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## OPLIN Will Be Your Host

Early in 2007, the OPLIN Board of Trustees approved a revised version of *OPLIN's Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Activities* ([www.oplin.org/oplin/policies/missionGoals.html](http://www.oplin.org/oplin/policies/missionGoals.html)). One of the more notable additions to this document was: *Objective 3.3: Provide web hosting services for public libraries.* In recent months, OPLIN has been developing this service, and is now looking for a few brave (or desperate) libraries to test it out.

Although the parameters of OPLIN's web hosting will likely evolve as the service matures and the needs of participating libraries become more clear, here's an early look at how OPLIN web hosting compares with commercial hosting services:

**Cost:** Decent commercial website hosting generally starts at about \$8 per month, and OPLIN's service will be free. Some Ohio libraries are successfully using commercial hosts, but others may prefer to deal with a non-commercial source like OPLIN.

**Storage:** OPLIN will start by offering 10GB of storage for each library. This is less than what's offered by most commercial services, but should be adequate for the needs of a library website.

**Support:** Commercial services often offer 24x7 telephone support, but OPLIN can only offer support during our normal Support Center hours of operation.

**Domain names:** Typically a commercial service will offer a "free domain name for life," with the possibility of adding subdomains and additional domains. OPLIN will offer one free domain name, unlimited subdomains, and will charge the actual cost for additional domain names.

**Website builder:** Commercial services typically offer some sort of software to help customers build their own website. OPLIN will provide customizable website templates to Ohio public libraries.

**FTP access:** Commercial services sometimes offer 100 or more FTP accounts for loading material to a website. OPLIN will offer an unlimited number, but a typical library won't need very many.

**Statistics:** Commercial services always come with some sort of stats package to allow customers to track their website traffic. OPLIN will offer a robust (but free) program called AWStats.

**Databases:** Generally, commercial services offer 50 or more MySQL or PostgreSQL databases to customers. The number of databases is actually meaningless, since one large database could use more resources than 50 small ones; storage space is the controlling factor. OPLIN will offer unlimited MySQL databases up to the storage limit, but most libraries will only need one.

**phpMyAdmin:** A very popular tool for managing MySQL databases, which OPLIN would make available to libraries.

**phpBB:** A popular software package that allows websites to host message boards, which OPLIN will also provide.

**Other services OPLIN is considering:**

**Secure server:** Commercial services will often offer Secure Socket Layer (SSL) web service for private transactions.

### Who's On Board?

The State Library Board recently approved the nominations of five new members of the OPLIN Board of Trustees, whose terms will begin on July 1st. They are:

- **Gary Branson**, Director of the London Public Library;
- **Karl Colon**, Director of the Greene County Public Library;
- **Laura Solomon**, Web Applications Supervisor for the Cleveland Public Library;
- **Jeff Wale**, Technology Coordinator at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library; and
- **Mike Wantz**, Director of the Perry County District Library

The new Board members will replace departing members Anne Hinton, Richard Murdock, Donna Perdsock, Clyde Scoles, and Sandi Thompson.



### OPLIN Will Be Your Host (from page 1)

**Audio/Video streaming:** A few commercial services provide software to allow a website to provide streaming audio or video.

**CGI:** Many commercial services offer Common Gateway Interface (CGI) capabilities, allowing customer websites to run programs that process input from users.

### **Things OPLIN is unlikely to offer:**

**ILS hosting:** By and large, commercial services do not offer hosting of library Integrated Library System software (the library catalog, etc.), because an ILS server is very different from a web server.

**E-mail:** Commercial web hosting services usually offer e-mail services. OPLIN would not, since e-mail is already available to libraries through the oplin.org e-mail server.

**Chat server:** Some commercial services offer chat server software as part of their package. OPLIN would not offer this as part of the web hosting, but would instead allow libraries to establish their own chat channel on the OPLIN chat server.

**VPN:** A few commercial services offer the ability to access the website over a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

## The Ohio Web Library Takes Shape

The **Ohio Web Library (OWL)** is two things: it's a name used to refer to the electronic database content purchased by the Libraries Connect Ohio partners (OPLIN, OhioLINK, INFOhio, and the State Library); and it's also a website that provides access to those databases ([ohioweblibrary.org](http://ohioweblibrary.org)).

OWL has come up in various library discussions lately, but in very different contexts, which can be confusing. It was discussed at the recent Library Partnership Summit (<http://winslo.state.oh.us/libsummit.html>), particularly in regard to the effort to find funding for purchasing the databases in the future. But you may also have heard bits of talk from OPLIN about revising OWL, and in that case we're talking about the website, not the content.

