



OPLIN Annual Report

for Fiscal Year 2006

July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006

OPLIN Practically a Teenager

Earlier this year, OPLIN passed a major milestone - the tenth anniversary of its official dedication.

The Ohio Public Library Information Network was conceived in 1994 through a group effort of Ohio's public libraries and the leadership of the Ohio Library Council. The idea was endorsed by Governor George Voinovich in his 1995 State of the State Address, and the organization was defined in the language of the state's biennial budget in June 1995. OPLIN was officially dedicated by Gov. Voinovich on June 12, 1996.

OPLIN's mission, then as now, is to offer Ohio residents fast, free access to the Internet and to subscription databases through Ohio's local public libraries. The overriding rationale for OPLIN is to ensure that all citizens have equal access to information, regardless of its location or format. OPLIN believes that equity of access to information for all must include access to the diverse resources of Ohio's public libraries; access to federal, state, and regional information resources; and access to electronic information resources.

Since 1996, OPLIN has brought universal Web access to Ohio at over 700 sites in all 88 counties. In the 2001 Ecom-Ohio report released by the Governor's Office, OPLIN was credited with providing 4,478 public access workstations at local public libraries, almost twice as many as were available from all other agencies combined. Today there are approximately 10,000 public computers in Ohio public libraries.

OPLIN is re-created every two years in the biennial budget

language. Specifically, OPLIN's governance and budget are defined in separate lines within the State Library's budget. (In addition, OPLIN receives significant administrative support from the State Library.) This budget language also specifies that the leaders of Ohio's government receive a biannual report on the activities of OPLIN, as well as an assessment of Internet trends in public libraries across the nation and around the world. Current reports are available at www.oplin.org/page.php?Id=62-4-229.

As we begin our second decade, OPLIN is closely watching the evolving information landscape. Significant changes are coming, and coming soon.

Network infrastructure and pricing are poised to change in the coming months. Security measures are becoming increasingly important. Methods for finding and retrieving our electronic content will be evolving, as will our website as we make it easier for our customers (you and your patrons) to find the information they need, and to improve the delivery of that information to mobile devices.

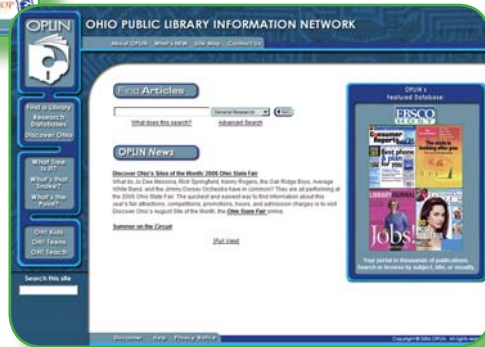
Whenever we find information that might affect your library, we will use as many delivery mechanisms as possible to notify you. Recently, we began publishing a weekly RSS feed (and bi-weekly podcast) of news from the wider information world (www.oplin.org/4cast) and will possibly even start vodcast to libraries. We need to be comfortable with the many ways of moving information across the Web, so we can offer sound advice to libraries

that also want to explore these new technologies.

OPLIN is acutely aware of the need for public libraries to stay relevant in our brave, new information world. Our tenth birthday wish is to do whatever we can to help.



The OPLIN website as it appeared (from the top) in 1996, 1998, 2001, and today.





10 Years of Evolution

The Network

Over the last 10 years, the OPLIN network has continually evolved to meet the changing needs of Ohio's public libraries. There have been three incarnations of the OPLIN core hub since the original design was implemented in 1996, the most recent of which saw the migration of over 700 circuits from the State of Ohio office tower (downtown Columbus) to the State of Ohio Computing Center (Ohio State University's West Campus). In 2002, all of the network's IP addresses were consolidated from a variety of different subnets to a single Class B block. Since the start of the millennium, Internet access has exploded from 80MB to a sustained 270MB of traffic during normal public library business hours. And the OPLIN core infrastructure will continue to evolve in fiscal year 2007 - the process of developing a fourth incarnation is already underway.

