Shared IT Services at the Associated Colleges of Central Kansas

Ellen Hassett, Peter Cunningham, Emilia Kancheva, Matt Newsome, Sara Wells

ECAR Case Study 1, 2002
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EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology.

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Preface

The EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) produces research to promote effective decisions regarding the selection, development, deployment, management, socialization, and use of information technology (IT) in higher education. ECAR research includes research bulletins—short summary analyses of key IT issues, research studies—in-depth applied research on complex and consequential technologies and practices, and case studies designed to exemplify important themes, trends, and experiences in the management of IT investments and activities.

To identify case study candidates, INPUT began with a list of approximately 80 colleges and universities that outsourced or shared some of their IT functions. From this list, 10 were interviewed extensively by telephone, and three were selected for on-site visits.

ECAR on-site visits are extensive and involve nearly two days of interviews and meetings with the widest variety of institutional representatives associated with—or affected by—the technologies or practices being investigated. ECAR wishes to thank the leadership of the Associated Colleges of Central Kansas for their time, assistance, and diligence in support of this research.

Introduction

Even though the cost of IT hardware has declined dramatically over the years, the cost of software and personnel has not, so the fiscal challenge remains. The ACCK consortium experience illustrates the unpredictable nature of technology and its effect on multifaceted, multilevel organizations—regardless of location, size, or mission. The ACCK consortium was established in 1966 by six small, independent Midwestern colleges to proactively address the high cost of IT while the computer revolution was in its formative stage. The leaders of these colleges saw the importance of automation and its potential to reduce costs and enhance efficiency, and they knew that individually they would never be able to afford computer automation. They also understood that getting six independent and competitive schools and their stakeholders to make long-term, contractual commitments to a plan for cooperation would be no small accomplishment.

More than 30 years later, the ACCK has evolved into a cost-effective network that includes a common academic calendar.
Member colleges share a variety of academic programs, facilities and resources, and a vision of the future. At present, the cost of the IT services component constitutes only about a third of the consortium’s total budget.

The ACCK story is an example of institutional evolution that transcends the initial IT solution, as innovative as it was (and remains). It spans virtually the entire history of the computer age, from the expensive, cumbersome mainframes of the late 1960s to today’s wireless and Internet technology.

The ACCK is one of the oldest and most successful voluntary consortia in higher education. While the concept of interinstitutional cooperation is not new—beginning at least as early as 1249 with Oxford’s University College—the ACCK represents one of the few consortia in which shared IT resources emerged as a central focus. Other examples of successful consortia include the Claremont Colleges and the Atlanta University Center, both founded in 1925.

Examples of other higher education consortia include:
- **Five Colleges, Inc.** (1965)—one university and four colleges.
- **Hudson-Mohawk Association of Colleges and Universities** (1969)—15 higher education institutions located near Albany, New York; (five universities, six four-year colleges, and four community colleges).
- **College Center of the Finger Lakes** (1961)—nine colleges and community colleges in New York State.
- **The Great Lakes Colleges Association** (1961)—12 four-year colleges in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana.
- **Associated Colleges of the Midwest** (1958)—13 four-year colleges in Michigan, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Colorado.
- **Colleges of Mid-America** (1968)—eight liberal arts, church-affiliated colleges in eastern South Dakota and northwestern Iowa.
- **San Francisco Consortium**—includes California College of Podiatric Medicine, City College of San Francisco, Cogswell College of Engineering, Golden Gate University, Hastings College of the Law, The University of San Francisco, and the University of California at San Francisco. The ACCK consortium continues to thrive, despite a disapproving assessment of the general consortium movement in a 1986 dissertation:

> “The future [of the consortium movement] does not appear to be one of growth. Government should, but is not likely soon to play any role in the movement. Funding is a challenge to consortia success, but it is a challenge to individual members also. Even with funding, consortia will have to face the problems of institutional turf, uniqueness, and devotion to individual member problems. The problem of inertia is always present.”

While an estimated 120 higher education consortia existed in 1986, there was widespread pessimism about the future of the movement.

