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Statewide Access to Electronic Resources

- *Secure a broad and deep menu of state–funded electronic databases that are available to all libraries and library customers in Oregon.*

Are we making progress toward achieving the *Vision 2010* goal of securing a "broad and deep menu of state-funded electronic databases that are available to all libraries and library customers in Oregon?" Perhaps. But, as with any journey, optimism about progress depends on knowing what you're aiming for, where you are now, and whether you have the staying power to continue the journey.

Statewide database licensing in Oregon dates back to 1991, with the creation of OLA's *Vision 2000* and the resulting set of goals known as the Oregon Information Highway Project (OIHP) (Scheppke, 1995). By 1995 a group of librarians was working as the Statewide Database Licensing Group (SDLG). Deb Carver speaks of the "long and sometimes confusing process" (Carver, 1999) of jump-starting statewide licensing without central funding or project staff. The SDLG eventually decided that seed money was needed to get things started and they devised a program based on gradually declining LSTA subsidies. SDLG also found that an administrative partner was needed and turned to Orbis and the Oregon Educational Technology Consortium (OETC) to issue an RFP, sign purchase agreements, bill libraries, and pay the vendor. In a remarkably short time, libraries were weaned from LSTA funds and SDLG ventured forth into a new era of self-funded purchasing.

While pleased with this success, there was also a sense among many that Oregon was not doing enough. Although clearly worthwhile, SDLG was purchasing just two products and many libraries in the state could not afford to participate. At the same time, early projects in wealthy states like Michigan, Ohio, and California were

expanding and being joined by new state-funded efforts in places like Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Surely, there must be a way for Oregon to keep pace with Mississippi.

As we entered the new millennium, two new visions emerged. One was *Vision 2010,* the other came from a grassroots effort known as Connect Oregon or CORE (Connect Oregon, 2001). Patterned after NCLive! in North Carolina, CORE's vision called for a statewide multi-type consortium funded by the state, LSTA, and participating libraries. CORE would begin with database licensing, then move on to other statewide priorities. The CORE effort gathered momentum very quickly and OLA sponsored a bill requesting state funding. Alas, although well received, the CORE bill died at the end of a busy legislative session.

The aftermath of the CORE effort led to the formation of the Senate Interim Task Force on Library Cooperation. In its final report, the Task Force identified "statewide coordination for purchasing databases" as the highest priority and stated that the Oregon State Library (OSL) "will become the host and fiscal agent for a new consortium organization charged with coordinating statewide services for Oregon libraries." (Oregon Senate, 2002). Unfortunately, task force ground rules stated that no new state funds could be sought and, after exploring various options, the task force concluded that LSTA funds should be used to supplement fees and support project staff at OSL. Financial support for this new effort would come at the expense of the net-lender reimbursement program, a long-standing effort aimed at encouraging ILL. Passage of Senate Bill 12 enabled OSL to play this expanded role and in 2003 the Oregon Statewide Database Licensing Program (SDLP) was born (Oregon Statewide Database Licensing Program, 2003).

Now, as we begin 2004, the EBSCO contract managed by SDLG in partnership with Orbis Cascade Alliance and OETC

will soon come to an end. The State Library and the Statewide Database Licensing Advisory Committee (SDLAC) are working to define program rules and draft a new RFP. OSL is also considering the extent of its role and whether enlisting the help of other organizations, such as the Bibliographic Center for Research (BCR), OCLC Western, Orbis Cascade Alliance, or OETC might make sense.

It has been a long strange trip, from *Vision 2000* to OIHP to SDLG to *Vision 2010* to CORE to the Senate Task Force and now SDLP, but have we made progress toward a "broad and deep menu of state-funded electronic databases?" The answer to that question depends on your perspective. A pessimist might say that we started with two products subsidized with LSTA funds, finally achieved self-funding by participating libraries, and have now dismantled the net lender program in order to spend even more LSTA money (now on a recurring basis) to replicate purchase of the same two products. An optimist might say that the net lender program was no longer effective and applaud its replacement by a robust database licensing effort. The optimist would further note that the previous SDLG process was risky and very limited in scope, while the new SDLP structure will have a much broader impact.

