

WorldCat Local helps Illinois users find and use materials more easily



Member feedback from pilot improved the service for all subscribers

Situation

Most library users know how fast and easy it is to use Google to search for resources, and those served by the Lincoln Trail Libraries System (LTLS) in east-central Illinois are no exception. Dissatisfaction among library users and staff with their traditional integrated library systems (ILS) led the nine-county consortium to explore other ways to provide access to resources.

The consortium procured LSTA funding for a multiyear project to test a new library interface that would (1) provide access to all types of materials—both within the library and the consortium, and to resources available in the larger library community; (2) provide a simple method for requesting materials not held locally; and (3) become a familiar search interface for library users across the state.

Lincoln Trail Consultant Pat Boze notes that Illinois is an extremely active resource-sharing state, so “...any service that can provide easy delivery options for our state’s library users is going to be seriously considered.”

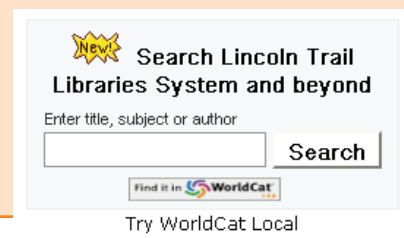
She adds that Illinois library systems, like Lincoln Trail, work in conjunction with the Illinois State Library to constantly improve resource discovery and delivery. “This goal is at the top of system and state library long-range library plans.”

Solution

Staff at Lincoln Trail managed a pilot of OCLC’s WorldCat® Local that ultimately included 23 public, academic, school and special libraries from across the state. Six of those

AT A GLANCE

- Founded in 1966 and based in Champaign, Illinois
- One of nine multitype library systems in Illinois, Lincoln Trail Libraries System serves seven academic, 17 special, 43 school and 52 public libraries in a nine-county area



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libraries were members of LTLS. During the pilot, staff and library users offered valuable feedback that influenced changes and enhancements for the WorldCat Local service.

Boze reports that Illinois libraries worked with OCLC® to include four levels of relevancy—local, consortia, state and WorldCat—which became part of the service’s permanent functionality. They also helped develop interoperability with external ILSs and began work with OCLC to develop a consortial solution to link EZproxy® authentication with WorldCat® Resource Sharing accounts of individual libraries.

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In addition, Boze believes that the pilot was influential in the release of the WorldCat Local “quick start” option in April 2008. Boze says that Illinois libraries had two compelling reasons to embrace “quick start”: (1) the state-wide FirstSearch® base package provides access at no additional charge; and (2) the migration of FirstSearch to the WorldCat.org™ platform.

To encourage Illinois libraries to register for the “quick start” option, staff at LTLS and OCLC collaborated in offering a “quick start” webinar for interested Illinois library staff. In addition, an Illinois project team member has been registering and configuring “quick start” for any Illinois library that wishes to offer the service.

Results

Lincoln Trail libraries and OCLC worked on a variety of promotional items—posters, bookmarks, news release templates and other methods—to communicate the good news about WorldCat Local “quick start” to their communities.

“We also set up conference calls with each of the regional library systems, posted announcements in the Illinois State Library e-newsletter, maintained a project Web site at Lincoln Trail and posted project information on the Illinois WebJunction® Web site,” says Boze.

Most users have responded very favorably to WorldCat Local according to Boze. Although library staff anticipated strong interest in local resources, users say they particularly like being able to identify resources that aren’t available locally. Boze emphasizes that users definitely want to submit interlibrary loan requests and access databases from their homes. LTLS and OCLC are working on a solution that will make it possible for EZproxy to support this demand.

WorldCat Local usage is strong at libraries in the Lincoln Trail system, and growth is steady, according to Boze. Her advice to other librarians interested in WorldCat Local: consider it a very useful complement to the library OPAC, and plan on investing staff time up front to make sure the local database is represented accurately in WorldCat.

About Lincoln Trail Libraries System

Based in Champaign, Illinois, and serving 119 multitype libraries in a nine-county area, Lincoln Trail’s mission is connecting the people of East Central Illinois to information through cooperation. Funding is provided by the Office of Secretary of State and the State Librarian Jesse White.