

OWLSnet Planning Committee Meeting Notes

November 28, 2006

Appleton Public Library Board Room

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. Barb Kelly, Joan Denis, Mark Merrifield, Rick Krumwiede, Elizabeth Timmins, Ann Hunt, and Gerri Moeller were in attendance.

Review Committee Charge

Rick briefly reviewed the [charge](#) to the Planning Committee.

Discussion of Planning Activities

The majority of the meeting was spent reviewing and discussing the [results](#) of the October 20, 2006 planning exercise. Much of the discussion focused on the areas where system staff had a different perception than member library staff.

- “OWLSnet member libraries cooperate effectively.” It wasn’t clear whether member libraries feel they cooperate effectively with each other, the systems, or both. System staff didn’t feel that the cooperation isn’t as effective as member libraries think.
- “Our patrons are confused because libraries have different policies and procedures.” Libraries agreed with this less than system staff. System staff may feel more strongly about this because they receive only the complaints from libraries, rather than hearing from the libraries who feel that we are appropriately setting different policies and procedures.
- “I’m confident that my library is aware of all of the services available from OWLSnet.” Libraries agreed with this far more than system staff. System staff believes there are member libraries that don’t know about all the available services. There is also probably some confusion between OWLSnet services and system services. This is especially true for NFLS libraries.
- “OWLSnet does a good job of providing training to member library staff.” Libraries agreed with this far more than system staff. System staff seem to feel they should be providing far more training, and far more effective training. There also seems to be a need for training more staff at member libraries.
- “Because our libraries are so different it would be impossible to standardize policies and procedures more than they are now.” There appeared to be very little consensus between libraries on this topic – although system staff felt that more standardization is achievable.

The OWLSnet planning committee agreed that one of the goals of the committee is to feed into the OWLS and NFLS technology plans which are due mid 2007. We should be developing both short and long term goals – although 3 years is probably the maximum practical length for long term goals, considering the pace of change.

Committee members agreed that it can be confusing to know who to call about a given issue, e.g., NFLS, OWLS, APL. There is often confusion about roles, especially for the NFLS libraries. Time was spent discussing the best methodology for conveying “who does what.” It seems that many libraries don’t use the OWLSnet web page and may not even know it exists. It is linked to the NFLS and OWLS web pages. Should it be more distinct from the OWLS web page? At the same time, most respondents felt they knew who to call, which may mean we’re doing a pretty good job in getting callers to the person who can answer their question, even if it isn’t the first person they call.

Member library staffs seem to appreciate AAC meetings, especially the opportunity to exchange ideas and hear differing viewpoints. AAC meetings have also been used as the primary method for disseminating information in OWLSnet. However, for a variety of reasons these meetings may be becoming less effective. The agenda is usually very full, and it is difficult to get to every agenda item. Yet there are more items that could go on every meeting agenda.

Many people leave the meetings early, and this means that items added at the end are unlikely to be heard by the majority. Perhaps one possibility would be to enable participants to join the AAC meetings by conference call. In the membership agreements, libraries do agree to be represented at meetings. Do we need to remind libraries of this responsibility? Should there be additional people on the AAC list? Should we send out a reminder to everyone that the AAC minutes are posted – not just the AAC list?

One of the most common complaints from libraries is about attending so many meetings. There is also a concern on the part of OWLSnet libraries and system staff that libraries who do not attend meetings are less likely to be aware of system requirements, information, policies, etc. Because they don’t attend, they are less likely to conform to the expectations of the system staff and other libraries – including compliance with policies. It’s a circle in which the less they attend, the less they realize how important it is to attend, and the more isolated they become. How can we encourage attendance?

The planning exercise mirrored the tension in any library automation consortium between local library autonomy and uniformity. This tension can sometimes result in different interpretations of group actions or procedures, so we probably need to become more intentional about specifying policies, procedures, and decisions.

For example, OWLSnet has always relied upon consensus decision-making, but some libraries occasionally interpret these decisions as guidelines or suggestions that don’t necessarily have to be followed. Or sometimes libraries seem to feel that consensus decisions are simply imposed on them by the OWLSnet staff. Lately, OWLSnet libraries have been voting more frequently at the AAC meetings and many libraries seem to feel this is a good thing. When libraries choose to vote on a topic, it seems more clear that it is the libraries group decision, and that it is not optional.

Also, we haven't created many policies about activities that were assumed to be the responsibility of each member library, but it may be necessary to implement new policies that spell out every library's responsibility to the consortium and to other libraries. For example, while the reports and statistics class was very useful, in order for libraries to really use this information they need to be confident that all libraries in the consortium are working the system reports. New policies could cover things like reports and notices, short loan procedures, appropriate use of the various patron types, overriding limits and waiving fines.

The libraries seemed to agree that wireless Internet and PC management were the most important new services they were looking for from OWLSnet. We're already working on segmenting the network to implement wireless networking, and Gerri agreed to do research in order to develop a recommendation for PC management in February of 2007.

Overall, the planning exercise responses were very positive. Almost all of the respondents (31 of 35) strongly agreed that "My library is glad that it belongs to OWLSnet."

Because the discussion of the planning exercise took so long, the group did not have time to discuss the other items on the agenda:

- Review governance structure and decision-making procedures
- Brainstorm list of issues to be addressed
- Discuss known short-term priorities for service development
 - InfoSoup development
 - Collection agency interface
 - Wireless Internet service
 - Workstation management software
 - Others?
- Discuss process for determining future service priorities
- Discuss areas in need of policy or procedure development
- Discuss issues related to achieving uniform compliance
- Identify of any additional issues that need to be addressed by the OWLSnet membership.

Set Dates and Times for Future Meetings

Future meetings were set for January 5, 2007 from 9:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at OWLS and for February 9, 2007 from 9:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at OWLS.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at about noon.

Respectfully submitted,

Gerri and Rick