



OPLIN Annual Report

for Fiscal Year 2004

July 1, 2003 - June 30, 2004

Expanding Access for Ohio

OPLIN entered the 2004 fiscal year in the midst of change and upheaval, capped by our moving to new space in October 2003. By combining Web and e-mail services with our own support services, we created a stable platform that enabled us to focus on our core goals - providing adequate, secure network access at every library building in Ohio, and delivering electronic content to all Ohio residents for business and workforce development, health, and education. At the same time, we improved our content management tools and continued our participation in statewide service initiatives.

| <u>Key Measures</u> | <u>FY 02</u> | <u>FY 03</u> | <u>FY 04</u> |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Website Page Requests. | 11,203,521 | 18,497,682 | * |
| Website Visitors Per Month. | 51,368 | 97,858 | * |
| Database Queries. | 1,520,051 | 2,155,456 | 3,962,239 |
| Database Documents Used. | 1,603,247 | 1,874,129 | 2,939,586 |
| Help Desk Action Items. | 2787 | 2198 | 2452 |
| Network Service Requests. | 65 | 494 | 128 |
| Available Public Workstations. | 6,983 | 6,478 | 7,825 |
| Buildings Connected. | 692 | 692 | 735 |

** During the transition from OARnet to OPLIN-managed servers and the website redesign, no web statistics were kept. Statistics were reinstated at the start of FY 2005 and the current rate is equal to, or exceeding, FY 2003.*

Key Accomplishments

- **Fast, free public network access** is now available in all 88 counties at over 700 buildings statewide. Public libraries provided 7,825 public workstations with Internet access and high-quality, network-delivered content for all 11,500,000 Ohio residents.
- **OPLIN OneSearch** removes barriers by making it possible to search multiple databases from a single search box with a simple interface. The search box is on OPLIN's top page and can also be installed directly on any Ohio public library website.
- **Libraries Connect Ohio** (OPLIN in partnership with OhioLINK and INFOhio) rolled out a dozen new databases on a variety of subjects, paid for with a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the State Library of Ohio and IMLS.
- Ohio residents used **57% more** high-quality database documents than in FY 2003, and **83% more** than in FY 2002.

Network Expansion

Our primary goal for Fiscal Year 2004 was to ensure uninterrupted network access for all communities, while expanding the bandwidth available to the major population centers.

By January 2004, OPLIN had upgraded the circuits provided to six major metro systems (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Cuyahoga County) from T1 to DS3. The seventh, Akron, was upgraded during the summer of 2004. This transition went very smoothly and it employed both SBC and AT&T-provided circuits. The use of



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multiple vendors ensured us the lowest possible costs.

Very quickly, the added traffic from these expanded connections, together with overall increases in usage by library patrons all over Ohio, began to put a strain on the state network. We were asked by OIT (the State of Ohio Office of Information Technology, formerly part of DAS) to move our Hub from the Rhodes Tower in downtown Columbus to the State of Ohio Computing Center, a more secure building designed for computer management. This move provided an excellent opportunity to upgrade. The OPLIN Board approved additional Hub routers, as well as caching servers. We requested and received space in the SOCC to house both our Web and e-mail servers, the proposed caching servers, and security devices with the Hub routers.

By the end of FY 2004, the new Hub had been built and we were preparing to move circuits over, a process that is still under way in October 2004. At the same time, the 67 library systems participating in the SEO consortium were beginning to experience network gridlock. As the year begins, we are upgrading the main SEO connection to DS3, and working with those SEO member libraries that need more bandwidth to their main libraries.

Network Accomplishments

- Completed 99% of all site router upgrades. Remaining libraries have specific barriers that we are working to resolve.
- Added seven OPLIN-managed ("Type A") circuits for library branch buildings, an option in which the branch connection comes directly to Columbus and is managed by OPLIN and its OIT partners.

- Implemented continual site router monitoring in the OPLIN Support Center to enable us to proactively step up to problems before they are reported.
- Enabled on-demand bandwidth studies.
- Upgraded virus protection to OPLIN e-mail and Web servers.

Network Goals for FY 2005

- Improve security services.
- Improve individual, on-site network planning services for libraries.
- Implement content caching.

Improved Content Delivery

Our primary goal for FY 2004 was to increase usage of the content we were already providing. FY 2004 was the first year of an LSTA grant to Libraries Connect Ohio (OPLIN, OhioLINK and INFOhio), which added numerous titles and subjects to the databases that OPLIN delivers. The large number of new titles required both awareness building and training. At the same time, we knew that the wealth of material in the EBSCOhost databases was underutilized, and that awareness of what we already offered was not as widespread as it might have been. Key tactics employed to improve awareness and increase usage included:

- The creation of a single search utility for all databases.
- Increased training for library staff members.
- Simplification of remote authentication.

