Ex Libris Customer (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Bill Slauenwhite

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

My name is Bill Slauenwhite and I'm writing on behalf of Novanet, the Consortium of Academic Libraries in Nova Scotia which is composed of the 11 university and college libraries in Nova Scotia.

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

We began the RFP process in early 2004 and signed an agreement to purchase Aleph in December of 2004. We began the implementation in mid-2005 and STP'd in December of 2005.

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

During the RFP process, I was the Chair of the Circulation Committee and also the Chair of the overall RFP Committee. When we signed the agreement, I was hired as the Implementation Project Manager in January 2005.

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

We were impressed with the circulation module's global/patron record set up which allowed us to maintain and improve our internal consortial lending service. Unicode support was also a plus.

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

Endeavor, GEAC

6...I think that two early decisions were very important:
- support of standards: the MARC and MAB formats, and, later UNIMARC
- the early use of Unicode, the ability to handle multiple languages and scripts – Hebrew and English from the first and, very early, Danish/German/Italian – laying the groundwork for making Aleph a system which could be implemented in virtually *any* language
- Others?
- Flexibility in architecture

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

NAAUG was a terrific resource for us. The 2005 conference allowed me to make several key contacts, especially staff at UMAI, a similarly organizsed consortium and of course Jane Aitkens at McGill, the only other Aleph user in Canada at the time.

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

Chris Holly, who was our Sales person at the time, Leah Bokar, who managed our conversion, Claudia Balby, who provided training, Jerry Specht, who helped after STP.

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?

10...Are there particular interesting, fun, or odd things that you remember?

This was actually in mid-2006 and I would describe it as weirdly fun and interesting in an odd way. We had a major crash and data loss and I worked with Jerry Specht and Eyal Alkalay for almost a week of near 15 hours days to get things back. I learned more about how Aleph works in that week than I have in the past 12 years and also about the dedication Ex Libris staff have to their clients.

11...If your library has stopped using Aleph, when did that happen – and what was the successor system?

12...If you moved to a different library, please describe briefly your history since that time.