

## OWLSnet Partnership Report


Prepared for Nicolet Federated Library System Board

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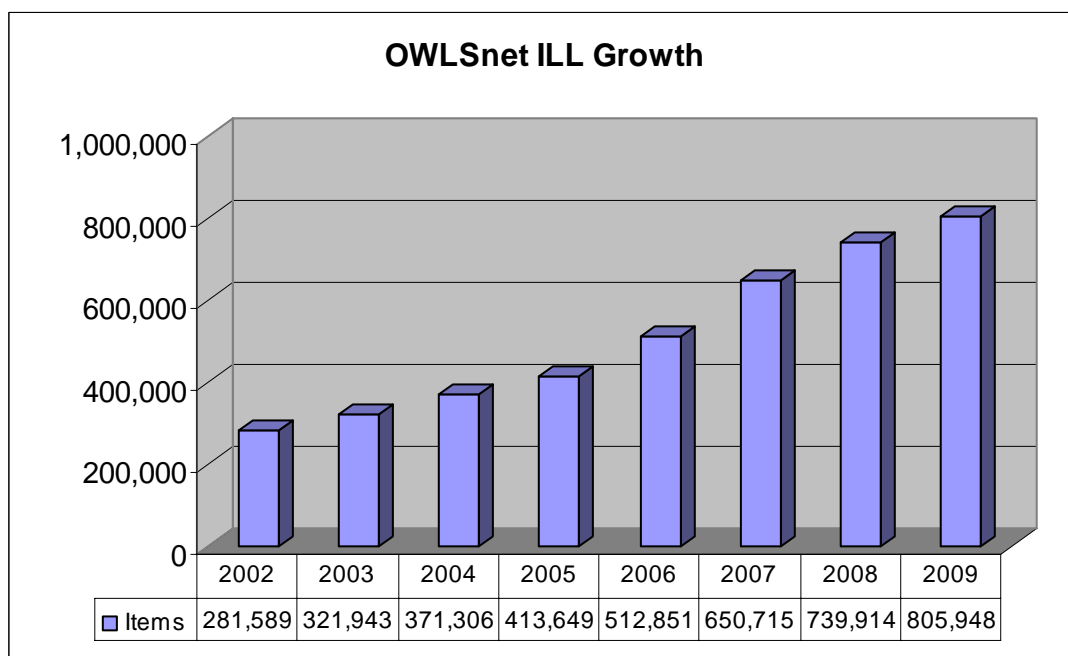
In 1995, the Outagamie Waupaca Library System and Nicolet Federated Library System entered into a partnership to provide a shared, integrated library system (OWLSnet) to OWLS and NFLS member libraries. While OWLSnet's primary mission is to provide a shared computer system to facilitate resource sharing and assist member libraries in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations, many additional services have been added over the years, e.g., Internet access, electronic resources, email, antivirus/security software.

### ***Highlights of 2009***

Listed below are significant activities that have occurred in 2009.

- OWLSnet continued to develop InfoSoup in order to enhance patron experience with the online catalog. Many new features were added.
  - A Job and Career Resources page was created to provide quick access to job and career information web sites, such as job centers in NE Wisconsin, job search engines, career tests, and career and salary information.
  - OWLS received an LSTA grant to add Optimal Resume, a web based resume and career building tool, to the Job and Career Resources page.
  - The InfoSoup Memory Project was launched, providing InfoSoup libraries with a powerful online platform for presenting local history materials.
  - LibraryThing was added to InfoSoup, enabling patrons to find titles similar to their favorites, as well as other editions or translations. LibraryThing also adds a tag cloud to help patrons find titles they might enjoy. A screencast has been developed to help patrons learn how to use LibraryThing.
  - Mango Languages, an effective and easy to use language learning tool that focuses on everyday conversation, was added to InfoSoup replacing the Tell Me More language learning system.
  - Two book review blogs that have been part of past Summer Library Programs, one for children and one for teens, are now available throughout the year.
  - Many additional booklists have been added to InfoSoup. Well over one hundred lists of materials are available to readers, listeners, and viewers of all ages.
  - Bookmarks were distributed to OWLSnet libraries promoting job and career resources, Learn a Test, and Mango Languages.
- Using LSTA grant funding OWLSnet launched ***infosoup to go!***, a version of InfoSoup that has been optimized for use on mobile devices. 
- Installation of SAM workstation management software was completed at 14 OWLS libraries and 20 NFLS libraries. Additional libraries may wish to have this software installed in the future.
- Public wireless Internet access was installed at six additional NFLS libraries bringing the total number of OWLSnet libraries with public wireless access to forty-six.

