

OLA Quarterly

Vision 2020



Our libraries will give users the freedom to create, and re-create, the library spaces they need, when they need them. Photo: Portland Community College Library.

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Vision 2020

**Upcoming
Issue**

Fall 2011
Service



Introduction

December 10, 2008 turned out to be a pretty significant day for me. Not only was it my birthday, but it was also the first meeting of the group that would eventually draft the OLA Vision 2020 statement. This group had been carefully selected to be small and nimble in number, but powerful in impact. It included people from every geographic area in Oregon, people who did all different kinds of work in Oregon’s libraries. There were recent library school graduates, and seasoned professional veterans.

The meeting that day—as we figured out how we were going to accomplish the thing the board was asking us to do, to draft a statement that could serve as a vision document for OLA and for Oregon libraries in the next decade—was energizing. We asked ourselves questions like “how will we be relevant in 2020? And “how will you tell your story? What will that story be?” We brainstormed ways to involve as many people as possible in our process. In *Sharing Visions/Sharing Stories* I talk about the many voices that are reflected in the final Vision 2020 statement.

We also thought a lot about the amazing things Oregon libraries have done in the last few decades. The Vision 2020 statement does not represent a break with the past; it builds on the work done by those who created Vision 2000, and Vision 2010. In *The Dream of a Statewide Catalog*, State Librarian Jim Scheppke shows the importance of that connection. His call to action takes us back to a Vision 2010 mandate that embodies the Vision 2020 theme of collaboration. The time has come, he says, to “sweep away” the barriers preventing holders of valid library cards from using those cards in any Oregon library.

In *Why Collaborate*, Caleb Tucker-Raymond reflects back on his experience with another Vision 2010 project—the statewide virtual reference service known as L-net. Caleb shows why our visions can never be static, why they need to be flexible and dynamic and why we must actively reflect on what we can learn from our users, and from our own experiences.

Both of these projects, the statewide library card and statewide virtual reference, show how much collaboration and sharing have become a part of the culture of libraries in Oregon. These are themes that resonate throughout Vision 2000 and Vision 2010, and I believe they are the core themes of Vision 2020. I would argue that by pushing Oregon libraries to collaborate on specific projects, like L-net, those earlier visions not only reflected a commitment to collaboration that already existed but they also helped to entrench the idea that collaboration is an essential part of what we do in Oregon.

Michael Baird, Michele Burke and Kate Rubick sat down earlier this spring to talk about collaboration and what it means to them as instruction librarians. I think a lot of people hear “collaboration” or “sharing” in libraries and they think collections—how can we collaboratively give our users access to more stuff? And as Jim Scheppke points out, sharing our stuff is something we do really well in Oregon. Kate, Michele and Michael, on the other hand, are exploring what it means to share ourselves—to share our expertise and the products of our daily work as librarians. This is an exciting way to think about sharing, and one that perfectly embodies the spirit of collaboration as it is articulated in Vision 2020.

The letters O, L, A, and Q are rendered in a large, light gray, serif font. They are positioned above a solid black horizontal bar. The letter Q has a long, thin tail that extends downwards and to the right, crossing the black bar.

OREGON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Terry Reese and Karyle Butcher have put an incredible amount of energy into the question of how can Oregon's university libraries share their expertise and resources. In *Doing More Together: Building New Partnerships to Bring Library Services to the Unserved* Terry describes two projects designed to do just that. The *Oregon Digital Library* offers a model where larger institutions can help smaller cultural institutions increase access to the rich collections they house. The *Libraries of Oregon* portal is intended to strengthen the connections between Oregonians and their libraries while extending access to statewide resources to those currently without access to library services.

I spent part of December 10, 2010 with OLA President Rob Everett, OLA President-Elect Robert Hulshof-Schmidt and Oregon State Librarian Jim Scheppke in front of the Oregon State Library board reporting on the results of the Vision 2020 process. The two years separating those two birthdays were sometimes challenging but always made fulfilling, interesting and exciting by the constant connections we were making with librarians around the state. The OLA Vision 2020 statement embodies the values it articulates. It is the product of collaboration, made stronger by the various voices that contributed to it. It was created by librarians with the freedom to be visionary, supported in that work by their employers and communities. And it describes a 2020 where Oregon libraries are active, essential parts of their communities.

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The Dream of a Statewide Catalog

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The dream of a statewide library catalog, and the ability to borrow books from any library in the state—it’s a wonderful dream. It’s a dream has been around for as long as I’ve worked in Oregon, and that’s a quarter of a century.

The dream figured prominently in the Oregon Library Association’s Vision 2000 and Vision 2010 and there are strong echoes of it in the new Vision 2020.

In Vision 2000 it was expressed this way:

Goal 2: The Oregon Library Community is committed to unrestricted access to the State’s collection and library services for each Oregonian.

Objective a. Establish a statewide cooperative collection development program.

Objective b. Establish statewide cooperative borrowing privileges.

Objective c. Create and maintain accessible databases containing all library holdings.

Objective d. Strengthen statewide document delivery services.

I recall, as a member of the Vision 2000 Committee, how daring it seemed at the time to refer to “the State’s collection.” “What?—you are claiming *my* collection as the State’s collection,” we could almost hear some contrary library director say.

In Vision 2010 the dream was expressed with similar edginess and enthusiasm as part of the “Call to Action”:

Statewide Library Card

- Sweep away the regional, jurisdictional and procedural boundaries so every Oregonian has a library card that works in any publically supported library.

Statewide Library Catalog

- Make the holdings of all Oregon libraries accessible through one catalog.
- Encourage Oregonians to place interlibrary loans through the statewide catalog.
- Deliver library and information directly to the customer.

The new Vision 2020, being less of a strategic plan and more of a vision, is a little more subtle, but it too calls for greater collaboration to “build, develop and provide access to collections” and “ensure that all Oregonians have access to library resources and services.”

I can imagine someone auditing these library community aspirations of the last two decades, and concluding that we have not been successful in carrying out our vision. Strictly speaking, they would be right. It is not the case that any Oregonian can easily discover any book in any Oregon library and make an online request and have the book delivered rapidly to his or her library, or home. And that really *was* the dream.

But looked at from a closer perspective, one could argue that for most Oregonians, we have come awfully close, and in some cases even exceeded the vision. With only a few exceptions, if you are a student or faculty member at one of Oregon’s four-year colleges and universities, or at a number of our larger community colleges, you have something even better than what was envisioned two decades ago. You have the Orbis Cascade Alliance and the Summit catalog. You can search a database of 9.2 million titles in 36 academic libraries in Oregon and Washington and request that a book be delivered to your home library in a few days.



From time to time I have compared resource sharing in Oregon academic libraries to that in other states using data from the National Center for Education Statistics, which collects academic library data. In 1994 Oregon ranked 16th among the 50 states in interlibrary loans per student enrollment, according to my analysis. Ten years later, in 2004, Oregon had moved to the #1 ranking with an astonishing 1.5 interlibrary loans per student enrollment. That number was three times the mean for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. What a testament to the value of Summit.

It should also be noted that thanks to the Orbis Cascade Alliance we have achieved Goal 2, Objective d of Vision 2000: a statewide courier delivery service. And we have maintained that with good price stability for over two decades. Of course the volume of loans in the Alliance requires a good delivery system. Thankfully, participation in the Alliance Courier has not been limited to Alliance members, but is open to any library in Oregon, Washington and parts of Idaho.

So that's the story for academic libraries. A lot to be proud of. But what about public libraries?

Again, even though we did not achieve the dream of an all-encompassing statewide resource sharing system, we have done very well with a different model. Beginning in the 1980s, the State Library began using federal Library Services and Construction Act (LCSA) funds to invest in shared automated library systems throughout the state. Today we have 10 major shared automated systems serving multiple libraries in one or more counties. In all, these systems serve libraries in all but nine of Oregon's 36 counties. Most have benefitted from investments of LCSA or Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) funds at one time or another. The most recent investment was made in Oregon's largest shared system, the Sage Library System, which now serves libraries (including some academic libraries) in fourteen counties. LSTA funds helped Sage migrate from a proprietary automated system to the new Evergreen open source integrated library system in late 2010.

And what is the outcome of having most of Oregon's public libraries participating in shared automated resource sharing systems? It's nearly as impressive as the outcome for our academic libraries. For a number of years Oregon has ranked #2 among the 50 states and the District of Columbia for interlibrary loans per capita in our public libraries. In the latest national data for 2008, Oregon ranks second only to Wisconsin with 0.9 interlibrary loans per capita. That's more than four times the mean for all states.

