

## *Creation of the Ohio Law Library Consortium*

*ORALL 2010*

*Kathleen M. Sasala, Esq.*

The Ohio Law Library Consortium has a website or wiki at [ollc.wikispaces.com](http://ollc.wikispaces.com). Please feel free to visit this site if you would like to read more about what we currently do or review some of the information and documents that we have posted there.

I became a professional librarian in 2000, and I joined my library in Cuyahoga County in February of 2003. My feet were still wet, and I was still green at the business of running a county law library when HB 66 was introduced in the Ohio General Assembly in early 2005.

As many of us will remember, that was the State's biennial budget bill, and, to our collective surprise, it contained provisions that would have phased out all financial support for Ohio's county law libraries over a period of 5 years.

One of the reasons driving the CCAO's interest in county law libraries was its more general interest in cost-savings through cooperation and consolidation. They also wanted our fines and penalties to help fund indigent defense in Ohio, but that was not the direct impetus for creation of the OLLC.

Since a basic tenet of librarianship is cooperation, and we did not want to see Ohio county law libraries close or be forced to accept reduced funding over their objections, David Whelan (Mary's predecessor in Hamilton County), Angela Baldree and I put our heads together to see what we could do. We eventually became a subcommittee of ORALL's County Law Library SIG.

We wanted to prove to the CCAO and a legislative Task Force on Ohio County Law Libraries that we were already sharing and saving our counties money so there was no reason to mess with us. We also wanted to create a forum for sharing our collective resources in the event HB66 cuts would force us to cancel print or electronic subscriptions. Ultimately, we hoped to work more closely with legal research vendors to ensure the best pricing for our members.

We started looking at what county law libraries in Ohio were already doing. Some examples include:

- Rosemarie Chrisant from the Akron Law Library had already created a hand-me down (and hand-me up) system of sharing pocket parts for books between the county law libraries in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> districts;
- Jan Morley, Ardis Stein, George Baker and others were already sharing resources among themselves informally;
- There were many other like groups sharing resources with each other throughout Ohio.

Being librarians, we also conducted a lot of research before we created the OLLC.

Specifically, we researched existing consortia all over the United States. We looked at the

types of functions consortia perform and the services they provide.

In Ohio, we looked in depth at:

- CLEVNET- a consortium in the greater Cleveland area for CPL, its branches and various other public and special libraries
- OhioLINK- a consortium of Ohio's college and university libraries and the State Library of Ohio
- OPLIN-Ohio's public library consortium.
- NEO-RLS (Northeast Ohio Regional Library System)-a multi-type library consortium
- SEO (Serving Every Ohioan)-a consortium for small and rural library systems

I interviewed the head of CLEVNET, and a number of us met with Tom Sanville, the former Director of OhioLINK.

After looking at a lot of models, we felt that our initial goals were not completely aligned with any existing consortium.

More importantly for us, we did not want to collect any dues right away for OLLC. That meant we would not have any money to pay dues or make any financial contributions to join another consortium.

As a result, we decided to create our own voluntary consortium to:

- attempt to address some of the CCAO's concerns;
- present a voluntary consortial package to the Task Force on County Law Libraries; and
- try to reverse the impending county funding cuts.

We considered forming a corporate and/or non-profit entity but eventually rejected all forms of a structured business entity.

We did realize the need to memorialize our purposes and formalize commitments to the OLLC so Angela wrote a statement of our Goals of Participation, and I drafted a Consortium Agreement and Bylaws. All of these documents are available on the Consortium's website.

Since we were all volunteers and we had no money, we created four initial levels of participation in October of 2006:

1. Consortium website and email
2. Pocket Part Exchange
3. Interlibrary Loan
4. Statewide purchasing

1. The goals of the website were to provide information on all county law libraries, including links to available websites and online catalogs. We also wanted to provide an online calendar for events relating to county law libraries, including activities of the Task Force.

2. The goal of the pocket part exchange was created to serve as a hand-me down system to help libraries who cannot afford to purchase certain books anymore. It was the brainchild of Rosemarie Chrisant of the Akron Law Library, and it went from 5 participating libraries (Summit, Wayne, Medina, Lorain and Cuyahoga) to at least 10 today.
3. The Interlibrary loan level was created to facilitate an organized, free system of state-wide resource sharing, primarily by electronic means. We allowed libraries to determine whether they wanted to share print resources and how much to charge for a loan. Since most of Ohio's county law libraries do not participate in OCLC, academic ILL systems, or other resource sharing networks, we wanted to facilitate sharing at least among ourselves.
4. Finally, we felt that we might have strength in numbers to negotiate with legal research vendors for better and more consistent pricing. Although we have yet to crack the biggest nuts, we were able to successfully negotiate pricing with several vendors for various products.

All of these goals have been realized, although we have always wanted to do more.

We may now have that opportunity through a Consortium that was legislatively created by Ohio HB 420, which was passed at the end of last year (2009). As you may know, this Bill also created new county agencies called County Law Library Resources Boards to run Ohio's county law libraries.

**Part I: History of the Ohio Law Library Consortium** (see Kathleen Sasala's remarks)

**Part II: Current Consortium Activities**

Kathy named the consortium's levels of participation. I'll start by offering a brief report on the current activities of the OLLC. We have approximately 40 members currently.