- Libraries began receiving monthly SAM statistics (total sessions and average minutes per session) and monthly wireless statistics (number of unique connections and number of days connected).
- OWLSnet began holding Tech Talk/Circ Works meetings online, eliminating the need for library staff to travel to these user group meetings.
- OWLSnet libraries finished the process of implementing transit slips printed by their receipt printers, eliminating the need for staff to fill out transit slips by hand. Transit slips are now printed automatically when materials are scanned, saving staff time, increasing readability, and reducing sorting errors.
- Libraries began using customizable hold slips and have reported that they reduce the staff time required to process holds.
- An E-Commerce module was purchased and installed on the Millennium server.
- The OWLSnet staff created and continues to develop an online user manual, making the most up-to-date information continuously available to member libraries.
- OWLSnet started producing some reports with scannable barcodes so that member library staff no longer need to manually enter barcode numbers in order to find computer records for items listed on the reports.
- OWLSnet completed installing Net Support Notify software on staff computers and began using it to broadcast messages to member library staff. This software has eliminated the need to call all libraries with status updates during certain types of service outages (e.g., Internet service is down, email is down).
- OWLSnet libraries voted to reduce the maximum number of holds allowed to 15 per patron in order to reduce the dramatic growth in resource sharing among OWLSnet libraries. While resource sharing grew almost 9% in 2009, this rate is significantly lower than the 27% average annual increase from 2002 to 2008.



- Two new servers that control many network functions (e.g., DHCP, DNS) and a new tape drive backup system were installed mid-year.
- OWLSnet activated its new IMAP email server on January 1, 2010, culminating several months work of preparing the server and writing scripts to seamlessly migrate users' email accounts. At the same time, new web-based email software (RoundCube) was made available to users.

### ***Current Activities***

Listed below are some significant activities that are currently underway or that are scheduled to occur in the next few months.

- OWLSnet will migrate to a new Millennium ILS server in February, replacing a server that has been in use for nearly four and a half years.
- Release 2009B of the Millennium software will be installed after migration to the new server has been completed.
- Work is continuing to implement the E-Commerce software module. The addition of this software will enable library patrons to pay fines, fees, and bills online with their credit cards. The software has been installed on the server, security certificates have been obtained, a merchant account has been established, and payment processing details are being worked out. Because of the complex nature of implementing online payment in a consortium environment, it is likely that implementation could take much of this year.
- Many OWLSnet libraries will begin using a new process to create labels for their materials, significantly reducing the staff time required to process materials. New label printers and label stock have been delivered to participating libraries, and OWLSnet staff is completing the somewhat difficult label configuration process. The result will be the availability of different templates for different types and sizes of materials.
- OWLSnet member libraries are investigating methods for streamlining the process of registering patrons and issuing library cards. Under consideration are the creation of pdf registration forms that patrons could complete online and purchasing Innovative's online patron registration module.
- Six-month and one-year assessments will be made of the impact of reducing the maximum number of holds allowed per patron. These assessments will be presented to and discussed by the membership at Administrative Advisory Committee meetings.
- OWLS will work with NFLS and Brown County Library to investigate methods for streamlining resource sharing between Brown County Library and other NFLS member libraries.
- OWLSnet will continue to develop InfoSoup in order to enhance patron experience with the online catalog.
  - Training, support, and encouragement will be provided to enable more libraries to add materials to the InfoSoup Memory Project.
  - An effort will be made to improve series information available in InfoSoup.
  - More efficient methods for adding and updating content will be sought, and discussions will be held to clarify the relationship between InfoSoup and local library web sites.

- OWLSnet will engage in a process to update its 3-year plan, and OWLS and NFLS will sign a new partnership agreement.

## **Challenges**

- The biggest challenge facing OWLSnet and member libraries is adapting to the changing environment.
  - Throughout its history OWLSnet has engaged in significant development, regularly adding new services and enhancements to existing services at no additional charge to member libraries.
  - This pattern is no longer sustainable because there is no room in the budget to pay for new services or enhancements and because the staff has no capacity to take on more work.
  - OWLSnet's focus for the foreseeable future is likely to be on optimizing current services, i.e., making what we do better, rather than on developing new services.
  - Implementing a Telephone Notification System (TNS) is illustrative of this situation.
    - Most members are interested in TNS if there are no direct costs to them, and it's likely that implementing TNS would save most libraries money on phone bills, staff time and/or postage and mailing costs.
    - Only about half of the members indicated that they would be interested in contributing to such a project, and it's not clear how many of them might actually have the ability to pay.
    - Even if a subset of the membership could finance such a project, the OWLSnet staff isn't likely to have the capacity to implement it, and it would be difficult to justify spending staff time on a service that's not available to the entire membership.
- The development of OWLSnet has led to an explosive increase in the volume of resource sharing, improving service for library patrons and placing a significant burden on library staff, the delivery service, and system delivery budgets. While OWLSnet libraries have reduced the maximum number of holds allowed in order to reduce the growth in resource sharing, a lower growth rate may still be difficult to sustain.
- Adequate bandwidth has always been and continues to be a challenge for OWLSnet. While OWLSnet has regularly increased Internet, Wide Area Network, and individual library bandwidth, it is sometimes used to capacity. It is likely that OWLSnet will need to change Internet Service Providers in the near future in order to more cost-effectively increase capacity. It is also crucial for the TEACH Wisconsin program be adequately funded by the State.