Conference attendees participated in the VILINET Conference from locations across the Territory. Mr. Wallace Williams opened the Conference with the day’s background and objectives.

He articulated the expectations for the web conference:
- Complete planning project supported by IMLS to revitalize VILINET
- Develop an understanding of the potential for VILINET as a territory-wide library system/service
- Prepare to present to decision makers what VILINET can be for the residents of the Virgin Islands

The three main participants of VILINET in the past have been:
- The Department of Education
- Division of Libraries
- University of the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas and St. Croix campuses

In addition, many other libraries have come on board through the last several years, including schools, the District Court, and other entities. There is a lot of interest across the territory in this initiative.

Materials for all presentations are available at the Division of Libraries web site.

GALILEO OVERVIEW

Ms. Merryll Penson, Executive Director of Library Services, Office of Information Technology, Board of Regents, System of Georgia, gave an overview of GALILEO, the statewide virtual library of Georgia.

Virtual Libraries usually provide an array of e-journals and databases through a common interface. They are often funded through state funding. Even though there is this commonality, each is unique based on its culture, history, objectives, etc.

From the user perspective, people typically want a union catalog, reciprocal access to books, and electronic resources in wide subject areas. These electronic resources can be reference databases, e-books, e-journals, state and/or local history, e-reference works, and increasingly these and dissertations (academic libraries), community and government information (public libraries), and help. Help can be delivered through chat, email, “Ask a Librarian”, online tutoring, lesson plans, and pathfinders.

In summary, users want easy and convenient information, at the time of need, without having to pay anything.
No virtual library can start with all of these things. Each group must look at their own priorities and start with those.

Libraries taking part in virtual libraries want such things as database licensing, contract management, payment, training, technical support, communications, input to decisions, and assessment, including usage statistics. Generally libraries want what is complementary to those things offered by individual libraries. The virtual library does not replace individual library programs and resources, but supplements them and makes libraries stronger. (This is an important message for decision makers.)

The bottom line: the virtual library should do what is needed to meet user needs, is easier, is affordable, and is better than if the libraries did it alone.

There are different governance structures and frameworks for stakeholder participation.

It is important to tie into whatever motivators are important to the stakeholders and decision makers: education, economic development, or whatever the hot button is.

Staffing varies, from one person who does everything to more extensive staffs, based on the services offered.

Funding varies, but is most often funded at least partially with government funding. There are various approaches. Sometimes there is a central pot of money, budgeted by various government units (such as the Dept of Education, State Library, etc.), or IMLS funding. In addition, some virtual library programs have membership fees to cover some of their optional services.

Virtual libraries are “the only affordable approach to expand the resources”. This does not necessarily mean savings, but “cost avoidance”: getting more without paying more.

Ms. Penson gave an overview of the way GALILEO was started. Lessons learned from this process:

- It is good to be talking and building relationships among librarians
- Seek support of decision makers: find an ally in the higher ups
- Agree on the message to the decision makers, and make sure all librarians use the same messages in their communications with all their decision makers, both on campus and across the state. There may be disagreement among librarians, but once the librarians arrive at consensus (meaning “I can live with it”), every one needs to get behind the message and communicate it consistently.
- After implementation, all legislators were invited to see GALILEO in their local jurisdiction
- They didn’t ask for anything that would be perceived as “frills”
- The librarians realized that all wouldn’t necessarily be equal, but that all would benefit
- Sometimes you have to be pragmatic and just do what it takes to get it done: do what works
• Once you decide what to do, start acting like it will happen, so when the money comes you are ready to implement. GALILEO started planning even before they got the funding
• GALILEO set up committees that addressed many aspects of start up: technical working group, training, database selection, etc. It is important that so many groups were working that many, many people say they had a role in building GALILEO

Messages that GALILEO used with decision makers:
• Maximizes scarce resources
• Provides the same information access wherever the user is located, from rural to urban

GALILEO has all of the public libraries, schools, colleges and universities as members. There are no special libraries, in part because GALILEO is funded with public funding. This could change over time. GALILEO has sub-groups for specific subsets of their membership.

After the initial implementation, GALILEO added GIL (a shared library management system) and the Georgia Digital Library.

Funding for GALILEO comes from special state funds, federal funding, and library fees.