So without having one statewide library catalog and statewide borrowing for every academic and public library user, we have nonetheless achieved a top tier ranking in library resource sharing in both our public and academic libraries.

So do we really need to keep thinking about a statewide library catalog and resource sharing system for all Oregonians? I think it's still a wonderful dream, and one that perhaps we can still achieve someday.

If we truly want to serve *all* Oregonians with such a system we need to first solve the problem of the 168,000 or so Oregonians who do not pay taxes to support public library services. These Oregonians reside mostly in Lane, Linn, Columbia and Clatsop counties with smaller pockets of what we at the State Library call "the unserved" in a few other counties. There is general agreement that it would be bad public policy to give away library service, via a statewide library catalog with borrowing privileges, to these Oregonians, and thereby create a disincentive for them ever choosing to do what about 96 percent of Oregonians already do—tax themselves for public library service.



Well, what about a statewide library catalog and resource sharing system for the 96 percent of Oregonians who do support a public library? Here we would first need to do some cost/benefit analysis, because we have already pushed library resource sharing in this state to several times the national average in both public and academic libraries. So we'd need to compare the cost of a statewide library catalog and resource sharing system serving all library cardholders with the marginal gain in resource sharing that we might achieve. My seat of the pants analysis is that the new system would have to come pretty cheap to cost-justify the marginal gains that would probably result.

Any resource sharing system has to have two components: discovery and delivery. Library users need to be able to discover the books and other materials they want to borrow from other libraries, and then they need to be able to request the materials to be delivered to them (usually to their home library). In 2011, discovery comes relatively cheap. OCLC WorldCat can be the basis of what we could call a statewide library catalog for Oregon. It will only include libraries that list their holdings in WorldCat, but that's the large majority of the major public and academic libraries in the state. Delivery (the software that lets the user make requests) is, however, another matter. There are several ways this could be done, and there are vendors who would sell us a delivery system, but it would not be cheap. If we had to use LSTA funds to pay for it, my guess is it would require a major long-term commitment of these funds. And the costs may not be commensurate with the benefit. Remember, most Oregon library users are doing pretty well with the resource sharing systems we have in place. Do we think we can really push resource sharing in our academic libraries much beyond three times the national average, and more than four times beyond the national average in our public libraries? It seems unlikely.

In the past I have been of the opinion that having a discovery system (aka statewide library catalog) without a delivery (requesting) system is a waste of time and effort. But I have revised my opinion. If we can have a discovery system at little or no cost, why not do it? The State Library has, in fact, tasked Terry Reese, the Gray Family Chair for Innovative Library Services, at Oregon State University Libraries, with creating a no-cost discovery system based on WorldCat. It's going to be featured in the *Libraries of Oregon* portal that Terry is creating under contract to the State Library.

The idea for *Libraries of Oregon* came from a task force of the State Library Board that wants to deliver some minimal benefits to "the unserved," those 168,000 Oregonians without a public library. The Board's idea is that there ought to be a Web site where Oregonians without a public library can go to get some services that they are entitled to because they are funded with Federal LSTA funds (e.g., Gale databases, LearningExpress Library, L-net, the Oregon School Library Information System). In addition to these resources, the site can provide information about purchasing a library card at a nearby library. Who knows, over time it might even make "the unserved" interested in annexing their area to an adjacent library service area. The statewide library catalog on the *Libraries of Oregon* site will just be a teaser. It won't include a requesting feature, but it might whet someone's appetite, and it might motivate them to purchase a card at a nearby library.


I can see other public libraries linking to Terry's statewide library catalog on their Web site, perhaps to facilitate interlibrary lending, or maybe just for fun.



But there another way that the *Libraries of Oregon* catalog might be useful. Vision 2010 called upon us to “sweep away the regional, jurisdictional and procedural boundaries so every Oregonian has a library card that works in any publically supported library.” I think it’s time we do this. Can’t we just agree to honor each other’s library cards and loan to each other’s patrons? I’m not talking about interlibrary loan (which would require the costly delivery/request system I already discussed). I’m talking about the ability for anyone with a library card from a public library, or public academic library (privates too, if they want to play), to walk into any participating library and walk out with a loan.

In the past there was a major barrier to making this happen. Since the mid-1980s public libraries in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties have had a reciprocal borrowing agreement known as the MIX agreement (Metropolitan Library Exchange). Until a few years ago, the items loaned and borrowed were tallied up at the end of the year and libraries actually got paid for net loans. For a long time, the Multnomah County Library got a pretty good sized check from the other MIX participants. But over time loans evened out considerably and a few years ago the MIX participants decided they could live without the payments. As long as the payments were taking place, it would have been hard to institute a statewide reciprocal borrowing program without any funding. But now that money is not changing hands for reciprocal borrowing, not in MIX or anywhere else in Oregon, the way seems clear to extend the MIX idea to the whole state. Other parts of the state are already doing it too. All 14 counties in the Sage Library System have no-cost reciprocal borrowing for walk-ins. Even the University of Oregon and Oregon State University have been extending free borrowing privileges to walk-ins for several years now.

I think it is time for OLA to appoint a task force to figure out how to “sweep away” any barriers to walk-in lending for bona fide library card holders. This would still leave out “the unserved,” as I think it should. Would this be a big deal and a big increase in workload for library workers? I doubt it, but the task force could assess this, since Colorado and probably some other states have already been doing it for years. What would the mechanics of checking out something to someone presenting a card from another library be? I don’t know. Let’s check with Colorado. There must be a relatively painless way, and an OLA taskforce could surely come up with it. I do happen to know that Colorado maintained a fund to reimburse libraries for stolen books, but did away with it a few years ago because it seldom got tapped.

I think statewide library borrowing for bona fide Oregon library cardholders would turn out to be, more than anything, a brilliant publicity stunt that would put the Oregon library community in a very favorable light. We would be saying to Oregonians that we have decided to add value to the library card that you already have at no cost to you. It would earn us all a lot of kudos, and probably at little cost and effort. I say we go for the dream. 



Why Collaborate?

by **Caleb Tucker-Raymond**
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L-net

At the 2011 Oregon Virtual Reference Summit in The Dalles last June, we invited five students from The Dalles Middle School to talk about how they find and evaluate information online. One hundred library staff from all over Oregon and from all types of libraries got together in a room to listen to a group of middle-school students, and everyone learned something. I think it is one of the most impressive things L-net has done.

L-net, Oregon's statewide reference service, is fully funded by a grant from the Oregon State Library through the Library Services and Technology Act. Thirty-nine libraries work together to serve everyone who lives, works, or goes to school in Oregon. Since 2003, we have had upwards of 300 people at more than 50 Oregon libraries contribute to answering over 168,000 questions. You (yes, you!) can connect to a librarian 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by live chat or e-mail on your computer or text messaging on your phone. And in addition to the centralized L-net service, every library in Oregon can use our open-source software to provide virtual reference services on their own or in collaboration with other libraries, for free.

All of this is wonderful, and it has happened because Oregon libraries have come together to collaborate. More important than the outputs of a collaborative service, though, are the outcomes. We explore the present and future of reference services together, we identify and share best practices and tools, and most of all, we recognize that each library's patrons and stakeholders are not divided into neat and separate categories. Our communities intersect, and so should our library services.

The reason for people involved with L-net to learn about kids and how they use—or don't use—libraries is simple: More than 50 percent of the patrons visiting L-net are students, and they usually come to ask for help finding resources for school assignments. L-net struggles with this because so few of us are youth librarians in our "regular jobs"—you know, the ones where we work with patrons in person, inside of our storied buildings.

We don't always know what to expect from kids, or what they expect from us. Technology and the skills required to use it can exacerbate the situation. If you send a student a link in live chat, will she click on it or copy it down by hand to look at it later? Anonymity online can also provide all kinds of entertainment for a bored teenager (or adult). But a bigger problem with online anonymity is that never seeing anyone's face means you also don't get the satisfaction of seeing kids learn and grow.

So L-net struggles with this, and we talk about it a lot. It began with the name itself; when it launched in 2003, L-net was called Answerland. Many people still feel that "Answerland" is a better name than "L-net." (Most names, I admit, would be better than the one we've got now.) But the problem with the name, as some members of our community saw it, was that it was a great name for a kid-focused service. And while we had two school libraries involved at that time—The Dalles High School and Winston Churchill High School in Eugene—many of the public and academic library partners at the time were vocally opposed to serving kids. The name, they said, was too much like "Disneyland" and "Candyland"—two lands for kids, but not one fit for "our patrons."

