DALNET – Historical Timeline
As compiled by Louise Bugg, Kristy A. Wells, and Deborah Adams

1983   DALNET concept from soon-to-be dean of libraries at Wayne State—Peter Spyers Duran. He had not yet arrived from CA; called Jim Williams, WSU associate director and Louise Bugg to ask them to look at automated systems, especially NOTIS—Northwestern University's mainframe system.

        Peter arrived at Wayne; wanted to get a system that would not only support Wayne's automation needs—including an online catalog—but also the needs of other libraries in metro Detroit. He envisioned a shared system run by WSU but with clear benefits for all partners—especially cost sharing.

        At that time, the only area of WSUL's operations that was automated was acquisitions. WSU had about 300,000 OCLC records from 1975 to 1983.

        Automating the rest of the operations and creating an online catalog for WSU's users grew to include 10 more libraries, one of which was Detroit Public Library, the biggest public library in the state.

1984   Early 1984, Peter organized a meeting with area libraries about their interest. Meetings were held weekly—with representatives from 10 libraries and WSU.

        By June, an RFP was written for a shared integrated library system—using model RFPs as a guide. The RFP included: a robust system, scalable to handle a large online catalog, a large network of dumb terminals (over 1,000), and unique security and operational requirements for all modules, including circulation, cataloging and authority control, acquisitions and serials check-in.

        Peter hired Dick Boss to review it. Dick indicated that there is no system out there than can do all that we wanted.

Participants included:
- Fran Buckley, representing Detroit Public Library and McGregor Libraries (Detroit Associated Libraries)
- Michele Klein, Children's Hospital
- Dina Mein, Henry Ford Hospital
- Debbie Adams, Botsford General Hospital
- Barbara Coe Johnson, Harper Hospital
- Nancy Skowronski, University of Detroit
- Joan Smith, William Beaumont Hospital
- Jim Flaherty, Wayne County Community College

DALNET formation—simultaneously, a DALNET Planning Committee worked on the governance and financial structures needed. Led by Jim Williams, the committee established the DALNET Board Bylaws and the service agreements between libraries and WSU.

DALNET was incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in 1985. The articles of incorporation were signed by Peter Spyers-Duran (WSU), Jane Hale Morgan (DPL) and Barbara Coe Johnson, Harper Hospital.

Other consortia around the country were consulted by phone, email and at professional meetings.

Partnership with the WSU Computing Center—a mainframe computer system was needed for our projected size, however, the library didn't have a computer room to handle it. Three bids were considered and NOTIS was selected. Dr. Mort Rahimi, the WSU VP for Information Technology, agreed. The WSU Computing Center (CSC) would house and manage the system. Dr. Rahimi was instrumental in obtaining the NOTIS system for DALNET. He sold us a used IBM 4381 mid-range mainframe.

1985   Another series of weekly meetings were held in 1985 with the CSC staff to get NOTIS installed and running. CSC staff had experience installing and managing mainframe hardware, telecommunications systems for IBM 3270 terminals, operating system software (CICS, MVS), and printing and distribution of computer output. The mainframe and disk drives and

controllers were as large as refrigerators. One disk drive held 5 GB of data and DALNET grew to need at least 6 of these drives (30 GB). The WSU Computer Center was a key partner in DALNET's early success.

DALNET staff started with Louise Bugg and Denise Taylor, an applications programmer who helped get our OCLC tapes checked and ready to load. Then Dody Fox, a programmer from the CSC who knew Cobol and mainframe systems, worked on reports and output like overdue notices, etc. She configured circulation for WSU and the other DALNET libraries.

Ana Fidler was hired because she knew IBM Assembly language that was used in NOTIS. She had experience with NOTIS software in Venezuela, one of the earliest users of NOTIS.

George Marck, also from the CSC, joined our team when we began loading index databases—MDAS. We had to license and load index databases locally—Wilson, CINAHL, Current Contents, PsycInfo.

Charlene Wecker transferred from WSU serials cataloging to DALNET staff. She became a key NOTIS trainer and software tester.

This core group of people built the foundation for DALNET's shared system.

