A Challenge: Technology and the Kalona Public Library

A patchwork of Amish, Mennonite, and Midwestern values, the town of Kalona, Iowa, features a public library housed within two rooms, located in the city's Community Center. The common sight of horse-drawn buggies brings charm to this city of almost 2,100 residents; by cooperative agreement, the library serves its municipal population, rural Washington County residents, and the city of Riverside, by contract. A staff of four employees (consisting of 1.5 FTEs) operates in a two-room area, totalling 2,800 square feet, within a building constructed in 1914 as a high school, one that is not sufficiently wired for the placing of computers or video equipment. Like other rural Iowa libraries, the Kalona Public Library (KPL) faces monumental barriers to adequately participate in the current technology explosion and to completely fund a new library within the next decade, in great part because the state provides no funding for its libraries.

Background on the Problem

Within a designated region of comparable nearby communities, Kalona contains the smallest collection per capita (4.7 items) (Lawson, 1997, p.3) and expended $12.71 per capita for the fiscal year of 1995-1996, the lowest expense noted in this category (Lawson, 1997, p.3). During fiscal year 1996- 1997, the library made 916 acquisitions and calculated its collection at 9,633 items (Lawson, 1997, p.3). Prior to 1995, the library operated solely on a $24,000 budget, to which a city-wide levy appropriated an additional twelve thousand dollars in FY 1995-1996 (A. Skaden, interview, September 12, 1997), thereby increasing the funds by a forty percent margin. Functioning within this severely limited budget, the Kalona Public Library daily combats a negative appearance that resulted from twenty years of neglecting collection development and weeding, as well as from no concern with increased funding. This lasting impression, until recently, created apathy within the city council, which rarely lent its support or approval to requests for increased funding.

With property taxes being quite high for a community of its size, Kalona's city officials frequently earmark funds solely for collection development, to the detriment of other library concerns. A 1996 city-wide levy for new technology failed to pass by almost sixty percent (A. Skaden, interview, September 12, 1997). Current budget allocations reveal that the director and her staff have a fund of only fifteen hundred dollars for technology acquistion (A. Skaden, interview, September 12, 1997). Within this

atmosphere of funds dispersal, the library director envisions a new, desperately needed facility in the next eight years (estimated at over one million dollars) and widely expanded collections as a remote possibility, despite the facility challenge occupying the majority of the library's resources in the next five years (A. Skaden, interview, September 12, 1997).

It is immediately apparent to patrons, library staff, and visitors that the present computer hardware and other technology are not up-to-date nor adequate to meet educational needs and basic computer user demands. All computers found within the library have been donated from local businesses or patrons. Within the main floor area, four workstations are found:

* An Apple Macintosh which offers ClarisWorks for word processing. Included here also is a laser printer for patron needs.

* An Apple IIe, used primarily by children and younger adults solely for games. There is no word processing capability here, nor any major, current software.

* A Hewlett Packard computer which is aged and used only for games by patrons. The unit was donated by Proctor and Gamble offices located in Iowa City, Iowa.

* A 386 PC with a laser printer, donated by the Kalona City Telephone Company (KCTC), a local cooperative. This station offers WordPerfect, an external CD-ROM drive with six disk capacity, the library's sole Internet connection, and Grolier's Encyclopedia (via a CD). This unit serves as the link to the State of Iowa Libraries Online (SILO) project, a statewide union catalog and communications system. Likewise, the workstation processes ILL requests; the library's funds purchased this computer's software, its CD-ROM drive, modem, and provides for monthly Internet access. This same station provides the cataloging software, BiblioPhile, for the director and one assistant in charge of the ongoing MARC conversion project.

Despite being older equipment, the computers are heavily used, with FirstSearch frequently employed for reference questions. The library is a member of the SILO Project, but the local public schools, particularly the elementary and high schools, are not participants. After electing to have its local telephone cooperative provide Internet service, the library experi-

enced problems in service quality, particularly when attempting to design and install a website to the local server or when accessing the local Internet server.