So what has changed since then?

In 2001, the Oregon Library Association Vision 2010 Committee called for a 24/7 collaborative online reference service. In their "Call to Action," the Committee identified three risks: doing nothing, doing too much, and not making the best use of our resources (Vi-



sion 2010 Committee, *A Call to Action for the Oregon Library Association*, OLA Quarterly, v. 7 no. 3 Fall 2001, http://data.memberclicks.com/site/ola/olaq_7no3.pdf, p. 21 accessed 6/30/2011).

Virtual reference, as we know it, was dreamed up in the late 1990s as a response to the huge surge in demand for information that the Internet helped create. Libraries imagined they could bridge the gap between the poor results that people got for themselves with search engines and the authoritative resources found in libraries. We thought if we stepped in to answer questions online, everyone would finally recognize libraries as the sage and impartial freedom-loving institutions that we are.

We were wrong. Google had other plans, as did almost everyone else. The Internet provided the opportunity for “disintermediation,” or the cost savings that result when we do not pay people to provide customer service. This has done a lot to change what people expect from business, and not always in a good way. In cautionary tales about the future of reference service, librarians are often compared to travel agents.

But I don’t think we were wrong to make ourselves available to connect with patrons online. Yes, if we didn’t offer live chat, e-mail, and text messaging, some of those patrons would come to us in person, and some would call us on the phone. But many patrons wouldn’t come to us at all.

The volume of questions we get that require the expertise and resources of a research library is very low compared to the ones we get for middle-school homework help, navigating library catalogs, and seeing if the library is open. None of these are bad questions for libraries to be answering, but it’s not exactly how we imagined that people would use online reference. As it turns out, offering to help patrons by live chat, e-mail, and text messaging can’t reverse the trend of people relying more and more on the Internet to find information; it is simply excellent customer service.

People still do ask difficult reference questions, but they are most pleased to get assistance from a thoughtful and caring expert. They tell us we save them time, that they were unable to convince the Internet to give them the information they needed on their own, or that they can’t come to the library in person.

Online anonymity also gives some the courage to ask things they would never dare to broach in person. It isn’t just that old biddy behind the reference desk beaming judgment from behind her glasses that patrons find intimidating; it’s the fact that baring your soul to anyone, even a professional who swears to confidentiality, is risky. Talking anonymously to a stranger online can help a teen learn about a rare medical condition that is affecting a sibling, or a divorced parent who wants to better understand Oregon’s child-custody laws. Libraries change lives, even online.

We did the right thing by collaborating. If we are going to ensure consistent use of and support for libraries in every community and on every campus in Oregon, it makes no sense for each of us to come up with solutions on our own. The Vision 2010 Committee wasn’t explicit about this, but collaboration is a key tactic for making sure libraries move forward in the best possible ways.

Oregon libraries initially benefited by collaborating on a statewide virtual reference service because it was more cost-effective and efficient than having each library staff its own service. Commercial software for customer-service-oriented chat was expensive, and companies charged by the simultaneous user or “seat.” We could only have as many librarians staff-



ing the service as we had seats. If a seat cost \$3,000 per year and 20 libraries each wanted a seat, it would cost a total of \$60,000. A better use of funds was to pool our resources and purchase a small number of seats together.

When we started we were not very busy. We had a few hundred questions each month, as opposed to up to a few hundred each day now. In the summer of 2003, if 20 libraries operated their own services individually, at least 19 of the librarians assigned to those desks would be idle—not helping patrons, not learning, and not challenged. It was much more efficient for each library to contribute a few hours each week to a collaborative service. That way, everyone got the benefit of a full-time service, without needing to pay the staff to deliver it. It is still a good deal.

A less obvious but still tangible benefit of collaborating on any new library service is that each library doesn't have to figure out every detail on its own. On L-net, by sharing anecdotes and reviewing transcripts of sessions, librarians learn from each other about techniques and resources for delivering better service. In addition, we started Answerland with teams of people working together to identify best practices for online reference, promote the service, deliver training, evaluate success, and untangle librarians and patrons from restrictions on licensed databases. L-net is a great service because each institution contributes both to delivering the service and to the support structure around it. In turn, each library is boosted by the collective experience of the group.

The day-to-day challenge of collaborative virtual reference is that patrons are rarely connected to someone from the library they frequent. How can a librarian in Scappoose help a patron at Oregon State University? As it turns out, it's not that complicated, because while each library has its own collection strengths, library resources are organized in about the same ways wherever you go. Library policies and contact information are listed on library Web sites, and if a patron can't find the "way to order books from another library," staff from any library can find the interlibrary loan page right away.

Beyond that, we developed specific tools to address this issue. We keep "policy pages" for each library, so librarians have quick access to resources and information to help any patron. We can also follow up with a patron by e-mail, so a patron with an account or tricky database question can get local help if necessary.

An early thought was that librarians could pretend to be on staff at the patron's local library, so the local library would get all the credit for the great and innovative service. The ruse worked for general information—"When and where is the 50-mile-long garage sale on the Coast?"—but fell apart when a patron needed to know why a book they returned wasn't checked in. When the same patron asked both of these questions, and found out only the second time that the librarian was elsewhere, I can only imagine the betrayal they felt. The best practice turned out to be to tell the patron right away and very simply, "I am not at your library, but I can still help."

Collaborating on a service online is good for Oregon library staff as well. By serving a more diverse set of patrons a few hours a week, librarians move beyond their comfort zones and open themselves to learning. L-net staff repeatedly say that their experience online helps them deliver better service in person.

The fact that we serve each others' patrons also makes it possible to help those who aren't served by a library at all. As of today, 4 percent of Oregonians are not served by a pub-



lic library (Oregon State Library, *Extending Library Service to the Unserved Grant Program*, <http://www.oregon.gov/OSL/LD/grants/ExtLibSvcToUnserved.shtml>, accessed 6/30/2011), and the services available to those of us who are served can vary wildly. L-net serves those unserved patrons—not in huge proportions, and only online, but we’re able to do so because we start with the idea that every person is welcome to use the service, and any patron might. It’s less important to find out who a patron is and where she lives than it is to make it as easy as possible for her to ask a question.

This is where kids come in. Regardless of the name we chose, kids, and especially middle-school students, have found virtual-reference services compelling. I have some theories about this. Perhaps they are not yet rebellious enough to reject the instructions of a teacher or school librarian who suggest the service. Perhaps they are being given research assignments for the first time. Perhaps they are thrilled to get one-on-one attention from an adult. Perhaps they are developing the skills to use computers, to interact socially, and to explore the world.


Whatever the reason, I’m starting to wonder if the only thing that would have stopped them from coming would have been a cutesy name, something that made it really clear that libraries were all about kids. Those same kids, just beginning to understand that they’ll have a role in our communities as adults, might have passed us by.

We have opened our virtual doors as a group of libraries committed to serving all patrons as well as possible, especially kids, because we understand that our service populations are not static and impermeable, and that everyone has need of the library. The same middle-school students speaking to a crowd of librarians also use the public library, today and in the future. We hope they will go to college and use their college libraries. Maybe, if we’re really lucky, they’ll even become elected officials or wealthy philanthropists. I am certain, though, that those kids will remember that librarians took the time to listen to their voices, in the interest of doing a better job of serving people like them.

When libraries collaborate, we create, among all of our various groups of patrons and staff, a shared experience of just what that word “library” means. From that basis, we have the opportunity to shift that definition so that it continues to positively impact and resonate with the communities we serve.

I know L-net does a great job, and that it has been positive for both Oregon libraries and their patrons. But it has been 10 years since the Vision 2010 *Call to Action* was written, and the more time goes by, the less comfortable I am at pointing to it as a mandate for L-net’s continued existence and use of state resources. We must examine and prioritize even our successful services, or risk the inertia that Vision 2010 warned us to guard against.

How do we know we are asking the right questions? How do we know we are working on the right problems? Partly, we trust that other capable people are working on other problems and that everything will get done. Partly, we work on the problems that can be addressed with the tools we have. And partly, we rely on broad and in-depth visioning processes to help figure out where we fit in.

I am glad to read that collaboration is a strong aspect of OLA’s new Vision 2020. Collaboration lets libraries build and deliver services together that we couldn’t dream of doing on our own. 



