
Volume 9
Number 4
*Special Double Issue: Revisiting the Vision
(Spring 2004)*

July 2014

Revising the Vision, Recasting our Goals

Cindy Gibbon
Multnomah County Library

Recommended Citation

Gibbon, C. (2014). Revising the Vision, Recasting our Goals. *OLA Quarterly*, 9(4), 4-5. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/1093-7374.1658>

© 2014 by the author(s).

OLA Quarterly is an official publication of the Oregon Library Association | ISSN 1093-7374

Revising the Vision, Recasting Our Goals

by Cindy Gibbon

Senior Library Manager
Multnomah County Library

Past Chair
OLA Public Library Division

Statewide Library Card

- *Sweep away regional, jurisdictional and procedural boundaries so every Oregonian has a library card that works at any publicly supported library*

Statewide Library Catalog

- *Make the holdings of all Oregon libraries accessible through one catalog.*

Vision 2010 is a bold call to action for the Oregon library community.

We've already made significant progress toward several of our goals. For example, we've agreed to divert Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from net lender reimbursement to the statewide database licensing program. Even in rural areas of Oregon most libraries now have access to high bandwidth telecommunications. Our pilot e-reference service is up and running. We owe our progress toward these goals to our level of commitment. A broad cross section of OLA members and the library community at large agreed these were high priorities for enhancing service to library users.

Significantly, the top two goals of Vision 2010—the Statewide Library Card and Statewide Library Catalog—haven't seen much progress. Why? Evidence from forums conducted around the state in Spring 2002 by the Public Library Division (PLD) Executive Board indicates we owe our lack of progress toward these goals to our lack of commitment. We must reexamine these two goals, because we really aren't collectively sure that either goal is worthy of our efforts.

During the months of February and March, 2002, the PLD Board conducted five forums on the concept of a statewide library card for Oregon. During the course of those conversations, we also received comments on the statewide catalog. Forums were held at the Public Library

Director's meeting in St. Helens; the Southern Oregon Library Federation meeting at Umpqua Community College; the Eastern Oregon Library Association meeting at Pendleton Public Library; at Hatfield Marine Sciences Center, Newport; and at Multnomah County Central Library, Portland. Based on the comments received at those forums, the PLD Executive Board reported the following findings to the OLA Executive Board on April 18, 2002.

What would a statewide library card look like if Oregon had one?

Forum participants generally agreed that:

- A statewide library card would allow in-person access to any public library in the state for any Oregon resident who has a valid library card from any participating Oregon public library.
- To deal with the issue of unserved areas, all participating libraries would agree to charge an established minimum non-resident fee to persons who live in an area where there is no tax-supported public library service.
- The card would be tied to a specific set of agreed-upon services applicable throughout the state.
- If the purpose of a statewide library card is to provide service to people in areas that have not chosen to support local public library service, there must be state funding to support their access. PLD Board did not recommend this approach, both because of the current fiscal and legislative climate and because it seems to reward those areas of the state that persistently resist funding public library service.

How would a statewide library card assist library users?

Many forum participants felt that a state-



wide library card provides little benefit where regional cooperative agreements exist. Most of the benefits of a statewide library card could be achieved by encouraging more regional agreements. For most Oregonians, in-person access is most relevant when it applies to libraries in their own home region. My in-laws, who live in Burns and use the Harney County Library, go to Bend regularly to shop or visit healthcare providers. For them, a regional agreement providing free access to Deschutes County Libraries might be very beneficial. But they wouldn't have much use for a library card that gave them free access to Tillamook County or Multnomah County Libraries.

Working regional agreements exist among libraries in many parts of Oregon. Identifying best practices and encouraging and assisting the development of additional meaningful regional agreements should be a priority for OLA in partnership with the Oregon State Library.

Thoughts on the statewide database/catalog

Forum participants shared these thoughts on the idea of a statewide catalog:

- Regional access agreements would not require the development of a statewide library catalog.
- Additional costs of providing interlibrary loan service based on a statewide catalog, including delivery costs, would require a state subsidy.
- A statewide database is no longer the only option for providing greater access to a broader range of materials. Examples of varying degrees of access include WorldCat, the expanded use of Z39.50, products such as WebFeat, and the efforts by automation vendors to use NCIP (National Circulation Interchange Protocol) whereby circulation

information is shared between different integrated library systems.

Thoughts on funding

We heard at all the forums that jurisdictions levying taxes to provide local public library service are unwilling to subsidize service to unserved areas. A state subsidy of local library services would be required to accomplish the vision of universal access promised by a statewide library card and a statewide catalog. Forum participants saw little chance of the Legislature funding such a program and did not favor use of LSTA funds for this purpose. Some participants were willing to consider use of LSTA monies to fund a pilot project only.

Participants were clear that a statewide database licensing program was their highest priority for use of any available funds.

Revising our vision

Based on these conversations, it seems clear that OLA must rethink the top two Vision 2010 priorities. The library community in Oregon is ambivalent at best about the Statewide Library Card and Catalog. For many of us, these are ideas whose time came and went in the last millennium, and we don't believe they will necessarily provide better library service to Oregonians today. Others doubt we will ever have sufficient state level resources to accomplish either goal and believe the resources we do have are better spent on other priorities.

What needs did we hope to meet for our users by establishing a statewide library card and catalog? Is regional, rather than statewide, cooperation the most practical way to meet those needs? Or can we envision a creative new strategy, with the power to capture our collective imagination and commitment? Let the conversation begin! 