Of immediate concern to this study are the apparent obstacles which this dearth of technology causes for the library staff. Daily, the director and her staff face an inability to meet the searching needs of patrons and watch as many local students travel elsewhere for course resources (A. Skaden, interview, September 12, 1997). A clear disparity in the community is clear; as the local public schools expand with new media centers, direct Internet access, and technology purchases (secured from education agencies and grants), the Kalona Public Library functions with outdated materials. After learning that many of the local schools established individual WWW sites, the library chose to do the same in the spring of 1997, appointing the spouse of a staff member to design the first library website. Despite his efforts, the site remained invisible due to a failure on the part of KCTC to notify the library of its proper directory address (Skaden, email, September 9, 1997). Those seeking the site would never find it, and in terms of content, the site merely reflected a simple brochure, offering operating hours and information on basic services.

In the midst of a technology explosion within the MidPrairie School District, the library staff subsists with one computer for the MARC conversion process, and this same workstation serves patrons with Internet requests. Competing tasks constantly force staff to abandon operation concerns for the sake of patrons at this workstation. Three of the four workstations contain no standard software (word processing, spreadsheets, etc.) that could be employed for staff or patron needs. The 386 workstation simply cannot compete with WWW visual and speed demands; sites requiring high memory and capability are difficult, if not impossible, to access.

In direct relationship to the library staff's needs are those of the students who frequent the library. Resources are quickly checked out, especially on the junior high and high school levels, before the staff realizes an assignment needing such items has been given. Local teachers frequently take their classes elsewhere for library orientation and reinforce the idea that Kalona's offerings are ineffective for course needs. Presently, there are no designated links from any of the schools' websites to the public library, and vice versa. In the effort to increase student knowledge of the library's collection, the director authorized the library's WWW site creation, but problems with the service provider meant an inability to publicize the location.

Rural Library Technology: General Concerns

In spite of severely limited budgets and the current automation trends, Kalona, like other rural public libraries, faces both theoretical and tangible concerns when entering this additional realm of service. Inherently, demands for recreational or leisure items are strongest within rural libraries (Vavrek, 1995, p. 43); nevertheless, technology continuously is viewed as the sole means to surviving in a increasingly complex society. Challenges facing rural libraries, in terms of automation, erupt from numerous concerns, such as : (1) inadequate funding for necessary hardware and software; (2) local situations involving Internet service providers and quality of service; (3) national pressures towards achieving automation; (4) usage policies for Internet services and targeting electronic resources to meet patron needs; (5) a lack of professionally trained staff and continuing technology education for staff; and (6) an absence of strategic planning for technology due to daily operation demands. For the Kalona Public Library, all of these conditions affect its technology status, and after much consultation with the director, it was decided that a technology plan would be an ideal vehicle for addressing these obvious concerns.

When compared to their urban counterparts, rural public libraries are 'disadvantaged' in resources and highly constrained by economic factors (Senkevitch, 1994, p. 662). Federal government studies from the early 1990's revealed rural areas declining in income levels, employment rates, and total population (Senkevitch, 1994, p. 663). These same documents also noted that almost eighty percent of American public libraries were located in cities or towns with less than 25,000 people, and of this eighty percent, one third of the surveyed libraries had user populations of less than 2,500 (Vavrek, 1995, p. 42). The recent "1996 National Survey of Public Libraries and the Internet" polled a randomly selected body of almost 1,100 public libraries; those libraries classifying their 'legal service population' as less than 5,000 were identified as rural facilities, often marked by a lack of financial resources and professionally trained staff (McClure, 1997, p. 2, 4). U.S. Bureau of Census data from 1996, contained within McClure's survey, indicated that 78.3 percent of the U.S. population "is served by a public library that has an Internet connection" (McClure, 1997, p. 6). Estimates reaching towards March, 1997, revealed a tentative 91.0 percent population strata having Internet access through a local public library (McClure, 1997, p. 6).