**Critical Questions**

This analysis attempts to answer the following three primary questions from the point of view of IT executives in higher education in the United States and Canada:
- Has the ACCK lasted for 30-plus years because of the concept’s vitality and the success of its execution, or because of inertia and the high exit cost?
- Is the ACCK IT outsourcing concept portable—that is, can it serve as a model for institutions elsewhere?
- If the model is portable, under what conditions is it applicable elsewhere?
The Initial Challenge

Ray Brown, executive director of the ACCK, framed the discussion of the initial challenge—funding—that confronted the founding colleges more than 30 years ago by observing, “Today, when I need to purchase new IT hardware, I use a credit card. When [the] ACCK was formed, member colleges could qualify for a bank loan for the same purpose. No single college would have qualified alone, or accepted the repayment risk even if it could have.”

In addition to the burden of paying for hardware, for all practical purposes, commercial, off-the-shelf software didn’t exist. As a result, the ACCK was forced to adopt a do-it-yourself approach to programming. This entailed hiring staff to create the customized software solutions required.

The Solution

The founding members saw the only solution to meeting the challenge of data automation: Establish a voluntary association to share costs and operation of a joint IT center.

Organization

The ACCK is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of Kansas. The board of directors, made up of presidents from the member colleges, serves as the governing body. The board hires an executive director. ACCK activities run the gamut of shared academic programs, including faculty development; shared courses in computer science, athletic training, and secondary teaching methods; student services; library cooperation; and centralized administrative computing. The most successful academic initiative is the cooperative program in special education.

According to Gary Dill, former president of ACCK member McPherson College and president of the College of the Southwest, one constant theme promotes the consortium’s existence: efficiency. “Over the years,” said Dill, “we have learned painfully the need to be efficient.” Yet, Dill also is quick to add that “Efficiency is not our top priority. Each school is fiercely independent.” Schools founded at the advent of the twentieth century have a strong sense of mission. While cooperation was imperative, no dilution of identity, religious affiliation, or commitment to the communities they serve was acceptable. Accordingly, the consortium as a solution was required to meet this substantial barrier and find a way to cooperate that did not threaten members’ independence.

Technology

Table 1 summarizes the computer hardware the ACCK acquired and used over the years.

Significant changes in the computer industry and more sophisticated computer use in higher education motivated ACCK directors to study new technological alternatives. After intense research and deliberation, in the mid-1980s the consortium purchased the CARS integrated administrative software and its supporting ENCORE computer system. The combined cost, including annual maintenance fees, was projected to exceed $500,000, with payments spread over five years. Full implementation of the 21 modules was expected to take 18 months.6

In addition, a new T1 line obtained from Sprint represents a genuine advance in the ACCK’s networking capabilities. Until three years ago, member colleges had no wide area network based on data switches, multiplexers, modems, and leased phone lines for serial data.
IT Outsourcing in Higher Education

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Staffing
Since late 1989, the ACCK computer support staff has consisted of five programmer/analysts and one printer operator. The programmer/analysts specialize in one or more of the CARS modules and perform other system maintenance duties. With staffing, as with computer hardware, the ACCK model of sharing has made possible the economical use of costly resources.

Budget
Table 2 summarizes ACCK general spending over recent years. The decline during the 2000–2001 academic year reflects the loss of grant funding for staff rather than any fundamental change in the budget.

Variations in total spending reflect primarily changes in full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff from year to year, and these reflect fluctuations in grant funding rather than any unusual IT-related or academic program expenses. ACCK finances have been stable for years.

Technologies advance almost daily, and with those advancements comes the temptation for members to invest in stand-alone, third-party software, which also means they resign their voluntary ACCK membership. To protect the consortium’s financial position, members established a disincentive to departure: a 16-quarter rolling average. Each quarter, members are billed an amount equal to one sixth of ACCK administrative expenses and their proportional share of computer-related expenses, which is based on the rolling average during the previous 16 quarters. Consequently, members who are heavier users of ACCK resources (which doesn’t correspond exactly to FTE) pay more.

