

*Disclaimer: This is a machine generated PDF of selected content from our databases. This functionality is provided solely for your convenience and is in no way intended to replace original scanned PDF. Neither Cengage Learning nor its licensors make any representations or warranties with respect to the machine generated PDF. The PDF is automatically generated "AS IS" and "AS AVAILABLE" and are not retained in our systems. CENGAGE LEARNING AND ITS LICENSORS SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY AND ALL EXPRESS OR IMPLIED WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION, ANY WARRANTIES FOR AVAILABILITY, ACCURACY, TIMELINESS, COMPLETENESS, NON-INFRINGEMENT, MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. Your use of the machine generated PDF is subject to all use restrictions contained in The Cengage Learning Subscription and License Agreement and/or the Gale Power Search Terms and Conditions and by using the machine generated PDF functionality you agree to forgo any and all claims against Cengage Learning or its licensors for your use of the machine generated PDF functionality and any output derived therefrom.*

## Starting small, dreaming big: the OSLIS (Oregon School Library Information System) project brings resources statewide

**Author:** Diane Claus-Smith

**Date:** November-December 1999

**From:** Multimedia Schools(Vol. 6, Issue 5)

**Publisher:** Information Today, Inc.

**Document Type:** Article

**Length:** 1,532 words

Full Text:

The Information Explosion Goes into Overload

Increasingly, students are accessing online information where they once read articles in print format from subscription magazines. They are quick studies in the use of technology for finding information. With simple directions, they can cruise the Net, surfing multiple search engines to find gazillions of hits on any given subject. Unfortunately, they often come up confused and/or empty-handed as far as any kind of useful research to help them with their school projects. What might start out as a simple search for information about "endangered species" recently retrieved 96,512 hits in AltaVista, 362,209 hits in Excite, and 8 categories and 174 sites on Yahoo!. An advanced Web searcher is not daunted by these numbers and will proceed to narrow the search to discover some useful nuggets of information. Most students, however, lack that kind of patience and virtuosity. They flounder with the numbers of hits, often becoming distracted by commercial and inappropriate sites.

In contrast to this serendipitous technique, one might use subscription online databases through the Internet. Increasingly, periodical and reference resources are made available through school library distributors. These resources contain the text and some images from the same print periodicals and reference books available at most school libraries. Periodical articles are selected by editorial boards of the magazines or reference books. For the most part, the information made available to students in this format is more reliable and authoritative than what an untutored search of the Internet might yield.

Subscription online periodical databases have been available to libraries for several years, with access provided through distributors like Dialog. For the first time ever, K-12 students whose library media centers subscribed to remote databases had access to in-depth, current information often unavailable to them in their local print collections. Unfortunately, getting to these resources was often costly and somewhat cumbersome for the lay searcher. Seldom were students able to perform their own searching and retrieving. Librarians sat at the keyboards assisting students in developing search paths and explaining results to their students. The format was unwieldy, time consuming, and expensive for most public school libraries.

The explosion of the Internet has revolutionized access to online databases. Commercial distributors now provide subscriptions to thousands of titles of newspapers, magazines, and references through any workstation connected to the Internet at schools and in homes. The databases use a common interface compatible with browsers like Netscape or Internet Explorer. With some basic training in browser tools, student users find navigation of online resources familiar territory.

So, what's the catch? Why don't all school libraries ditch their subscriptions to print periodicals and reference

resources and join what looks to be the bandwagon of the future?

Cost is the main hang-up. An individual school or even a medium-sized district often finds it prohibitive to provide access to online resources. Onsite facility budget items, including Internet access lines, adequate workstations, and printing peripherals, add to the costs for subscriptions. Where a library media center once warehoused back issues of print magazines, now they must consider how many students are able to access workstations so they can use the online resources. This fundamental change in the dynamics of periodical delivery is a complex issue that can only be remedied by a substantial increase in the number of Internet workstations in schools.

### The Key to Cost-Effective Online Resources Is Collaboration

Conceding this potential pothole in the Information Superhighway, the reality and utility of online library database resources remain. The majority of our students and staff have information literacy needs that require quick and complete access to the solid, reliable, and appropriate information available through these products. How then can library media specialists find affordable ways to provide these services to their school clientele?

Online database providers offer substantial discounts for group acquisition of their products. This fact has prompted the development of library consortia to spread the costs across a wider market. There has been an upsurge of cooperative planning from libraries within districts to statewide contracts. School library media specialists are joining forces with colleagues in academic and public libraries to establish consortia with the power of multiple purchases.

### Starting Small, Dreaming Big--The OSLIS Project

In the summer of 1997, one small group of school library media specialists representing the Oregon Educational Media Association (OEMA) discussed the need we had heard crying out from our members all across the state for cost-effective access to electronic resources in school libraries. Because the Oregon State Library has included cooperative database licensing for school library media centers as one of its long-range planning goals for a number of years, State Library staff encouraged OEMA to apply for federal LSTA (Library Services and Technology Act) funding.

To develop a grant application and project development plan, OEMA sought associates in this venture from like-minded educational and library organizations.

