

X-Lotus-FromDomain: AMLIBS
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Reply-To: NOTIS discussion group list <NOTIS-L@LISTSERV.UIC.EDU>
Sender: NOTIS discussion group list <NOTIS-L@LISTSERV.UIC.EDU>
X-PH: V3.12@relay
From: Jerry Specht <jerrys@AMLIBS.COM>
Subject: Changes...
Comments: cc: gbala@amlibs.com, kenv@amlibs.com, tmarqui@amlibs.com,
jmeers@amlibs.com, bens@amlibs.com, estrada@amlibs.com,
rowi@amlibs.com
To: NOTIS-L@LISTSERV.UIC.EDU

This Friday will be my last day with Ameritech. I start on Monday, Nov. 2, with Ex Libris --in their newly-opened Chicago office. (Ex Libris is an Israeli library company which has been very successful in Europe and South America but whose only major U.S. customer at this point is the University of Notre Dame.)

I've had a very long and rewarding association with the NOTIS software and owe a considerable debt to its creators:

Jim Aagaard (still, by my reckoning, the best programmer I've ever met) and Velma Veneziano --hardworking people who each devoted almost 25 years to NOTIS;

Kenton Anderson --who did much of the original OPAC;

and, more recently: John Kolman, Verne Coppi, and Jim Martin --who've done so much with PACLink, LSYS, Navigator, and the new Circulation.

And to Jane Burke who made sure that people understood NOTIS? merits and who guided its enhancement --insisting early-on, for instance, that keyword/Boolean searching be part of the product.

And the customers:

Mark Hinnebusch (FCLA), who made it work under MVS;

Maithreyi Manoharan (University of Central Oklahoma), who wrote the original OCLC Transfer;

Tim Prettyman (University of Michigan), who has done so much with PACLink and various fixes;

and many, many others. A system is only as good as its best customers and I consider myself blessed to have had such smart, pleasant people as my customers.

So, why am I leaving? I want to be part of a team of bright, energetic people with a strong sense of purpose. For whatever reason, we've lost that in NOTIS Support. A year ago there were 6 engineers; five months ago the count fell to 1.5 --where it has remained --until last week (see below). Maybe we haven't been paying enough money --but it has certainly seemed that we've been paying a lot...

I've felt right along that NOTIS customer support is extremely important --but, frankly, I feel outvoted. Everyone left and we have had great difficulty in finding people to replace them. I have found it very unpleasant to be in the position of not being able to answer your questions and deal with your problems simply because there are so many of you and so few of me.... You certainly *deserve* better support for what you're

paying....

["Right, Jerry, --and your leaving?s going to help a lot...."] Good point. I feel very guilty. I first announced that I would be leaving 4 months ago in hopes that we could somehow prepare. It wasn?t until last week, however, that anyone was actually hired: Jeff Tkach, who worked as a programmer in NOTIS development in 1995-6 and at least has some experience with NOTIS,... but certainly much more is required. We continue looking for others....

Ironically, all this is happening at a time when it seems that the "mainframe-as-a-server" concept may actually work and when Ameritech does finally seem to be committing more resources to the product. I think that there are some first-class people running the company now --Lana Porter; Tyler Gingrich, the Vice-President for Development. Jim Martin, the LMS development manager is outstanding at creating and applying fixes and enhancements in an orderly manner, but he, too, doesn?t have much help....

It seems that what life LMS has will be increasingly outside of Evanston: clients developed in Provo; "middleware" in Seattle.... The Resource Sharing System which Randy Menakes, John Bodfish, and Ken Victorson are working on (in Evanston) seems very promising --but not something that?s going to require much support staff....

["So, Jerry, you?re leaving us high and dry . . ."] Not quite. Tom Marqui is still here. It?s always possible that Ameritech will be able to hire/rehire some people who really know the system. If not, Jeff and whoever else is hired will learn things and six months from now should be making a strong contribution.

I?m also leaving you a gift: 4,000 problem resolutions, 1,800 of them created by myself. It?s true that many of them are outdated, but there are many more which are still valid. I have religiously, fanatically recorded my findings in the form of these problem resolutions --and have fought to make them available to you on the Web in a usable fashion. A number have come to you as part of the semi-monthly postings to NOTIS-L, but there are many others which have not. I?m sending you, once again, information about how to access and search "Log Express" --in an email following this one. (Note that this has been updated; I ask that you look at it even if you read the previous version. In particular, read the note at the end where I talk about certain resolutions being incorrectly omitted from the database....)

You'll probably have to rely on each other even more than you have in the past. If you are interested in being added to our list of experienced NOTIS technical people whom we can call upon for paid consulting services to less-experienced customers --or even to Ameritech itself--, please contact Helen Gbala.

I think that library automation/information management remains one of the most interesting and worthwhile uses of computers....

Good luck!

Jerry

p.s. After Friday my email address will be jerry@exlibris-usa.com