1.1 OCLC: A Global Cooperative

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Introduction

The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) is a nonprofit, membership computer library service and a research organization serving the needs of all types of libraries in the world. It is dedicated to the public purpose of furthering access to the world's information and reducing library costs.[1] More than 72,000 libraries in 170 countries and territories around the world use the OCLC service to locate acquire, catalog, lend, preserve, and manage library materials.[2] In addition, "researchers, students, faculty, scholars, professional librarians and other information seekers use OCLC services to obtain bibliographic, abstract and full text information, when and where they need it. OCLC and its members cooperatively produce and maintain WorldCat the OCLC Online Union Catalog."[3] This chapter will discuss OCLC and international librarianship in several ways.

First, the structure, governance, growth and strategic direction of the OCLC cooperative. It then takes a look at OCLC's partnerships around the world. Finally, it examines the growth in the materials cataloged by the OCLC cooperative and how those materials are being made available to users throughout the world.

The Structure and Governance of OCLC

OCLC was founded in 1967 by the librarian Frederick G. Kilgour and the presidents of Ohio's colleges and universities in the United States. OCLC's mission was then, and is now, to further access to the world's information and to reduce the rate of rise of per-unit library costs.

In 1971, OCLC began providing online shared cataloging services to 54 Ohio academic libraries. The service made it possible for only one library to have to originally catalog an item. Other libraries would use the same

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1   *OCLC Annual Report 2010/2011*, Dublin, Ohio, 2011: ii. http://www.oclc.org/news/publications/annualreports/2011/214629_usb_Annual_Report_2011.pdf.
2   OCLC Homepage, http://www.oclc.org/us/default.htm. Accessed February 9, 2012.
3   *OCLC Annual Report*, 2011: ii. http://www.oclc.org/news/publications/annualreports/2011/214629_usb_Annual_Report_2011.pdf.