

Maine Infonet Board Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 3 at 12:30 p.m. at the University of Maine Orono

The meeting was called to order at approximately 12:30 p.m. by Steve Norman.

Attending were James Jackson Sanborn, Nancy Grant, Bryce Cundick, Daisy Singh, Lori Fisher, Steve Norman, and Kevin Smith (the latter by Zoom so needing to provide his own lunch), as well as Infonet staff members Alisia Revitt, Nelson Eubanks, Albie Dunn, Tim Pellet, and Vince Garin.

Minutes of the August meeting were approved.

Nelson told about migrating multiple libraries to Polaris and migrating Colby-Bates-Bowdoin to Ex Libris/Alma and integrating those libraries and even more new libraries with other ILS systems through INN-Reach into MaineCat, all while continuing to provide regular support to MaineCat libraries.

Alisia also talked about those migrations and the difficulties of tech support. Libraries definitely need to submit tickets to request tech support, but she lovingly referred to the current ticket support system as a “plague.” TDX is a different ticket software package that would be great. Too much is happening at Infonet now, though, to take on a project to switch the ticket software. All of the ticket solutions that have been entered into the current software would have to be migrated to any new software. AI (which might be used for tech support) is currently prohibited for Maine state government use. Lori noted the challenges for some library purposes of State IT requirements.

Tim is serving on the MSL Database Task Force. He has been working with a contracted programmer on authentication scripts for Fogler Library.

Albie talked about ensuring functionalities across systems with all of the different platforms now in MaineCat. Staff are finding surprises and making discoveries. Sometimes, they see that things are not working or are working differently than expected.

Bridge libraries were mentioned. Bridge libraries are when a library (normally, a small library) requests ILLs as a “patron” of the “main” library (normally, an ARRC library like MSL). The goal is eventually to convert to a different (not bridge) method for these ILL requests.

For training on all of the new systems, Lynn Uhlman often gives “drop in” help by Zoom. Alisia anticipates “co-viewing” assistance for the Alma migrations.

It was noted that getting Alma and Triple-I to work together on solutions is hard (especially with 360⁰ and Ex Libris), which is somewhat surprising since they are part of the same corporate structure under Clarivate. Vince expressed that it is very interesting to work to resolve questions between end users and ILS vendors.

Infonet staff were asked for suggestions on how to make their work better or more effective. 1. Continue to co-pollinate the different libraries in the different systems. Encourage participation by libraries of different sizes, types, and geographic locations. 2. More focus on “enhancements”—that is, contracted work by vendors to make MaineCat’s cross-connected systems (Polaris, Sierra, Alma, etc.) work smoothly together. Use MaineCat’s size and scale of economy as leverage in negotiations on contractual matters connected with such work.

The primary goal up to this point for MaineCat has been growth. For the future, the goal should be fine-tuning, streamlining, maximizing efficiency, making it all work together as well as possible, and consolidating the gains.

There ought to be an Infonet presence at the statewide New Director Orientations (maybe about a 30-minute presentation?). Nearly 65% of library directors in the state are new within the last four or five years. An introduction to how MaineCat works and what Infonet does is needed.

A *really big* issue is cataloging in MaineCat. Deb Follansbee (the contracted cataloging support person funded by Minerva) has retired. Ellen Conway is also retiring from her cataloging support position. Minerva has recently been trying to address the question of what to do about cataloging training or support. Throughout Maine, there has been a massive turnover of catalogers in the past few years. By the time any flakiness in MaineCat’s catalog is noticeable, it may already be very late in the game.

There is a definite need for a central cataloging position of some kind. Lori thought that MSL is the most natural place for such a position. There is no timeline, though, for when that might happen. It was noted that cataloging is a necessary part of librarianship.

Regarding reciprocal borrowing and a “statewide card”—lots of questions are going to the Infonet staff. More consistent messaging would be good. Reciprocal borrowing within all of intra-Minerva would be helpful (then, after that, within all of MaineCat).

The board expressed its deep appreciation for all that Infonet staff do. What the staff have accomplished in the past few years with all of the migrations, integrating new libraries into MaineCat, and keeping it all working has been amazing—like juggling sabers and burning batons while on a unicycle!

Filling Infonet board vacancies was discussed. Further ideas for a MILS representative were brought up. Possibly, in the future there could be a representative from a school library or a very small public library (though the challenges of finding someone who could commit the time to fill such a position were noted). The goal for now for community college libraries is to foster cooperation among those libraries so an Infonet board position would be beneficial in the future.

Infonet’s end-of-year financial report was reviewed. Lori moved, Bryce seconded that the report be approved. Motion carried.

James reviewed his report.

The idea of “branding” (perhaps with the help of MSL) for Infonet came up—something like an annual report including “here’s what’s happening at Infonet.”

Lori stated that progress on the Library Ecosystem effort has not been rapid. The next meeting will be on October 18. Bryce will attend.

Collection development and reconsideration policies will be discussed at the next meeting.

Lori said the MSL Database and Van Delivery Task Forces are progressing well. The deadline for the completed surveys is in October. The next step will be to review the RFPs from the last cycle. After that, RFPs (probably plural) will be sent out before January 1.

E-book licensing issues will be discussed at the next meeting.

Lori said that legislation with disincentives (as was done in Illinois) for book banning might be coming.

The next meeting will be on December 4 at 1:30 at MSL (depending on weather!).

The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.