As part of a recent OPLIN-led Ethernet project, the Central Library Consortium, Westerville Public Library, and Worthington Libraries have increased bandwidth and speed without having to add another circuit (which would have cost over \$700 a month). By migrating additional libraries from multiple T1 and DS3 circuits to single 10MB or 100MB lines, we plan to expand this

successful project in the coming year.

In an effort to drive down overall circuit costs, OPLIN has also initiated pricing discussions with a number of telecom companies, while examining other types of broadband services such as cable, DSL, and wireless that already exist throughout the state. Our goal is always to provide libraries with the best possible broadband service at the most reasonable price.

The "star" topology of the network will likely evolve in the coming year as well. Instead of long-hauling all of the OPLIN-provided T1 and DS3 circuits back to our core in Columbus, libraries will begin seeing distributed, regionalized connections to a local point of presence (POP), which will then ride a single, larger circuit back to Columbus. This new implementation of an old design will likely drive down circuit costs for OPLIN as well as library-paid branch connections.

In August, the OPLIN Board of Trustees released an RFQ for technical management of the OPLIN network. Later this fall, we expect to decide between the Ohio Office of Information Technology (our current provider) or a new entity. A copy of the RFQ, along with vendor questions and answers, can be read at <http://oit.ohio.gov/SDD/Contracts/RFO/RFO.aspx>.

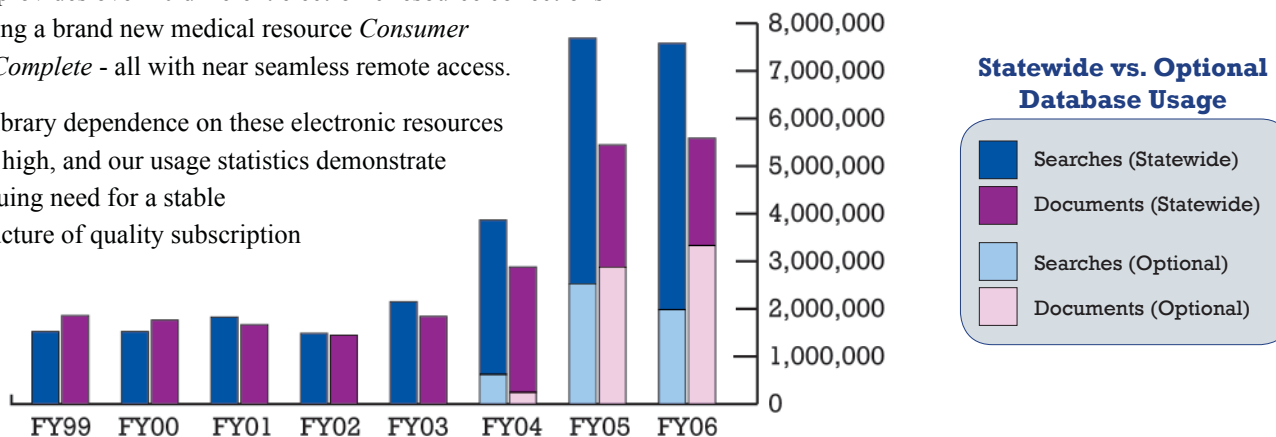
The Content

When OPLIN debuted in 1996, it provided Ohio libraries with six subscription databases. Some of these were text-only, accessible through VT100 terminals (so called "dumb terminals") or Telnet programs, but most could be reached through a web browser (Netscape 2.02 or a new browser called "Internet Explorer"). A few of the databases required libraries to install front-end client programs on their computers. There was no such thing as "remote access" to these subscriptions. Today, OPLIN provides over 40 different electronic resource collections - including a brand new medical resource *Consumer Health Complete* - all with near seamless remote access.

