

Call with Georgia Pines, 1/24/08
Georgia Pines: Lamar Veatch, State Librarian
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The Georgia statewide library card program is funded entirely by state money. The program began in 1999. The cornerstone and key building block to the program was the decision to develop it using a single patron database (shared ILS), and require same circulation periods for materials and same user thresholds. From the beginning, libraries involved in the statewide library card program operated within this shared, standardized environment.

Georgia Pines now serves about half of the state population (total population is 9.7 million), and about 85% of the geographic area. State funding provides the shared, centralized automation system. In the last two years, Pines has moved to the Evergreen open source system which currently provides cataloging, circulation, a web catalog and statistical reporting. Acquisition and serial modules are still in development. The very largest libraries in the state are not in the Pines consortium, but are planning to join once these extra modules are in production. There has not been an effort to test interoperability largely because the focus is on adding libraries to the shared system.

There is no statewide collection policy. Rather, libraries maintain their collections in their own ways, to the benefit of their users. Smaller libraries often turn out to be net lenders and large libraries are often heavy borrowers.

A few years ago, the state ceased the ILL reimbursement program to put the money into a courier service. That service is entirely state funded. They've gone through a couple of courier systems, mainly because the couriers were not able to meet the ever increasing volume of materials to be transported. Last year, Pines moved 600,000 items; they expect to hit a million items soon. The State Library is starting to explore the possibility of offering grants to regional libraries to set up their own delivery services. There are 60 library systems in Georgia. 46 are members of Pines and there are hubs for the courier service. These hub libraries then get material out to the other libraries either by subcontracting with the central service, using a local delivery system, using volunteers or using the mail.

Selling the statewide library card program to the Georgia legislature has been extremely successful, largely due to the fact that the libraries share the same circ system and loan periods. Lamar describes it: "It is a heck of a product to sell to the legislators. The 'common patron experience', which comes from same circ periods, standard look and feel, online options, etc.... they love it. The Pines system has become our major brand. Rural legislators particularly love it. Their citizens have access to 9 million books instead of their library's 40,000."

"The governor just approved another half million for the continued growth of the Pines system."