Collaborative Information Literacy: The Future is Now

Conversation by

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Collaboration and sharing are themes that are deeply embedded in Vision 2020. When it comes to sharing our stuff, we know what that looks like. Sharing ourselves—our labor, our expertise and our vision—is a little less familiar. Vision 2020 describes a future where that kind of sharing is essential:

In 2020, Oregon librarians will rely on dynamic professional networks—local, statewide and beyond—for resources, support and expertise.

For three Oregon librarians, that future is now.

In the spring of 2011, I asked these three library leaders to talk about the collaborative work that they do. The highlights of our conversation are below:

The Players (and the acronyms)

- Michele Burke is a reference librarian at Chemeketa Community College. She is the chair of the Information Literacy Advisory Group of Oregon (ILAGO) and the incoming chair of OLA's Library Instruction Round Table (OLA-LIRT). And that is just the start. She extends this collaboration beyond the library community, most notably as a member of the Oregon Writing and Education Advisory Committee (OWEAC)
- Michael Baird works at Western Oregon University, and he is the coordinator of the LSTA-funded Cooperative Library Instruction Project (CLIP). In that role, Michael creates unbranded information literacy tutorials that can be used by librarians anywhere, and he also works to ensure that those tutorials get in the hands of the librarians who need them.
- Kate Rubick is the Instruction Services Librarian at Lewis and Clark College. She is also the current Chair of OLA's Library Instruction Round Table. In that capacity she is an ex-officio member of the Association for College and Research Libraries' Oregon chapter (ACRL-OR). With ILAGO, OLA-LIRT co-sponsored the 2011 Information Literacy Summit, and Kate also contributed her expertise as a presenter at that event. She has recently started serving as a CLIP peer evaluator.

Why Collaborate?

Michele, Kate and Michael work towards a goal shared by librarians around the state, in all types of libraries: helping Oregon students develop the information skills they need to be successful in school and as lifelong learners.

They talked about the importance of combining our efforts — the fact that students won't stay in one library forever, that our ultimate goal is a shared goal, and that all libraries (and all librarians) can bring something to the table.

"Librarians love to share"

Kate—Although I got my library degree in 1997 at Simmons College in Boston, my whole library career has been in Oregon. I have worked in public, community college and now a liberal arts college library. But working with librarians in Oregon has been a constant as I have moved among institutions.



Michael—Librarians love to share. We're good at it and we know that it's a good thing to do. We need to recognize this and make it a priority to share with and help each other.

"Our libraries are all connected"

Michael—Our libraries are all connected: throughout life our patrons pass from one of our libraries to the next, improving upon how they use information and then loop back around again. Collaborating to help one of us will absolutely be passed along, via our patrons, to improve the rest of us.

Kate—We all work at institutions that serve a particular group of students. But in a college career a student might transfer between our institutions. So collaborating with other academic librarians (and school librarians) about how information literacy happens at their institution will inform us about what are students may have found (or may find) when they are elsewhere.

"We all bring a different dish to the pot luck"

Michael—I love collaborating. I know that I have really good ideas, but it is especially difficult to examine those ideas in my own head from a variety of perspectives. The method of collaboration can vary greatly from informal, asking a quick question of librarian friends on Facebook, to arranging a formal partnership on a project. It is so incredibly rewarding to look at a finished product and revel in knowing that it is better than I could have done on my own, solely because other individuals were involved.

Michele—Our collaborations really are a melting pot that helps fuel our instructional creativity while adding the articulation piece that helps ensure our instruction remains relevant (to our four-year partners, to the work force, and to our students) ...

We all bring a different dish to the pot luck. Of necessity, my focus at the community college is on instruction. I don't have the time that I might like to invest in research that can be published to inform our profession, so I rely on my partners at research institutions to engage in that kind of exploration and share their findings. I may not have the time to devote to creating CLIP tutorials, but I can share what I know about our needs with the CLIP coordinator who can then build the learning object. On our end, there are certain kinds of instructional innovations that are easier to roll out in a community college setting, so I can share information about our experimental work. There are types of instruction that are not generally called for at our 2-year college, so I rely on partners at other schools to keep me informed about the kind of discipline specific instruction taking place so I can prepare our students. I would also add that we're stronger when we collaborate with people outside of Higher Ed. For example, we have a significant number of students who have recently been released from prison and many went through cognitive education programs while incarcerated. I see potential in collaborating with the people who coordinate those programs for the penal system in order for us to gain insight into the needs of that population so we can create targeted, relevant instruction, especially in terms of increasing retention.



Kate

Collaboration fosters social interaction and promotes communication and learning. So collaboration around information literacy just makes sense.

The Information Literacy Summit

In April 2011 the fourth Information Literacy Summit was held at Portland Community College. This event started as a way for Oregon State University to collaborate with partners in its dual-degree program, but it has quickly grown into a much broader event, bringing together librarians and classroom faculty from institutions around the state. The Summit provides a space for potential collaborative partners to meet face-to-face once a year, and the conversations that come out of this event are an important factor in keeping the momentum around these collaborative projects moving forward.

“the IL Summit acts as a motivating event”

Kate—My work with LIRT over the last couple of years has been, by all accounts, an exercise in collaboration. By definition, LIRT serves to promote cooperation and fellowship among OLA members engaged in library instruction. But when I started serving as chair, LIRT had been defunct for some years and I was charged with reviving it. Right at that moment, I was contacted by the Information Literacy Advisory Group of Oregon (ILAGO) about an event that they hoped LIRT would support called the IL Summit, which is a one-day conference around information literacy topics. It seemed like a great fit—and a leg up for LIRT. So began a kind of partnership (one that is still very much in flux and being defined) whereby LIRT and ILAGO pool resources and put together a content-rich (and, I might add, economically lean) program.

Michele—Each year the IL Summit acts as a motivating event around which to collaborate and I continue to learn from participating in the planning. Out of the IL Summit collaborations, we formed ILAGO, a group to work on articulation and respond nimbly to issues involving information literacy instruction. ILAGO helps plan the Summit and facilitates IL conversation outside of the event. In order to be “nimble” we have to know each other, so our ongoing collaboration gives us a solid relationship base from which to work. ILAGO is multidisciplinary and we’ve used OWEAC as an organizational model.

Kate—To me, it has made a lot of sense for these two organizations [OLA-LIRT and ILAGO] to join forces to put on one high-value event, especially in a climate where a lot of libraries are tightening belts and allowing librarians to take advantage of fewer professional development opportunities. But it has raised some new issues about how OLA units collaborate with non-OLA organizations. An OLA task force has been appointed to examine this, and the results of their work will be very useful to LIRT and A-RIG [Alliance Research Interest Group] and other groups grappling with these issues.



How Do You Make Collaboration Happen?

One idea that came up over and over again was the idea that when you collaborate, more opportunities for collaboration emerge. Putting our heads together can lead to new ideas, new ways of looking at old ideas, and new partnerships. A willingness to get out there and find out what we have in common with others is key.

“good ideas happen all over the place”

Kate—One thing that got me excited recently was some work I did with Robert Monge of Western Oregon University. We co-led one of the workgroups at the IL Summit called “The Next Gen OneShot: Information Literacy in the Disciplines.” To prepare for this workgroup we both conducted interviews of discipline faculty at our institutions. Clips from those interviews served as a springboard for small-group discussion during the session.

Originally, we conducted the interviews as a way of bringing faculty presence into the workgroup, since it was not realistic to expect our discipline faculty to attend the IL Summit in person. We discovered that interviewing faculty is a great vehicle for talking to faculty about information literacy, and also that by recording the interviews; it makes it possible to share that information with others. So something that was done to make logistics easier actually turned out to be a really useful tool. I guess my hope, in terms of impact, for this kind of work is others will learn from what we did and use this technique in their own institutions.



A few of the things collaboration gives back

- Triangulation—we advise students to test information validity, collaborating is a way to check our own instructional practices.
- Articulation—who are my students and what do they already know? What do they need to know to be successful at the next step? How are my peers interpreting those necessary skills? How do we define success outside of the transfer student model?
- Environmental scanning—collaborating keeps us in the loop about what is happening close to home, state-wide and beyond.
- Economy—by sharing, we can do more with fewer resources. We don’t need to spend time, money and labor reinventing the wheel.
- Communication—helps us avoid mistakes and capitalize on victories.

