

Founded in 1995, the **Ohio Public Library Information Network (OPLIN)** provides broadband Internet connections and related information services to Ohio public libraries. Our primary mission is to ensure that all Ohio residents have fast, free public Internet access through the 251 independent local public library systems in Ohio, as well as the use of high-quality research databases not freely available on the World Wide Web.

Major Accomplishments

- ▶ Number of libraries that qualified for circuit upgrades this year was 36.
- ▶ Public Library Data Center debuted replacing the annual OPLIN Connectivity Survey for gathering library data.
- ▶ The purchase of a new Linux e-mail server and research into replacing current system with new Web-based mail software.
- ▶ Libraries can now purchase and use their own domain names with their OPLIN e-mail addresses.
- ▶ New, free SMS text messaging notification service became available.
- ▶ Laura Solomon received OLC Resolution Honors from the OLC Board of Directors, July 17, for her work on *Save Ohio Public Libraries*.
- ▶ OPLIN Web servers moved to the State of Ohio Computer Center (SOCC) for increased reliability, security, and stability.
- ▶ Ohio Web Library search results improved and new translators added.

As a state government agency, OPLIN receives extensive fiscal support services from the State Library of Ohio and contracts with the Ohio Office of Information Technology for assistance with network management. As a result, only about 10% of the OPLIN budget is used for administrative costs, such as personnel, rent, equipment, and supplies. The remainder of the budget is used to purchase the services provided to Ohio public libraries, primarily Internet telecommunica-

tions (about \$3.5 million annually) and subscriptions to basic information databases (about \$1.5 million). Because OPLIN provides these services, public libraries do not need to pay for them from their individual budgets.

OPLIN is governed by Director, Stephen Hedges, and a Board of Trustees composed of 11 members selected from the staff and past or present Boards of Trustees of Ohio public libraries, who serve for a term of three years. Since OPLIN seeks representatives of public libraries, board members are chosen based on location, library size, and skill set. The other four staff members currently employed at OPLIN are listed to the right:

OPLIN Staff Members

Director:	Stephen Hedges
Technology Project Manager:	Karl Jendretzky
Library Services Manager:	Laura Solomon
Network Support:	Vincent Riley
Customer Relations/Support:	Amie McReynolds



OPLIN Services & Resources

Originally, OPLIN only provided two major, important services for libraries: Internet connectivity and databases. Over the years, OPLIN has grown beyond its initial mission to provide a host of other valuable services that public libraries would otherwise be unable to afford themselves. We provide these additional services and resources in a streamlined and efficient manner without incurring unreasonable or extra charges due to staff ingenuity and skill as well as by using free or open source solutions when available and low-cost alternatives when not.

libraries are crucial both to the public and staff, especially in this declining economy with increased necessity for access to library resources and technology.

- Internet connectivity
- Research databases
- Support Center assistance
- E-mail accounts
- SMS text messaging
- Internet filtering grants
- E-Rate workshops
- Dynamic Website Kits
- Public Library Data Center
- OPLIN mailing lists
- Social media/blogs
- Instructional materials

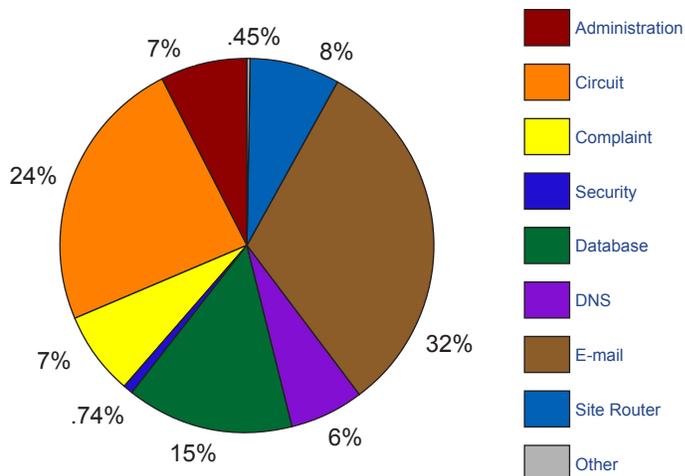
Though the eventual consumers of our services are often members of the general public, our actual customers are in fact limited to the public library systems of Ohio. However, the goal of Ohio public libraries is to provide free and open access to all types of information resources and technology to the citizens of this state, and the services that OPLIN is able to offer

This year, OPLIN has implemented some changes to make our services more cost-effective and efficient as well as our data more stable, reliable, and secure. We try to use Linux-based software solutions when possible because they offer cross-platform compatibility with multiple operating systems and provide a large support community.

