. She joined the Atlanta University Faculty in 1974 and teaches in the areas of Cataloging, Technical Service, and Library Automation.

She has served as the liaison person from the School of Library Service in coordinating the Information Retrieval Workshops with the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory.

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