\* The Oregon Public Education Network (OPEN), in partnership with the Oregon Association of Educational Service Districts, brings Web-based information and instructional support to Oregon educators. Their role in the OSLIS venture would be to provide server space, information dispersal, and technical expertise.

\* Western Oregon University's (WOU) Teaching Research Division would assist with evaluation and research data to track the progress of our project.

\* The Oregon Educational Technology Consortium (OETC-Oregon's statewide school district member clearinghouse for negotiation and purchase of software, hardware, and other technology) would arrange contracts which would benefit our statewide venture.

\* OEMA's role would be to test and critique the online products that were presented as potential resources. In our position as front-line library media specialists, a crucial objective would be to develop a core of online curriculum support tutorials and face-to-face training opportunities for schools that would pilot our project.

\* The Oregon State Library would act in an advisory capacity, supporting our efforts and providing contact information for continuity with other statewide library consortia.

With this powerful assemblage, the project was headed in a fast-paced race which resulted in the funding of the LSTA grant, hiring of staff, selection of 18 pilot high school library media centers, and negotiation of contracts with distributors in record time. In less than 6 months, the project, called OSLIS (Oregon School Library Information System) was underway (see Figure 1).

The OSLIS mission "is to help all K-12 students achieve Oregon's high standards, including information-literacy skills, by creating, evaluating, and providing cost-effective, curriculum-based online information resources" (OSLIS Web Site <http://www.open.k12.or.us/oslis/about/factsheet.html>).

To accomplish this goal, the newly created OSLIS board selected 18 schools from across the state to be pilots for the project. Certified library media specialists at each pilot site were given the task of incorporating the online resources into secondary curriculum. The venue for this curriculum would be the OSLIS Web site with various information literacy tutorials relating to the use of online resources. Getting together for a series of training workshops and online discussions resulted in a tight knit group of dynamic and creative educators as well as a highly practical and efficient set of curriculum pieces (see Figure 2).

A second LSTA grant expanded access to the project resources in over 100 secondary schools and 10 elementary sites. The elementary pilots are currently evaluating resources for K-6 grades and developing a separate OSLIS Web site for the younger grades.

More federal funding from a Technology Challenge Grant, recently acquired through the Oregon Department of Education, will enable the 100+ secondary library media pilots to receive training on collaborative projects with classroom teachers in using the OSLIS resources to improve information literacy in their schools.

The OSLIS Web site (<http://www.open.k12.or.us/oslis>) is accessible to anyone on the Internet. It includes the tutorials that have been created for the secondary level as well as links to information about the OSLIS project. Direct access through our host server at OPEN connects each of the pilot schools to the commercial products with IP authentication. Home access is available for students and staff of OSLIS pilots.

The future of OSLIS is dependent upon consistent funding and continual perseverance on the part of educators. Current proposals to our state legislature include monies to support statewide access to all schools for OSLIS resources. There is power in numbers. With so many schools collaborating and forming cooperative agreements encouraged by the success of OSLIS, distributor prices have been substantially reduced.

Collaboration is the secret weapon which OSLIS and all these other statewide resource projects share. Each site includes the common denominator of a devoted core of individuals who work tirelessly to realize the dream of access to worthwhile and cost-effective online resources for all their citizens in all kinds of libraries. School library projects like OSLIS add the unique and special touch of developing the lifelong curriculum-based skills of information literacy in our students.

#### Nationwide Trends in Collaborative Online Resource Projects

OSLIS is not alone in what it is helping to provide the citizens of its state. Across the country, other states have been actively creating similar consortia. Most share the support of an enlightened state library, federal funding sources, and the powerful collaborative nature of a strong library community. For more information, check these Web sites.

##### Alaska

<http://www.educ.state.ak.us/lam/databases/home.html>

##### Idaho

<http://www.lili.org>

##### Washington

<http://www.statelib.wa.gov/sdl/descriptions.html>

<http://www.co.calstate.edu/irt/seir/sys.lib.init.html>

Indiana (INSPIRE)

<http://www.inspire-indiana.net>

Florida Library COINS--Cooperative Information Network Services

<http://www.seflin.org/coins/index.html>

Access Colorado

<http://menu.aclin.org/information.cfm>

Maryland (SAILOR)

<http://www.lib.md.us/index.html>

Massachusetts Information and Library Network

[http://www.mlin.lib.ma.us/databases/databases\\_index.shtml](http://www.mlin.lib.ma.us/databases/databases_index.shtml)

Ohio (OPLIN)

<http://www.oplin.lib.oh.us>

**Copyright:** COPYRIGHT 1999 Information Today, Inc.

<http://www.infotoday.com/default.asp>

**Source Citation** (MLA 8th Edition)

Claus-Smith, Diane. "Starting small, dreaming big: the OSLIS (Oregon School Library Information System) project brings resources statewide." *Multimedia Schools*, vol. 6, no. 5, Nov.-Dec. 1999, pp. 28-31. *Gale General OneFile*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A30475294/GPS?u=oslis&sid=GPS&xid=005b3af4>. Accessed 16 June 2020.

**Gale Document Number:** GALE|A30475294