Support Center Tickets

The OPLIN Support Center provides assistance for a wide variety of technical questions and issues for libraries as well as monitoring and maintaining network and databases. This fiscal year, Support Center personnel opened 2,024 tickets for 251 library systems (256 circuit connections) at 728 buildings in a total of nine categories.

The majority of support tickets were related to e-mail issues (32%) and library circuits (24%), which includes Internet connectivity and circuit upgrades. Questions and problems involving the statewide databases accounted for 15% of tickets. OPLIN provides approximately 2,450 total e-mail accounts to Ohio public library staff members.





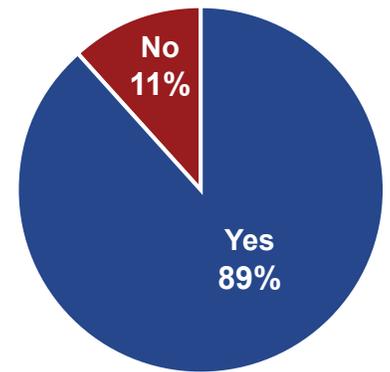
Internet Connectivity

OPLIN provides an Internet connection to the public library systems in Ohio in addition to connections for the four regional library systems and the State Library of Ohio for 256 total circuits. Most libraries still use T1 lines, but we have upgraded many to Ethernet over the last year. Of the total number of Internet connections, we have 193 T1 lines, 2 DS3 (bundle of T1), and 61 Ethernet. The number of libraries that qualified for circuit upgrades this year is 36, and we expect that number will increase in 2011. The total network bandwidth usage for libraries at the beginning of the fiscal year (July 1, 2009) was 800 Mbps, and at the end of the year (June 30, 2010) was 940 Mbps.

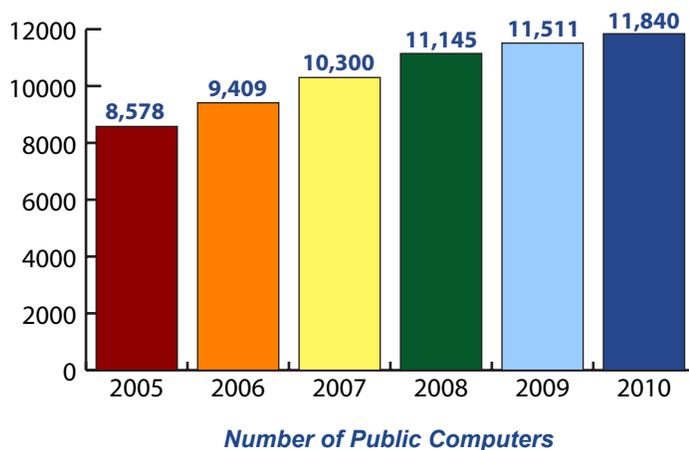
In past years, a library was eligible for a circuit upgrade, or increased bandwidth, if the circuit maintained an average of 80% utilization during peak hours over a specified time period. As a result of responses to the “Question of the Week” posted on the OPLINlist mailing list, the circuit upgrade threshold has now been reduced to 70%, which means that libraries can qualify for an upgrade earlier. Based

on area network infrastructure, we try to upgrade circuits to broadband Ethernet when possible, which is newer technology and rapidly replacing older T1/DS3 connections. A single T1 line has a capacity of 1.54 Mbps, DS3 (28 T1s) has 44.74 Mbps while Ethernet carries a range of 5 to 500 Mbps on our network.

