



University Libraries

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OhioLINK Announces Cutbacks, Institutes Membership Fee

The Ohio Library and Information Network (OhioLINK) has announced a series of service reductions and the institution of a membership fee, in response to anticipated reductions in revenue from the State of Ohio.

OhioLINK is a consortium of academic libraries that serves more than 600,000 students, faculty and staff at 85 institutions. OhioLINK's membership includes 17 public universities, including The Ohio State University, 23 community/technical colleges, 44 private colleges and the State Library of Ohio. For more than a decade, OhioLINK has been the world-wide model for creating a highly efficient collaborative higher education library system that stimulates scientific and medical research, improves health care with access to the latest medical research, and attracts high quality faculty and students.

"The vast majority of OhioLINK monies are used to purchase content, including electronic journals, databases, e-books and digital media," Tom Sanville, OhioLINK's executive director, explained.

"By pooling OhioLINK and higher education library resources we have created a world-class set of research materials that individual libraries could not afford on their own," Sanville said. "I'm not aware of any other state program that has done as good a job as OhioLINK in improving academic library resources on a comprehensive, statewide basis. However, reduced OhioLINK funding lessens our ability to contribute to a competitive Ohio economy through high quality research and instructional resources."

To combat the anticipated shortfall, OhioLINK has cut subscriptions to 490 electronic journals for 2005 and will institute a membership fee for the first time in its 12-year history. The fee will be assessed beginning in July 2005 and will raise \$200,000 annually. Cutting 490 of the least used titles from Blackwell Publishing and Springer will save \$288,000 annually. The cut titles represent all academic disciplines and four percent of the annual downloads from active titles. Cancellation of another 800 or more titles is expected for 2006. In addition, the consortium also plans to cut database expenses of \$100,000 or more this year, depending on the amount of the next operating appropriation.

OhioLINK is credited with improving the quality of Ohio's universities and colleges and has enhanced Ohio's competitiveness for a knowledge based economy. Without the statewide collaboration of higher education institutions and the Ohio Board of Regents, the dramatic expansion in access to research and instructional information resources would not have been economically possible. Now researchers and students alike will feel the impact of cutbacks to OhioLINK and higher education funding.

Dr. Max Funk, a chemistry professor at the University of Toledo, and other OhioLINK users, are speaking out about the real impact to the quality of research and higher education statewide if OhioLINK funding is inadequate in the next combined operating and capital budgets as anticipated.

“OhioLINK is an indispensable resource and without it I would not be able to apply the latest discoveries in biochemistry, biotechnology and other scientific fields,” Dr. Funk said. “Loss of access to the cutting-edge information available through OhioLINK would hinder my capability to be an effective educator and researcher as well as our ability to attract the most promising scholars to Ohio.”

Kent State University graduate student Leann Kucharski agrees that OhioLINK is vital to enticing scholars. “OhioLINK is the main reason I chose to pursue a master’s degree in Ohio,” she said. “Without OhioLINK my research would not be as comprehensive and it would take weeks, not days.”

OhioLINK funding is part of the state appropriation for higher education. State support of Ohio higher education will most likely decline in the upcoming state capital budget and is unlikely to increase in the next operating budget. OhioLINK’s financial resources peaked at \$11.4 million in fiscal-year 2001. Total OhioLINK funding in fiscal-year 2005 was just under \$11 million. OhioLINK resources are spent in combination with library funds in order to provide a wide array of resources.

OhioLINK users can visit www.ohiolink.edu/supportohiolink for additional information.