

Lorain County Libraries Sector

Why Is This Important?

Today, libraries are more than just books on the shelves. Everything from the card catalog to checkout can be simplified with the help of high-speed Internet. Public libraries often play a vital role in the community by providing every resident with the opportunity to receive instruction and use the Internet free of charge. Though they are not available 24 hours a day as a home computer is, libraries are still a central point of access to the Internet. Ohio Public Library Information Network, or OPLIN, provides Internet connections and information services to Ohio public libraries. OPLIN's mission is to ensure that all Ohio residents have fast, free public Internet access through the 251 independent local public libraries in Ohio, as well as the use of high-quality research databases not freely available on the World Wide Web. www.oplin.lib.oh.us

Many businesses have been launched as a result of research conducted on a computer in an Ohio library. Many children are able to do their homework online or research reports because of the Internet access provided by the local library. Because the library plays such an important role in the community, it is essential that local libraries are on the cutting edge of technology and are continuing to develop new methods of keeping their patrons up-to-date. High-speed Internet can help libraries continue their tradition as a trusted and indispensable resource.

According to the State of Ohio Library statistics, Lorain County Public Library System had 209,376 registered borrowers and a circulation of 3,978,779 items.

Lorain County Libraries

- Lorain County District Library, www.lorain.lib.oh.us
- Ohio State Library, winslo.state.oh.us
- Ohio Public Library Info Network, www.oplin.lib.oh.us
- Digital Media Service, www.overdrive.com
- Ohio Electronic Library, www.infohio.org/default.asp
- Ohio State Archives, www.ohiohistory.org/resource/statearc
- Ohio Public Libraries, winslo.state.oh.us/publib/libtable.html
- INFOhio, www.infohio.org
- MCOECN, www.mcoecn.org

Where Are We Today?

Lorain County has (7) independent library systems operating a total of (15) library facilities. The libraries in Lorain County serve as a primary source of information, entertainment and culture for county residents.

In recent years, the libraries have also become a reliable source of computer and Broadband access for those who do not have access at home and a haven to laptop users who enjoy the benefits of free Wi-Fi service that most locations provide.

Listed below are the library systems of Lorain County:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Amherst Public Library | www.amherst.lib.oh.us |
| Avon Lake Public Library | www.alpl.org |
| Elyria Public Library System | www.elyria.lib.oh.us |
| Grafton-Midview Public Library | www.graftonpl.lib.oh.us |
| Herrick Memorial Library – Wellington | www.wellington.lib.oh.us |
| Lorain Public Library System | www.lorain.lib.oh.us |
| Oberlin Public Library | www.oberlinpl.lib.oh.us |

Residents also have access to State of Ohio's Library online at winslo.state.oh.us. The online catalog is available to place requests, check on the status of requests, or renew books from the comfort of your home. Other library resources include; INFOhio, a virtual K-12 library at www.infohio.org/default.asp, OhioLINK offers access to more than 47.6 million library items statewide at www.ohiolink.edu, and eResources at seoebok.seo.lib.oh.us.

All locations have Broadband access, generally provided via T-1 connections, and computer terminals for public use. Wi-Fi service and computer/Internet training classes are offered at many locations. Many libraries site issues with bandwidth and a need for additional computer terminals to accommodate patron use.

Funding for technology and staffing is a major issue for most library systems in the county, especially in light of the recent state budget crisis.

| Libraries Sector Assessment Overview | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Category | Current Assessment | Future Vision | Additional Comments |
| Networked Places | 4 | 5 | |
| Applications & Services | 4 | 5 | |
| Leadership | 4 | 5 | |

The Lorain County eCommunity Leadership Team found that the libraries sector is on track for enhancing access and using technology and its applications. The team plans to continue to make significant progress in making technology a priority.

- **Networked Places** – In the category of networked places, Lorain County’s libraries sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale.
- **Applications & Services** – In the category of technology applications & services, the libraries sector is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. Patrons may review their accounts online and pay fines by credit card. Patrons can access the library online as a portal for other online information services.
- **Leadership** – In terms of technology leadership within the libraries community, Lorain County is currently at stage 4 on a 0 to 5 scale. The library research desk is an online community resource.

Where Do We Need To Be?

The Lorain County eCommunity Leadership Team has set forth a two-year vision for enhancing the library and allowing it to serve the community more effectively and efficiently. The team has set goals to move Networked Places, Applications & Services and Leadership from stage 4 to stage 5, all on a 0 to 5 scale.

The team’s vision includes:

- All libraries have the bandwidth and sufficient computer terminals to accommodate patron needs.
- Reliable sources of funding are in place to enable libraries to make the necessary investments in technology and technology staffing.
- Video conferencing is available at select locations, providing county residents with convenient points to access such services.
- Most public libraries offer patrons a 54 mbps or faster wireless network.
- Public libraries offer live video consultations. Public libraries allow patrons to borrow ebooks over

the Internet. They help patrons conduct research and assist with legal access to copyrighted databases and publications, including music and movies.

- Libraries continue to upgrade their facilities to offer the community the next generation in technology, services and training. Libraries actively promote information technology literacy to drive positive impacts on economic performance, skills and innovation in the community.

How Do We Get There?

Project Ideas

- Secure funding to enable all libraries in the county to provide the bandwidth and computer resources to accommodate patron needs.
- Participate in all county initiatives to drive Broadband adoption which will enable more county residents to use the online services available through the libraries.
- Implement video conferencing at select locations where demand dictates and where funding is available to do so.
- Provide continuous technology education and training to library staff.

Other Potential Projects

- Expand use of wireless access to provide more patrons with high-speed access.
- Encourage and promote the use of online databases and catalogs.

The eCommunity Leaders within the Libraries sector include:

Valerie Smith, Lorain Public Library System

Robin Wood, Amherst Public Library

Frank Szuch, Elyria Public Library System

Janet Hollingsworth, Herrick Memorial Library

Tami Mullins, Grafton-Midview Public Library

In working toward the implementation of the sector-specific goals, Connect Ohio will recommend specific additional participants be brought into the process, who may include technology providers, subject matter



experts, other community organizations, funding sources, government agencies, and the resources of agencies and commercial providers of products and services to the libraries sector.

Dave Davidson, Northwest State Operations Manager for Connect Ohio will continue to work with the sector leaders to advance selected projects toward their completion. By leveraging Connect Ohio's project management process, its research information, and its partners, projects will be defined, developed, and reviewed to help assure that the local teams are equipped to execute them. Connect Ohio will assist in the identification of funding sources, introducing technical resources, and helping to define the measurable goals and timelines that will ensure that the projects are actionable, measurable, and valuable.