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## Library2go: a Technology Community is Born

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# Library2go: a Technology Community is Born

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The Oregon Digital Library Consortium is, in essence, a community of technology partners. This article describes how and why it was formed, how it functions and thus, how it represents the theme of this issue, “Finding Community.”

In April 2005, Jim Scheppke, State Librarian, called together representatives from public libraries from throughout the State of Oregon to meet during the OLA conference to discuss the idea of combining resources to provide downloadable audio books to public library patrons in Oregon. He had already done a great deal of preliminary work by getting BCR (Bibliographical Center for Research) to agree to be the fiscal agent and by talking to the folks at Overdrive (Digital Library Reserve) for the provision of content. They had experience with like consortia throughout the country.

This large group met several times and finally coalesced into a core group of eight interested libraries: Corvallis-Benton County Public Library, Deschutes County Library, Eugene Public Library, Jackson County Library, Library Information Network of Clackamas County, Multnomah County Library, Salem Public Library, and Washington County Cooperative Library Services. The next step was to create a cooperative agreement that would protect all members as well as serve as a structure under which the group could operate and make decisions. To this end, by-laws were developed and signed, and each entity signed a separate agreement with BCR.

Ready to go, the next step was electing officers and assigning committees and task forces. Teresa Landers of Corvallis was elected Chair for the first 18-month period with Barbara O’Neil as Vice-Chair. Committees and task forces included: Selection, with one representative from each interested library; Training; Web Design and

Marketing; and Cataloging. Committee names are representative of function with the Cataloging committee charged with working out the details of libraries who want them, receiving the MARC record for each title ordered so they can be included in that library’s database, searchable like all other library materials. All these committees had/have representatives from the member libraries so that all efforts are collaborative.

A graphics person from Washington County designed the logo and the Web Design and Marketing team took charge of designing the Web site. We branded the collaborative effort under the banner of “Library2go.” We selected a name that would not limit us to expanding our offerings beyond downloadable audio books should we choose to expand in the future.



Perhaps the most difficult task after coming up with by-laws agreeable to eight different jurisdictions with eight different city/county attorneys, was agreeing on loan periods and other circulation policies as we could only have one unified set of parameters. But, this was a group determined to show that eight libraries could come to agreement and we did—and really very painlessly.

Each library worked individually with the Digital Library Reserve (DLR) to get their ILS to interface with the DLR system. An opening day collection was purchased using a \$25,000 initial assessment for the first six months, with the idea that we would contribute an additional \$25,000 for the purchase of materials for the fiscal year beginning July 2006.

The ODLC Overdrive site for downloadable audio books went live on Janu-



ary 31, 2006—about 10 months after the initial meeting. Success was instantaneous and overwhelming. It became immediately evident that more materials were needed since everything was checked out with holds on just about everything within three days of going live.

When it became obvious that we had seriously underestimated demand for the service, the ODLC board assessed each library for a total of \$15,000 more during the 05/06 fiscal year. We purchased materials beyond the opening day collection in February 2006 (Maximum Access aka Always Available titles), April 2006, and three times in May 2006, including another 50 Maximum Access titles. By March holds were down to 3,700 from the initial high of 8,500 in February. With additional funds totaling about \$100,000 in 2006/2007 holds are now averaging about 1,500 and the collection has grown from 325 on opening day to 150 titles that are always available, and over 800 items that are one checkout at a time per copy. We are adding 150–200 titles per month.

Since opening day the ODLC has been dealing with a number of issues:

- **Keeping holds to a reasonable level. To this end we developed a business plan which includes addressing collection issues such as holds.** A holds ratio of 5:1 has been established with no more than 15 copies of any one title purchased
- **Tweaking circulation policies—number of holds, checkout period, checkout limits, etc.—to best meet the needs of the majority of our patrons.**
- **Expanding collection purchases to include children's, young adult and video materials.** This one is still under discussion and grant funding for initial purchases is being explored.
- **Expanding membership to other public libraries.** This is happening as of July 1, 2008. Eight new libraries are joining: Albany Public Library, Baker County Public Library, the Chemeketa Cooperative Regional Library Service which replaces Salem Public Library; the Coastal Resource Sharing Network, Curry Public Library District, Klamath County Library District, Seaside Public Library, and St. Helens Public Library. Deschutes County Library is withdrawing.
- **Incompatibility with the Apple format so that it does not work with Ipods or Macs.** This is a major public relations issue but is essentially a decision by Apple to not provide the necessary digital rights licensing to allow compatibility.

The future for the ODLC looks bright. We continue to expand the collection and work together in setting direction and making decisions for the good of all involved. This partnership allows us to pool resources so that we are not each paying for the administrative and overhead costs involved with a service such as this. No one of us is paying more than what we were each individually quoted before the consortium formed, and most are paying a great deal less. The amount of savings varies by size of library. The greatest advantage is that very small libraries (our smallest as of July 2007 will be 5,000) are enjoying the same access to service as our largest library (6.7 million) and it works well for everyone.

How does this fit into the theme of "Finding Community?" The ODLC is a



community of interest that fulfills each library's mission to provide materials in as many formats as our patrons' demand. While each member has its own specific mission we are joined in an overarching mission as public libraries committed to providing excellent customer service as defined by our patrons. The success of the ODLC is an indication that we are meeting our patrons needs. Two customer surveys were done in the first 18 months of operation and we always receive very high ratings, including 92 percent who say they will use the service again. An interesting anecdote is that our single largest group of users is women over the age of 45!

We are able to share resources in a way very different from the physical models of resource sharing, whose success is mixed. We do not need to concern ourselves with transporting materials to and from each other's physical location, which saves time and staff.

There is also a sustainability aspect to the project. No gas is used to courier materials, nor is any used by patrons who don't need to come in to the physical library but can access these materials from home. There is no redundant purchasing of materials and storage media. This saves a lot on plastic packaging materials alone! Staff resources are conserved by not having to process and circulate physical materials. The only group that has ever met physically is the Board. All others have only met virtually.

The ODLC has also demonstrated that libraries representing different constituencies CAN come together and agree on a variety of issues from circulation policies to collection management. We have found community as we communicate and resolve our differences, and as staff from each institution work together whether it be designing the Web page or marketing, or selecting materials. Even though most of the committee members have never met in person, they work together to accomplish a common mission.

There is no doubt that Library2go is a branded identity for a consortium of like-minded libraries. But it is more than a brand or a partnership between 14 member libraries. It is a virtual community for 2.6 million residents of Oregon. 