In response to a question, Ms. Nevins indicated that SOLINET could support VILINET in a variety of ways depending on what VILINET would find most useful. Possible areas of partnership are in training, negotiating with database vendors, administration such as managing orders or billing, and hosting access.

There was a lively discussion and question and answer session exploring issues and opportunities for VILINET.

VILINET Legislation

Mr. Wallace overviewed the history and legislation enabling VILINET. The enabling legislation is inclusive of all types of libraries: public libraries, academic libraries, secondary schools, professional and special libraries, and the Archives of the Virgin Islands. The Department of Libraries and Museums is authorized to seek funding under this legislation, but no requests have been made for some time. Recent changes in the government provide an opportunity. The next step will be for librarians to develop a plan to put forward that could include requests for territorial and IMLS funding.

Discussion ensued about the issue of equity and wide access. The legislation enables this equity, but it is up to the leadership and initiative of Virgin Island librarians to make it happen.

VIALS

Chris Doute provided an overview of the Virgin Islands Automated Library System. Mr. Doute noted that VIALS provides much of the infrastructure necessary for the development of
VILINET.

The catalog is a project between the Division of Library outlets. Included were three high school libraries.

Department of Education
Susan Aleck presented the resources available to schools by the Media Services Department of the Department of Education. Ms. Aleck noted that these are broad and useful materials, but the challenge is to increase use by student, faculty and teachers. It is necessary to help teachers integrate these resources into their lesson plans. Ms. Aleck overviewed The Notable Virgin Islanders resource, which is heavily used. The service also includes a bulletin board for libraries to post events, a file of forms, and book marks for useful resources.

The school librarians do meet together, and this could provide a forum for VILINET discussions.

Discussion ensued about the need for VILINET to coordinate resource creation and presentation to minimize duplication and improve access.

University of the Virgin Islands

Judith Rogers overviewed the electronic and cooperative initiatives of the University of the Virgin Islands libraries. The University of the Virgin Islands is a two campus institution.

The campuses share databases, the catalog, and technical infrastructure. In addition, functions (such as video conferences, etc.) are divided between the library leadership at each campus.

Ms. Rogers highlighted cooperative projects across the Virgin Islands, Caribbean and Florida on the Digital Library of the Virgin Islands. The group has the common goals in collections, technical decisions, and access. This is a multilingual cooperative program.

The librarians at the UVI are committed to working with other librarians in the Virgin Islands to build a collaborative effort to bring additional resources and to control costs. First, we need to develop a plan and then move it forward.

Division of Libraries , Archives and Museums

Mr. Williams overviewed the Division’s responsibility for support of public libraries. He provided an overview of the library facilities and programs, located on all three islands. Programs include traveling exhibits, ask-a-librarian service, resources for test preparation, a shared catalog and library management system, web based tutoring service, and electronic resources. There are a wide ranch of databases available, including newspapers, reference databases, and scholarly services such as theses and dissertations. Usage lags and more awareness and training is necessary. Attendees identified several barriers to use, such as the log on process, which need to be looked into.

Comments from
Julio Espinoza made comments about his plans to restructure the Department of Education. This includes looking at how funding is put together. He mentioned that the community is interested in electronic resources. VILINET fits well into the priorities of strengthening Education in the Virgin Islands. He noted that we will all have to work hard.

**DISCUSSION ON THE VISION FOR VILINET**

Kate Nevins shared her observations from the presentations and discussions:

- Today we heard about many great initiatives among Virgin Islands libraries which will serve as building blocks for VILINET
- Virgin Islands librarians and their institutions are well networked. These relationships are a strong base for advancing VILINET.
- The attendees showed great enthusiasm and commitment to VILINET. There was a definite consensus that “the time is now.”

Attendees identified the following as potential components of VILINET:

- Additional online resources
- Mechanism for training and sharing training
- Better application interface for access to resources and services
- Look at the availability of print and the costs of printing locally
- Disaster preparation, mitigation and recovery
- Ease of access to resources
  - MOU across library types
  - Investigate some of the connection challenges
- Budget and funding
- Need unified telecommunications structure

Next steps include:

- Developing a vision statements
- Prioritizing possible VILINET initiatives
- Develop a budget
- Developing a promotion plan to build support
- Develop a funding plan
- Seek Territory and IMLS Funding