TITLE: Can Librarians Afford the Cutting Edge?
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PUBLICATION TYPE: Presentation
DATE: 2003
VENUE: Keynote Polaris Users Group, Syracuse, NY.
ABSTRACT: A discussion of digital reference and a call for more software development in the library world.
KEYWORDS: virtual reference, open source, catalogs, innovation
Can Librarians Afford the Cutting Edge?

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Don’t Panic

- Technology and Standards are Learned Languages...
  - just Like French…
  - or MARC
- Technology (Internet/Software) is the Price of Respect
Buying on the curve
Technology Adoption in Libraries

• The Library field is not always well-served by vendors from other communities
  – OPACs and Databases
  – Digital Reference and Help Desks
• Cutting Edge Open Standards
  – Dublin Core, NISO AZ, OAI
Build Versus Buy

• The More you Pay, the Less Reliable the Software
  – Remedy, PeopleSoft
  – The “Consultant Class”
    • Sybase, Oracle

• Cost of Software versus Salary
# Build Versus Buy

## Computerworld's 14th Annual Salary Survey

### Staff and Entry Level (Page 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Average Salary</th>
<th>Bonus</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Network administrator</td>
<td>$52,736</td>
<td>$4,277</td>
<td>$57,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce network administrator</td>
<td>$58,741</td>
<td>$5,446</td>
<td>$64,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information security specialist</td>
<td>$62,013</td>
<td>$4,268</td>
<td>$66,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior systems analyst</td>
<td>$63,711</td>
<td>$5,362</td>
<td>$69,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems analyst/administrator</td>
<td>$63,766</td>
<td>$5,194</td>
<td>$68,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior systems programmer</td>
<td>$63,732</td>
<td>$5,293</td>
<td>$68,925</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior programmer</td>
<td>$54,383</td>
<td>$5,039</td>
<td>$59,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior programmer/analyst</td>
<td>$61,803</td>
<td>$5,049</td>
<td>$66,852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Build Versus Buy

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• Cost of Software versus Salary
Open Standards (Alphabits for Adults)

- XML
  - XML Schema, XSL, XSLT
  - DTD, XQL
- Dublin Core
- RDF
- NISO AZ, Z39.50 (ZING)
The Open Source Revolution

• “Copyleft”
• Operating Systems
  – Linux, FreeBSD (MacOS X), Windows: $274.95
• Databases
  – MySQL, Postgress
• Content Management
  – Zope
• Office
  – OpenOffice
OpenOffice

Project "Freedom"
Migration to OpenOffice.org 1.1

- Business case
  - Massive annual license fee savings
  - Central support costs reduced
  - Minimal migration cost
  - Reduced storage/archiving
  - Enable migration to thin client computing
  - Extend life of existing desktops 'indefinitely'

5 year savings
The Open Source Revolution

• “Copyleft”

• Operating Systems
  – Linux, FreeBSD (MacOS X), Windows: $274.95

• Databases
  – MySQL, Postgress

• Content Management
  – Zope

• Office
  – Star Office
Scripting Kiddie vs Coding Hacker

- The Internet has **LOWERCED** the bar on coding skills:
  - One Click Web Server
  - HTML by Falling on the Keyboard
  - Open Scripting Tools
    - PHP, JSP, JavaScript
  - Vendor Cousins
    - ASP, Cold Fusion
Advantages of Building

- Creation of Intellectual Property
  - Licensing and Revenue Generation
- Better Relationship with Existing Vendors
  - Get Paid to be a Guinea Pig
- Re-Center the Library in the Community
  - Build Partnerships in the web of information
    - County/City Offices
    - IT Departments
- Control
Disadvantages of Building

- Significant Cultural Shifts
- Increased Personnel Costs (and Disparities)
- False Starts
Some Bottom Lines

• Buy in mature markets
  – OPACS
• Build in early markets
• Adopt Technology People and Skills into Culture
  – Define librarianship as a set of technical skills
• Buy for Support, but Ensure the Support is There!
• Become Comfortable with TMTLA
So WHY Should Libraries be at the Cutting Edge?

- Digital Libraries Equals Empowerment
- “Research” Focus versus “Library” Focus
- “Old Style Librarians” Equivalent to “Ignore”
- NO Digital Library without a Digital Librarian!
Questions?