EFTS Newsletter

Summer 2007

University of Connecticut Health Center

Electronic Fund Transfer System
Lyman Maynard Stowe Library
University of Connecticut Health Center
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From the Director…

By Evelyn Morgen

We have had some great successes this spring! The biggest is the final rollout of the Canadian currency conversion feature of EFTS that was presented at the May meeting of the Canadian Health Sciences Library Association meeting in Ottawa. It generated much interest, and we already have several new Canadian EFTS members.

Both members and numbers of transactions processed continue to grow. We now have 1176 members, and have processed 2% more transactions through the end of June than a year ago.

This is especially good news because the National Library of Medicine asked me to discuss our plans for self sufficiency at the May 2007 RML directors meeting in Philadelphia. As you are all probably aware, the NLM has less money available to support RML activities because of federal budget decreases. This impacts all RML activities including EFTS.

At our EFTS Advisory Committee meeting in July, we received some ideas about ways to work toward self sufficiency. Ideas include increasing our market share – there is still significant room for growth in some regions. We also discussed decreasing our expenditures, and slightly raising our fees for lenders.

We are therefore working with the RMLs -- and you -- to increase marketing throughout each region while at the same time reducing our own travel expenses. Ways to do that include sending you material and promotional items needed to promote EFTS at local, state, or regional meetings. Please feel empowered to help us spread the word about EFTS! Jola and Lucy are happy to discuss possibilities with you, so just give them a call. You can order free promotional items from our members' website.

We thank you all for being loyal members. As I've said in the past, our main suggestion from current members is to get everyone to join! Please send us any other marketing ideas you may have.

Meanwhile, we hope you are enjoying these summer days . . .

Evelyn Morgen, Director

Lyman Maynard Stowe Library

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EFTS-L Listserv

The EFTS-L listserv is the primary mechanism for communication between Participants and the Office. New participants and software improvements are announced on the list. Participants can also ask questions and share information with others. Information on subscribing can be found under the Tools link on the homepage. Join today.

Flipping Switches ad Infinitum

By Steve Bazinet

Many people have misconceptions about what computers can do.  Usually, they inflate what computers can actually do. I know that I certainly did before I really started studying them. The main thing to keep in mind is that a computer is really only a machine.

In fact, a computer is a giant switching machine. Modern computers contain billions upon billions of microscopic switches. These switches are divided into groups of eight switches. Such a group is called a **byte** and an individual switch is called a **bit**. Within a byte there are 256 different patterns in which the bits can be arranged.

At this point, the computer scientist is ready to proceed in making the little switches do some valued work. What the scientist wants is to use the switches to represent objects in his universe. For example, he naturally wants to represent numbers and symbols. How would he do this? He would do some of this work in an essentially arbitrary manner. Indeed, he may establish an understanding that if the first seven bits in a byte were off and the remaining one was on then that pattern would represent the letter, "a". This bit pattern is denoted by 00000001.

Given that in English there are 26 lowercase and 26 uppercase letters then 52 distinct patterns would be needed to *encode* the alphabet. It is illustrative to compare this concept with another more commonly known one. That is the Morse code. Samuel Morse assigned meaning to differing patterns of dots and dashes.  Did he have to assign the letter, "a" to a dot followed by a dash? No, he could have assigned the pattern to any letter.

After the computer scientist had represented all the characters and symbols that he wanted he needed a mechanism to turn switches on and off in the actual memory. **Memory** is the term used to address collectively the set of all switches within the machine. For this he invented a little machine call the central processing unit or **CPU** for short. The CPU conceptually crawls all over the memory changing switches as it proceeds in its work.

An example of useful work for the CPU is taking the event of a person pressing a key on a keyboard and writing the corresponding pattern into memory. Of course, this process is a little more complicated since the CPU would probably change switches in main memory and also the memory that drives the display attached to the computer. So, the sequence of events is a key stroke, a write into main memory, and a write into video memory.

Marvelously and simply, a computer accomplishes everything that we see it doing by flipping switches. It is hard to see how such a basic level would ever produce the Holy Grail of computing, an artificial intelligence (an AI).

