

**Nevada Library Association Annual Convention  
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Panel on state-wide cooperation**

## **History of Pioneer, Utah's Online Library**

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The first thing I would like to say about Pioneer is that it does not exist.

Pioneer has no constitution or bylaws. It has no office, no staff, no address and no dues.

Academic Pioneer has been around longer and, in its official guise as the Utah Academic Library Consortium, is somewhat more formal. It has a constitution and dues. It has several committees, and most meet regularly. It has no office, staff, or formal voting structure; but it has been successful in obtaining on-going funding of over \$3 million a year for Utah libraries.

I believe that if you ask any library in the state - k-12, public, or academic - about the best thing that has happened to them in the last decade, their answer won't be Pioneer - but it will point to Pioneer. It will be something (or a combination of things) that might not have happened had libraries in Utah not come together as we have. Pioneer has been a win for libraries individually and collectively.

Pioneer provides databases to all libraries in the state - EBSCO and SIRS, as well as the Wilson Biographies and our two local newspapers - the Deseret News and the Salt Lake Tribune. Academic Pioneer provides a broader range of indexes and full-text for academic libraries in Utah and Nevada. It offers UTAD, the Utah Article Delivery system - which will fax to the user any journal article not held in a user's home library. It offers reciprocal borrowing at libraries in Utah and Nevada. UALC and its institutions have grants to digitize pioneer diaries, early maps, early Utah newspapers, and other documents. We have purchased a server for UALC, which will hold bibliographic records for the Utah/Nevada electronic book and journal collection. We are looking at central software to better connect indexes and full text resources throughout the state. Electronic resource cataloging is a project of the UALC Cataloging Committee. There are UALC state-wide initiatives in nursing, science, criminal justice, education, humanities and audio-visual which have enriched electronic and print collections throughout the state. And the Distance Education committee coordinates support of distance ed throughout the state. The Public Services committee does instruction and handouts for all the libraries, and has started a chat-reference project being prototyped at several schools.

Additionally, the UALC funding initiative has provided new funding to individual acquisitions budgets throughout the state. My own library has received over half a million dollars in new ongoing funds through UALC initiatives - we have received almost no on-going funding from any other source. And I do not believe we would have received this without state-wide support.

How did we get there?

UALC has a long history. It began more than 30 years ago as the Utah College Library Council - which comprised every academic library in Utah - public, private, two-year, four-year - plus the Utah State Library, a partner to academic libraries since way back. Reciprocal borrowing and cooperative purchase have been around for many years. Early in the 90s, also, UCLC, which became UALC - the Utah Academic Library Council - lobbied for a state-wide library study which led to new or renovated buildings for every library in the state, obtained funding for ARIEL stations for each school, obtained funds for the purchase of an integrated library system (Horizon) for all the state institutions, and put in place a full-text journal system in 1996 - back in the days of jukeboxes which held 240 cd-roms apiece. It even worked part of the time.

In the mid-90s, academic libraries were frustrated. We were getting no new acquisitions funding at the larger libraries. Smaller libraries couldn't seem to get to the top of campus priority lists. In a fairly radical departure, led by a most unusual source - the head of the University of Utah Health Sciences Library - libraries requested campus and Regents' permission to go directly and jointly to the Legislature for funds.

This was not an easy sell and the biggest hurdles were local. Campus presidents and planners did not immediately warm to the idea of allowing direct legislative access to individual campus units and of lobbying for funds over which the institution would not have control and which would not be in institutional budgets. But they were eventually convinced to let us try - I don't think they thought it likely we would succeed. In turn the Regents' Office and the Legislative Analysts and the Governors' Analysts and the Legislature itself were approached. In 1996 the legislature appropriated \$3.1 million in ongoing funding to UALC and there has since then been no going back. Some years we get no new money. Some years we do. But UALC directors now lobby every month of the year.

## **Pioneer**

Multi-type consortia did not, so far as I know, exist at this time. Nobody thought that the different types of libraries had enough in common to make such an idea appealing. (The same thing we now know was happening in Georgia. GALILEO, we believe, predates Pioneer by a few months.)

So what happened in Utah?

The leadership of the Utah State Library and of the UU Health Sciences Library called a meeting. They invited representatives of UALC, the Utah State Library (to represent Public Libraries), the Utah State Office of Education, and the Utah Education Network (to represent k-12).

Early meetings focused on whether there was anything at all that we might do together that we could do better together than we had been doing separately.

Those of us representing academic libraries were, of course, converts by now for state-wide action. And most of us, as parents, were frustrated at the low level of attention Utah pays to its school libraries and at the fact that our state, unlike some others which were forming public

library networks, offered no databases in any but the largest of the public libraries.

We thought perhaps we might engage in some RFP-like activity. Suppose we were to issue a quasi-RFP for a full-text periodical database? There weren't a vast number of choices in 1996. And if nothing were to come of it, well, nothing would come of it...

We had no central money - we still don't - but each of the three groups had access to some funding. And each felt that, with each other's support, we might be able to leverage more. So we issued our RFP - and evaluated it - using purchasing departments and lawyers and staff and librarian support borrowed from any available source.

