Ex Libris Customer (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Ron Johnston

1… What is your name and the name of the institution(s) where you worked with Aleph (and/or other Ex Libris products)?

Ron Johnston

McGill Univ

2…When did your site install Ex Libris software and when did you start working with it?

Installed approximately 1999. I started working with it in 2000, after it became operational, tho I did work on preparing some of the data to be migrated from NOTIS.

3…What was your job title, or, more generally, what did you do?   Were there particular projects you were involved in?

Title remained Sr Systems Analyst for my entire stint with the McGill Librairies, 1983 to 2010.

I worked mainly with job scripts for batch loading or unloading of data into or out of the Aleph database. Specifically, patron data received from the student and staff files; a small file returned to the student file to enable flagging of those owing to the Librairies a total exceeding the University threshold; variously sourced bibliographic files. The last thing we did with NOTIS technology was to upgrade our MARC (a mix of USMARC and Canadian MARC) to MARC21, which allowed us to disallow all the obsolete MARC elements in our tag chart. Cataloging re-implemented Aleph options to automatically upgrade new MARC records to the same standard, requiring manual review of a very few records. Much of the rest of my time went into scripts for tasks involving multiple programs. These were added either to the Aleph schedule or to the system for running scripts on demand.

4…Were there modules which you felt were particularly good, distinguishing Aleph from other vendors' versions of the same module?

5…Who were Aleph/Ex Libris' main competitors?

6…I think that two early decisions were very important: …

7…Comments on the role of user groups (ICAU, NAAUG, SMUG, etc.)?

8…Were there particularly interesting/valuable Ex Libris staff that you remember?

I can vouch for the high quality of Aleph design, programming, and technical support.

9…It seems that, with ALEPH 500, the choice of a Linux / Oracle environment was important -- but maybe most of the competitors' products also operated in this environment?

We used Sun machines running unix. This got us off the mainframe a couple of years before it disappeared as per University policy.

Learning unix was non-stop "fun" for a 55-year-old. My COBOL experience was from decades previous, prior to the upgrades for structured programming, so learning a new compiler was more like "work".

 I moved from McGill to a terrific retirement.