In the midst of the present technology explosion, rural libraries can clearly identify the benefits of offering Internet service to their patrons :

(1) the ability to view and use Internet-based information; (2) communication among library professionals via the Internet; and (3) enlarged reference capabilities with Internet service (Saupp, 1997, p. 56). However, restricted budgets constantly force these same libraries to make heavily weighted decisions, in terms of technology. Automation is costly, and unless such costs can be recovered in the long term, many libraries must choose to offer less than adequate services. The sheer cost of communication services and systems, coupled with the availability of state-based funding are the greatest electronic acquisition barriers for most rural libraries (McClure, 1997, p. 5). Outside pressure from statewide intiatives and the ever-present technology focus within public schools demand that rural libraries become part of the electronic era. An average of 4.2 percent of a public library's budget is devoted to Internet technology; for rural libraries, the percentage ranges from 1.7 to 3.8 (McClure, 1997, p. 9). For the Kalona Public Library, operating on an annual budget of $36,000 per fiscal year, such costs are tremendous, given other operational needs. Like other libraries within rural communities, Kalona's technology situation is an example of automation trends facing small American libraries.

Rural Library Technology: Costs, Politics, and ISPs

In September of 1996, the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) allocated $150 million in federal funding to begin in 1997 (continuing through 2002), with the intentions of improving library service on a nationwide scale (Saupp, 1997, p. 51). Originally, the plan prescribed each state library agency receiving about $2.75 million for dispersal among its library system (Saupp, 1997, p. 51). For the state of Iowa, allocation hinges upon a library meeting a given set of criteria, and at the lowest level (Tier I Funding for small communities), meeting specified standards in such areas as budgeting, board meetings, certification of staff, operation hours, book return policies, and local ordinances (Enrich Iowa,1996, p. 6). For most rural libraries, costs associated with networking are the greatest deterrent to providing Internet service. Unlike larger communities, rural areas face unique, often very problematic situations when deciding on an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

Political Definitions and Biases

To define what is meant by a 'rural' area, studies typically resort to state-established guidelines or national standards; even so, the definition seems to encompass several interpretations. For some, the definition refers

to any community of less than 5,000 as a user population; for others, a per mile, person concentration is used for classification. The U.S. Census Bureau classifies "...areas and places with populations under 2,500 to be rural" (Clark, 1996, p.25). Regardless of definition, rural areas which feature clustered communities suffer greatly in the allocation of LSTA funds, since census records may typically group smaller townships, thereby classifying an area as 'urban' due to the incorporation (Saupp, 1997, p. 55). Likewise, the tax levies for rural communities seem to reveal disproportionate reasoning— often, a rural library serves patrons from several communities, but typically, only those patrons who reside locally (as determined by census data) pay the taxes which support the facility (Saupp, 1997, p. 55). This reasoning also transposes itself into telecommunications providers, for Internet access, in some rural areas, can only be achieved through a long-distance call, not a local service. Studies have also shown that rural library access problems may not be due to a lack of local or regional networks, but an underpowered telecommunications system, ill-equipped to handle Internet demands (Senkevitch, 1994, p. 665).

Internet Service Providers

Trends continually point to Internet installation at central library facilities, not rural branches (Saupp, 1997, p. 55). With no differences found in the willingness of patrons to use new library technology, whether in rural or urban areas, studies have repeatedly emphasized the education of rural users in technology, as well as that of the library staff (Senkevitch, 1994, p. 665). Proposals have suggested the formation of Rural Area Networks (RANs), service providers built around geographical concerns, rather than commercial or functional boundaries; rural areas frequently find service providers devoted solely to commercial interests, not the communities' needs or library's wishes (Saupp, 1997, p. 58). Networking of rural libraries continues to foster debate over standardizing access rates; LSTA guidelines particularly noted that such matters must be addressed at the state level (Saupp, 1997, p. 55). Options for service providers outside the commercial spectrum include local government connections, educational organizations, regional networks, and free-net (Saupp, 1997, p. 58). Ironically, in areas where rural libraries experience major cost dilemmas in funding Internet access, public schools are often totally networked and receive major grants for technology. Such a situation clearly exists in the Kalona area, where both the elementary and middle schools in the MidPrairie School District have recently acquired new technology, have Internet access within school media centers and most classrooms, and receive major funding from state agencies. The issue of networking rural

