

A lot has changed since July 2007.

Database Changes

✓ The new and improved Ohio Web Library collection was launched on July 1st, following an extensive evaluation process involving 15 librarians plus additional staff from OPLIN, OhioLINK, INFOhio, and the State Library of Ohio.

The task force recommended a revised collection of resources that best serve the entire Ohio library community. The most notable changes were the switch from *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to *World Book*, and dropping Ohio Capitol Connection because of budget concerns and low usage.

The Ohio Web Library is funded in part by a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant through the State Library of Ohio.

New search tool

✓ The new Ohio Web Library collection of databases can be found at ohioweblibrary.org.

This site features a new database searching tool that OPLIN developed using market research done by Kent State University and open source components to match the needs of users from all types of libraries in Ohio.

We think it's a big improvement over our former database access page, and our usage statistics certainly seem to confirm that. The number of searches doubled in the first month after it was launched!

New websites

✓ The new Ohio Web Library site achieved the goal of separating the databases, which are used by the general public, from the OPLIN web site, which has a lot of information just for library staff members. Everything you ever wanted to know about OPLIN can be found at the new oplin.org site.

We also split the Discover Ohio content away from everything else and gave it a new name: ExploreOhio. The new exploreohio.org site contains over 13,000 links to Ohio-specific information, now organized in a format that's easier to search and navigate.

Permanent standing

✓ Another momentous change during the past year is that OPLIN is now defined in the Ohio Revised Code, thanks to the legislative efforts of the Ohio Library Council.

Up until now, OPLIN has been defined in the language of each biennial budget bill as a line item in the State Library budget, meaning that OPLIN technically ceased to exist every two years.

Now OPLIN is a part of permanent law, structured as an independent agency within the State Library. We can now take advantage of longer service contracts and feel a little more secure.

Less staff

✓ Over the past two years, the OPLIN staff has been reduced from seven to five, and we have shifted many job duties to cover the workload.

In the current state budget climate, we don't foresee any increase in OPLIN staff over the next several years, but we feel we can still deliver good service despite our 28% staff reduction.

Staff:

Executive Director - *Stephen Hedges*
Technology Project Manager - *Karl Jendretzky*
Library Services Manager - *Laura Solomon*
Support Center - *Vincent Riley*
Customer Relations & Support - *Bobbi Galvin*

OPLIN staff members who have moved on:
Laura Watkins and Joel Husenits

So - big changes to the OPLIN staff, to the legal standing of OPLIN, to the databases, and to the web sites. What else?

Well, there were some big changes to the network infrastructure itself.

Stephen Hedges, the OPLIN executive director, was appointed this year to the Ohio Broadband Council, the group spearheading the effort to combine and streamline the networks serving state government, schools, colleges, and libraries, as well as pushing for wider broadband availability across the state. OPLIN libraries are taking a state-wide lead in adapting to the new Broadband Ohio network - with over 50 libraries already connected - while most other agencies are still in the planning stages of migration.



The network is based on broadband Ethernet technology, which is rapidly replacing the older T1 and DS3 connections used by OPLIN from the beginning. Because of its speed, Ethernet is changing the way people use the Internet. It is becoming a “normal” communication medium in America, and that results in more pressure on public libraries to provide good Internet service to the members of their communities who do not have broadband at home.

