MCOECN Update *by Bruce Hawkins, CEO*

What is the Management Council?

by Bruce E. Hawkins, CEO

Nearly twenty years ago the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) was formed to support the efforts of the A-Sites (now called Data Acquisition Sites or DA Sites) in their efforts to provide computer services to Ohio schools. At that time the major function of an A-Site was to assist the schools with the new state mandate to use a uniform system of cost accounting. Therefore, the major connection to school districts was through the treasurer's office.

Since that time there have been dramatic changes in the use of technology in Ohio's schools. Computers were introduced to the guidance offices for career counseling, grade cards, attendance and other student administrative functions. In 1989 the legislature passed a bill requiring the implementation of the Educational Management Information System (EMIS), which was implemented in the early 1990's. The 1990's also brought about library automation and the use of electronic resources for student learning. As the Internet became more available as an educational resource to Ohio's classrooms, the A-Sites and School-Net worked together to make these resources available to Ohio school children. Fortunately, today computers and technology are an integral part of education in Ohio schools. The use of these technological tools will be critical as today's students enter the workforce and as the schools in Ohio develop a workforce that is prepared to continue into the twenty-first century.

Just as the role of the DA Site has evolved and expanded over the past twenty years, the role of the Management Council in supporting the Data Acquisition Sites has also changed. The Management Council staff serves on various statewide educational committees, a legislative task force, and various professional organizations. The MCOECN staff promotes and models the use of technology to teachers, administrators, and other school staffs.

The governance structure of the various DA Sites is made up of representatives from the school districts and governing boards that control the operations and directions of the DA Sites. School districts are in a unique position in that they are not only the customers of the Data Acquisition Sites, they are also the owners. Thus, not all DA Sites in Ohio look exactly the same. The DA Site services depend on the needs identified and the resources that are available as determined by the governing board in the various 23 sites around Ohio. Over the years, the school districts have seen increasing needs for DA Site services and, in most cases, have paid for those services through a contractual agreement with the DA Site or through an agreed upon assessment to all districts within that site.

As the finances become tighter, the DA Sites have received a smaller percentage of their funding from state sources not only in the general DA Site subsidy, but also in EMIS funding and other mandated services. We are now facing the deliberations for a new budget cycle and hopefully the legislators and other state government officials will see the need to continue the expansion of the use of technology in Ohio schools for both administrative services and student learning. Because of the infrastructure that Ohio has developed within the school buildings and the connectivity that exists between schools and state agencies, Ohio is now a leader in educational technology. We continue to take advantage of the position and move forward as a leader in educational technology in this country.

Management Council
Ohio Education Computer Network - http://www.mcoecn.org

INFOhio

THE INFORMATION NETWORK FOR OHIO SCHOOLS

The Information Network for Ohio Schools (INFOhio), a statewide cooperative school library and information network, uses technology to ensure curriculum and instruction of information literacy by providing greater access for Ohio's learners and educators. Our goal is to provide all of Ohio's elementary and secondary school libraries with the right resource for the right student at the right time.

Right Resource…

INFOhio provides every primary and secondary school with access to a core collection of curriculum-related and age-specific electronic resources. The cost to schools…absolutely nothing. The State of Ohio funds INFOhio to purchase these online resources for unlimited access by ALL public and non-public K-12 schools, educators, students and their parents across Ohio.

Right Student…

Every student is the right student. That's why INFOhio provides every Ohio school, regardless of size, location or fiscal resources, with access to the same core electronic resources. INFOhio ensures equity for every K-12 student by providing information to complete homework, research assignments and encourage life-long learning.

Right Time…

Readily accessible information that is accurate and timely is a vital part of education. INFOhio is committed to making available up-to-date, relevant and professionally selected information anytime the student or teacher needs it. The "right time" is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. INFOhio resources are always available for that "teachable moment."

A 21st Century School Library should provide the right resource for the right student at the right time using the tools of the Information Age. Utilize INFOhio to bring your school library into the twenty-first century.

Library Automation in your school library is as fundamental as **ABC**…
• A computerized library catalog provides **access** to the contents of your classroom materials and school library with the touch of a button.

• An online catalog **broadens** the scope of the library by providing access from remote locations, such as the classroom and home, via the Internet.
• Automation networks allow for **centralized** and efficient organization. Once library functions are automated, librarians have more time to spend working with students and teachers fostering an environment in which information literacy can flourish.

Media Booking makes it possible for teachers from anywhere in the state to simply point and click to locate, reserve and book the multi-media educational resources they need, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The collections of more than 40 Area Media Centers, Special Education Regional Resource Centers, and education television corporations are online.

Professional Development: INFOhio offers a full range of training, workshops, seminars, in-services, and support programs to help educators throughout the state better understand the expanding definition of literacy and how to use tools and technologies of the Information Age.

Electronic Resources: INFOhio provides a core collection of electronic, age-specific, curriculum-related resources for K-12 use both at school and home. Included is a full-text general periodical database of more than 6,000 titles, electronic encyclopedias, elementary reference and research databases, and a collection of biographies.

Through a Union Catalog, librarians can share cataloging information such as specific reading levels and curriculum objectives. This web-based database holds over 1.3 million resources from K-12 schools and educational support agencies throughout the state. Copying cataloging records from the Union Catalog reduces staff time spent on necessary "behind the scene" functions allowing for more time to be spent working with students and teachers.

INFOhio is a project of the Ohio Department of Education, Division of Information Management Services and is accountable to the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN). The OECN, through its 23 regional Data Acquisition Sites (DASites), serves as the technical backbone for INFOhio services.

