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Service to residents and libraries of Eastern Oregon

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Eastern Oregon University's (Eastern) mission is to serve the educational, social, cultural, and economic needs of the ten eastern-most counties in Oregon through high quality programs of instruction, research, and service. Pierce Library, on Eastern's campus, supports the University's mission by providing information retrieval, resource sharing and consortia building to a multitude of libraries in eastern Oregon and subsequently their patrons.

Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler are the ten identified counties of eastern Oregon. The population served is 170,550 and covers an area of 41,178 square miles (*Oregon Blue Book*, 1997).

The small libraries in rural Oregon are challenged by the disadvantages of severely limited budgets due in part to the reduction of timber sales, low population density and geographic isolation. And those in eastern Oregon suffer no differently than their counterparts throughout the state. Holt (1995) conveys that no public library can do everything. But one thing that all modern libraries have to do is to introduce technology into their way of doing business.

Service to Residents and Libraries of Eastern Oregon

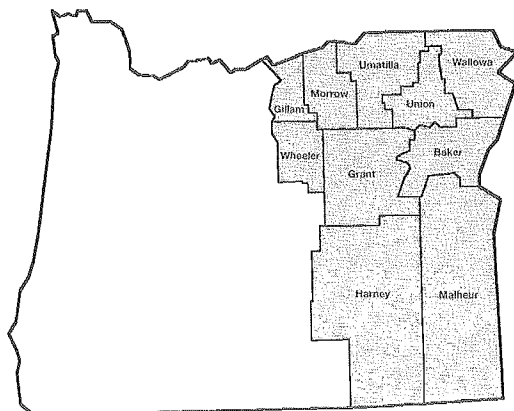
by Shirley Roberts

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With the many challenges facing the residents and libraries of eastern Oregon, Pierce Library has made a commitment to provide improved access to information resources and to support the smaller libraries regarding technology issues. This commitment began in 1986 when Pierce Library founded the Eastern Oregon Information Network (EOIN) through the efforts of Patricia Cutright, then On-line Reference Librarian and Ken Girard, software developer, with LSCA and Meyer Memorial Trust grants. The network was originally designed to ease communi-

Ten counties in Eastern Oregon have been identified as having underserved populations



cations among libraries, hospitals and schools of eastern Oregon through improved sharing of resources by placing computers, fax machines and peripherals in 21 multi-type regional libraries. In the years the network has been in place, the variety and complexity of services offered has increased, as has the need for these services. The network now includes the following electronic components: inter-library loan, messaging, regional union serials list and reference request referral. All academic, public, school and special libraries in the ten eastern-most counties are encouraged to participate in the Eastern Oregon Information Network. Currently, participation in the network includes the 3 (100 percent) academic libraries and 22 of the 33 (64 percent) public libraries found in eastern Oregon. School library participants number 35, in addition to the participation of the library from the Snake River Correctional Facility. Today the most utilized component of the network is interlibrary loan with 4,873 requests for materials placed during the last fiscal year (July 1997 to June 1998).

A grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Title IID, in 1989 allowed the implementation of a state-of-the-art CD-ROM system. This system was merged with the EOIN to facilitate information access; licensing allowed service not only for the regional libraries but also to the residents of eastern Oregon who were taking classes off-campus from Eastern.

In 1994 Pierce Library was identified as the library to provide reference services to eastern Oregon citizens for the Oregon Reference Link program. Not only has the Reference Link program been active in answering referred reference questions [56 percent of the high schools in the region referred questions during the 1997 calendar year, with 61 percent of the public libraries having referred questions during the same period] but has also been involved in training library personnel in the ten county region on such topics of collection development, resource sharing, reference interview techniques, Internet as a reference tool, and how to utilize available technology within the library.

Pierce Library promotes partnerships and collaborative efforts among libraries in eastern Oregon that will benefit the rural citizens they serve. In 1993, LSCA funding was received for a library automation project that established the Pioneer Library System. This project integrated the holdings of two public libraries (La Grande Public and Baker County Public) and Pierce Library's, enhancing the cooperative efforts started in 1986 with EOIN. This collaborative effort increased the availability of information resources for the citizens of eastern Oregon by 80,000 titles and put those titles at their fingertips through the On-line Public Access Catalog (OPAC).