—Michele Burke



I also think that good ideas happen all over the place and sometime, as in the above, example working on the session for the IL summit, almost by accident. So, yes, any librarian at any library might come up with one!

Michele—Also, from the IL Summit and the IL Retreat, a collaboration was formed between Mt. Hood Community College, Portland Community College, Portland State University, and Chemeketa Community College. Our Portland area group worked to refine and describe the IL Proficiencies drafted at the IL Summit. We then talked about how to use the standards on our local campuses and how to use them collectively, then we shared our work at a following Summit and at the ACRL-NW conference in Seattle. We also collaborated with librarians from Washington and presented our work at the OLA-WLA Joint Conference.

“it is easier to collaborate when we’re comfortable”

Michael—I have to communicate with other librarians and instructors to identify learning problems and then articulate them in a meaningful way in order to begin considering solutions.

Michele—Personal connections create a comfort zone and it is easier to collaborate when we’re comfortable, so naturally we want to create these zones and increase their inclusiveness where possible.

“simply saying Yes”

Michele—Sometimes a vital factor in collaboration is simply saying Yes. I’ve been attending OWEAC meetings ever since and they are one of the most rewarding collegial and collaborative activities in which I engage. The OWEAC meetings have been a great way to connect with English and Writing faculty at 2- and 4-year schools and I have learned a tremendous amount from these intellectual, earnest, hardworking, and generous people.



Collaborative Projects

Information Literacy Advisory Group of Oregon (ILAGO):
<http://ilago.wordpress.com/>

Oregon Writing & English Advisory Committee (OWEAC):
<http://oweac.wordpress.com/>

Cooperative Library Instruction Project (CLIP):
<http://www.clipinfolit.org/>

2011 Information Literacy Summit:
<http://ilago.wordpress.com/oregon-il-summit/>



Predict the Future?

As they are working so hard to ensure that there is a future for library instruction, I asked Michael, Kate and Michele to think a little bit about what that future might hold, the good and the bad.

They worry about the same things we all talk about—budgets and staffing. They see collaboration as a constant, and as a way to address these challenges. As our information landscape continues to change, they see a new and vital role for information literacy instruction, if librarians are willing to put ourselves out there, to be aware of the new skills our users need to develop, and to keep an eye on the skills and resources we need to preserve as we continue to support the development of information literate learners into the future.

“Rewarding and vital and engaging”

Michele—As a new librarian I worried that instruction would start to feel canned or repetitive, but that is not at all the case, quite the opposite! I feel certain that instruction will continue to be rewarding and vital and engaging for our library community.

Kate—I think library instruction has a new cachet in academia. I think that faculty and administrators are grasping its value. I think faculty are genuinely concerned about their students’ library research proficiencies, and that they appreciate not having to shoulder the burden of teaching them those skills alone. So in that way, I think librarians are poised to capture the attention of institutional players and make a great case for information literacy related programs.

“We should be willing to put ourselves out there”

Michele—I’m worried that as budgets get tight, we won’t have the time or resources to meet and work as colleagues across institutions as often or as creatively as we would like. I’m concerned that, because we are so busy doing instruction, we are not being proactive and strategic enough about advocating for our instruction within the educational landscape.

Michael—The funny thing is that my project has the potential to become my greatest worry for 2020. I fear that online tutorials (both passive and active) will become a replacement for conscious and flexible instruction rather than serving as a tool to support and enhance instruction.

Michele—I hope students will find that high school does in fact prepare them for college and that community college does prepare them to be successful in achieving their goals whether or not that includes transfer to upper-division work. I hope we build more robust partnerships with K–12 librarians.

Kate—I worry about staffing. I worry about burnout. At our institution we recently lost a full time research and instruction librarian position—a librarian retired and then was not replaced. The rest of us are supposed to fill in the gap.



Michele—If we want everyone else to support IL across the curriculum, we should be willing to put ourselves out there and get directly involved with campus-wide initiatives like the First-Year Experience.

“Spend less time teaching where to click”

Michael—I like to think that our tools will continue to improve so we can spend less time teaching where to click and in what order, but instead more time teaching how to frame effective research.

Kate—How to protect your privacy online. How to evaluate sources with a focus on how to understand the corporate interests imbedded in the information available. How to find a book. How to find a journal article on a particular topic.

Michael—The ability to recognize hacks in the virtual reality matrix would probably be valuable. No, really, I can imagine an increase in digitally born crimes as the recent Playstation Network debacle demonstrated. Part of information literacy is also evaluating environments and circumstances where we share information, especially sensitive and personal information. 🌿



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Doing More Together:

Building New Partnerships to Bring Library Services to the Unserved

Introduction

One of the parts of my job that I have always enjoyed and embraced is working at a Land Grant university. As the holder of the Gray Family Chair for Innovative Library Services, this means specifically looking beyond the needs of the organization to see how our tools and services can add and improve existing services to libraries around the state. Sometimes, this is a tough thing to do, especially when it may not be economically feasible to start new services or seek new partnerships. However, maybe it's in those times of economic hardship, when organizations are most focused on their own needs, that the mission of the land grant institution is the most important. As public and private institutions focus their scarce resources on serving their ever expanding populations, it is even more critical for land grant institutions to stand in the gaps and build partnerships with other organizations. Doing this not only makes the collaborating organizations stronger, but it provides services to those libraries that are least able to fund and support them. At Oregon State University Libraries, we embrace wholeheartedly our role as the state's land grant institution and the special relationship we have with the citizens of Oregon.

Two years ago, shortly after being named to the Gray Family Chair for Innovative Library Services, I knew that I was in a position to actively promote how OSU Libraries could play a greater role in helping to meet the needs of Oregon's unserved and underserved populations. Talking to then University Librarian Karyle Butcher and others within the state, it was clear to me that Oregon's cultural heritage organizations house a vast treasure trove of materials that are not always easily accessible to citizens within the local library community. My goal was to create a program that would place the OSU Libraries in the position of mediator to facilitate discovery of Oregon's exceptional digital collections and a partner for Oregon's cultural heritage institutions looking to begin or expand a digital preservation program. Continued discussions and encouragement from Karyle and State Librarian Jim Schepke were instrumental in shaping the program and setting realistic goals for OSU Libraries. We understood that success would depend on seeking active partnerships from many communities. To that end we looked to partner with the State Library of Oregon and the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Advisory Council to come up with a short-term and long-term plan to make these programs a reality.

Understanding the Need

For me, the impetus behind this project was a visit to the Linn County Historical Museum where I saw firsthand the exceptional local treasures being housed there. Throughout Oregon, local cultural heritage organizations like the Linn County Historical Museum tell the stories of the people of Oregon. In many cases, these cultural organizations are looking for partners to help make their collections more accessible to the world at large. For many, finding volunteers to digitize the content is the easy part of the process. More difficult is building the infrastructure needed to store, preserve and provide access to a set of digital objects. Institutions like OSU Libraries have the capacity to make that infrastructure available allowing these digital programs to flourish. In considering these programs, OSU Libraries wanted to build a model that could be used for future collaboration—a model that could be used by other OUS institutions around the state.



In 2008, the Oregon Library Association (OLA) convened a taskforce charged with creating OLA's 2020 vision statement. This statement would represent a set of core values and assumptions for Oregon libraries moving into the next decade. While the document provides a number of areas for thought, one of the primary themes that emerged from the taskforce's work was the need for further collaboration between Oregon's OUS institutions and the state's public cultural heritage organizations. The report calls out the need for Oregon libraries to "rely on dynamic professional networks—local, statewide and beyond—for resources, support and expertise (Vision 2020)." Within these shared networks, libraries will work together to share collections, extend library services and develop and share best practices, standards and technologies around the state. OLA's shared goals, expressed in the Vision 2020 document, underscore the need for libraries within the state to take a more proactive role in looking beyond their own needs and services and to focus on the shared goals of providing information services to all Oregonians within the state. The OLA Vision 2020 document is a rallying cry for libraries within Oregon to find ways to do more, and to do more together. For Oregon's seven OUS institutions, the OLA Vision 2020 document should be viewed as both a challenge and an opportunity. Oregon's university libraries have an uneven legacy of partnering with public libraries. We serve different communities with vastly different focuses. However, we share the common values of providing access to information and creating an informed population of life-long learners. These shared values offer points of collaboration if we are to come together to build shared services for all Oregonians.