Governor Bob Taft announced the newest INFOhio Electronic Resource, EBSCOhost, at Arbor Hills Junior High School in Sylvania. "This new electronic information resource is yet another improvement in our efforts to support quality education," Taft said. "As a state, we need to make it easy for our students to acquire the technology skills that define the knowledge economy workers of tomorrow. This new resource will help our schools enhance learning to enable our students to succeed." This resource forms the basis of the Statewide Core Electronic Information Collection jointly purchased by INFOhio, OPLIN and OhioLINK collaborating as Libraries Connect Ohio.

History of the MCOECN

The history of the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN) begins with the creation of the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN) by the Ohio Legislature in the mid-1970's. In 1975, the Ohio General Assembly amended the Ohio Revised Code, section 117.05(B) to read:

"... the chief inspector and supervisor of public offices shall adopt and require within each school district the use of a uniform system of cost accounting whereby the direct and indirect costs of all districts' activities, including athletics and non-instructional activities, regardless of the source of funding, can be analyzed."

In 1976, the Auditor of State issued the Uniform School Accounting System (USAS) standard in compliance with this language. Implementation of the USAS chart of accounts required that most school districts utilize a computer in order to obtain the level of detail necessary to provide better management and reporting data. The Auditor of State and the State Department of Education cooperatively developed the necessary computer software to support the new accounting standard.

It soon became evident that it was efficient and economical for school districts to form a regional computer consortium to provide computerized USAS services to all members. However, the formation of such facilities did not occur in most areas of the state until the 113th Ohio General Assembly provided authorizing legislation for the formation of a computer network program. This legislation, Special Appropriation 426 of Sub. S.B. 59, also represented the driving force for implementation of the Uniform School Accounting Network. The companion budget bill for the 1980-1981 biennium contained a $7.1 million appropriation to support the program.

By the early mid-1980's the OECN had grown to encompass 27 regional data centers and service more than 600 owner-member Ohio public school districts. It was in 1984 that representatives of the regional data centers met and formed a professional organization called the Management Council of the Ohio Education Computer Network (MCOECN). The purpose of this organization was to plan, promote, and facilitate effective and efficient computer services for Ohio schools. Comprised of representatives from each of the regional data centers (often referred to as Data Acquisition Sites or DA-Sites), the MCOECN has become a strong force in the leadership, development, and coordination of information technology services to Ohio school districts.

In 1991, the MCOECN was reorganized as a Council of Governments to utilize the cost-saving advantages of volume purchasing. In the early 1990's, the MCOECN provided cooperative and volume purchasing opportunities to its member DA-Sites with a great deal of success. By 1995 the MCOECN expanded this purchasing service to create the Value-Added Reseller (VAR) program of the MCOECN. The VAR program permits the MCOECN to provide the advantages of volume purchasing for technology-related items to all not-for-profit K-12 educational entities in Ohio. All profits generated from the VAR program are then used in the support of the MCOECN and its technology initiatives in Ohio's K-12 education community.

During its first fifteen years of operation, the MCOECN was led by volunteers and part-time consultants. John Parsons and Andrew Qualtire provided a great deal of leadership during this time period.

In 1998, the MCOECN was restructured to provide for full-time staffing and leadership. This restructuring led to the hiring of Bruce Hawkins as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the MCOECN, and Andrew Tompkins as the Chief Technology Officer (CTO). Since that time the organization has been very active in affecting educational technology policy-making at the state level and in working with the DA-Sites to constantly advance and improve the services provided to Ohio schools.

For further information regarding the MCOECN, please contact Bruce Hawkins (Hawkins@mcoecn.org).

Recent Achievements
**Continuing a Tradition
of Service to Ohio Schools**

The Data Acquisition Sites of the Ohio Education Computer Network (OECN) in partnership with the Management Council (MCOECN) have a tradition of service to Ohio schools, and this past year has been no exception. Here are highlights of some of our recent achievements.

We recently completed the inaugural year of a new continuous improvement planning (CIP) process. Each of the twenty-three Data Acquisition Sites was involved in this effort. Each site established goals based on customer input and created a plan to meet those targets. The MCOECN partnered with the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio SchoolNet, the Legislative Office of Education Oversight, and the Buckeye Association of School Administrators to form a committee providing guidance and direction for the CIP initiative. This year culminated in a state-wide customer satisfaction survey. The results of this survey prove once again that our school district customers are pleased with the services provided by their regional Data Acquisition Site. As we move forward, our Data Acquisition Sites will continue to strive towards the goal of providing the best service at the lowest cost to Ohio school districts.

Another highlight involves our Data Analysis for Student Learning (DASL) Project. DASL is a web-based data analysis solution that empowers schools to improve performance through better data awareness. DASL has continued to grow during this past year and over 550 school districts now have access to valuable student performance data through the DASL system. Recent new features include off-year proficiency data, web-based grade and attendance entry, a course-request system for scheduling, and state proficiency item analysis.

Other recent MCOECN highlights include:

• INFOhio partnership with OPLIN and OhioLINK to bring an even greater selection of electronic resources to all K-12 schools in Ohio

• Assisted in the formation of two new organizations representing Ohio educational professionals:

• The Ohio Association of EMIS Professionals (OAEP)

• The Association of Technology Professionals Serving Ohio Schools (ATPSOS)

• Host for several professional development opportunities including:

• Spring/Fall Technology Academy in partnership with Ohio SchoolNet

• Microsoft Active Directory University

• Human Resource Development Series

• "Training Tuesday" distance learning events

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