54

of libraries that have qualified for a circuit upgrade

of libraries running on Ethernet lines

34

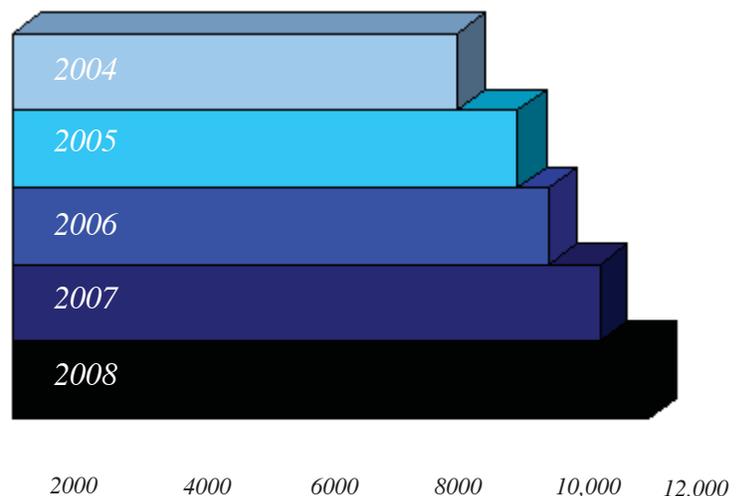
This year, OPLIN began doing quarterly bandwidth checks on all OPLIN-provided lines, and the OPLIN Board decided that any time a library starts using more than an average 80% of its OPLIN circuit during peak hours, OPLIN will upgrade the circuit, and where possible, upgrade to Ethernet. Many libraries have new, robust OPLIN circuits that can now handle their Internet traffic without any need to buy additional circuits with local funds.

The public demands more computers, and they have been added to the network at a furious rate. According to the OPLIN survey last year, there were 10,300 PCs available to the public. This year, there are about 11,145, and these computers are each using more bandwidth than ever before.

It is vital that OPLIN provide libraries with the robust connections they need, but it is also becoming more and more expensive. In addition to circuit charges, OPLIN also pays an additional bandwidth charge for all the traffic that comes from library branches, through main libraries, across the statewide network, and out to the Internet through the OPLIN core.

Bandwidth charges make up 20% of our total telecommunications bill each month. The total OPLIN bandwidth usage is increasing by about 75% a year, and so is our bandwidth cost. That cost is growing at a much faster rate than anything else in our budget.

OPLIN pays over \$220,000 every month to connect Ohio public libraries to the Internet.



Current # of public computers on the OPLIN network = 11,145

The OPLIN budget:

CRITICAL

In January of this year, all state agencies, including the State Library and OPLIN, were ordered to reduce their budgets by 10% for the entire fiscal year, which ended in June. This 10% cut has carried through to this year, and an extra 4.75% cut has just been added to this. Next year and the year after, there will be additional cuts, meaning that in July 2009, OPLIN will probably receive at least 20% less than it received in December 2007. *That's a huge cut.*

So far, we've been able to get through the cut by using E-rate reimbursements that had been saved for network upgrades, and by dropping one of our databases, the Ohio Capitol Connection, and substituting e-mail subscriptions to the Hannah Report and the Gongwer Ohio Report instead.

The staff reductions help a little, but OPLIN's entire administrative overhead, including personnel, makes up only about 10% of our budget; 90% of our funds go directly into purchasing services for libraries. So even if we manage to cut administrative expenses by 30%, we still have to make large cuts in our services in order to balance the budget.

Going forward...

The E-rate reserves are starting to run out, but we need to save some of the money for network upgrades. The network routers in libraries have all reached industry end-of-life and can no longer be maintained.

OPLIN was successful, however, in getting \$200,000 in capital budget money this year for replacing the routers, by matching those funds with \$200,000 from our E-rate reserves. We consider ourselves very fortunate to get these capital budget funds at this time.

One strategy for balancing the budget is to bring in more E-rate reimbursements. OPLIN has entered into an agreement with eTech Ohio, which provides services to schools, to handle our E-rate applications this year. Our hope is that their E-rate expertise may be able to net us more E-rate reimbursements than we have received in the past; time will tell. Included in our agreement is E-rate support for public libraries. Libraries can call on eTech for E-rate consulting, and they will also be conducting E-rate workshops. *In this tough state budget climate, none of us can afford to leave federal money on the table.*

OPLIN may also begin offering some premium services to libraries in return for a fee. Most likely this will involve using our talents to build unique products for your web sites, but we have not yet decided on any details. This would be a major shift for OPLIN, but other options for increasing our revenue are very limited. The OPLIN Board will soon be making decisions about fee-based services.