public libraries and local public schools has met with marked success in Montana and some Canadian areas; studies on the topic are lacking, and no apparent studies have been conducted on the subject, in terms of Iowa schools and its libraries in sparsely populated areas. For rural libraries, especially those in Iowa, the 'benefits' of Internet access are multi-faceted, revealing negative aspects, as well as convenience.

Rural Technology: Personnel Concerns

Despite its image of ease and immediate gratification, technology is "...difficult to use, lacks consistency, and is in a constant state of revision" (Walster, 1995, p. 43). Automation, especially in a rural library, will force modifications to tasks, to the organization of personnel, and to the allocation of resources. Identifying the specific technology needs of a rural community involves an immense dedication to planning, large amounts of time which many small staffs simply cannot spare. Realizing the scope and abilities of users is crucial in selecting technology forms; the library must prepare its resources (the collection and outside funding sources) for the introduction of new technology (Walster, 1995, p. 41). Studies indicate that employing strategic planning in the technology selection process will enable a staff to make all decisions applicable to the purchase, and in the course of planning, the library's unique needs will be identified (Walster, 1995, p. 41). Inherent in this ability to do long-range planning are professional backgrounds of the library personnel and their skills, in terms of the Internet and new technology.

Consistently, national and regional studies state that a lack of professionally trained staff poses the greatest problem towards integrating technology within rural libraries (Walster, 1995, p. 43). McClure's 1996 national survey noted that significant decreases in ALA-accredited full-time employees (FTEs) within public libraries declined at the rate of 11.1 percent within Midwestern libraries (McClure, 1997, p. 4). The number of professional staff, as well as costs for operating and material expenditures, were directly associated with the legal user population area for a given library (McClure, 1997, p. 4), implying a dearth of trained professionals in rural areas. In many cases, a rural library will have a certified, degreed professional as its director, but support staff typically do not have graduate, or even undergraduate, educations. Real needs exist in offering continuing education, especially in technology, for librarians within rural areas, because automation constantly forces greater demands on staff and frequently causes a need for additional hiring (Martin, 1996, p. 34). A lack of computer proficiency or Internet proficiency in rural library staff may

account for the glaring statistics which McClure's survey revealed—70 percent of public library staffs with a user group of less than 9,999 never use e-mail or use it less than 25 times a week (McClure, 1997, p. 11). Forty-three percent of said staffs never use Internet listservs or professional discussion groups in a given week (McClure, 1997, p. 11); public library staffs in the Midwest are among the most likely to never use (or use less than 25 times per week) a bibliographic utility (McClure, 1997, p. 12). The statistics on Internet usage are the most alarming— nearly half (50.7%) of public library staffs who serve areas with a service base of less than 5,000 never use the Web or use it less than 25 times per week (McClure, 1997, p. 12). To meet the massive needs for increasing WWW awareness and for enabling education of rural librarians, the idea of a 'change agent' has been posed, a specialist in technology who would conduct workshops in automation and the WWW, acting as an intermediary for staff needs until personnel reached a comfort level with the technology (Senkevitch, 1994, p. 671); such an arrangement has operated in Wisconsin with marked success, but a library's response to a workshop varies widely. Ultimately, both scholars and practicing library professionals note that within a rural library setting, the staff must exert leadership in the community, foster cooperation with local leaders, and actively pursue technology education for an automation project to succeed (Martin, 1996, p. 34).