As for wireless access, libraries handle their own setup and costs if they choose to provide wi-fi for their patrons, but 644 Ohio public library buildings currently offer free wireless to their user communities, which has increased from previous years. Some libraries allow patrons to use their own laptops on the wi-fi network while other libraries also provide loaner laptop computers.



Wireless Access



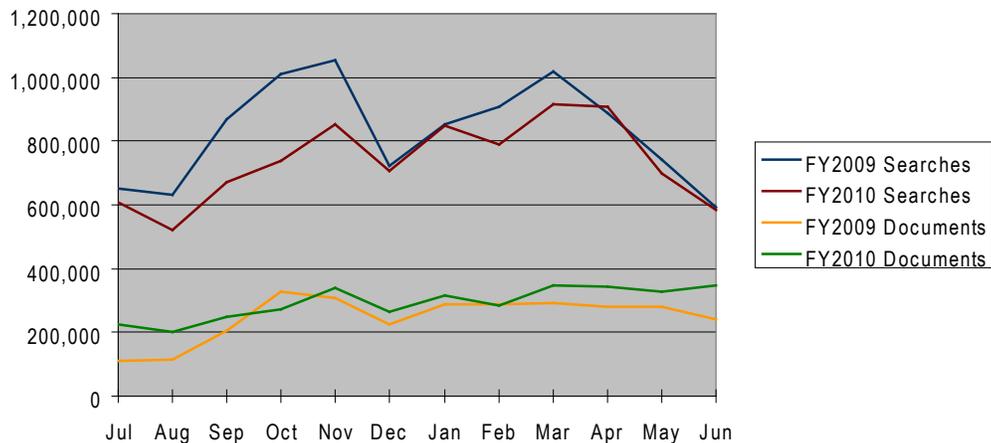
The number of computers available for public use in libraries has risen to 11,840, and the computers available for staff use is now 10,331, which is a total of 22,171 computers in Ohio public libraries. These numbers continue to increase every year as the use of technology and Internet access become a necessary focus of public libraries.

OPLIN paid about \$3.12 million, or \$260,000 per month, for public library telecommunications.



Ohio Web Library – OPLIN Databases

The Ohio Web Library is a vast collection of 281 electronic information resources, or databases, provided by Libraries Connect Ohio (LCO), composed of four library networks – OPLIN, OhioLINK, INFOhio, and the State Library of Ohio. Within these licensed databases are 30,985 individual electronic serial titles (i.e., publications with ISSN), and the databases are accessed through a federated search tool, which is a fast, Google-like search interface, located at <http://www.ohioweblibrary.org> or <http://www.oplin.org/databases/>.



LCO can cooperatively purchase access to these statewide resources at a cost-effective rate whereas most individual libraries would never be able to afford them on their own. These research databases are available for free to all Ohio residents and include online publications and research resources, such as journals, magazines, newspapers, and tutorials.

OPLIN paid about \$1.57 million for information resources (databases).

In FY 2010, a total of 8,844,981 searches were performed, and 3,521,660 documents were retrieved. These numbers are fairly consistent with last year, however, it appears that searches have decreased while retrieved documents have slightly increased. This discrepancy could be explained by more efficient search processes – search translators have been improved, and users have become more savvy searchers. The number that is really more important in determining database usage are the downloaded documents.

Funded in part through an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) LSTA grant awarded by the State Library of Ohio.

Dynamic Website Kits

Since April 2008, OPLIN has been offering Dynamic Website Kits to Ohio public libraries, a service that provides new, attractive Web sites with numerous features and options at a modest price. The fee includes the initial setup, maintenance/upgrades, hosting, and free training at OPLIN. Professional sites are essential to meet the changing needs of library communities in addition to showing their patrons that they are still vital and relevant institutions. The Web kits are built on Drupal, a popular content management system (CMS), for ease of use, ability to update content, and custom appearance. These sites are standards-compliant, which provides increased accessibility and usability. The total number of Ohio public libraries using the Web Kit service is 12 with nine completed in FY 2010 alone.