We figured that if we did not come to an agreement and find something to purchase together, nothing would be lost; and if we did, we would make gains for users state-wide. So we started buying databases. Then we realized that it was hard for people to understand what the USOE/UOHE/UALC/Utah State Library/UEN coalition was.

We badly needed a name. You couldn't go on calling this thing by the vendor's name - or you could, but we wanted library visibility - not vendor visibility. People brought suggestions to a meeting. None of them really resonated, but a representative of the Murray Public Library, as I recall, kept suggesting Pioneer. We in UALC liked Uinta better - after the mountains - and it made a better acronym. It could be the Utah Information whatever.... but this did not prevail.

Pioneer reminded some of us of wagon trains and handcarts. Not that we don't like covered wagons - I love covered wagons - in museums. But it's a hackneyed image. No, no, he said. An intellectual Pioneer. Libraries - pioneering...intellectually. So we agreed on Pioneer.

The Pioneer logo is a compass. And the clouds behind it are actually shots of Old Faithful - which, when the Utah Education Network was trying to create the image - evidently produced better cloud-like images than do clouds.

### **Challenges:**

What have been the challenges for Pioneer and Academic Pioneer?

1) The what's-in-it-for-me syndrome?

Every library's first question is and will probably always be: "What's in it for my patrons? Can I get it cheaper than I could on my own? Will it enable me to show my campus/trustees/etc how they have benefited from the consortium? "

You have to find win-win solutions.

You have to keep going through possible projects - looking for those which are wins for the group and also wins for the individual members.

On the other hand, it really is wonderful if you can get past the "I don't want to pay more than

my share.” and especially past the “we can’t do that because somebody in there would be getting more than their fair share.”

You need to get to: “My colleagues are slightly off-base to want to do this project, but I will support them because I know my turn will come.” At least part of the time.

## 2) Turf

Turf is a problem in life and seems likely to remain so.

One of the great advantages in both UALC and Pioneer is that when you have no formal voting system, you can only do things by consensus. So you have to reach it. And you just keep trying until you do.

## 3) Work

All of these systems are a lot of work for all of the participating groups. This work is not in anyone’s job description. And it has a hard time competing with local priorities and the local users and librarians suggesting that their needs are more urgent than those vague state-wide things....

Neither UALC nor Pioneer has any officially designated staff - but I don’t really even want to think about the number of FTE that go into it across the state. Much of this work, on databases, for example, you would be doing anyway - but state-wide takes more time.

## 4) Leadership

There are a lot of really good state-wide projects that could be done within our existing funding and other restraints. But they tend to only happen when they have a leader.

The UALC initiatives in nursing, criminal justice, science, humanities and audio-visual have succeeded only because, in each case, there was a librarian somewhere in the state who made it happen.

This is easier in areas with a history of cooperation - ILL, document delivery, resource sharing, collection development - than it is in areas like SPC which have traditionally been more in competition and not had a history of shared projects.

When you have a leader willing to do a project - do that project. Don’t dream up some other project that is perhaps a better project, but no one in particular wants to do it. It won’t get done.

## 5) Patience

Patience on the part of all is a big requirement;

(However, our vendors say Utah moves more quickly than most states - and they say that Utah is

different, because the libraries here truly are in it for the good of the group - not just for their individual advantage. I like to think they really mean this.)

### **Rewards:**

- 1) Better library services throughout the state.
- 2) An attitude of cooperation. The idea that each library has something to give to the state.

Eccles Library mounts and pays for CINAHL for the state; the University does the same for the Royal Society of Chemistry journals and Utah State for the Encyclopedia of Associations.

- 3) An increased level of visibility and credibility for libraries.

### **The Future from a user point of view:**

Users want library service. They don't care which library it comes from.

This has probably always been true. But in the electronic environment, in which a user is at home or in an office or computer lab, it is much more true. It makes absolutely no difference to the user which library they are connecting to. But it makes a world of difference if it is easy to find and link to the many resources to which they are entitled. And librarians need to be able to refer patrons to such a spot.

Consider the example of a family who lives in - for example - Draper - a Salt Lake City suburb served by the SL County library system. Suppose the mother teaches at the U. Suppose the father runs a business from home. Suppose they have one kid at SLCC and another in Grade 10. This family is entitled to almost every library service offered by Utah's libraries. Do they know this? Do the librarians who help them at one library or another know this? If not, we need to see that they find out...

We are in competition for our users' attention with a myriad of commercial and free services. These services aggressively market to end users and take pains to offer attractive and easy to use sources of information. In some cases, they're excellent. But we also need to teach users about the broad range of quality information offered by libraries and how to find, evaluate, and use them.

School librarians need to teach students to use print and online libraries in their schools - and also encourage them to learn what is available through the public library they visit after school. Public librarians need to be able to knowledgeably refer users who want access to academic materials to their local academic libraries, and tell them of their rights to use those resources. Public libraries need to be aware of the online collections and service offered for distance ed students who may reside in their community while taking course from a higher ed institution in another. Academic librarians need to be teaching students about the value public and school libraries will have in their lives after they leave school and to be educating life-long library users.

In today's online world, no library can best serve its users if it sees its mission as relating primarily to its own collections and its locally licensed resources. Every library needs to look at the information world through the eyes of its users and their needs. These needs can best be met if all sorts of libraries in all sorts of places serving all sorts of people work together.