Statewide Catalog: 2004 Status Report

Pam Horan
Oregon State Library

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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 materials and information directly to the customer.

Although it appears that Oregon is some years away from offering an effective statewide library catalog to its citizens, the infrastructure necessary for such a statewide service is moving slowly into place. The goal would be to allow patrons to initiate requests for any library materials available in the state, and to receive them within two days—much as the Orbis Cascade Alliance borrowing system works now.

Figure 1 below provides a graphic representation, locating most of the public/academic library regional shared systems around the state.

Figure 2 on the following page gives a snapshot of Oregon’s shared systems and larger public library systems, indicating the number of public and academic library participants, the population served or enrollment, the number of titles reported, and the variety of vendors used—Innovative, Epixtech iPac, Polaris, DRA, WebPac, Voyager and TLC.

From the table in Figure 2 we can calculate that roughly 13 percent of Oregon’s population is not currently in a service area with a public shared catalog or large library system. Moreover, roughly 20 percent (35 libraries) of Oregon’s academic and legally established public libraries neither participate in a shared catalog nor are in a large library system.

The development and expansion of regional shared catalog systems that include public, academic and some school libraries has had a dramatic effect on the accessibility of library materials for patrons and the ease of requesting them, resulting in the growth of Interlibrary Loans (ILLs) throughout the state. Since 1995, the growth rate of ILLs has been consistently high, with a 2002–03 increase of over 12 percent.
Although this double digit rise is impressive, it is far short of the robust growth of the previous three years (minimum 19 percent per year), which has been due largely to participation in shared systems by Oregon libraries. And Oregon ranks an impressive third in the nation for ILLs (470.65 per 1,000 population), far above the national average of 70.46 per 1,000. Only Rhode Island and Wisconsin make a better showing (National Center for Education Statistics, Public Libraries in the United States: Fiscal Year 2001 Table. A2, p.110 at http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003399).

A statewide catalog may be achieved more quickly than expected if changing technology and reduced costs allow. But local politics and political concerns may prove more daunting challenges than those of cost and technology.