



# Smart Libraries™

Formerly Library Systems Newsletter™

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## SCHOOL LIBRARY CENTRALIZATION MEETS ITS DESTINY

Taking advantage of the trend toward centralized automation in school district libraries, Follett Software Co., released an all-Web-based system, Destiny, in June 2003.

Centralization offers many benefits for school libraries, especially where resources are scarce. Although this approach demands a larger upfront investment, it offers long-term efficiency, requires less technical support, and assists resource sharing among the libraries in the school district.

Follett, a division of Follett, Inc., isn't the first out of the gate in the centralized school district library automation race. Several companies that produce multiuser library automation systems have expanded into the school library market over the last two years, including Sagebrush Accent, a version of Sirsi's Unicorn Library Management System (January 2001); Via from Innovative Interfaces, Inc. (November 2002); and SchoolLibrary. Solution from The Library Corp. (February 2001). Each of these multiuser systems was originally written for other types of libraries; Destiny was developed specifically for school libraries.

Only Sagebrush Corp., though, offers any significant competition to Follett in terms of both new sales and number of systems installed in school districts. Follett keeps a tight focus on the K-12 market: 96% of its sales go to school libraries.

Follett has long offered its library automation products for Web access for individual schools, but Destiny was built from the ground up to be implemented as a centralized library automation system for an entire school district.

Libraries can operate Destiny from any computer capable of running a Web browser. Follett avoided ActiveX or Java applets, facilitating its use by even low-end computers—an important consideration for school libraries that often don't have high-performance computers.

### Savings abound

Libraries will not need to install client software on their library computers; they can leverage existing Web browsers and Internet connections. Not having to install and maintain software

on the computers in the libraries relieves school district IT personnel or library staff from much library automation support.

Destiny relies on a centralized servers running Microsoft Windows 2000 Server to support many libraries throughout a school district. It uses Microsoft SQL Server 2000 for its underlying database functions.

Districts with 10 or fewer libraries can operate Destiny on a single server that operates both the application and the database. Districts with more than 10 libraries need two servers. The application uses Structured Query Language (SQL) and open database connectivity (ODBC) for database access, allowing libraries to use custom-built or third-party reporting utilities.

For school libraries, the ability to share data with other applications (such as student information systems that log student grades, class enrollment, and attendance) saves time and labor. Follett has created a set of utilities that can automatically transfer records in batch mode with other applications to avoid the need to retype user records.

The Lake Washington School District worked with Follett since late 2002 as a Destiny beta test site. The district's 46 schools, totaling 23,500 students, migrated from its DRA Classic system. Orange County Schools in North Carolina also was a beta test site.

Both school districts report successful migrations from older outdated automation systems to Destiny. Orange County Schools implemented Destiny as part of an effort that included automating a new 1,200-student high school.

Even though Destiny is new, it sports the full complement of features expected in a modern library automation system. Follett offers several add-ons for Destiny that most automated systems added after their inception:

- TitlePeek offers book jacket images, summaries, and reviews.
- WebPath Express allows students to access approved and age-appropriate websites.
- Find-a-book helps students locate books associated with reading programs such as Accelerated Reader or Scholastic Reading Counts.—*Marshall Breeding*