We evaluated various "metasearch" services to try and find a single search utility for OPLIN's databases, and selected WebFeat as the product that best met our needs. The staff at WebFeat built an authentication system that mirrors OPLIN's own, directing

users to their home library's profile of available databases. The WebFeat/OneSearch service is seamlessly integrated into the OPLIN website, allowing users to search over 65 separate databases from a single search box. Our goal was to make searching premium library resources nearly as accessible as Google makes searching the World Wide Web. The databases are grouped into "subject clusters" that help searchers focus on the most appropriate resources for a given subject. Since launching OPLIN OneSearch, searches within databases increased an average of 162% over the same period in 2003, and document retrievals increased an average of 43%. The addition of OneSearch helps searchers make better use of the information we pay for.

New Libraries Connect Ohio (LCO) databases were introduced in July 2003 and the new OPLIN website (with OneSearch) was launched in May 2004. Both of these launches required demonstrations and training for library staff. OPLIN presented workshops on the new databases for the regional library systems, and an abbreviated version of that workshop was presented at all

six OLC chapter conferences. Also, between August and October 2004, 14 hands-on workshops addressing OneSearch were



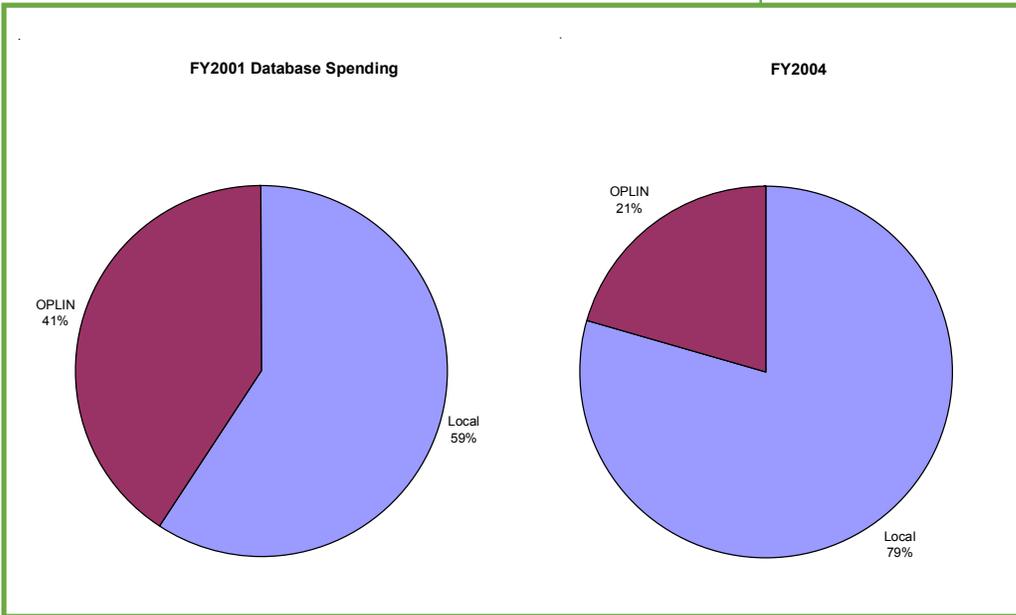
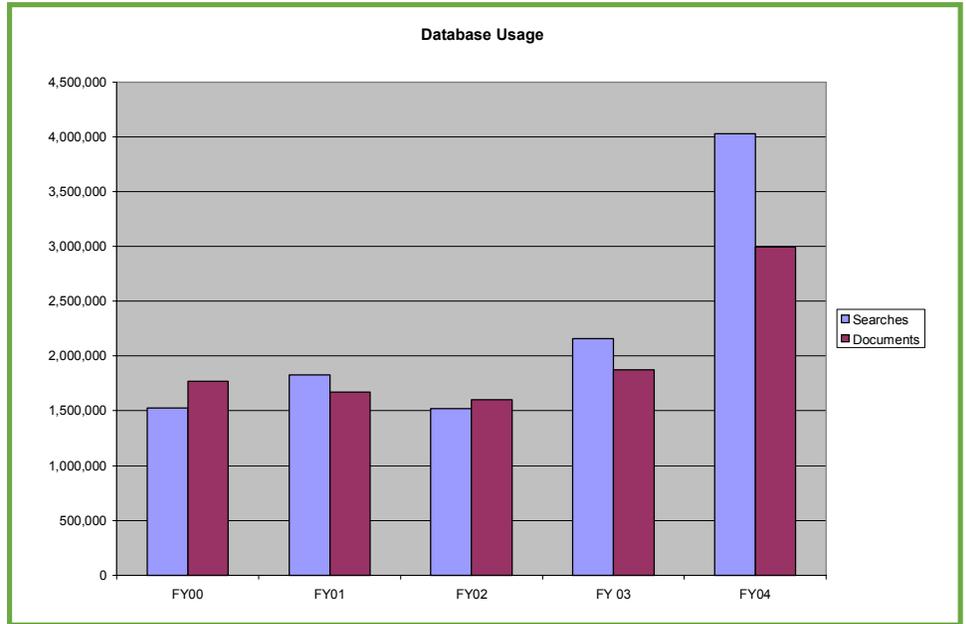


presented around the state. The more library staff learn about the available resources, the more they use them.

home users, and OPLIN is working to address this expanding “home user” demographic.