Although both have a point, I must admit to a strong preference for the optimist's view. Still in its early stages, the new Statewide Database Licensing Program marks an ambitious role for the Oregon State Library and shows much promise for the future. SDLP is a great new beginning but several factors will be critical to its success.

Oversight by SDLAC

Effective use of the Statewide Database Licensing Advisory Committee is critical to the success of SDLP. In its start-up phase, the project saw a few missteps and it is important that OSL now establish a practice of using the advice provided by the Advisory Committee. For their part, the Committee has made a very strong start and members should continue to stay in close communication with their constituencies and provide sound advice to OSL.

Active involvement of Oregon libraries

It is too easy to assume that others are looking after statewide database licensing. In order to create a first-rate program, Oregon libraries must follow the process, conduct thorough trials, provide feedback, stand by their purchase decisions and support OSL and SDLAC in their work.

SDLP is a worthy development that builds on the hard work and creativity of its predecessors. However, as a consortial junkie, I must admit to a great hope that Oregon is evolving toward the creation of a robust multi-type consortium charged with pursuing statewide goals. More important than such organizational details, I suggest that strong and recurring state funding is the legitimate goal of all such organizations. Some may consider it foolish to set our sites on state funding but other states have done it and CORE came close in a very short time and under difficult circumstances. Oregon libraries should resist the temptation to feel satisfied with incremental progress toward modest goals. Let's celebrate Oregon's progress but also recognize that much more can be done. As we continue the journey, every Oregon library has an important role to play in achieving success.

References

Carver D., 1999. Statewide Database Licensing the Oregon Way. *OLA Quarterly* 5(1) [sic]: [4(4)] http://www.olaweb.org/quarterly/quar4-4/carver.shtml

Connect Oregon, 2001. CORE: a Summary for Librarians. http://www.olaweb.org/core/librarian.html

11

according to a unique population … [with] more emphasis on local character and needs." Newport Public Library is well positioned to build on the local character of the library and Newport's unique population. While implementing new services, we will keep what we do best. Personalized service will trump buying another computer. Staff will continue to learn and grow with the library and bring excellent service to the public. We will use what we have and who we are to create and insure the future.

In Rita Dove's poem *The First Book*, she says of opening a book for the first time, "it's not like it's the end of the world—just the world as you think you know it." This is why libraries are worth saving. In libraries our task is to make it easy for all to open those doors, one after another, to worlds that alter lives, inform vision, and inspire change in the universe.

Progress Along the Road

Oregon Statewide Database Licensing Program, 2003. http://www.osl.state.or.us/home/libdev/osdlp/index.html

Scheppke J., 1995. Update on the Oregon Information Highway: Oh, What Tangled Webs We Weave. *OLA Quarterly* 1(1): 7. http://www.olaweb.org/quarterly/quar1-1/scheppke.shtml

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Serving Every Child

Board also has granted LSTA funds to the Salem Public Library for some public opinion survey work that will assist them in planning for a library district election this November. A new Salem area library district would serve an estimated 44,000 unserved children and adults in Marion and Polk counties, in addition to the City of Salem residents who are already served.

I am encouraged that the Oregon library community's commitment to "serve every child" is higher than I have ever seen it in my 18 years at the State Library. It's not just librarians, but hundreds of dedicated citizens, in organizations like the Lane Library League, the Linn Library League, the Friends of the Fossil Public Library, and "Yes for Libraries" in the Salem area, who are devoted to achieving this goal.

As the State Library looks ahead to our centennial in 2005, I can think of no better commemoration than to be on our way to finally finishing the work that began 100 years ago, a goal that we wholeheartedly share with the Oregon Library Association.