Public library dependence on these electronic resources remains high, and our usage statistics demonstrate a continuing need for a stable infrastructure of quality subscription content.

The Ohio Web Library website (www.ohioweblibrary.org) was launched last year in an effort to define and promote the importance of a core electronic information collection accessible to all Ohio citizens. The website is the work of the Libraries Connect Ohio partnership - OPLIN, with INFOhio, OhioLINK, and the State Library of Ohio - who are committed to providing all Ohioans access to the authoritative, educational resources that are necessary for life in the information-intensive 21st century.

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Highlights from the Past Year

Over the course of fiscal year 2006, OPLIN also:

- Named Stephen Hedges as its third Executive Director.
- Welcomed three new OPLIN Board members: Mary Pat Essman, Jim Kenzig, and Clyde Scoles; and bid farewell to six-year Board veterans Kim Fender and Tim Kambitsch.
- Elected to maintain its current administrative arrangement, rather than become a fully integrated department of the State Library of Ohio.
- Made a variety of improvements to the OPLIN website, including a Google-powered “Search this site” box at the bottom of the left-hand menu, plus the addition of Google Maps to the popular Find a Library tool (www.oplin.org/fal).
- Debuted a new library news service, *The OPLIN 4cast* (www.oplin.org/4cast), including bi-weekly podcasts.
- Extended OPLIN Support Center hours: 8am-8pm Monday-Thursday, and 8am-5pm on Fridays.
- Made many improvements to OPLIN webMAIL (<http://mail.oplin.org>), including more layout options, better filtering, better spam identification, and bigger attachments.
- Completed work on a second redundant path from the OPLIN core to the commodity Internet as part of our ongoing effort to make Ohio public library Internet access more reliable.
- Received the WebFeat President’s Award for Innovation in the category of multi-library networks for our OneSearch multi-database search engine.
- Successfully distributed over \$100,000 to public libraries through the newly created Internet Filter Assistance program.
- Identified numerous errors in past telecom bills, and recovered a significant amount of money as a result.
- Attended a wide variety of meetings and conferences throughout the state, and made presentations at each of the OLC Chapter Conferences, the OHIONET Annual Meeting, the Small Libraries Conference, and TechConnections 6.
- Gave the 5th Annual Award for Innovation to Cleveland Public Library, Cuyahoga County Public Library, and NOLA Regional Library System for the KnowItNow Toolbar (www.knowitnow.org/toolbar/).

The Content (continued from page 2)

These communication pieces are vital tools in securing continued funds for the Ohio Web Library when the current LSTA grant ends in 2008.

In the spring, we repeated our successful partnership with OHIONET to offer public libraries a month-long preview of a variety of research databases. All of these products were available for discounts, either directly from OHIONET or as part of a group contract managed by OPLIN and the State Library. At the end of the fiscal year, 168 libraries had agreed to pay \$684,000 to support contracts for 10 optional databases, the most popular selections being EBSCO’s *Auto Repair Reference Center* and ProQuest’s genealogy resource *HeritageQuest*.

The group contracts help libraries by bringing extra databases into their reach, but the growth in this program highlights a

disturbing fact: usage of the statewide subscriptions is shrinking (down 15% from last year), while usage of the optional, library-paid subscriptions has grown by 20%. With this trend in mind, OPLIN is collecting detailed data on how the 25 largest libraries in the state spend their electronic subscription budgets (acting alone or as part of an OPLIN group contract). This will help us discover the information needs that are not being met by our

statewide subscriptions, and inform our content strategies going forward.

In the coming year, watch for improvements with remote access to OPLIN-provided databases. Already, new authentication tools enable us to identify the IP addresses of Ohio

residents, and we only require users to enter their zip code to quickly connect them to databases. We also plan to redesign our Research Databases page (www.oplin.org/databases) so that the most useful titles are more prominent, and users can more easily select the right resource for their needs.

