

Chapter 60

INFOhio Transforms Content Delivery for PreK–12 Students: From Physical Classrooms to Virtual SchoolRooms

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a case study of how INFOhio, Ohio's library and information network for PreK-12 schools, transformed content delivery through partnerships and collaborations to benefit today's digital learners. It chronicles the formation of a unique relationship between INFOhio and library software vendor SirsiDynix, a partnership that was shaped by the common vision of creating a virtual classroom of reference, research, and discovery material to support student curricular needs. Discussion covers the creation and implementation of the Discovery Portal for student research and inquiry, which brings together Internet content, electronic resources, and physical library materials under one, online interface for Ohio students. Significant traditional and non-traditional partnerships have enabled INFOhio to become one of the largest school library Information Technology projects in the country.

21st CENTURY LEARNERS

The transformation of knowledge tools has shifted the manner in which students and teachers approach research and learning. This transformation from accessing information to creating and

transmitting new discoveries in an open networked world changes the role of school libraries. Just as teachers and textbooks are no longer the sole classroom expert, school librarians and school libraries are no longer the sole information source.

Today's students access and analyze information often without ever visiting a library or consulting with a librarian. They retrieve information

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through Google's search box 24x7. They believe the Internet provides substantially more material and is easier to use than the library, and it does not require a librarian to act as intermediary because they can independently access the information.

Transformations in technology and expectations in the late 20th century directly influenced the role of school libraries as information provider. Student research shifted from asking a teacher or a librarian a question to being able to ask the world for a response; from watching and listening to interactive learning. Today's learners expect remote access 24x7, with instant information retrieval and virtual assistance.

Language use reflects these changes: reference to e-reference, searching to discovering, learning to active learning, looking-up something to inquiry-based learning, books to e-books, indexes to databases, knowledge to proficiency (test), and so on.

Generational attitudes and expectations reflect these changes: Baby Boom-generation teachers are working with Generation X teachers who are teaching the Generation Z children of Generation Y parents. Children have changed; parents have changed; teachers have changed.

All of these changes have altered the way today's student learns.

This chapter is a case study of how INFOhio, Ohio's library and information network for PreK-12 schools, has embraced these changes and developed a virtual student research and inquiry content portal for all Ohio students.

THE 21ST CENTURY ENVIRONMENT

For the first time in our history, various pieces of legislation, most notably the *No Child Left Behind Act*, mandate specific instructional and learning standards for evaluating students and educators (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). To meet these standards and the goal of creating 21st century learners, teachers and librarians must have

the tools necessary to permit students to assume responsibility for their own learning and become active knowledge seekers.

In 2007, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), adopted new standards for the "21st -Century Learner." These standards provide a vision of school librarians as leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, teachers, and program administrators who collaborate with other education professionals to shape the learning of students in schools through school libraries. However, to accomplish this vision, access to appropriate educational and instructional content must be available for both students and educators.

This is where INFOhio comes in.

INFOhio: A CASE STUDY

The Vision

In November 1989, a group of school librarians in northeast Ohio proposed a statewide plan to automate school libraries. The first two libraries, Austintown Fitch and Boardman high schools, were automated in 1994. Now, a little more than twenty years later (as of January 2011), 2,447 individual school libraries, serving more than 1.1 million students, are automated and networked together by INFOhio with library automation software from SirsiDynix.

In addition to this very successful effort that created interconnected virtual catalogs among these school libraries, INFOhio realized that every student needed access to a robust virtual reference environment. INFOhio quickly expanded beyond a library automation project to include providing electronic and digital resources, resource sharing, professional development, information literacy instruction, and support for teachers and parents. The mission statement of INFOhio accurately reflects that it "supports and enriches teaching and learning

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