Rural Library Technology: Funding Concerns

Public libraries spend an average of 4.2 percent of their total operating expenditures on library technology within a given fiscal year (McClure, 1997, p. 9), with one third of this total amount allocated to the costs for system hardware or server hardware (McClure, 1997, p. 10). Almost twenty-three percent (22.7) is necessary for communications fees, followed by 15.6 percent for software purchases, 9.1 percent for training and education (presumably, of staff), 8.0 percent for building changes to accommodate networking, 6.1 percent on planning and staffing costs, and 5.5 percent on resource development expenses (McClure, 1997, p. 10). These proportions translate into startling numbers, most noticeably in system hardware, which costs $7,760 per FY, and in communications fees, which amount to $5,338.35 per FY (McClure, 1997, p. 10). For the Kalona Public Library, the present budget allocation of $1,500 per fiscal year for technology expenses is grossly inadequate to meet costs associated with new hardware, software, and communications services through a local provider. Such is the case for many rural American libraries, leading them to seek desperately needed funds through national grants or organized programs, as well as state-based opportunities.

National Opportunities

The American Library Association, in conjunction with the Technology Research Institute (TRI) and MCI, launched a telecommunications and automations grant program known as ALA Libraries Online in 1995. Targeting major metropolitan areas, the initiative sought to bring Internet access, supporting hardware and software, as well as training for personnel, to libraries with a poor urban population. Within the program, Microsoft provided both educational and automation software to the libraries chosen for the pilot study. Once the success of the project was determined, the glaring technology deficits within rural libraries birthed the successor to Libraries Online, known as The Gates Foundation. In short, Microsoft, for selected libraries, agreed to provide all necessary software, arrange for new hardware and electronic networking (mainly through TRI and Gateway 2000 Computers), as well as provide technical support for library personnel; application procedures and necessary qualifications were announced by Microsoft in late October, 1997. Inherent in the new foundation are matters concerning a library's user group; data must show that a significant portion of the user population is financially unable to afford Internet access or that a significant portion of the student population does not have access to Internet service in their local schools. In the case of the Kalona Public Library, such matters are a barrier in competing for the Gates program.

Despite limited funds from local taxes or state-based agencies, the rural public library is in a unique position to raise needed monies, given its position as a community resource which is highly valued. Justification of possible expenses for technology must be clearly defined, and an extensive consultation with the user population will help to target the patrons' needs and wishes. Likewise, the library's policies towards technology have a direct correlation between the way automation is implemented and the perception the public holds of the technology (Saupp, 1997, p. 62). A library must determine its role outside of technology if it is to establish a true identity; in essence, it is a myth that technology will solve the library's problems (Walster, 1995, p. 46), and for some researchers, automation is viewed as both a savior and the final possible step before a library's total collapse (Vavrek, 1995, p. 42). For those rural libraries which opt for telecommunications and automation, a great portion of needed funds (and other resources) comes from local or state-based agencies and organizations.

State-based Opportunities

Bernard Vavrek, director of the Center for the Study of Rural Librarianship at Clarion University, emphatically states that a rural library typically serves its user population with an annual budget of $15,000 (Clark, 1996, p. 23). Noted trends in rural library funding point towards an increase in locally received revenue, with over 93 percent of such monies coming from non-governmental resources (Clark, 1996, p. 39). Within the state of Iowa, the initative known as "Enrich Iowa," is presently seeking to implement universal service rates for rural areas, as well as to provide libraries with an additional funding source which compliments locally sup- ported efforts (*Enrich Iowa* , 1996, p.1). Likewise, numerous corporations, private donors, and state-owned businesses donate funds to libraries, most in conjunction with a competitive grants system, operating on submitted proposals (*Big Book of Library Grant Money,* 1996-1997). Nationally known corporations, such as Farm Bureau Insurance and Cargill, offer challenge grants to Iowa communities in which the parent organization has a community presence; local services in need of monies gather donations from the community, and the corporation matches such grants.