New Dynamic Website Kits

- London Public Library
- Marion Public Library
- Franklin-Springboro Public Library
- Minerva Public Library
- Wright Memorial Public Library
- Harbor-Topky Memorial Library
- Granville Public Library
- Tuscarawas County Public Library
- Adams County Public Library



Internet Filtering Assistance & E-Rate Program

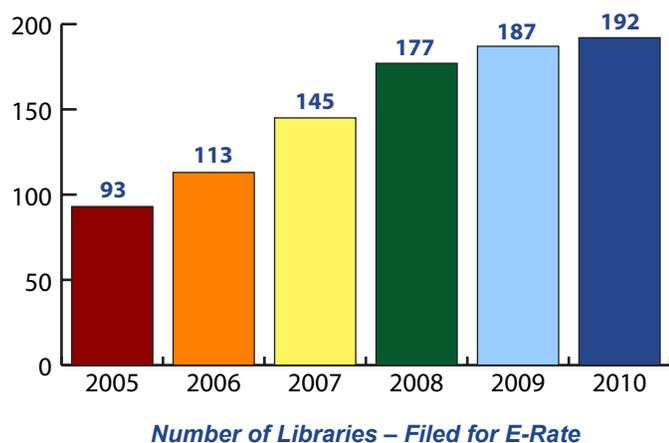
Internet Filtering Assistance grants are part of a program in which OPLIN offers financial assistance to Ohio public libraries that are interested in becoming CIPA-compliant (Children’s Internet Protection Act) or maintaining their CIPA-compliance. To become eligible for these awards, libraries must implement filtering technology by installing new hardware or software to screen out inappropriate, obscene, or illegal materials on public access computers. The grant funds were awarded to libraries in three categories: 1) New filtering measures (top priority); 2) upgrades/expansions of existing filters; and 3) maintenance or renewal of existing filters.

Internet Filtering

OPLIN awarded \$81,000 in grants to 49 libraries, and 165 libraries currently use Internet filters.

E-Rate Program

192 public libraries filed for E-Rate refunds and received approximately \$3.5 million.



The federal E-Rate program, administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), provides discounted rates to assist schools and libraries in obtaining affordable telecommunications and Internet access. All public libraries are eligible to receive this E-Rate money by simply completing some forms, and once reimbursed, libraries can spend the money on anything that they need. The OPLIN discount averages 50% to 60% but can range from 20% to 80%. Because it is so important for libraries to claim their E-Rate funds, OPLIN and the State Library sponsor E-Rate workshops presented by Lorie Germann, Educational Technology Consultant at eTech Ohio, to assist public libraries in completing these forms. All Ohio public libraries are required to submit some E-Rate forms to OPLIN annually, regardless of whether the library itself participates in the E-Rate program.

OPLIN received approximately \$1.35 million in E-Rate reimbursements in FY 2010.

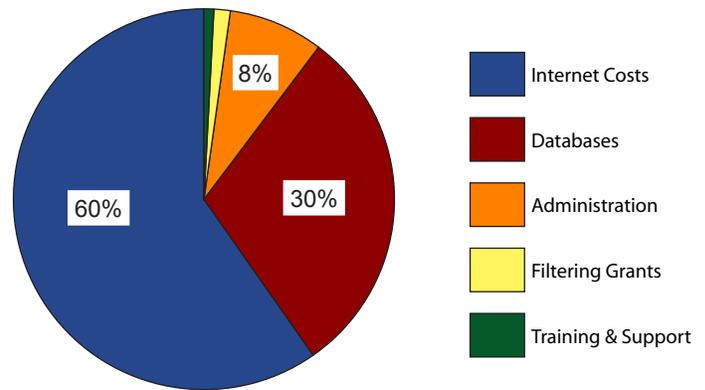


OPLIN Financial Highlights

The State of Ohio government is in financial and economic turmoil as is the federal government, which has consequently affected all Ohio state agencies. For the overall state budget, 10 cost savings days (unpaid days) per fiscal year were implemented for all state employees in FY 2010 and will continue for FY 2011. OPLIN is already a streamlined and efficient state agency with only five employees, and over 90% of our budget is going directly toward services to Ohio public libraries. Any additional budgetary cuts would be the same as cuts to individual libraries, which are already struggling in recent years. For OPLIN's part, we use open source software (OSS) or free software whenever possible for our network and staff computers for monetary as well as for quality reasons.