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Internet Access in Ohio Public Libraries

OPLIN conducts an annual survey in order to track information about Internet access in Ohio public libraries. The graphs to the right are based on annual survey data from the past three years.

Overall, the graphs demonstrate increasing public access to the Internet through Ohio libraries. In 2006, for example, there were 9,409 public workstations in libraries, up from 8,580 in 2005. Of this total, computers designated for children's Internet use increased from 963 in 2005 to 1,233 in 2006. The number of libraries using Internet content filters in 2006 was 150 (136 in 2005) and the number of libraries applying for E-rate discounts on telecommunications and Internet costs rose to 113 (93 in 2005).

Although the total amount of money spent by public libraries on equipment and software related to network access increased from \$5,615,983 in 2005 to \$5,878,321 in 2006, the 2006 figure is almost identical to the 2004 total, resulting in an overall flat spending trend. This can probably be attributed to lower prices for networking equipment and software in 2006 as compared to 2004.

OPLIN

CONTACT INFORMATION

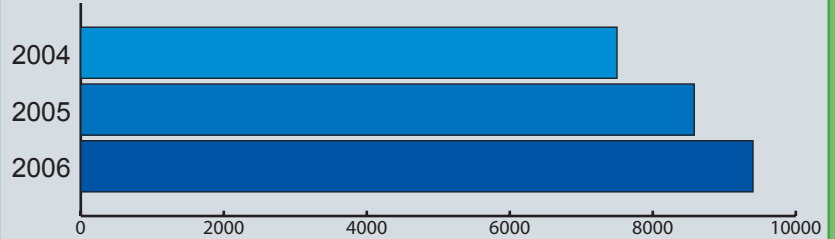
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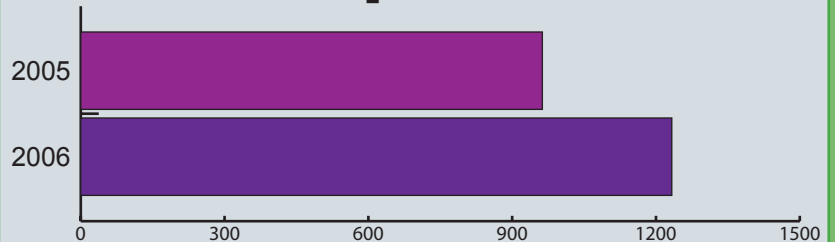
E-mail: support@oplin.org

Web: <http://www.oplin.org>
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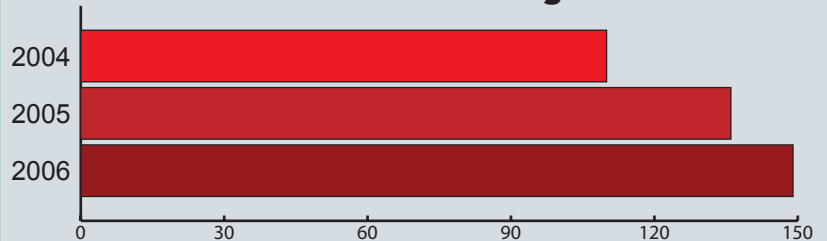
Public Computers



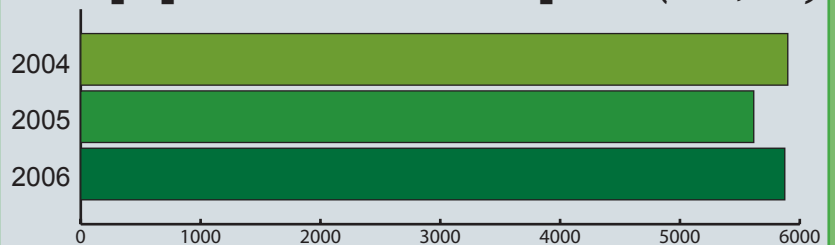
Children's Computers



Number of Libraries Using Filters



Equipment & Software Expense (x \$1,000)



Number of Libraries Filing for E-rate