In 1997, the rural Iowa libraries of the Elkader, Elk Horn, and Harlan communities benefitted from Iowa Farm Bureau Challenge Grants. Indeed, the barriers to local or state funding are nonexistent, as research shows. However, the time and commitment involved to seeking out such grants and submitting proposals is rarely found within a rural library staff. Often, fundraising efforts are performed by a professional outside the facility, a technical writer who has a successful history of grant submissions, or a development officer who operates under contract with the city or library itself. Regardless, the continued trends in escalating expenses for tech- nology and Internet access force upon rural librarians the added role of fundraiser, which can prove to be successful in gathering needed monies and in raising public awareness of the library's importance to its patrons.

Kalona ISP Selection Strategies

In its first relationship with an Internet service provider, the Kalona Public Library selected Iowa Network Services (INS), based in Des Moines, which provided WWW access via a toll-free number and offered dependable service, free of connection problems. Following INS's decision to discontinue accounts within the Kalona area, the library received a donated computer workstation from its local telephone company, the Kalona Cooperative Telephone Company (KCTC). Because of this gift

and the announcement that KCTC had expanded its role to that of an Internet Service Provider (ISP), the library selected this local communications provider for its WWW access. At the time of signing with KCTC, no monthly discounts, particular to the library, were offered to offset charges.

Kalona, like other rural communities, relies on its local telephone company for both Internet services and telecommunications. Implicit in this agreement is the availability of technical support for customers; presently, KCTC's System Administrator serves as the primary customer representative in this area and has a staff of two additional workers (J. Miller, interview, November 7, 1997). Despite the convenience of location, Internet service has remained unpredictable. From the beginnings of this study, the library's director has repeatedly spoken of the difficulties in gathering information from the technical support department, in the lack of customer aid when creating and posting a Website to a local server, as well as the lack of concern in offering the library any form of rate discount. The relationship also manifested itself in KCTC's ambivalence in aiding the library to file necessary paperwork for consideration in telecommunications grant proposals. In short, it was immediately decided that research must be done to provide the library with other ISP rates for comparison, in the event that the Kalona Public Library wished to change its provider.

In the course of inquiry, several observations were made. First, rural communities are often forced to enter into Internet service agreements with local providers, despite poor service, simply for the costs of access. Second, rural communities frequently have few choices, in terms of service providers, and for some towns, there is absolutely no alternative to mediocre access. Lastly, the priorities of many rural telecommunications providers do not include excellence of Internet service, given the major concerns with fiberoptics conversion and linking themselves to larger networks, thereby offering better phone service.

Research revealed that the Kalona Public Library could receive WWW access via other providers, but each option necessitated a long-distance call, translating into radical rate increases. To meet the objectives for this study, quality of service and rate cost were the primary factors in deciding on the appropriate ISP for the library.

Kalona Funding Opportunity Strategies

A recent needs assessment of the Kalona Public Library, presented in a November, 1997, community meeting, called for the construction of a

new facility, estimated at over a million dollars. Local citizens wondered if the town would have to accumulate such funds through their own efforts. The consultant responded to the question, urging the community to seek outside funding sources, particularly in the form of large grants and proposals.

The burden of alloting time for composing grant proposals and gathering community information rests on the library's current director, who could write such proposals herself or could hire a technical writer with experience in library grant submissions. Recently, local efforts to raise library funds appeared in the form of an omelet dinner, with all proceeds earmarked for the library, as well as in active campaigning by the library's Friends group, which is seeking to acquire each household in the community as a member of the organization by early 1998. Ms. Skaden recently noted that private donations for a new computer workstation should be on hand at the end of December, 1997, (estimated at $2,000), thereby allowing her to purchase desperately needed technology.