The OWL website was originally set up to provide a place to access the databases without starting at a particular library (or library network) website. In part, the intention was to demonstrate to legislators what Libraries Connect Ohio was buying with its state and federal funds. The page was never intended for serious public use, so there wasn't a lot of effort to make it user-friendly. That's obvious if you visit the site now.

OPLIN intends to revise the OWL website to make it as useful, efficient, and easy to use as Google or WorldCat. In addition to database content, we would also like it to incorporate public library catalog records in its search results. OPLIN has had discussions with developers from Google and OCLC, and we're planning to test the MasterKey product from IndexData. By next spring, we hope to roll out a completely new version of [ohioweblibrary.org](http://ohioweblibrary.org).

When that happens, we hope to provide the OWL search box to public libraries as a widget they can embed in their own websites. OWL can also become a site for Ohioans who do not associate themselves with any particular library, but still want to get to the resources purchased on their behalf. It will not be branded as an "OPLIN" page, but simply as the "Ohio Web Library." It's not intended to replace anyone's current website; it's intended to be an additional tool to get people to the databases.

Two other things will probably happen when the new version of OWL is ready: it will replace the current WebFeat portal to the databases on the OPLIN website; and we will start a marketing campaign to promote it.



## OH in D.C.

In early May, OPLIN Director Stephen Hedges (*pictured at left, front and center*) was among a group of Ohio representatives that participated in the ALA's National Library Legislative Day activities in Washington D.C.

National Library Legislative Day is a two-day event in which people who care about libraries participate in advocacy and issue-training sessions, interact with Capitol Hill insiders, and visit congressional member offices to ask Congress to pass legislation that supports libraries.



# An Open Source Discourse

In late April, the State Library hosted a meeting open to anyone interested in discussing the future of Integrated Library Systems in Ohio libraries. Originally the meeting was to be a simple discussion among libraries affected by the coming end of the Horizon library system from Sirsi/Dynix; however, many librarians also wanted to have a discussion about statewide options, including the possibility of moving to open source library systems.

The State Library has started a blog to continue the discussion at [statelibraryohioils.blogspot.com](http://statelibraryohioils.blogspot.com). OPLIN also covered the topic further in *The OPLIN 4cast Podcast #18* (the following article is a modified version of that podcast).

## What Is Open Source?

A simple definition of open source software is software with source code that's made available to the general public, having either relaxed or non-existent property restrictions.

"Source code" is computer program language that can be read by humans. To run a program, source code is compiled into "object code," which can be read and understood by a computer. Most commercial software consists of compiled object code, but not source code. This means that you cannot decipher exactly how the program works or make any changes.

Open source, however, is something more than just open code. The term also refers to a way of looking at software as intellectual property. In the early days of computers and the Internet, it was routine for companies and universities to share software for the purpose of collecting suggestions and improvements from as many people as possible.

By the late '70s, however, companies began to look at themselves as owners of software properties, which they excluded from others unless they received payment.

This change in attitude caught many people in the computer community by surprise, and

irritated some. This backlash led to the 1985 creation of the Free Software Foundation, which developed licensing language that could be attached to software to insure that its source code would remain freely available. By the late '90s, people began to call such software "open source" instead of "free" software. Such software is usually distributed free of charge, but the important factor is the freedom to read and change the code.

## In Libraries?

You may think that libraries would be natural users of open source software, since they share a similar view of intellectual property as something to be freely distributed. In practice, however, there are often not enough programmers who care about libraries to work on such software. And unfortunately, it is sometimes impossible to get libraries to agree on what they really need. That creates a difficult environment for the open source production process.

Nevertheless, there are at least two open source library automation systems currently in use in the U.S. One is Evergreen, the new software being used by the Georgia PINES consortium. The other is Koha, which is in use by at least 300 libraries worldwide.

The major difference between the two is age. Evergreen has only been used in libraries for months, while Koha has been in use for over seven years. Many of the finer differences between the two can be traced to this difference in maturity, which can be a very important factor with open source software.

Also, Evergreen has not yet fully embraced the open source production process. Evergreen was planned and conceived from the "top" down, with programmers hired by Georgia and project details managed by PINES, much as you would find in a commercial software production process. Whether Evergreen makes the transition to the "grass roots" process remains to be seen, but recent developments have been positive.

## Out & About on the Circuit

Small Library Directors Forum  
Tuesday, July 31  
Wadsworth Public Library

OPLIN Board Meeting  
Friday, August 10  
State Library of Ohio

## Bits & Bytes

### Survey Says...

It's nearly that time of year again: time to fill out the OPLIN Annual Survey. As a reminder, the dual purposes of the survey are:

- To report the results to the legislature and other government entities that help make critical funding decisions, and
- To track the size and progress of the network, in order to facilitate planning.