Unfortunately, the needs faced within this state are great. In the January 2010 report to the Oregon State Library Board of Trustees Benchmark #38 Strategy Committee, State Librarian Jim Scheppke reported on new data from the 2008–2009 year concerning the unserved and underserved populations within Oregon. For the purpose of this report, "unserved" was used to designate individuals living outside the service area of a public library (a city, county or district), while "underserved" was used to designate those that had access to a public library, but were not adequately served by existing library services. For the years of 2008–2009, the data indicated that only 78 percent of Oregonians were currently receiving adequate library services. Since 1990, this number represents the lowest number of Oregonians receiving adequate library services. Of the remaining 22 percent, 4 percent of those individuals had no access to public library services, while 18 percent represented a large, and growing, underserved population within the state. The report underscores the fact that community library services exist within a volatile environment as local governments wrestle to adequately fund community services. This volatility recently played out in Hood River County, where the failure of a library district measure cut off library services to 21,000 residents (Zisko, 2010). Thankfully, a similar measure passed when it was voted on again last November and the Library plans to reopen this summer.

Building Partnerships

In partnership with the State Library and the LSTA Board, the OSU Libraries has been working to collaboratively address some of the issues raised by the OLA Vision 2020 document. Over the past two years, the OSU Libraries has used resources made available by two LSTA contracts to examine how Oregonians find and access digital information created by the state's cultural heritage organizations, and to find new and innovative ways to help



unserved populations gain access to content purchased on their behalf by the State Library. These two projects, the *Oregon Digital Library* (<http://odl.library.oregonstate.edu>) and the *Libraries of Oregon*, represent ongoing efforts by the OSU Libraries to work collaboratively with Oregon's cultural heritage organizations to promote library services to Oregonians.

Oregon Digital Library

<http://odl.library.oregonstate.edu>

The *Oregon Digital Library* functions much like a Web search engine for primary digital resources created by Oregon's cultural heritage institutions. Over the past ten years, a number of Oregon's libraries and museums have initiated programs to digitally capture, preserve and provide access to primary resources from their collections. These collections represent an eclectic range of Oregon's past and present, covering topics related to historic industries like fishing and logging, multi-cultural populations like the Braceros work programs of the 1960s, important historical figures, and cutting edge research being done at Oregon's universities. And yet, as these programs have developed and become rich with content, access for the general library user has become increasingly difficult. While search engines like Google and Bing index some collections, many remain poorly indexed and difficult to find. The purpose of the *Oregon Digital Library* project is to provide a unifying digital portal to Oregon's digital content, simplifying access to resources across multiple institutions.

Utilizing open protocols like the Open Archives Initiatives Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH), and previously funded LSTA development framework, Library-Find™, the Oregon Digital Library project harvests and indexes metadata from collections that support open metadata harvesting standards. The project then indexes the metadata. This allows users to find direct links to collections when they query the portal—and to retrieve primary resources from collections spanning multiple institutions.

As part of the Oregon Digital Library project, OSU Libraries also collaboratively developed two digital collections with the Oregon Coast History Center and the Columbia Gorge Discovery Center. These partnerships grew out of OLA's 2020 Vision document stating the need for better collaboration between Oregon's cultural heritage institutions. This collaboration piloted a model in which OSU Libraries made their digital production infrastructure available to the two partner sites to provide long-term preservation and access for large-scale digital collections. The partner sites supplied the personnel required to digitize and describe the documents. Over the course of the pilot, OSU Libraries ingested nearly 12,000 digital objects from its partners, providing access to these digital collections through its digital image management system. Likewise, these materials were then harvested into the Oregon Digital Library portal to promote greater access and use. The successful pilot can serve as a model for future collaboration, as OSU Libraries works to make this a permanent service offering to Oregon's heritage organizations.



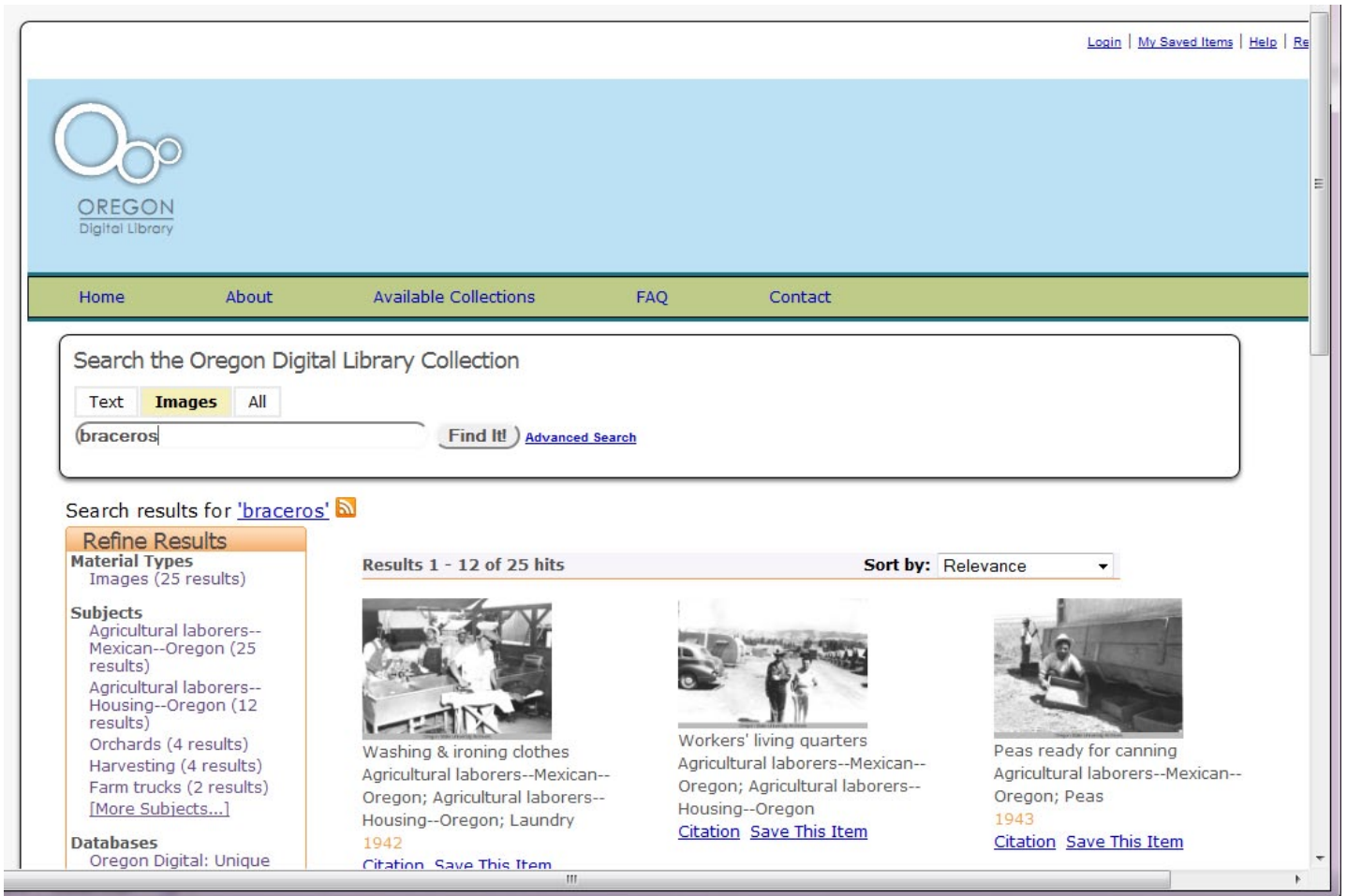


Figure 1: The Oregon Digital Library offers patrons three methods for search: Text, Image and All content.



Libraries of Oregon

Completion Date: Aug. 1, 2011

The *Libraries of Oregon* represents a new partnership between OSU Libraries and the public libraries of Oregon. The *Libraries of Oregon* project seeks to strengthen the connection between Oregonians and their local public libraries, while at the same time, reaching out to the unserved populations of Oregon and providing access to state supported library services. The project will provide quick access to Oregon's statewide services including access to: the statewide article databases, primary collections of digital photography and documents, the L-NET service, a state-wide library catalog based on OCLC's WorldCat and other resources currently provided to Oregonians through the LSTA program. Likewise, the *Libraries of Oregon* portal will serve as a clearinghouse of information, directing visitors to local libraries and providing local libraries with tools and widgets that they can utilize to interface with the *Libraries of Oregon* project. While the development of this project is geared towards Oregon's unserved population, the goal is to provide a resource that can serve all Oregonians and provide Oregon's public libraries with a rich set of tools and services to enhance their organizations.