Unfortunately, there will be further cuts to current OPLIN services. Specifically, we must cut the last remaining database that we purchase outside of the LCO partnership, namely NoveList. We know how much libraries value this database, but we simply have no recourse. Between now and next July, we will be exploring various scenarios for either replacing NoveList with non-commercial readers advisory tools, or finding a way to offer a significant discount to libraries that want to purchase NoveList individually.

Long-range view...

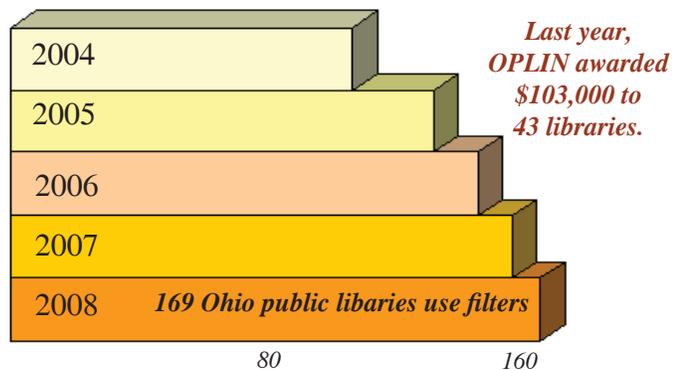
Things do not look any better in the next budget biennium. Our budget projections show that even with cutbacks to staff and databases, our E-rate reserves and state funding will come up almost \$300,000 short by June 2011. State agencies are not allowed to run a deficit. We have asked the Ohio Office of Budget and Management to keep our budget next year at 95% instead of 90%.

If they agree, then we will break even. But the current state economy doesn't look promising, and we fully expect to face some very challenging times ahead.

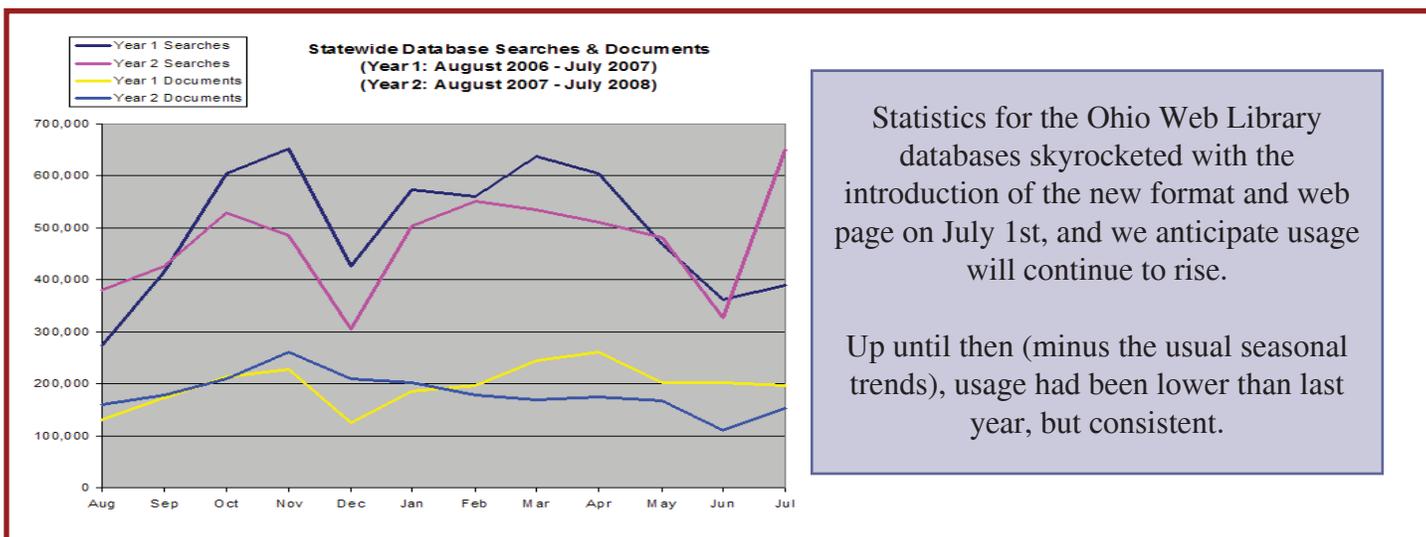
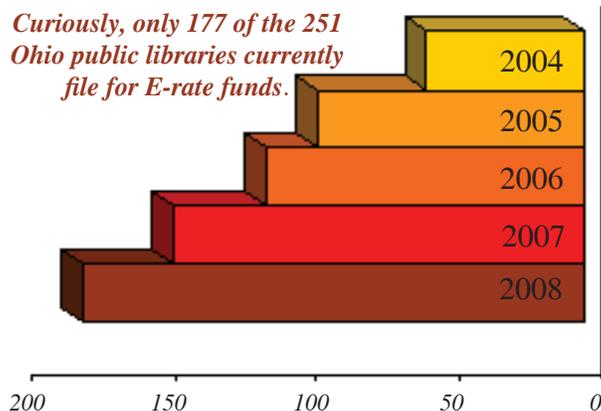
This especially bleak outlook may come as a shock to many of you. It's easy to assume that OPLIN and the State Library will always be able to step up and provide whatever is needed, without thinking too much about the funding. In actuality, the state government is currently in financial distress, and only the masterful efforts of the Ohio Library Council to protect public library funding in Ohio have insulated you from the deep cuts being inflicted on the rest of state government.