<p>| Table 1. ACCK Computer Systems |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Computer</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IBM 1401</td>
<td>7/68–11/71</td>
<td>Located at McPherson College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEC PDP/8</td>
<td>9/71–9/76</td>
<td>Located at ACCK office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBM 370/145</td>
<td>1971–9/76</td>
<td>Leased space at remote site; 256-Kbyte memory; 100 Mbytes of hard-disk space allocated to ACCK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris S210</td>
<td>10/76–10/83</td>
<td>288-Kbyte memory; two 80-Mbyte hard disks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris S80</td>
<td>5/81–10/83</td>
<td>0.59-Mbyte memory; one 80-Mbyte and one 675-Mbyte hard disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris H800</td>
<td>10/83–2/90</td>
<td>2.5-Mbyte memory; one 80-Mbyte and three 675-Mbyte hard disks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encore</td>
<td>3/88–10/93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP9000/G30</td>
<td>4/93–1996</td>
<td>49-MHz RISC parallel processors; 320-Mbyte memory; 18-Gbyte hard disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP9000/D250</td>
<td>1996–1998</td>
<td>0.5-Gbyte memory; 24-Gbyte hard disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HP9000/D270</td>
<td>1998–present</td>
<td>1-Gbyte memory; 28-Gbyte hard disk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Summary of ACCK Expenditures, 1996–2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Spending</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$1.2 million</td>
<td>$1.3 million</td>
<td>$1.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FTE Staff</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll</td>
<td>$487,554</td>
<td>$559,171</td>
<td>$626,060</td>
<td>$662,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant-Funded Spending</td>
<td>$185,298</td>
<td>$332,746</td>
<td>$352,434</td>
<td>$412,953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Basically, a departing member would not see a cessation of billing until 16 quarters elapsed. Departing members would also confront the fact that they leave with no IT assets and they bear the entire burden of carrying their own IT needs.

Table 3 (followed by a discussion of how the ACCK calculates its billings) summarizes member billings over recent years, including year-over-year (Y-O-Y) percentage increases.

How are billing amounts calculated?

- Each member college is billed an equal proportion of the annual computer center administrative expenses.
- Variable usage is summarized monthly for each college; prime-time (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) usage is weighted by a factor of twice non–prime-time use.
- A figure is calculated to represent use of hard-disk-drive space by each college; an average use figure for the quarter is multiplied by three.
- Variable amounts are translated into percentages to eliminate changes in scale over time that result from new hardware or software installations.
- The 16-month rolling average is calculated quarterly and used to compute member billing.

This approach has proven fair and transparent to members, reflecting both a mix of fixed and variable expenses and a method of accounting for fluctuations in expenses owing to maintenance and hardware and software upgrades.

### Table 3. ACCK Member Billing Breakout (Dollars in Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bethany</th>
<th>Bethel</th>
<th>Wesleyan</th>
<th>McPherson</th>
<th>Sterling</th>
<th>Tabor</th>
<th>Total Income from Colleges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Est. 01–02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing</td>
<td>$258</td>
<td>$189</td>
<td>$137</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$143</td>
<td>$165</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Inc Y-O-Y</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 00–01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing</td>
<td>$214</td>
<td>$143</td>
<td>$115</td>
<td>$173</td>
<td>$113</td>
<td>$133</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Inc Y-O-Y</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>–8%</td>
<td>–5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>–8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Est. 99–00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing</td>
<td>$181</td>
<td>$168</td>
<td>$122</td>
<td>$157</td>
<td>$99</td>
<td>$145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Inc Y-O-Y</td>
<td>–10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>–9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>–4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developmental Chronology

As early as the 1940s, several of the small, church-affiliated private colleges that later formed the ACCK consortium participated in annual faculty meetings. The idea of a more formal consortium emerged in the mid-1960s on the basis of effective advocacy by two college presidents who were concerned that each school alone would be financially unable to participate in the incipient trend toward data automation. Thus, the ACCK was formally created at a gathering of presidents and representative members of trustees on May 6, 1966.

