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“Free to All” Made Possible by an Academic/Public Library Collaboration

by **Barbara G. Preece** (Executive Director, Boston Library Consortium, Inc., 700 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02117; Phone: 617-262-6244) <bprece@blc.org>



The **Boston Library Consortium** is an academic and research library consortium that bridges successfully the gap between academic and public libraries in both directions — since its very beginnings in 1970 the resources of the **Boston Public Library** have been available to the consortium’s constituency throughout New England.

And now, with its **Open Content Alliance (OCA)** project — it will be working in the other direction — as the first large library consortium to announce a self-funded partnership with a major digitalizing project, the **OCA**, the **Boston Library Consortium** is providing materials with none of the restrictions that apply to materials scanned by **Google** or **Microsoft**.

Boston Library Consortium

The **Boston Library Consortium, Inc. (BLC)** is an association of 19 academic and research libraries located throughout New England. Founded in 1970 at the behest of the graduate school deans, the **Consortium** is dedicated to sharing human and information resources to advance the research and learning of its constituency. The **Consortium** supports resource sharing and enhanced user services through programs in cooperative collecting, access to electronic resources and physical collections, and expedited interlibrary loan and document delivery. This year the **Consortium** entered a new partnership with the **Internet Archive (IA)** to digitize materials in its collections. Among the leaders of this project is the esteemed **Boston Public Library**, which quickly identified collections for the projects and also provided space to house the **Northeast Regional Scanning Center**.

Boston Public Library

Founded in 1848, the **Boston Public Library (BPL)** was the first large free municipal library in the United States. The present

Copley Square location has been home to the library since 1895, when architect **Charles Follen McKim** completed his “palace for the people.” In 1972 the library expanded its Copley Square location with the opening of an addition designed by **Philip Johnson**. Today, the **McKim** building houses the **BPL**’s vast research collection and the **Johnson Building** holds the circulating collection of the general library and serves as headquarters for the **Boston Public Library**’s 26 branch libraries. Home to the library of **John Quincy Adams**, second president of the United States, the **BPL** is the only public library in the country that also serves as a **Presidential Library**.

The **BPL**, one of the first members of the **Consortium**, also serves as home to the **BLC** offices, and provides the **Consortium**’s constituency through a variety of services including resource sharing, cooperative collection development and a consortium card program that allows students/faculty/staff from the member libraries to use the vast resources of the **BPL**.

BLC and BPL join OCA:

Most recently, the **Consortium** including the **Boston Public Library** joined together to work with the **Internet Archive**’s **Open Content Alliance**. The **Open Content Alliance** (<http://www.opencontentalliance.org/>) represents the collaborative efforts of a group of cultural, technology, nonprofit, and governmental organizations from around the world that will help build a permanent archive of multilingual digitized text and multimedia content. The **Internet Archive** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that was founded in 1996 to build

an Internet library, with the purpose of offering permanent access for researchers, historians, and scholars to historical collections that exist in digital format.

“Fortunately many great libraries are weighing the alternatives and choosing to go open instead of putting public domain material under perpetual restrictions.”

According to **Brewster Kahle**, digital librarian and founder of the **Internet Archive**, “Fortunately many great libraries are weighing the alternatives and choosing to go open instead of putting public domain material under perpetual restrictions.”

The **BLC** and its member libraries, including the **Boston Public Library**, have partnered with the **Open Content Alliance** to build a freely accessible library of digital materials from the 19 member libraries. The **Consortium** will provide high resolution, downloadable, reusable files of public domain materials. The digitization efforts, using scanning technology from the **Internet Archive**, are based in a scanning center housed at the **Boston Public Library**. The **Northeast Digital Scanning Center** was unveiled on September 20, 2007. **BPL** President **Bernard Margolis** said, “The **Boston Public Library** is pleased to host this innovative collaborative effort. It is exciting to see the application of the latest in digital scanning technology of the **Internet Archive** to the enormous task of converting the rich book collections of the **BLC** libraries for easy access by people around the world. We are, in the most basic and important meaning of the word, “enriching” the world. As we open these books we give opportunity for their use in many new and expanding ways for new and expanding audiences. We are doing what libraries as supposed to do.”

The **Boston Library Consortium**’s project is self-funded. It pays ten cents a page to the **Internet Archive** and receives in return a variety of file formats that are stored by **IA** and available to the library to download. The center will serve as a northeast regional center; currently scanning materials from **BLC** members, including the **John Adams Library** funded by a grant from the **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation**, it is also scanning materials from the **Biodiversity Heritage Library Project** (<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>). It is anticipated that other libraries in the region will join the scanning project in the near future.

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2) To create an up-to-date consumer health information portal for Utah.

The primary route to reaching consumers all over the state is a partnership with public libraries. One of the ways this is done, primarily for rural public libraries is through the “Quick Links” off the **Utah State Library Division’s Homepage**. Citizens seeking health information are directed to **Utahhealthnet** as their default search. Since Utah is a rural state, the T-1 high speed Internet access provided in public libraries is often a rural citizen’s lifeline to accurate, up to date health information.

In addition, the **Eccles Health Sciences Library** is also a **Regional Medical Library for the MidContinental Region** in the **National Network of Libraries of Medicine MidContinental Region** that also has a commitment to provide outreach services to Utah communities.

Conclusions

Putting all these resources together doesn’t solve the problem unless someone solves the “last mile” issue — getting the information into the hands of those who need it

This will be accomplished through public libraries — in a partnership between academic/public libraries to best serve all of the users of all our library systems. 🌱

The Alabama Vision

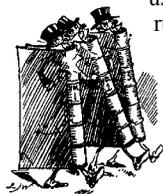
by **Sue O. Medina** (Director, Network of Alabama Academic Libraries, c/o Alabama Commission on Higher Education, 100 North Union Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104; Phone: 334-242-2211) <sue.medina@ache.alabama.gov>

Library users move easily among their communities' libraries, seeking information regardless of the "type of library" available to them. No single library or type of library can meet all the needs of its users.