OPLIN will endure, of course, and will continue to provide you with the best service we can afford. Because OPLIN has such a talented staff, we will even be able to offer new services, so long as they don't cost us anything other than hard work and sweat. Better times will come, but until then we ask for your patience and understanding.

For the past few years, OPLIN has been legally required to award filtering grants to libraries looking to install initial hardware to start filtering their connection or to update existing equipment.



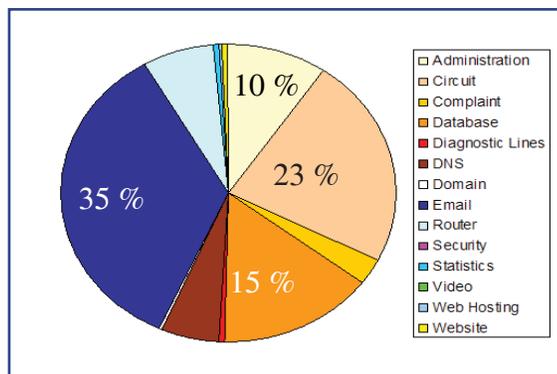
In FY 2007, Ohio public libraries received millions of dollars in E-rate refunds. All public libraries are eligible to apply for this federal money, and once reimbursed, libraries are free to spend the money on anything their library needs.



As the “first line of defense” for database problems and network troubleshooting, the OPLIN Support Center opened 2,304 tickets this year for library issues.

E-mail issues accounted for the majority of the support center tickets. OPLIN provides 2,459 e-mail accounts to Ohio library staff members. This fiscal year, we created 104 accounts more than we deleted.

23% of the tickets involved library circuits. Issues included billing questions, downed circuits, line moves and circuit upgrades.



FY 2008 was the year OPLIN got social.

MySpace

www.myspace.com/ohoplin

Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com>

Slideshare

<http://www.slideshare.net/OPLIN>

Twitter

<http://www.twitter.com/OPLIN>

We are everywhere!

Search for the OPLIN group on LinkedIn.com

Our blogs:

<http://www.oplin.org/4cast>

<http://www.oplin.org/ohiolibrarynews>

<http://www.oplin.org/meanlaura>