1. Resource Sharing: We currently have about 25 libraries participating. Hundreds of interlibrary loans have been shared in the past couple of years.
2. Pocket Part Exchange: There are 102 titles available with 67 currently shared by 11 participating libraries.
3. Court Rules: Nearly all counties' rules are available, with 8 or 9 librarians responsible for monitoring them and watching for updates.
4. Statewide Purchasing: The OLLC negotiated pricing for a number of products. We have 27 libraries taking advantage of one or more of these arrangements. Briefly, they include:
  - a) Capitol Connection/Hannah
  - b) DR software: domestic relations forms and pleadings
  - c) Gale Legal Trac for 2 simultaneous users
  - d) Gale Virtual Reference Library (5 sources: West Encyclopedia of American law , American Law Yearbooks, Gale Encyclopedia of Everyday Law, and National Survey of State Law)
  - e) Companion with DR, Hot Docs (Lexis).
  - f) BNA deal on 6 titles : ADA manual, US Law Week, Family Law Reporter, Criminal Law Reporter, Employment Law.Although there were conversations with Hein, LexisNexis, and Westlaw, no consortium deals were able to be arranged.
5. Wiki: The OLLC has a wiki for sharing documents, forms, and news.
6. The OLLC maintains a close relationship with the Coalition and County SIG due to the obvious overlap in membership.

**Part III: The New Consortium**

The CLLRB statewide consortium was created by Ohio HB420 in late 2009. It provides additional opportunities for collaboration, given its statutory charge. While the new consortium's board can decide how to carry out these responsibilities, it is, by law, expected to:

- Negotiate contracts for the purchase or licensing of legal information resources
- Catalog existing resources and facilitate the sharing of those resources
- Develop and recommend guidelines for the collection of or access to legal resources
- Provide consultation and assistance
- Issue an annual report

A word about the new consortium and its board: Each county law library is governed by a County Law Library Resources Board. All of the CLLRBs in the state are members of the new consortium. The consortium has an appointed board. The current chair is Charles Schneider, judge with the Franklin County Common Pleas Court, and the other members are Ken Kozlowski of the Ohio Supreme Court Library, John Leutz of the CCAO, Kathleen Sasala, and me.

Since this new body has a mandate to foster resource and information sharing and negotiate contracts, it is intent of the OLLC board to work cooperatively with the new consortium and to transfer much of its work to the new board, or, perhaps more realistically, to volunteers, as has been the case, but under the direction of the new board. The OLLC Board doesn't want to be hasty, though, as is currently planning to keep the organization in place until its membership decides otherwise, depending on the CLLRB consortium's efforts, successes, and continued existence.

We'll talk now about the cooperative future of the county law libraries. Since Kathy and I are members of the consortium's board, I'm compelled to say that these comments represent our own ideas and hopes for our libraries and the consortium. Some of these initiatives are mandated, at least in general terms, by the law. Others are our hopes as library directors and as people who find value and strength in the collective. And many of these hopes have been identified by our colleagues at other county law libraries in surveys and meetings.

In a nutshell, we expect that the OLLC's initiatives will be carried on, for the most part, by the new consortium, that the consortium will carry out its statutory duties, that the spirit of cooperation between libraries will continue and strengthen, and that the new consortium provides a structure that can help to improve individual libraries and the whole. Not only will our members expect a direct cost benefit for the money they have to pay in, they also expect the consortium to facilitate the information sharing, resource sharing, collective strength, and deals that our various volunteer organizations have jump started.

But, more specifically, here are our suggestions for the CLLRB consortium: [See next page]

#### **Part IV: Conclusion**

In the interest of time, we'll end by saying we are hopeful that the new consortium will prove its value to county law libraries with a return on investment and with an enhanced level of information sharing. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Thank you.

## **Consortium of County Law Library Resources Boards: Potential Initiatives & Benefits**

ORALL Annual Meeting, October 21, 2010

Mary Jenkins and Kathleen M. Sasala, Esq.

1. Create a more specific communications system for CLLRB members and CLLRB-related communications (beyond ORALL-C) to facilitate resource and information sharing.
  2. Negotiate deals, discounts, and favorable purchase and license terms with publishers, developing a base plan with major vendors with a discounted price for additional resources. (Note that state contracts are not contingent on number of participants so buying power may not be an issue.)
  3. Provide collection development assistance and coordination, including suggested core acquisition and maintenance lists. Ascertain and facilitate subject strengths and specialties among the libraries.
  4. Develop a more structured approach to resource sharing and interlibrary loan to reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiency, generally.
  5. Explore the means to develop a joint or union catalog that displays current and archival library holdings to facilitate access to our collections as well as ILL and resource sharing state-wide. Expand our existing cross-library search mechanism as more libraries create web-based catalogs.
  6. Continue the pocket part exchange.
  7. Support regular and ongoing training and professional development opportunities for library management, staff, boards, and commissioners at various state-wide meetings and via webinar. Preliminary suggestions for topics could include library management, budgeting, accounting, database training and protocols for board meetings.
  8. Explore beneficial relationships with existing consortia and other organizations, both in-state and nationally.
  9. Utilize the expertise of our members to provide targeted support and consultation to colleagues with particular issues. This system could operate like a bar association referral service where members who need specific advice could contact the consortium for referral to a librarian or board member who could provide free advice.
  10. Facilitate shared, scheduled reference and research guidance through chat, phone, and email.
  11. Create an online repository of global research guides and FAQ's on issues relevant to the needs of CLLRB patrons.
  12. Continue to monitor and respond to legislative and other challenges.
  13. Continue to share board and library policies, procedures, and guidelines.
  14. Devise grant opportunities to strengthen our member libraries in ways that will benefit other county law libraries as well.
  15. Create a CLLRB Consortium wiki/website as a centralized portal and repository for information and documents.
  16. Provide guidance for local CLLRBs and county governments upon request, including advisement and reinforcement related to the law on CLLRBs.
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