During the first three years, member schools had virtually no out-of-pocket expenses, owing to a federal Title III grant. When this funding ended, members faced a fundamental turning point and had to decide if they were prepared to bear the entire burden of current and future consortium cost with no assurance of additional federal support. There were two other turning points in the ACCK’s computing history. In 1981 it transitioned from locally developed software to vendor-supplied integrated administrative software packages, and in 1999 the computer center ended support of academic users.

1967 to 1970

Federal Title III legislation funded most activity. The ACCK hired an administrator and set up a central office, started a hotline telephone connection and a courier service, and hired its first director for its data processing center. During 1967 and 1968, the ACCK used custom, self-generated software on a mainframe.

1971 to 1975

Federal funds continued to aid growth. A common calendar was in place with a January interterm, and consortium offerings included cooperative classes in several disciplines, a faculty development and visiting scholar program, management workshops followed by assistance for planning and research, and an Upward Bound program for high school seniors.

1976 to 1980

Computer services became a major ACCK activity. The absence of federal funding tested the collective will of the campuses. The selection of executive directors reflected the importance of the computer center and the need for constructive retrenchment in academic programs and student services. In contrast to the decline of many activities, the special education and teacher education programs gained statewide visibility and achieved a reputation for quality. The ACCK acquired a larger facility and began new cooperative initiatives. The board approved an athletic training program and laid the foundation to create a health insurance pool. A committee explored options for creating a shared program in early childhood education.

1981 to Present

The ACCK migrated from internal custom-programming solutions to commercially available software packages. The first package, which is no longer available, was INTERACT (from Information Associates, later Westinghouse Learning Resources). This software was followed in March 1988 by CARS, which was subsequently acquired by Jenzabar.

Jenzabar’s acquisition of Cars Information Systems (CIS, the developer of CARS software) resulted in CARS’ being renamed Jenzabar CX. The acquisition marked an uncertain time for the ACCK because the future of CARS, its IT backbone, was unknown. Would Jenzabar continue to support CIS’s CARS and its 140 legacy clients postacquisition? The answer was yes.7
Enterprise software solutions use expanded, including application service provider (ASP) delivery of Blackboard to the original six consortium members and to two additional client colleges. Shared academic programs and a common calendar were established, and T1 network services through Sprint (replacing a state provider, KANREN) were secured for Internet access.

Demographics of Schools and Communities

The ACCK has its offices at McPherson College. ACCK member schools offer B.A. degrees, some graduate programs, and professional programs in elementary and secondary education, special education, and athletic training. Consortium member schools are accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Students at member colleges are mostly residential and fit the traditional student profile. Also, member schools draw enrollments widely. For example, McPherson College students come from 28 states. Marshall Stanton, president of Kansas Wesleyan University, provided an insight into the true nature of ACCK member schools by saying, “The genius of small schools is their identity, which belongs to the community.”

All six consortium members are located within a 35-mile radius of McPherson, Kansas, home of the ACCK computer center. Over the 30-year history of the consortium, enrollments have remained stable; none of the members foresees any significant enrollment change in the future.

Current Status

Although shared IT services were the cornerstone of the ACCK, today they make up just a small, but nevertheless important, part of total ACCK activities. For example, Ray Brown, ACCK executive director, spends less time attending to the IT data center than managing the growing number of academic programs and other services offered through the consortium.8

The Long-Term Challenge

The ACCK faces challenges in figuring out how to maintain early successes based on cooperation, expand shared academic programs (short of merging), and meet the continuing fiscal challenges of technology and rising expectations. To meet its long-term challenges, the ACCK must keep its expectations modest, and directors must provide leadership consistent with the board’s established agenda.

There was consensus among ACCK stakeholders that member cooperation could not remain rooted in budget constraints. Cooperative initiatives that go well beyond IT and that use ACCK as a vehicle suggest how the consortium might evolve. Specialized arrangements with additional schools are likely to proliferate. For example, there’s a current arrangement whereby the ACCK provides nonmember access to its Blackboard platform.

Outlook

Successful organizations are nimble: they adapt to change and meet challenges head-on. Likewise, the ACCK consortium may evolve in ways not totally expected. Members say a merger among member colleges is not likely any time soon. However strong the resulting new institution might be in theory, a merger would erode the very tenets the member colleges hold dear: the individual identities and church and community affiliations that nourish each consortium member. The belief is that ultimately enrollment would erode to the benefit of competing institutions.