Some relatively good news for this fiscal year was that the portion of state taxes going to public library funding was only reduced 10% instead of the proposed 30% due in part to the Save Ohio Public Libraries campaign. Although reduced general tax revenues went to the Public Library Fund, \$5 million annually was transferred from the General Revenue Fund to the

Public Library Fund to cover OPLIN and the Library for the Blind. However, libraries still received 25% less state funding due to decreased tax collections. In terms of the General Revenue Fund – Public Library Fund (GRF-PLF), OPLIN received \$3,702,150 from the PLF in FY 2010, which was reduced 15% from the \$4,330,000 we received from the GRF in FY 2009.



Financial Report

EXPENDITURES

Internet Costs	\$3,113,943
Databases	1,569,862
Administration	415,483
Filtering Grants	81,000
Training & Support	46,877

REVENUE

Public Library Fund	\$3,702,150
E-Rate Refunds	1,352,790
Web Kits	10,425

TOTAL	\$5,227,165	TOTAL	\$5,065,365
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Shortfall drawn from previous years' E-Rate Reimbursements	\$ 161,800
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A positive note is that Time Warner Cable (TWC) now has a new master state contract with the Ohio Office of Information Technology (OIT) for fiber optic circuits in addition to the contracts already held with AT&T and TW Telecom. However, TWC does not charge extra for long-haul Ethernet, which not only saves us money but also might control connection costs with the competition.



OPLIN Changes

In fiscal year 2010, we experienced changes and updates both to our vendor contracts and to the OPLIN network. As mentioned in the previous *Financial* section, Time Warner Cable (TWC) now has a new master state contract with the Ohio Office of Information Technology (OIT) for fiber optic Ethernet circuits in addition to the contracts already held with AT&T and TW Telecom. This contract should save money for OPLIN as well as control connection costs with other vendors. In addition, OPLIN has been attempting to upgrade a huge portion of our network by switching from T1 lines to fiber Ethernet connections from AT&T, TW Telecom, and now TWC. Due to lower pricing, many of our newer upgrades are TWC connections, and TW Telecom is slowly being phased out by the competition.

Another major change this year was the “*Connectivity Policy*” change implemented last spring. Since the beginning of OPLIN in 1995, the budget language defining OPLIN gave the Board complete authority to certify participants in the network. Typically, OPLIN provided one Internet connection to each main library location although the State Library and regional library systems received connections as well. However, due to a legislative revision, the OPLIN Board no longer has authority to certify OPLIN participants; possible participants are now defined by the Ohio Revised Code (O.R.C. 3375.64).

A proposed revision to the “*Policy on the Provision of Network Services*” with language that specifies one connection for one location per participant, excluding three connections for the State Library, OPLIN, and SEO, was accepted by the Board. Also as part of the provision, OPLIN would continue to pay OIT’s management costs for the Central Library Consortium (CLC) connection through the end of FY 2010, but O.R.C. language prevented the Board from honoring CLC’s request to pay for their office circuit.

Last April, State Representatives Todd Book (D-McDermott) and Dan Dodd (D-Hebron) proposed legislation to eliminate or merge 100 state boards and commissions to improve efficiency and streamline the Ohio government. However, this legislation as originally worded would also have eliminated the OPLIN Board, and abolishing the Board would eliminate the entire OPLIN organization, which was not the original intent. After hearing this news from the State Library, Stephen Hedges, OPLIN Director, and Lynda Murray, Director of Government and Legal Services at Ohio Library Council (OLC), met with bill sponsors to talk about the potential consequences of this action. In the end, the resolution was that the OPLIN Board being on this list of state boards to eliminate was a mistake and subsequently corrected.

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