Shortly thereafter, in 1996, Pierce Library and the Pioneer Library System undertook their next collaborative effort and invited public and school libraries in Baker, Grant, Union and Wallowa counties to par-

ticipate in building a regional union catalog by adding collections to the Pioneer Library System OPAC. The majority of the libraries invited were able to participate and with LSCA funding a more unified, larger and diverse collection of information was created for the residents of eastern Oregon. The participating libraries include:

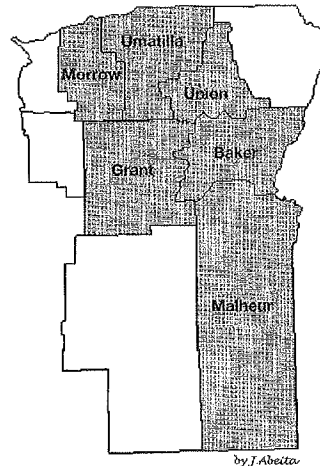
- **Cove:** Cove Public Library and Cove School Library
- **Elgin:** Elgin Public Library and Elgin Schools Library
- **Imbler:** Imbler School Library
- **John Day:** Grant County Public Library
- **La Grande:** Central Elementary School Library, Greenwood Elementary School Library, Island City Elementary School Library, Riveria Elementary School Library, La Grande Middle School Library and La Grande High School Library.
- **North Powder:** North Powder City Library and Powder Valley School Library
- **Union:** Union Public Library and Union School Library

The different types of library participants with academic, public and schools involved creates a uniquely diverse collection that will be of great value not only to the residents of eastern Oregon but to the entire state. Linking this dynamic collection to the EOIN interlibrary loan service, with OCLC as a backup, Pierce Library provides all eastern Oregon libraries the ability to better serve their patrons in the retrieval of information resources.

With the Internet and graphical user interfaces becoming more commonplace, readily and easily recognized, and used by the general public, Pierce Library transferred the Pioneer Library System text-based OPAC to a Web version in January 1998. Access to the regional union catalog and the EOIN is now directly available from Pierce Library's home page (www.pierce.eou.edu). Also available from that same home page are other information resources, such as government documents, library catalogs, etc., which residents in eastern Oregon can access from the Internet.

Pierce Library is always looking for ways to expand its collection to provide access to more information resources. In August 1998, 2800 linear feet of shelving was installed adding nearly 9,000 volumes to its collection in the areas of art, animal husbandry, gardening, music, foreign languages, sports and recreation and folklore. Sixteen thousand more volumes are to be integrated by Fall 1999 in the areas of literature and history. The Oregon State Library provided these titles in order to make them available to the citizens of eastern Oregon.

What the future is for rural residents of eastern Oregon and what part Pierce Library, Eastern Oregon University, will play has yet not been fully determined. There are new projects on the horizon such as ORION, a virtual catalog expected to integrate the three regional union catalogs in eastern Oregon (Pioneer Library System, Umatilla/Morrow Library Network and Southeastern Oregon Library Network). This project, spearheaded by the Oregon State library, will include an interlibrary loan component with a patron initiated borrowing component.



1 ORION/Eastern Oregon Project

- Pioneer Library Network — Union, Baker and Grant Counties (Innovative)
- Umatilla/Morrow County Library Network (Ameritech)
- Southeast Oregon Library Network — Malheur County

Project Includes—
 3 academic libraries
 21 public libraries
 35 school libraries

Recently a formal study completed by a group of consultants with LSTA funding explored the possibility of creating a ten-county library district. Metz, et al. (1998) agree that a ten county library district for eastern Oregon could


- serve a larger area than any public library in the United States, excluding Alaska (41,178 square miles)
- serve a larger area than five New England states combined (New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut)
- serve 43 percent of the area in Oregon
- serve the third largest population in the State of Oregon after the Multnomah County Library and the Salem Public Library
- provide a new national model for quality public library services to rural communities in the 21st century

Kniffel (1996) proclaims that underserved populations inhabit cities, as well as rural areas. In fact, "underserved" could include just about everybody in the world. For many years, a concerted effort has been undertaken to provide information access and resources to the rural residents of eastern Oregon.

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Service to Residents

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Pierce Library staff is committed to eastern Oregon libraries and the patrons they serve and will continue to provide access, as well as the physical resources, as long as funding permits and the need exists in eastern Oregon. 

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Serving the Minority

(continued from page 10)

profit agencies, and a library of approximately 1300 volumes) will soon be available for use by students and scholars. The Community History Center has presented two symposia, the "Jackson Forum" an annual event featuring presentations of scholarly papers on selected topics relating to African American History. One Jackson Forum presented papers on the Vanport Community, the disastrous flood of 1948 and subsequent relocation of African Americans in the Portland area. Future symposia will focus on minority employment in the Portland area and on displacement of minority neighborhoods by the Portland Coliseum, Lloyd Center and the Emanuel urban renewal project. The Center has also collected more than fifty oral histories, other collections of historical documents and newspapers, and has the promise of personal papers from other notable African American leaders in Oregon, including Margaret Carter (recently retired from the Oregon legislature), and State Senator Avel Gordly.

The Community History Center has received support from Portland Community College, the community,

and grants from the Black United Fund, Oregon Community Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente.

The Center, in addition to other recent publications and projects, greatly expands the available base of information about the African American experience in Oregon, and fills in many missing particulars about the history of the area. Materials may be accessed by appointment. Future plans include Internet access but that is not envisioned for the next biennium. 

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