It’s possible that ACCK membership will expand. Presidents of ACCK member schools believe that a controlled expansion
of up to 20 schools sharing profiles similar to those of existing members and located within the same basic radius from McPherson could be a viable way to grow the ACCK responsibly. Another alternative is to expand the present initiative whereby additional schools become ASP clients for specific IT services only, such as Blackboard, without participating in shared academic functions or consortium leadership. Expanded functionality is already underway. The Blackboard course management system is being offered to members, and plans call for linkage to a Web portal and integration of the Jenzabar CX (CARS) system.

Another likely scenario is expansion of ACCK academic programs. Currently, one third of the combined schools’ total student enrollment is participating in one of the shared academic programs. For courses taught at ACCK facilities, members share salary costs. The consortium is already beginning to serve as an institutional research and procurement resource. Members have used the consortium to obtain new group health insurance by virtue of ACCK negotiations. Members foresee a larger role for the consortium in sharing salary information; providing uniform, comparative financial information; and serving as a focal point for contact with other state or national organizations. Brown expects to do more grant writing (this could become a new full-time position in the near future). Ultimately, member schools may conduct some joint fundraising activities.

On the basis of its conversations with officials, INPUT predicts that certain types of IT outsourcing will do better than others at the ACCK. For example, there is little enthusiasm for distance learning because the residential experience is considered critical to students’ overall education.9

At the outset, INPUT asked three questions that need to be answered in order to look into the ACCK’s future:

- Has the ACCK lasted for 30-plus years because of the concept’s vitality and the success of its execution, or because of inertia, the high exit cost, and the unique characteristics of the member schools?
- Is the ACCK concept portable—that is, can it serve as a model for schools elsewhere?
- If so, under what conditions?

The answer to the first question is clearly that the ACCK’s vitality is due to the success of its execution, which involves leadership from member college presidents as well as consortium directors.

As for the second and third questions, the quick answer is yes, the ACCK model is portable. However, its viability appears to depend primarily on the types of institutions adopting it, especially in terms of size, geography, and organization.

**Applicability Elsewhere**

While the concept of the ACCK consortium is portable, the ability to replicate the model successfully depends on several factors. Consortium member schools should be of a similar size and profile and geographically proximal. A mix of large and small schools would founder, as large schools with large operating budgets would likely balk at supporting less-funded partners. Larger schools enjoy an array of solution alternatives. In contrast, small schools feel they lack any margin for error. They must make their solution work; this is likely to be a survival issue for them in a way that it would not be for larger schools. Geography speaks to the success of sharing academic programs and sustaining critical relationships upon which the consortium depends—beyond merely sharing IT expenses. Also, necessity promotes consensus: relationships and cooperation are even more precious when schools are relatively isolated geographically.
Certain other factors apply:

- Members must share common values, visions, and goals. Heterogeneous schools will pull in different directions and have different agendas, institutional cultures, and levels of readiness for innovation.

- The number of consortium members should remain small, perhaps 15–20. Having more than 20 members could threaten consensus decision making. A larger membership, especially if it included geographically distant schools, would compromise the viability of the consortium.

- Quarterly meetings of member college presidents are very important.

- The initial motive for forming a consortium should be to cope with an urgent, mutual crisis having limited solution alternatives. The ultimate goal should be to create benefits that transcend the current crisis. Ultimately, the networks of relationships and other forms of cooperation that follow are more important to the consortium’s survival than cost savings alone.

- All member schools and their presidents must share a strong commitment to identity and cooperation. Consortium leaders need patience and a knack for proper timing. Similarly, the consortium’s executive director must be willing to wait for the member schools to indicate the direction they prefer to move in.