Alabama was among the first states to recognize this fact and its implications — and to bring its libraries together to address these issues. The **Network of Alabama Academic Libraries** was an early champion of collaboration among libraries and an eager adopter of networking technology.

NAAL — Making Published Content Available to Academic Libraries

NAAL (<http://www.ache.state.al.us/NAAL>) became one of the first statewide consortia to license the newly available online databases for all its members. This produced a marked improvement in access for the users of academic libraries (especially those in smaller, rural, or less-well funded schools) — but we knew that users of public libraries also needed this content.



NAAL was careful to negotiate access for "walk-in" users in its contracts and libraries' "open door" policies resulted in walk-in community users discovering online resources available through nearby academic libraries. Increasingly, though, users requested remote access. Our contracts did not allow this for non-academic users — nor could we possibly afford the costs of contracts which did. Academic library databases are denied to anyone not an "authorized user."

So NAAL went to the next step and envisioned a "virtual library" to serve all Alabamians.

Alabama Virtual Library — (www.avl.lib.al.us) Information for All Citizens of Alabama

The concept of a statewide virtual library led NAAL to foster new partnerships among public school systems, colleges, and public libraries to use technology to strengthen information resources available for all Alabamians. The **Alabama Legislature** responded to NAAL's statewide advocacy campaign by initially appropriating \$3,000,000 — and continuing annual incremented appropriations for an "**Alabama Virtual Library**". This simple line item in the FY2000 budget conveyed ac-

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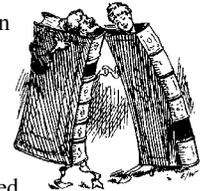
"Free to All"

As inscribed on the outside of the **McKim** building, "free to all" remains a cornerstone of the **Boston Public Library** and through its and the **Consortium's** efforts with the **OCA**, materials will remain free and available to everyone rather than imposing restrictions on material access through the use of required search engines. According to **Doron Weber**, Program Director, **Universal Access to Recorded Knowledge**, at the **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation**, "The **Alfred P. Sloan Foundation**, which has supported the **Open Content Alliance** from its inception in 2005, salutes this bold move by the **BLC** and its 19 member libraries to step up to the plate and embrace the great potential of mass digitization in a truly open, non-profit and non-exclusive basis.

Unlike corporate backed efforts by **Google**, **Microsoft**, **Amazon** et al., which all impose different, albeit understandable, levels of restriction to protect their investment, the **BLC** has shown libraries all across the country the right way to take institutional responsibility and manage this historic transition to a universal digital archive that serves the needs of scholars, researchers and the general public without compromise. Bravo for the **BLC** and the **Open Content Alliance!**" 🌱

ceptance of three principles for the provision of information needed by Alabama's students and citizens.

- **Equity:** every student, teacher, and citizen should have online access to core information needed for instruction, research, and life-long learning
- **Excellence:** information should be accurate, scholarly, and current
- **Economy:** significant savings could be achieved by providing information on a statewide basis.



The virtual library concept was an ideal merger of aspirations to improve information resources supporting education in the context of the reality of limited funding for libraries, and the emergence of online information products. It also marked a change in political strategy for libraries. Instead of competing among themselves for limited state funds, five state agencies agreed to cooperatively operate a "new" library, one not physically owned by an individual library or educational sector but one that is always available to library users, regardless of their "type of library" affiliation.

Since its initial funding, the **AVL** has emerged as an essential portal for access to information for K-12, the higher education community, and the public. In 2008, the **AVL** offers over 80 databases from major vendors including **Gale**, **EBSCO**, **OCLC Oxford University Press**, **ProQuest**, and **SIRS**. In addition, NAAL is creating **Alabama Mosaic**, an image and full text database with content related to Alabama history. This database is being developed to help support state standards for the study of Alabama history in public schools. The State appropriation is now slightly more than four million dollars and pays for the commercial databases.

Residents of Alabama can obtain an **AVL Card** from their local public libraries that assigns a personal identification number for remote access to the databases. The **AVL Card** is valid for three years and can be renewed.

Alabama Mosaic — Enriching the Study of Alabama History

Unfortunately, commercial databases, created and marketed for national markets, rarely include material of regional or local interest. These products, most often created by aggregating secondary source materials as it is published, offer few full text historical materials or images older than the final quarter of the last century. Despite the richness of these electronic collections, searches of commercial databases in the **AVL** do not generally yield much information about Alabama's history and culture.

In 2001, the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** funded NAAL to demonstrate a model for statewide collaboration to make unique historical treasures from Alabama's archives, libraries, museums, and other repositories electronically accessible to Alabama residents as well as students and scholars around the world. During the three-year **IMLS** project, academic librarians supported training for all types of cultural heritage repositories to plan, implement, and complete digitization projects. **Auburn University**, a member of NAAL, hosts the central site for **Alabama Mosaic** (<http://www.alabamamosaic.org>). This site supports a shared digital file management system (**ContentDM**) and a search engine (**ContentDM MultiSite Server**). **Alabama Mosaic** hosts both the digital files and their associated metadata for any repository that does not have its own digital file management system.

Any repository with significant treasures related to Alabama can contribute digital resources to **Alabama Mosaic**. Academic libraries are digitizing unique materials from their special collections, including documents, images, recordings and videos to enrich the study of Alabama. The **Alabama Department of Archives and History**, the nation's first state-funded archive, is contributing materials from its

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