The combined lack of time to address grant proposals and the lack of funds to hire a trained writer necessitates grants which target rural libraries or donors, within the state, with a history of library giving. In addition, national library funding sources are being considered in an effort to apply to a spectrum of sources. Ideally, foundations or donors which have simple application procedures are given top priority by the Kalona Public Library; similarly, grants presently being sought are of smaller amounts, with any resulting awards contributing to the securing of a library OPAC system.

Nationally, the Gates Library Foundation (GLF) has been a major focus of this project; with the October 28 announcement of necessary criteria for participation came the stipulation that libraries among the first round of grants must have a current poverty rate (as determined by a joint ALA and Department of Census survey) of at least forty percent. Among its first three filing options, the GLF offered no opportunities for the Kalona Public Library to qualify for available funds. However, the second round of grant criteria will be announced in February, 1998, and this phase claims to be applicable to individual public libraries of all sizes; it is not known whether the current poverty rate statistic will still apply as a determinant to consideration. On the state level, several private endowments and corporations offer opportunities for financial aid; noticeably, challenge grant potential is quite promising, given the community's current fundraising efforts. In selecting possible funding sources, the director sought applications which were free of imposed filing deadlines, simple in composition, and manageable in data gathering.

Despite its present restrictions, the Gates Library Foundation remains the most promising source of funds, solely because of Kalona's needs in technology acquisition. The program offers a wide array of educational, word processing and business software, and Gateway 2000 hardware, as well as full technical support to staff during implementation. Likewise, the foundation is anticipated to last for the next five years, enabling the Kalona staff to prepare a thorough application. Ideally, an award from this organization would enable the library's new facility to be fully automated and to truly serve patrons' needs.

In the area of state-based funding opportunities, one targeted source is the Carver Charitable Trust, based in Muscatine, which requires that a community have already raised (through local efforts) at least fifty percent of the requested donation. A second source is the Kinney-Lindstrom Foundation, the body from which a neighboring public library received a sizeable grant in FY 1996; efforts are presently under way to secure application procedures from this agency. Lastly, inquiries were made with the local Johnson County offices of Farm Bureau Insurance to gain information on their challenge grants program; a referral then to the Des Moines offices resulted in data concerning the application process. This grants system also requires matching funds from the community; in this case, one thousand dollars of privately-raised funds will be matched by the corresponding county Farm Bureau offices for local libraries and social services.

Analysis of the Study's Solutions

In the course of the final formal meeting with the Kalona Public Library, solutions were reiterated, including that of an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and funding opportunities which would meet particular goals of the library, especially for anticipated technology improvements during 1998. The rationale behind the decision of continuing with the present ISP, the Kalona Cooperative Telephone Company (KCTC) primarily resulted from the current costs associated with service (albeit not having to endure long distance calls for Internet use) and from recent consultations with the director of the technical support department. The library's director noted her recent success (as of November 15) in filing a technology plan with the State Library of Iowa, thereby completing the first installment of her requirements to obtain reduced universal service. The current KCTC director expresses interest in improving the library's quality of service and seems to be dedicated to providing more dependable Internet service to patrons. The library director agreed that continuing her affiliation with a local service provider is the wisest decision at this point in time, given

budget constraints and some recent improvements in the area of customer contact.

Funding opportunities, primarily because of their nature, continue to be a true interest to the library director and the Kalona community as a whole. One mitigating factor concerning funding opportunities was noted at the meeting; the local Rotary Club-sponsored omelet dinner donated its earnings solely to the library, and for any funds which were not met (for the targeted total of $2,000), the local telephone company supplied any missing funds. The gift is expected in early 1998, and monies will go to a new technology workstation. When considering this study's focus upon the interrelatedness of funding and technology within rural libraries, it is obvious that Kalona's staff, like others within similar situations, will have tremendous choices and burdens in becoming part of the automated sector, choices which are impossible to fully understand and predict.

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