- An essential success factor for a consortium is nonprofit, mutual ownership by member schools, as well as direct responsibility of member college presidents for its direction.¹⁰

Endnotes
1. The idea of consortia in higher education is not at all new. Consortia, whereby two or more institutions agree to pursue strategies for strengthening academic programs, improving administration, or providing for other special needs, is old and well accepted: the Association for Consortium Leadership in Norfolk, Virginia, has a large and diverse membership (www.acl.odu.edu). The movement gathered momentum in the late 1950s and 1960s, benefiting from federal and foundation support. The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 was an example of path-breaking legislation at the federal level that promoted cooperative arrangements, including cooperative graduate centers. Subsequent legislation in 1965 resulted in the Title III program that enabled ACCK members to establish the consortium with virtually no out-of-pocket cost for the first three years of its operation.


3. Ibid., p. 107

4. Ibid., p. 148

5. Ibid., p. 160: “Few...[are] willing to forecast significant growth of the movement. The theory of cooperation’s value through potential cost savings, sharing of resources, and mutual problem solving must, then, be a myth; otherwise the movement would be growing. The consortia movement is marking time. Those that were organized before the advent of Title III funding (and some that were organized because of it) grew strong, for one reason or another, and remain. Many, however, that ‘jumped on the federal funding bandwagon’ fell off when the funding ceased. Few consortia are being organized, and those few are barely offsetting those that are dissolving.”

6. CARS Information Systems (CIS) was a groundbreaking, comprehensive enterprise software solution that integrated academic, administrative, and business functions specifically for higher education. The CARS software suite enabled departments and functions across the entire organization to maintain and share real-time student, financial, and operational information. This integrated product suite comprised a series of modular applications: recruiting/admissions, financial aid, registration and academic records, student affairs, institutional advancement, financial, and human resources.
7. CIS had served approximately 140 institutions over a period of years in the 1990s. The target market for CIS had been smaller higher education institutions. Implementation of CARS for multiple campuses through a centralized consortium was relatively unique and had been pioneered by the ACCK. (Education Management Consortium with 18 proprietary schools and the California School of Professional Psychology with five proprietary schools were the only other consortia using CARS.) Prior to the Jenzabar acquisition, the following changes were anticipated: development for NT/UNIX platforms; database independence to permit use of Informix, Oracle, or SQL Server; support for document imaging; redesign to support Web technology; and object-based coding using Java. Post-acquisition, Jenzabar has affirmed its intention to continue supporting the CARS product under its new name.

8. In addition to providing member schools with data processing services, the data center also provides a daily courier service between the schools. The ACCK serves as a host for a growing number of academic programs, including teacher training, athletic training, education, and computer science. Other opportunities for shared programs and services are under study. Also, the ACCK provides group health insurance to members and, increasingly, is taking on the function of institutional research. According to the member instructions, the ACCK is gathering data that each member wanted but could not compile or analyze independently.

9. Walt Eis, an ACCK programmer, summed up the general attitude toward proximity by saying, “Higher ed is built on personal relationships. The model of the Internet school is failing. The relationships of students to administration and faculty, as well as our relationships to them, wouldn’t work if work were outsourced to a distant vendor.” Others stressed the importance of informality enabled by these personal relationships, saying, “Colleges are neighbors and ACCK is the tool shed.” Programmers believed strongly that their close relationships with their clients at each school were a strong contributing factor to the ACCK’s success. Without physical meetings or face-to-face relationships, they didn’t believe it would be possible to maintain a high level of cooperation. Would video- and teleconferencing with geographically distant new consortium members solve this problem? The attitude was open, but cautiously skeptical.

10. INPUT acknowledges and thanks the following individuals for their time and valuable contributions to the research underlying this case study:

Dr. Ray Brown, executive director of ACCK
Dr. Gary Dill, president of McPherson College
Dr. Doug Penner, president of Bethel College
Dr. Rodney Frey, registrar, Bethel College
Dr. Stanton Marshall, president of Kansas Wesleyan University
David Gitchell, director of computing services, McPherson College
Shirley Reissig, business manager, McPherson College
Jerod Prothe, programmer/analyst, ACCK
Marcie Cottrell, programmer/analyst, ACCK
Dr. Gavin Doughty, programmer/analyst, ACCK
Walt Eis, programmer/analyst, ACCK
Valerie McDowell, programmer/analyst, ACCK
Darlene Goering, printing coordinator, ACCK
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