Ex Libris Staff (1978-2005) Questionnaire – Kathryn Heavey

[Feel free to say as little or as much as you like. Do *not* feel that you need to answer all of the questions....]

1. When did you start working for Ex Libris?   How did this come about?

    I started in September 2003. I was working at Endeavor, couldn't see a path forward for myself, and Ex Libris was advertising for someone with my skills. Russell MacDonald hired me.

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

    I was hired as the sole proposal writer in North America, responding to RFPs for Aleph and SFX.

    Thinking of the 1978-2005 time period....

3. Why was Ex Libris as successful as it was? Why did customers go with Aleph rather than other systems?   Some possibilities:
    a. Superior system and program design? (-- primarily Yohanan's doing? Others?)
    b. Superior functional design? (-- primarily Judy Levi's doing? Others?)
    c. Superior strategy (Oren Beit-Arie -- and others?)
    d. Superior marketing (Barbara Radel, et al.)
    e. Superior organization (Azriel and Udi and ???)
    f. Other?

4. Who were Ex Libris' main competitors?

    Beginning with my start in 2003, our primary competitors then were Endeavor, SirsiDynix and Innovative. Alma changed everything for us in the ILS space.

5. I think that two decisions – perhaps just coincidence or luck – were very important:
    a. the use of the MARC standard – absolutely critical to success in North America (and the UK?), perhaps less so in Europe?
    b. 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
    c. Others?

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

7. Were there particularly interesting/valuable customers that you remember?

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

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?

I guess this counts as odd (maybe fun): When I started working at the Ex Libris office in Lincoln Park, on Sheffield Avenue, my office was a converted broom closet. It had no door.

Luis Lacayo was the main IT guy. He and I were in charge of the move to Michigan Avenue. The new location was great, but the building did not live up to its promise to allow us to vent our servers outside the building, leaving us with a very warm office location. We all had little fans on our desks and wore summer clothes under our coats – in the Chicago winter. Luckily, we stayed there less than two years before the move to Des Plaines.

11. When and why did you leave?