New web-based catalog unveiled by library

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Access to the Hekman Library's card catalog system is now available via the web, as the library rolled out its new WebCat catalog interface on Wednesday.

"Things have been going well," said Greg Sennema, Digital Resources Librarian. "This morning we went live and things have been switching over well."

The new web catalog system replaces the previous telnet-based Dynix terminal access that had been in use for over 10 years. In 1999, the Dynix system was deemed antiquated and the decision was made to replace it.

Initially 12 vendors were selected, and then the selection was narrowed down to three. From those three, WebCat, a library management package made by Sirsi Corporation of Huntsville, Ala., was selected.

WebCat was chosen because it was a web-based catalog. In addition, it catalogued and warehoused the library data properly, and had a good internal software interface.

As an added bonus, it also included software called Hyperion, billed as a "digital media archive system" that will allow the library to start warehousing online books, pictures, sounds, and other digital media.

"Our catalog will create records that point to digital items that we have," explained Sennema. "We're going to start by scanning archive pictures."

This digital library will include 10,000 digital books that Calvin purchased through netLibrary, Inc. The books will be available on the web and accessible through the catalog, and will be shared with other Michigan libraries. There will also be up to 600 online journals available through the new catalog.

The biggest benefit of the new system, according to Sennema, is the ease with which students, faculty, and guests of the library will now be able to access the library's vast amounts of information and make researching and finding information easier and more productive.

"This is the very beginning," Sennema said. "We're streamlining the research approach. This catalog allows us to make searching and finding from the same place possible. The whole point of going to the web is to enable connections with resources like Blackboard or other online libraries."

Although there were a few glitches during Wednesday's roll-out, including an unexpected server malfunction which caused the service to be temporarily unavailable, Sennema said he feels the project is a success.

"It went really well," he said. "We had a very good team and excellent cooperation with CIT."

WebCat can be accessed from the Hekman Library's homepage at www.calvin.edu/library.