

NU libraries to be quicker with new computerized system

By Tom Prentiss

The University of Nebraska libraries are preparing a new and faster method of checking out books that also will help library users find books.

The new program, the Library Information Retrieval System, uses computers to store information about people registered to check out books and about books in circulation.

Assistant Dean of Libraries, Brice Hobrock said the system will help the library locate a book that may be at the UNL, UNO or University Medical Center libraries.

Hobrock said when operations begin in April, Love and C.Y. Thompson libraries will be the first to use LIRS. Other UNL libraries will join the program in the next fiscal year.

He said the LIRS will reduce the amount of work for library users and the library staff.

"When we start it in April, we plan to have four computer terminals at the main desk in Love and one at the Love North exit," Hobrock said, adding that the average transaction (checking out a book) will be reduced from three to four minutes to about 15 seconds.

"LIRS won't really eliminate any jobs either," Hobrock said, but will eliminate the current system of filling out papers by hand. The filing system for these papers also will be discontinued.

He said NU is the first large academic institution to have such a system.

Library cards used

All persons who will use the library will have to register for a library card. Anyone who is a Nebraska resident and has a Nebraska drivers license may apply, Hobrock said.

Registration for the new cards will begin Jan. 22 in Love and C.Y. Thompson libraries and continue for two weeks.

"We'd like to get as many people as we can during the two week period, but we will be issuing them after that," Hobrock said.

He emphasized that the current procedure will be in effect until April.

Hobrock said he thinks the cards are more official looking than any other card the university currently issues. He said there is a possibility that it will become the only card a student will need on campus.

"There's a spade where a picture could be placed on the card if they wanted," Hobrock said. "But that is somebody else's decision and we'll have to wait and see." The cards the library will issue won't have pictures on them.

Lost cards should be treated like lost credit cards and should be reported to the library immediately.

"It would take just a few seconds to invalidate a lost card," Hobrock said.

Cards read by light gun

Hobrock said LIRS operates by assigning each cardholder a number called an optical character code. When a book is checked out, a gun that shoots a beam of light will "read" the card.

The computer will then check its storage bank for the number. If the person doesn't have any overdue books or fines, the computer will signal to check out the book. The gun will also read the number of the book, he said.

Hobrock said overdues and fines show up immediately on the terminal and will be handled accordingly. He added that LIRS will also print overdue and fine notices to be mailed after a due date.

Although he thinks LIRS will improve the library, Hobrock has some doubts about the early going. He predicted, "It may be traumatic in the initial months while everyone is getting used to the system."

The library staff is "quite intrigued and yet apprehensive" about working with the new system Hobrock said. He added that the terminal part of the computer, much like a typewriter, is "surprisingly easy" to learn.

Libraries at UNL, UNO and the medical center have worked in cooperation for the past three years on the program, according to Hobrock, who served as the project director.

Project costs \$350,000

Hobrock said the total cost of the project is about \$350,000 with all three campuses and a grant from the NU Foundation contributing.

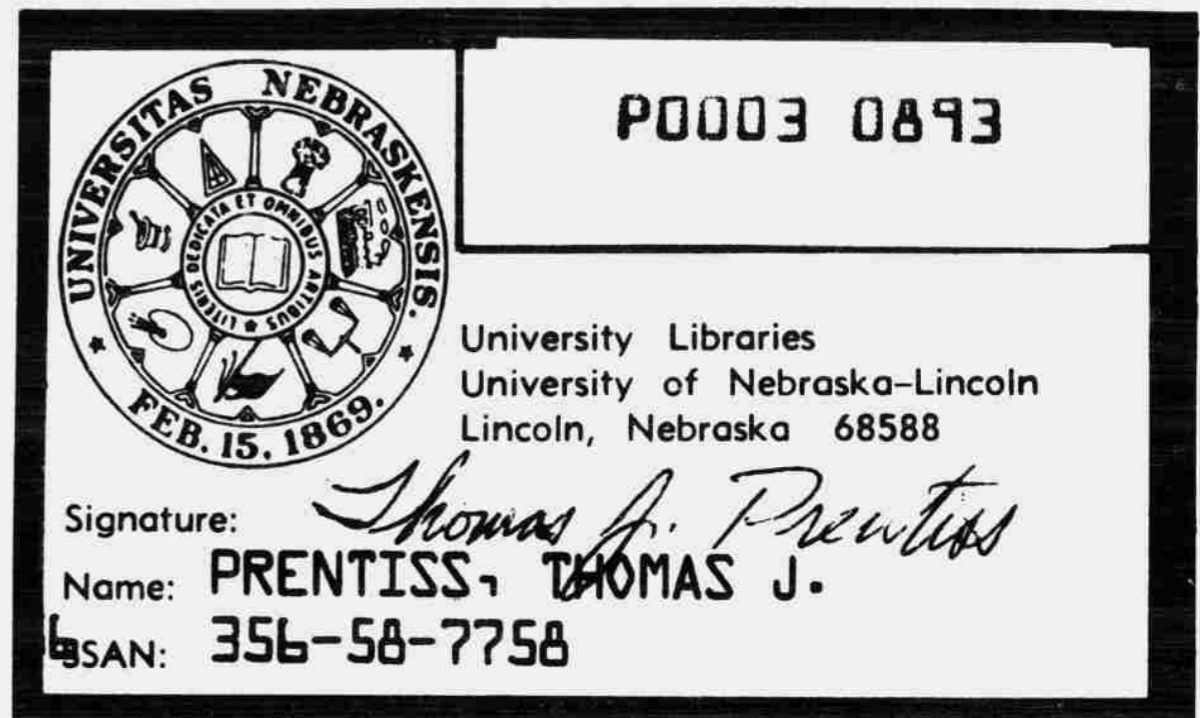
Charles Chamberlin, personnel and budget officer for university libraries, said the money for the project came from unused utility funds and the NU Foundation.

Chamberlin said that as he understands the law, libraries are entitled to money that is left over from money allocated for utilities, such as oil and electricity.

The UNL and medical center libraries contributed \$100,000 in unspent utility funds. UNL had no unspent money, he said.

The rest of the funding, he said, came from a \$150,000 grant from the NU Foundation. UNL, however, did spend money on the program, Chamberlin noted.

"We spent quite an extensive amount on remodeling some rooms to house the equipment," said Chamberlin. He added that the medical and life sciences departments of both Omaha campuses will be aided by the system.



This is a sample of the library cards to be used with the new system. Card applications start Jan. 22.

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To avoid influenza, don't get too tired

Scattered cases of Russian flu have occurred in the United States, although epidemic portions have not been reached and "It's hard to say if the flu will plague UNL," according to Dr. Garland Bare, director of the University Health Center.

There is no vaccination to prevent the Russian flu. "The only way to help prevent the flu is to avoid becoming too fatigued," Bare said.

"Since this is Nebraska's coldest winter on record and because residence halls do not have humidifiers, the health center is expecting respiratory infections to be the major health problem," Bare said.

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