In keeping with these goals, the *Libraries of Oregon* project will include for the first time, two new access methods relating to the discovery of materials. One of these access methods relates to traditional library catalogs. For a number of years, the State Library and the LSTA Advisory Council have sought to develop a comprehensive catalog of library holdings from around the state. Such a catalog would allow patrons to search for any item within the Oregon library network and potentially request access to the content. Up until now, efforts to create a comprehensive Oregon catalog have been stymied by ineffectual technology and an unrealistic expectation that all items would be represented. While that expectation may be unrealistic, the *Libraries of Oregon* project will provide access to a near comprehensive library catalog, utilizing OCLC's WorldCat database to provide access to library holdings from around the state. OCLC's WorldCat database was chosen as the data source primarily due to the ubiquitous nature of the resource within the Oregon library community. Will utilizing this method result in a fully comprehensive Oregon union catalog? No—but the resulting tool will provide a much closer state-wide discovery experience.


In addition to the development of a comprehensive library catalog, the *Libraries of Oregon* project has been working closely with the State Library and our statewide e-journal providers (primarily Gale) to develop for the first time, geolocated patron authentication. Presently, library patrons must go to their home library's Web site, click through a special link and enter their library patron information in order to access e-journals provided by the state. Patrons outside of a library district currently have no options available to gain access to the state-wide databases. This project is working to change that by moving authentication away from individual patron authentication, to a more robust geolocation service that will automatically authenticate any user that is within Oregon. By making these simple changes to how authentication will take place, the *Libraries of Oregon* project will provide streamlined access to all users within the present underserved and unserved populations.

The development of the *Libraries of Oregon* portal represents the first step in what I hope will be a long-term partnership with the State Library and public libraries as we continue to address issues related to the unserved and underserved populations. For example, as



more materials become available online, how do we as a community, address the lack of adequate high speed data access? In creating the *Libraries of Oregon* portal, we will be addressing this through the creation of mobile specific tools to improve the functionality of the site for cell phone users. However, more work will need to be done in this area and the areas of accessibility as we continue to move forward.

Building for the Future

As these projects demonstrate, the time is right for Oregon libraries to build strong partnership which will benefit individual libraries as well as all Oregonians. The technology to do this exists and I believe the will to do this also exists. As Oregon libraries move into the future, our success and relevancy will largely be determined by the partnerships that we develop today. These projects represent will help to build and strengthen partnerships between Oregon's academic and public library communities and provide a vehicle for these two groups to continue to work together. They not only improve access and availability to precious resources but they are a concrete demonstration to the Oregon legislature that funding and collaboration can leverage modest resources in ways that benefit all Oregonians. In tough economic times, what could be better? 

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Sharing Visions/Sharing Stories

by *Anne-Marie Deitering*
Vision 2020 Chair

“What kind of information should our newly-formed task force gather to inform our visioning process?” That really isn’t a very exciting question, but the answer turned out to be so important. Like the Vision 2010 committee before us, we had the advantage of support from the Oregon State Library Board and the Oregon Library Association Executive Board. We weren’t going to have to gather all of our information ourselves—so where could we use an expert’s help?

The Vision 2010 committee had benefited from some excellent environmental scans as they put together their statement, and that was something we could choose to do too. Talking to the people who led that effort, however, another option emerged. They told us that while they had had the opportunity for people to send in their thoughts, because that information was not gathered in a systematic way, with a plan for analyzing and using it built in, they weren’t able to take advantage of the rich input they received. We decided that we would put our resources into gathering this kind of qualitative input from Oregon libraries and Oregon librarians. Working with a consultant, we decided that the way we would do this was by conducting a Delphi study.

The Delphi method has been around for a while, but it’s not well known. It is a research method that brings together experts on a topic and then has them work together to develop consensus around that topic. For our purposes, it was an exciting way to bring together people from around the state—and to allow them to collaborate across time and space. We’re a big state, and distance is a barrier to participation. As we used it, the Delphi method lets everyone participate equally without having to travel.

The committee members, who themselves represented a cross-section of Oregon libraries, identified our initial group of participants. We took care that those 75 people represented a good mix of library types and of librarian types. Those who agreed to participate were then given three sets of questions to answer.

The first round of questions was open-ended:

- In an ideal world, what will your users experience when they use your library in 2020?
- What needs to happen between now and then for that vision to come true?
- What could get in the way of achieving that vision?

Participants could write as much or as little as they wanted, and they did. A few hit the pre-set limit on our online survey software and sent their lengthier responses via e-mail. Our consultant took those hundreds of pages of responses and broke them into individual concepts and ideas. She grouped those ideas into seven broad categories:

- The library environment
- Access to library services
- Library and Community
- Inclusiveness in Libraries
- Library technology
- Collaboration among libraries
- Library staffing



Looking back, it is striking how much of the final document we can see in those themes.

We then created a list of almost three hundred ideas that were pulled directly from the participants’ responses. That list was turned into a survey. In the second round, participants went through those 300 statements and indicated their agreement or disagreement with each one. In this way, the participants could have a virtual “conversation” or debate about the concepts they’d generated in round one.

Once that round was over, the consultant took the ranked statements and generated a list of core goals. At this point, we dropped the third question, about barriers. At this point it was clear that finances and funding was such a significant barrier that it rendered the question almost meaningless. No one could comment meaningfully on barriers besides funding, because funding was so significant that it was hard to see past it. In the third and final round, the participants were asked to rank their top three goals in each thematic area.