In 1985, the actual process of automating a library for the first time could take 2 years or more. Many steps were required— terminal purchase and network installation, staff training, record conversion and loading (usually OCLC tapes), barcoding books and linking them to item records, configuring circulation rules, acquisition funds and vendor records, and loading serials check-in data. It took 4 months for start up and 4 months for each of 5 modules. Wayne was the first library to be implemented. From that point the knowledge gained was used to install and implement the system at each DALNET library. Several libraries were being automated simultaneously—each at a different part of the process.

1986   The first DALNET library after Wayne (in fall 1986) was Oakland University. Eventually, all but one of the other libraries around the planning table automated with DALNET.

Some libraries took much longer to automate, like DPL. Helen Ma developed her "Helen Ma Method" and went from branch to branch with Terry Potvin to automate circulation. They had to roll carts of books to terminals, find or create items records, apply barcode labels, and link the books to the records one by one, truck by truck. Teams traveled between branches, which were closed to the public during this process.

Many other large libraries and consortia visited DALNET to learn from our experience. Eventually, DALNET grew to be the biggest NOTIS system in Michigan and one of the biggest in the country.

1987   Beaumont Hospitals, Botsford Hospital, Children's Hospital of Michigan, Detroit Public Library, Harper Hospital, and Wayne County Community College District officially joined DALNET.

1988   University of Detroit Mercy, Oakland County Law Library and Macomb Community College joined DALNET.

1989   Oakland Community College joined DALNET.

1991   During the beginning of statewide cooperation, the Michigan Research Triangle (MRT) was created by Peter, Hiram Davis of Michigan State University, and Don Riggs of University of Michigan. NOTIS' PACLink software was utilized to access to each library's catalog. A Z39.50 link between the systems enabled searching each online catalog. Later, MDAS databases were shared in this manner also, so all three libraries did not need to load the indexes. Thus they were able to save a considerable amount of money.

1993   Walsh College joined DALNET.

1995   The Detroit Medical Center joined DALNET.

1996   The John D. Dingell VA Medical Center joined DALNET

1998   The Detroit Institute of Arts joined DALNET as a stand-alone institution. The DIA catalog had originally been part of the Wayne State University Libraries system in the early 1990's.

1999   All DALNET libraries migrated from NOTIS to Horizon in time to turn off the mainframe on December 31, 1999.

2000   The Henry Ford, Marygrove College and Mt. Clemens Regional Medical Center joined DALNET.

2001   The MRT project helped pave the way for MiLE (2001/2002) with Z39.50 links between TLN, SLC and DALNET libraries with patron-initiated ILL, and then for MeLCat , the current statewide resource sharing system. DALNET was a pioneer in library cooperation.

Rochester College joined DALNET.

2004   Healthcalendar.org project began, funded in part by the Ameritech Foundation and the Friends of the Detroit Public Library and developed by the libraries of DALNET.

2006   Oakland County Research Library and Arab American National Museum joined DALNET

2007   DALNET started a news blog using WordPress in October of 2007.

The DALNET Digital Lab began with two book scanners and has now grown with the addition of equipment able to convert VHS to DVD, slides and negatives to digital files, audiocassette to digital audio files, and LPs to digital audio files/CDs.

Concordia University Ann Arbor joined DALNET.

2008 The DALNET Program Initiative Reserve Grant program began with the first recipients being Wayne State University and Arab American National Museum.

Adam Cardinal Maida Alumni Library joined DALNET.

2009 DALNET YouTube channel and Twitter account created.

2010 The DALNET Union Catalog is completed. The first ever actual union catalog is finished for use by all shared system members. The catalog initially contains over 1 million bibliographic records representing over 1.5 million items.

DALNET Facebook account created.

DALNET holds 25th Anniversary Luncheon, inviting current members and constituents as well as past employees of the consortium. George Marck is honored for 25 years of service to DALNET.

DALNET holds a series of Educational Forums open to the public to discuss current relevant topics for libraries including eBook readers, Web-scale services, and green libraries.

DALNET provides a Silver Sponsorship for the 2010 Michigan Library Association Annual Conference, to commemorate DALNET's 25th anniversary year.