Of course, as time proceeds, we see more and more interesting and fantastic computer applications. They range from automated factories to high fidelity graphics to complex computer games and more. These applications although apparently *smart* are still only flipping switches on and off.

Finally, I use the phrase, "only flipping switches", in what may appear to be a pejorative sense. This is not really true. Something much more subtle and sublime is actually occurring. Imagine if I referred to a Roman aqueduct as only the stacking of little red bricks. Clearly, this would not convey the essence of the construction. The same analogy is applicable to the little switches. The gestalt of their construction is truly a wonder of our modern electronic age.

Imagine all those little switches that are being systematically thrown each time you upload an EFTS transaction.

Simplifying Billing of DOCLINE Requests

By Barbara Nicholson, NLM

The Electronic Fund Transfer System (EFTS) helps libraries efficiently and quickly bill and collect interlibrary loan charges. Developed in 1996 by the University of Connecticut Health Center, EFTS provides important benefits to participating libraries.

EFTS streamlines the billing process by eliminating the need to create individual invoices and process reimbursement checks for interlibrary loans between participants. This improved billing workflow results in reduced time spent on billing and more time spent meeting your patron's needs. EFTS participants can expect to see a reduction of interlibrary loan associated costs.

The DOCLINE EFTS File Builder will be of particular interest to libraries wishing to further simplify the billing process. Made available in October 2006, the EFTS File Builder provides EFTS libraries without a local ILL system the ability to quickly create the EFTS transaction files. These files are then uploaded by the library to EFTS for billing.

To learn more about DOCLINE's EFTS File Builder feature and EFTS in general, please see the article "EFTS and DOCLINE Assist Libraries with Billing" in the NLM technical bulletin at: http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/mj07/mj07_efts.html

DOCLINE Customer Service

National Library of Medicine

US: 1-888-FINDNLM (press 3, then press 1)

Intl: 301-594-5983 (press 3, then press 1) http://www.nlm.nih.gov/docline

EFTS on the road!

Jackie Lewis held an EFTS Users' Group meeting at the MLA conference in Philadelphia. Thank you so much for the comments! We ask that you continue to give us feed back, both good and bad, so that we can make EFTS all the you want and *need* it to be.

Additionally, both Jackie Lewis and Jola Sliwinski presented at the Canadian Hospital Libraries Association (CHLA) annual meeting in Ottawa. Much interest in EFTS was expressed by Canadian librarians. EFTS continues to market in Canada with the hope that more Canadian libraries join the service. We continue to meet with CISTI staff to encourage their participation as well.

Presentations from both meetings can be viewed at:

https://efts.uchc.edu/efts/Static/EFTS%20website/presentations.html

Listen to Lucy...

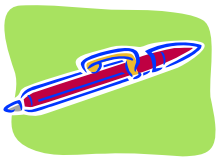
The EFTS-L Listserv is the primary mechanism for communication between participants and the EFTS office, as well as between participants. Participants can ask questions and share information with others. However, the EFTS staff does not maintain the Listserv and therefore we would not remove or add members. If you would like to have a name added or removed from that list, please follow the links and instruction from the EFTS site to execute your request (s):

https://efts.uchc.edu/efts/Static/EFTS%20website/listserv.html

Scroll to the bottom of the page for "subscribe" and "unsubscribe" instructions.

Promotional Materials Available!

In case you haven't noticed, the EFTS site now has a link to facilitate requests for promotional materials. After logging in, note the link at the left: *Promotional Materials.* When planning a meeting or conference, simply request materials you would like to have on hand for distribution. EFTS will ship promotional materials to you, just for the asking. We hope these materials will serve as a method to encourage non-members to join EFTS.



Please note:

The semi-annual EFTS Advisory Committee meeting was held via teleconference on June 21, 2007. Highlights from the agenda included Steve's software update and future plans,

Meeting minutes available at:

https://efts.uchc.edu/efts/Static/EFTS%20website/ACminutes.html

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