Overall database usage grew very strongly in FY 2004 [see Database Usage chart, right].

The changes in the OPLIN website and the path to our databases led us to revisit how we identify and authenticate remote users for access to library resources. It is important to protect subscription content so that only authorized users can access it, but it is just as important to remove any unnecessary barriers. The more we can streamline the authentication process, the more positive we make the research experience, and thus encourage the continued use of subscription databases. From the user’s point of view, it is the library that is remote. As computers become increasingly common in homes, more and more of our usage stats will come from



cooperate with Libraries Connect Ohio partners to provide the EBSCO suite of databases, and to pay the state’s matching portion of the LSTA grant. Material in the LCO core collection now includes articles from over 8,000 magazines and peer-reviewed research journals, articles from 17 Ohio newspapers and over 250 national newspapers, English and Spanish encyclopedias, primary documents from American history, authoritative medical and scientific information, as well as art and literature. Material in support of business professionals, consumer health information, and Ohio’s K-16 students is also key to the core collection.

A secondary goal for FY 2004 was to make sure Ohio residents do not lose access to the premium content they currently enjoy. Difficult fiscal times for Ohio have caused a general slowing in development of electronic collections. OPLIN’s budget for databases has been flat to down in recent years.

However, there continue to be gaps. The total amount of knowledge existing in database form increases every year, and it is a blunt truth that Ohio’s current holdings represent a ever-decreasing percentage of that knowledge. In order to meet the future needs of Ohio residents, the state’s public libraries have added numerous additional titles. Expenditures by libraries have grown [see Database Spending charts, above left]. **Unfortunately, locally licensed material is not evenly distributed statewide, resulting in have- and have-not communities.** OPLIN has begun to work with

OPLIN continued to provide Wilson Biographies, SIRS Discoverer (both critical homework tools) and Ohio Capital Connection outright with its funds. OPLIN used the rest of its database funds to



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local libraries to leverage our buying strength through shared contracts.

Database Accomplishments

- Increased searches of databases 84% over FY 2003. By making WebFeat easily accessible, we more efficiently directed visitors to many resources, enabling them to see the breadth of material available. The number of actual documents used rose by 57%.
- Completed shared contracts with two vendors for five different products. These contracts are managed by OPLIN and paid for by public libraries.
- Provided a preview event for public libraries to view a variety of database products at the same time.
- Developed Quickstart Guides for all databases and made them available via the OPLIN website (under **About OPLIN**).

Database Goals for FY 2005

- Continue to see increases in database usage, and continue to use the same variety of tactics to improve awareness of and use of the material.
- Ensure that all OPLIN-provided content can be delivered smoothly by Ohio library staff to residents using the KnowItNow live research service, through the State Library of Ohio.
- Work closely with Ohio public libraries to maximize buying power through shared contracts.

Cooperation, Partnerships, Resource Sharing

Support for the MORE system resided at the State Library of Ohio for all of 2004, though the OPLIN Support Center continued to provide first-line support. The OSC also continued to support hardware provided by grants from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to public libraries.

Planning for the KnowItNow statewide online reference service continued during FY 2004. Involvement with KnowItNow, MORE, and other statewide cooperative efforts led OPLIN to become an advocate for an Ohio Statewide Card. Such an agreement or compact among libraries would enable any Ohio resident to borrow from and return materials to any library. A statewide card that featured standardized 14-digit codabar patron barcodes (with unique leading digits for each library system) would profoundly impact Ohio's ability to deliver cooperative projects to its citizens.

In FY 2004, OPLIN also...

- Inaugurated the new OPLIN Support Center on July 1, 2003 - the first day of FY 2004.
- Completed the migration of 2,500 e-mail accounts to our new mail server in August 2003.
- Successfully completed and received approval for the federal E-rate discount for the year beginning on July 1, 2004.
- Exhibited at the Ohio SchoolNet Conference and at the Ohio Library Council (OLC) Trade Show in May 2004.
- Had information tables at the OLC Annual Conference in September 2004.
- Upgraded the site routers at most public libraries.
- Introduced a redesigned website.
- Moved all web services to servers housed and managed by OPLIN.
- Worked with the State Library of Ohio to develop database training for libraries, using a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- Attended over 20 meetings in all parts of the state via the OLC Annual Chapter Meetings and member meetings or classes of the regional library systems, to keep library staff informed about our web and database changes.

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