This year's survey will be available once again as a webform. Because it's crucial to our operations, OPLIN needs a 100% response rate, so keep your eyes peeled.

### Care to Chat?

The OPLIN Support Center's website ([support.oplin.org](http://support.oplin.org)) is sporting a brand new look and a shiny new service: live chat.

To start a live chat session with an OPLIN Support Center Technician, simply enter your name in the box on the right-hand side of the OSC website (during normal OSC hours of operation, of course).

For routine items like circuit and e-mail requests, libraries are still encouraged to use OPLIN Self Service, but for general questions and quick issues, live chat may be faster and more efficient.



# OPLIN DATABASE NEWS

## AccessScience

The **redesign of the AccessScience website** has recently reached the “alpha” stage and is on track for release later this summer. The new look of the website is essentially complete, and the enhancements to functionality are either implemented on the test site or well along in development.

Through the use of semantic tagging, a search in the new *AccessScience* will lead the user to the full spectrum of offerings on any of thousands of topics. Results will be arranged on the page in categories, such as multimedia, graphics, news, along with the latest updates to articles. A preview of the new home page can be seen at: [www.accessscience.com/Newsletter/AlphaHome3.pdf](http://www.accessscience.com/Newsletter/AlphaHome3.pdf).

## Encyclopædia Britannica

*Britannica* has added **over 200 new videos** that cover a variety of subjects, including History, Science, Geography, the Arts, and Social Studies. Video topics include Toulouse-Lautrec, Botticelli, Lewis & Clark, Asia, Ancient Cultures, World Wars, Economics, Native Americans, Insects, the Chaos Theory, and the expanding Universe, among others.

These new extended play videos are between 15 to 45 minutes long, and can be downloaded into Power Point Presentations. The videos can be found on the homepages of *Britannica Online Academic Edition* in the “Video Collection” box.

## LearningExpress Library

**MARC records** for *LearningExpress Library* are now available at [www.oplin.org/marcrecords](http://www.oplin.org/marcrecords) for downloading into your library’s catalog. If you add these records to your catalog, patrons using your OPAC and searching for something like “civil service exam” will see a link to *LearningExpress Library*, where they can sign up for an online practice test. This is an easy way to get more people using this online resource.

## NetWellness

In recent months, *NetWellness* has spotlighted **Minority Health, Mental Health, and Men’s Health**. The *NetWellness* website has also added the **Wellness and Mental Health Health Centers**, and the new HealthTopics of **Esophageal Cancer, Head and Neck Cancer, Pancreatic Cancer, and Depression**.

## NewsBank

Do you know how often patrons are using your library’s paid research products? Can your patrons easily find and use your library’s subscriptions? How can you do a better job of ushering them to the resources they require?

A new section on the *NewsBank* website addresses these questions. The new **Product Use Section** provides a variety of useful promotional items aimed at streamlining patron access, enhanced reporting to track changes in use patterns, and more. The section’s practical tools and guidelines include:

- A best practices document entitled “Five Proven Ways to Increase Use of Paid Online Databases”;
- Links to relevant articles by librarians;
- Examples of thoughtfully designed public library websites and resources pages;
- Search tips, success stories, and more;

Visit the new Product Use Section at [www.newsbank.com/productuse](http://www.newsbank.com/productuse) or go to *NewsBank’s* Public Library Website, [www.newsbank.com/libraries](http://www.newsbank.com/libraries), and click on the link under “Product Use & Support.”

## NoveList

EBSCO and *NoveList* are on schedule to release **NoveList Plus**, an enhanced version of the original database that will also include nonfiction titles, in early 2008. *NoveList Plus* represents the company’s most significant development effort in this product line since *NoveList*, the readers’ advisory resource used in 65% of the public libraries in the United States, was first introduced in 1994.

A 2005 national survey of over 1,200 public librarians documented the need for a resource that does for nonfiction what *NoveList* does for fiction. It also pointed out that existing bibliographic data will not meet the needs of nonfiction readers, and that a nonfiction readers’ advisory resource should contain browsing lists and lists of award winners, as well as author read-alikes, reviews, and book discussion guides for popular titles. *NoveList Plus* will be an upgrade to *NoveList*, and will contain the entire *NoveList* service.

*NoveList* is drawing on the expertise of many of the leading names in readers’ advisory service to develop the product’s title database and create the content that users need and expect from *NoveList*. *NoveList Plus* will sport a completely new interface and many powerful user-requested features.