Introduction:

It was a pleasure to meet with the staff of the TLN's BDBS Department. They are all very capable and hard working. They are all concerned with doing the highest quality work possible. They all express a high degree of job satisfaction.

Your member libraries find them very approachable for problems and questions. They feel that the staff responds very quickly when asked for help. In particular, they appreciate the ability to reach the staff by phone when it is too difficult to explain the problem in written form.

I believe that the staff does a fine job under a crushing volume of work. If the work continues to be generated at the same volume, they need to look at ways to be more efficient in the time that they have available.

I am making the following recommendations with the understanding that you might have financial, staff, and political limitations on what you are able to do.

Recommendation 1: Outsource the backlog of brief records waiting to be upgraded.

The members of your network feel that the most pressing problem with BDBS is the backlog of brief records waiting to be upgraded. They feel that these titles are not fully searchable to anyone using the catalog.

The staff is frustrated by the size of the backlog, but they are unable to make much headway due to the volume of new work coming in. Susan has made the decision to give the highest priority to keeping up with new requests for records. I would agree with this decision, because the newest titles have the highest circulation.

I heard estimates of between 33,000 and 38,000 titles. I don't think anyone is exactly sure of the number. I know that when I was in Michigan, the staff was working on records entered in December 2006.

One priority should be to get a realistic estimate of the actual number of records in the backlog. It is likely that many titles have been discarded, lost, or gone missing. An API script could compare the Home and Current locations of the copies attached to the brief records. If all the copies on a record are not currently on the shelf, these titles should be removed from the spreadsheet. Also an API script could look for a date in the 245 field to identify serials that have been cataloged as monographs. It is the staff practice to move these copies to serial records. If these titles were removed from the spreadsheet, the estimate of the backlog might be more accurate.

It is possible that many of the titles in the backlog might be duplicates of full records already in the catalog. You can do a bibliographic upgrade of these records by an outside vendor and combine it with a deduping project. It is easier to dedup if you are working with full records.

There are several vendors who can upgrade the records, including OCLC, Marcive, and Sirsi. I know that all three vendors do deduping.

Recommendation 2- Decide on Sue LaBenne's status with BDBS

Sue LaBenne has been on temporary assignment to work full time with BDBS. I think that the only way the department has been able to make considerable headway in catching up with the backload has been her added assistance.

I think with the current division of labor within the department, it is important that Sue be assigned fulltime to this department on a permanent basis. If at a future time Susan's responsibilities could be adjusted to include more cataloging duties, Sue might be reassigned.

Recommendation 3: Re-evaluate all the various edits that BDBS staff does to MARC records.

All staff members spend a lot of time editing the OCLC records they import. This adds to the amount of time needed to process each titles. I believe that the staff has been making these edits for a long time. While there was

probably a good reason to do the edit originally, this reason may be not be as strong now.

Susan should discuss these edits with the members of the Technical Services Committee to see if they are still important to your members.

It is worth investigating whether these edits could be accomplished more efficiently by running API scripts to make changes on the SirsiDynix system. For example, an API script can easily change any 245 |h (GMDs) that are not your system's preferred language.

Recommendation 4-Adjust cataloging standards

The staff of the BDBS is trying for the highest possible quality of bibliographic record in the catalog. Susan, along with the Technical Services Committee, should be looking at what level of cataloging is needed in view of the department's staff and the demand of work.

Recommendation 5: Susan should have additional training on how the loader works and how your database is indexed.

Susan has been running loaders that were configured for her by other staff members. I think she needs to have additional training on the various options that the loader offers.

I don't believe that she has any understanding of how the indexes are configured for your database. If your network is anything like ours, Sirsi gave you their "out of the box" indexing configuration when you went live. I have made many adjustments to our indexing over the years because there were some real gaps in which fields were indexed and in which index they appeared. I believe that this could help Susan make more informed decisions on how her staff does cataloging. She could make better recommendations on changes to how the database is indexed. She could also be able to better explain searching anomalies in the OPAC.

SirsiDynix does offer online courses in the loader and in cataloging configuration..

Recommendation 6: Either charge your contract cataloging libraries more or outsource the cataloging to OCLC Batch Processing

I understand that politically it is important for TLN to do the contract cataloging, but you are serious undercharging them for your services. Randi has done over 1500 titles this year (through mid-March) and you are only charging them $5300 per year. You are losing money on this project!

I think you should be charging at least $1 per title. That is what the records are costing you and this does not include Randi's time.

Another possibility is to send the records to OCLC through the Batch Processing Department. It takes time to set up a profile,; but once it is done, the turnaround time is very fast. Randi could just look at the no matches, because OCLC can only do numerical matching.

Recommendation 7-Do a reclamation project with OCLC

BDBS staff is manually going to OCLC and deleting your holdings. You get a credit on your OCLC bill, but not as much as you are spending in staff time.

You can send OCLC a copy of your entire database. They will delete your holdings first and then add them back based on the file that they send you. OCLC will do a one time reclamation project at no charge. I recommend that you do this after you have caught up on your backlog.

It may be wise to do this project more often, depending on what OCLC would charge you and what your budget allows.

Recommendation 8-Transfer running the bibliographic loader to other TLN staff

Susan spends much of her time running different bibliographic loaders. This is not a duty that has to be done by a cataloger. This can be done by a systems person with Susan being available to only handle problems.

Susan should be spending her time doing jobs which can only be done by a cataloger. Your members are very eager to get more training, which Susan can and should be doing. Also this would free her to spend more time working on authority control and quality control projects in the database.

Recommendation 9-Develop a strong working relationship with the Technical Services Committee

You have a good group of members on this committee. I think it is wonderful that you have a mixture of catalogers and public services staff on the committee. BDBS staff should not be cataloging in a vacuum. They need to work with your members to see if they are meeting their needs.

Recommendation 10-Develop better communication between BDBS and the Acquisitions Dept.

These two departments are very interdependent. When Acquisitions makes changes in their policies, they should alert Susan to them so she can assess whether they will impact her work.

BDBS spends a great deal of time loading records and cataloging titles in advance of purchase. Many of these records are never used. Acquisitions and BDBS should work closely in trying to predict which titles to catalog in order to avoid unnecessary additional work.