

INFOhio

Leading into the Future

INFOhio, the Information Network for Ohio Schools, began in 1989, when several northeast Ohio school library media specialists met to develop a strategy to automate their libraries and provide a model to automate all K-12 schools. One early point of consensus was to use the existing Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN) to take advantage of a more sophisticated network and software than employed by standalone systems of the day.



A student library assistant checks out items for a fellow Bedford High School student. Bedford City Schools was one of the first schools to join INFOhio's library automation program.



Need:

An integrated library automation system with scalability, reliability, and usability

Solution:

Migration to the Sirsi Unicorn® Management Library System

Result:

More than 2,000 INFOhio school libraries will share one Sirsi network, serving K-12 students and educators across Ohio with state-of-the-art technologies



*How will you _____
shape the future?*



In 1992, a local foundation funded a consultant to help write a request for proposals and evaluate products from several automation vendors. The first two schools automated in 1994, and a decade later INFOhio boasts more than 2,000 automated libraries.

Almost half of INFOhio's automated schools have benefited from the Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) to pay most local costs related to automation. In Ohio, the State Library of Ohio (SLO) administers these federal funds. INFOhio recognizes the cooperation and support of LSTA and SLO in the success of INFOhio's library automation efforts. However, to continue the vision of shaping the future of school libraries statewide, technology and services needed to be expanded.

Widening scope calls for broader technology

INFOhio's scope broadened. From its original goal of automating school libraries, INFOhio has evolved into a statewide K-12 network including four other components:

- A core collection of 13 electronic resources (online databases) is available at no cost to all Ohio K-12 public and private schools, including 24/7 home access for Ohio students and educators.
- INFOhio's K-12 Curriculum Resource Catalog, a statewide union catalog, collects bibliographic records for quality control and local database development. It also provides a single point of access for special collections of K-12 resources and other anticipated MARC databases.



Students at Bedford High School have the online catalog to access the district's library holdings and use INFOhio's Core Collection of Electronic Resources.

- Media booking software automates more than 40 regional and statewide collections.
- Instructional development activities help assure effective use of all INFOhio products and services.

Selecting Sirsi

After extensive deliberation and planning, those involved with INFOhio's library automation project decided to migrate to the Sirsi Unicorn® Library Management System, with plans to convert more than 2,000 buildings by July 2006.

The migration's first wave of 45 schools in 12 districts serve as prototypes for the full conversion, going live in the fall of 2003. Successive schools will migrate as staff at each of the 23 OECN regional centers installs the necessary equipment and receives training from INFOhio's technical support staff. With more than 4,000 K-12 buildings in Ohio, there is much room for INFOhio's library automation project to grow. Many school libraries that currently are not automated with INFOhio are planning to participate, as each regional center joins the migration.

Theresa M. Fredericka, INFOhio executive director, is confident the migration to Sirsi will be successful. "At each step in the process, everyone involved embraced the vision of what our state could accomplish for our students and teachers, including Sirsi Corporation officials. INFOhio expects our efforts to migrate Ohio schools to be an investment in helping improve instruction and fostering lifelong learners and readers."

Strategies for migration to Sirsi

While some conversions to Sirsi may not be as large as INFOhio's, there are some strategies others may want to consider:

- Involve all stakeholders in early discussions, planning, and problem solving. While only 45 schools participated in the first round of migrations, all OECN regional center staff and their school library customers are well represented in every aspect of the project.
- Build on existing functionality. During its planning stages, INFOhio decided to add functionality available with Sirsi, such as content enrichment and additional indexed fields, to its existing Web2 online public access catalog (OPAC).



Tuslaw High School student assistant makes the Canton-area school's first circulation with the newly-installed Sirsi WorkFlows, as adult library staff look on.

By maintaining the familiar OPAC, patrons in schools migrating to Sirsi utilize a familiar interface. In addition, school librarians can concentrate on mastering the new software's administrative functions, spending minimal time teaching patrons a new system.

- A clean database provides for a smooth migration. Librarians are trained to use the previous integrated library system's functions to correct errors in bibliographic and item information before conversion to Sirsi. As librarians increase awareness of their records, they are better able to ensure that important local information is maintained in the new database.
- Listen and evaluate. Listen to those who migrate early, learn from their experiences, and apply the lessons to those who migrate next. INFOhio conducted an extensive survey of the first 45 schools and is using the results to fine-tune the process for those migrating next.

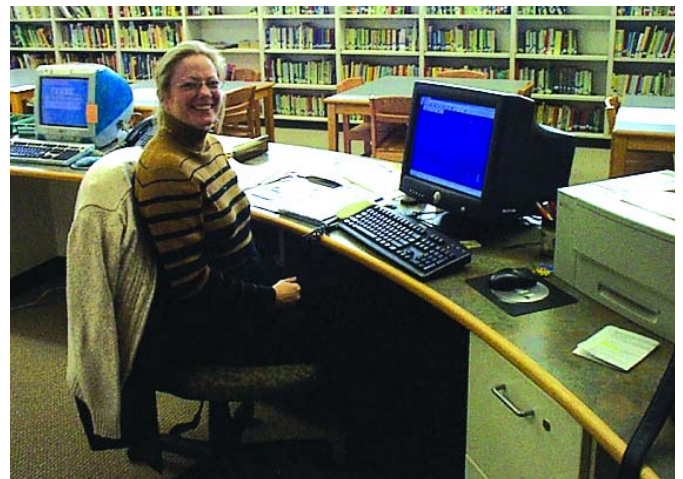
Having it all is as easy as A-B-C

In a November 2003 *School Library Media Activities Monthly* article (Vol. XX, No. 3, pp. 27-31), Marjorie L. Pappas surveyed nine K-12 virtual libraries developed by several state consortia that provide subscription resources, state union catalogs, collections of free Web-based resources, access to primary source documents, and navigation/usage features. "INFOhio is the only virtual library that included all of those characteristics," Pappas concluded.

Well-designed library automation software is a core service that extends access to information resources beyond traditional library walls with a school library catalog accessible from any Internet-ready computer. As Ohio's K-12 virtual library, INFOhio continues to emphasize the importance of library automation in 21st century schools and views library automation to be as fundamental to a school as A-B-C. Such library automation software provides:

- A – Access to print and electronic information
- B – Broadened scope of the library (e.g., Ohio's statewide resource sharing program)
- C – Centralized and efficient organization of materials

Ohio's school libraries own more than 40 million books and other instructional materials, a number that grows every year. With the timesaving technology of library automation software, school library personnel are better able to support the educational mission of their schools by providing more instructional support to students and other faculty members.



North Nimishillen Elementary Library staffer logs on to Sirsi WorkFlows to prepare for the next wave of students to visit for book selection and storytime. Nimishillen Elementary School is part of Louisville City Schools, near Canton.



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