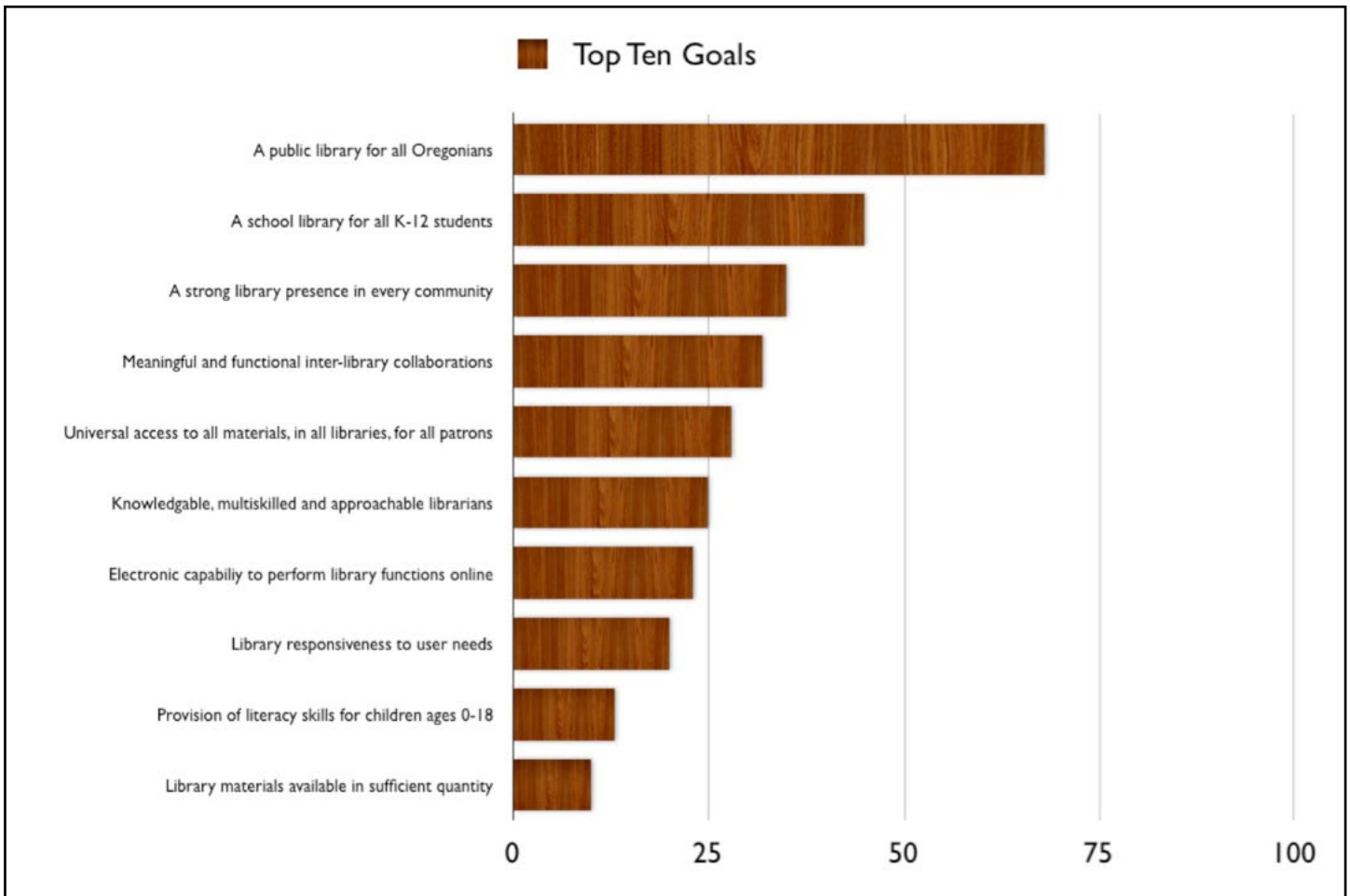


Figure 1. Top 10 goals



At this point, it became clear that we had what we wanted: the voices of Oregon libraries and Oregon librarians were clearly threaded through our whole process. But it was also clear at this point that we could not simply rely on the “results” of this process to define the Vision 2020 statement. The Delphi process, at the end of the day, is designed to produce consensus. And consensus, at the end of the day, is not very visionary. We needed to go beyond ideas so widely accepted and return to the concept of vision.


To do this, we went back to that first round of open-ended questions and the stories people told there. We took the shared values revealed by the Delphi process: universal access, collaboration, sharing, innovation and leadership and we asked ourselves—if our libraries are going to be dynamic, active spaces at the center of their communities in 2020, what things need to be true?

We had always understood the Delphi data to be one of multiple “streams” of information that we could use to inform our process. To get from data collection to vision creation, the small task force met for two days in a retreat at Oregon State University. In that retreat we analyzed the Delphi data. Each member read widely for visionary statements and ideas and shared those that resonated with the group. Our final stream was quantitative; we updated the environmental scans that had informed the Vision 2010 process.

At that point, we headed into a brainstorming phase. Using dozens of post-it notes, every group member brainstormed ideas—ideas that resonated from the literature, from the Delphi stories, ideas that resonated with them individually, and ideas they believed reflected the needs of “Oregon libraries.” We all wrote down all of our ideas twice and when we had two complete sets of post-its, we broke into small groups to do what librarians do best: organize.

When we came back together, we discovered that had come up with the same broad categories for our collection of ideas. That gave us a lot of confidence that those categories -- staffing, community, place and sharing—were the right ones. We broke into pairs, each pair took a category, and overnight we drafted a description and some examples to illustrate its importance. We ended our 48 hours knowing each other a lot better, with a fully articulated draft statement.

The Delphi process was invaluable to us as we did this work. For example, librarians spend a lot of time focusing on our users, for good reason. We design user-centered services, and put together user-centered collections. Sometimes, it seems almost wrong to focus on our own needs in our program development. Reading through what was shared in the Delphi process, however, it became very clear that Oregon librarians believe that Oregon libraries cannot thrive if they are not places where good people want to work. Hearing how important issues like work environment, leadership and staff development are to Oregon librarians in the Delphi process gave us, for lack of a better word, permission to include those librarian-focused issues in the Vision 2020 statement.

Finally, we took the conversation back to the people of the Oregon Library Association. Each section of the Vision 2020 statement was posted online for comments, which were gathered using an online form. As we posted each section on Libs-OR and asked for feedback, dozens of comments would roll in. This feedback was then incorporated into revisions, and the final statement reflects a lot of what we heard in that process. It reflects our description of a 2020 where libraries are thriving. And it reflects the voices and stories of Oregon librarians, who gave their own answers to those questions every step of the way. 



VISION 2020

Final copy – Approved by the OLA Executive Board

6/4/10

PREFACE

In the Summer of 2008, OLA President Mary Ginanne convened a special task force charged with crafting OLA's Vision 2020 statement. This small group represented libraries and librarians from around the state of Oregon. Its members came from school, special, public and academic libraries – from Oregon's western, eastern, central and southern regions. There are people who have been in the library profession for decades, and those who are just starting their careers.

To create this vision, we gathered ideas, concerns and aspirations from library staff and supporters throughout Oregon. In 2008-2009, we conducted a Delphi study to support this project. Seventy-six librarians were identified by their peers as people whose voices should be a part of our conversations. These seventy-six people participated in three rounds of surveys and discussion about the future of Oregon libraries. The themes that emerged from this process were instrumental in shaping this statement.

The committee took these contributions, scanned the environment and the literature, and drafted the initial version of this statement in a two-day retreat in the summer of 2009. Each section of the draft statement was then shared across the state; we received dozens of comments were about each section of the draft statement.

The statement that follows is infinitely richer as a result of this process. The Vision 2020 statement is intended to paint a picture of the challenges and opportunities Oregon's libraries will face in the next decade. These are not strategic goals; this is not a strategic plan. The Executive Board of the Oregon Library Association will pick up this vision from here, and OLA's divisions, committees and task forces will take on the concrete work of making it happen.

The Vision 2020 Task Force would like to thank everyone who participated in this process. It has truly brought together hundreds of voices, ideas and opinions. We would also like to thank the OLA Executive Board for its support, and the Oregon State Library Board of Trustees, for funding the Delphi project. We could have not completed this task without the support and leadership provided by Mary Ginnane, who got this project started and who has kept it moving forward at every phase.

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ASSUMPTIONS

This vision is shaped and informed by a set of assumptions we share. These apply to, and inform, every part of the vision that follows:

- There will be funding challenges in Oregon.
- Oregon libraries will maintain a sense of service, and a commitment to provide many services to many people in many ways.
- The next decade will bring many changes; some will be difficult and possibly alarming, some invigorating.
- When Oregon library staff collaborate, we are stronger and more efficient.
- Every library and every library worker has something to contribute to our collective strength and growth.

VISION

Collaboration

In 2020, Oregon librarians will rely on dynamic professional networks – local, statewide and beyond – for resources, support and expertise.

Together our libraries will:

- Build, develop and provide access to collections.
- Create and share opportunities for professional development and training.
- Extend library services to all Oregonians, at home and around the state.
- Negotiate with vendors and publishers.
- Develop and share best practices, standards, technologies, templates and tools.
- Advocate for broader access, useful legislation and a robust information infrastructure.

People

In 2020, library staff and library advocates will actively participate in nimble, supportive and creative organizations.

Our libraries will be staffed and supported by:

- Leaders who demonstrate a commitment to experimentation and innovation.
- Individuals who are open to new ways of doing things.
- Lifelong learners who can build on successes and failures alike.
- Leaders who devote resources to staff development and training.
- People who are educated and empowered to effectively advocate for their organizations, their communities and the information profession.



Community

In 2020, public, academic, school and special libraries will be an important presence in Oregon's communities.

Our libraries will:

- Ensure that all Oregonians have access to library resources and services.
- Support lifelong learning wherever, whenever and however it happens. Libraries will be there when Oregonians need to learn new things, in new ways.
- Reflect all the communities they serve with services that reflect their communities' changing needs.
- Make their communities better, by providing the services and resources their communities need.

Place

In 2020, the library will be the place its users need it to be.

Our libraries will:

- Provide physical and virtual spaces where Oregonians can connect to ideas, information and people.
- Reflect the vision and leadership of library staff who are focused on the spaces their users need, now and in the future.
- Give users the freedom to create, and re-create, the library spaces they need, when they need them.
- Be welcoming, safe, creative and productive – spaces where Oregonians want to spend their time, online and offline.



OLA Quarterly Publication Schedule 2010–11

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Each issue is developed around a theme determined by the Communications Committee and Guest Editor(s). To suggest future topics for the *OLA Quarterly*, or to volunteer/nominate a Guest Editor, contact the OLAQ Coordinator.

Vol./No.	Theme	Deadline	Pub. Date	Guest Editor
Vol 17 • No 3 Fall 2011	<i>Service</i>	August 1, 2011	September 15, 2011	Janet Tapper University of Western States
Vol 17 • No 4 Winter 2011	<i>Connecting to Collections</i>	November 1, 2011	December 15, 2011	Robin Ward Lewis & Clark College & Jim Bunnelle Lewis & Clark College

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