

Use of Statewide Databases Skyrockets in 2009: Library Patrons Benefit from Additional Databases & Training

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Use of electronic databases in Colorado libraries increased significantly during the last fiscal year, according to new data from the Acquisition of Information Resources Statewide (AIRS) Committee. Thanks to a significant investment in training for librarians and additions to the statewide database package, database use more than doubled between Fiscal Year 2007-08 (FY08) and Fiscal Year 2008-09 (FY09).

For each fiscal year, the AIRS Committee—a group of representatives from the Colorado State Library, the Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC), the Bibliographic Center for Research (BCR), Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, and individuals from public, academic, school, and special libraries—negotiates the database package from EBSCO and OCLC at a special statewide rate. The package includes databases covering general, business, and K-12 information (see sidebar).

During FY08, 695 libraries subscribed to the AIRS database package, compared to 715 in FY09. In spite of only a modest increase (3%) in the number of participating libraries and *comparing only the databases common to both years*, the number of sessions increased by 56 percent for all libraries from FY08 to FY09. For some types of libraries the increase was even greater, with special (120%) and public (113%) libraries showing the largest growth (see Table 1).

Databases in the AIRS Package Fiscal Year 2008

- Academic Search Premier
- Agricola
- Biomedical Reference Collection: Basic Edition
- Business Source Premier
- Corporate ResourceNet
- EBSCO Animals
- ERIC
- Fuente Academica
- Health Source: Consumer Edition
- Image Collection
- MAS Ultra – School Edition
- MedicLatina
- MiddleSearch Plus
- Newspaper Source
- Nursing and Allied Health Collection: Basic Edition
- Primary Search
- Professional Development Collection
- Regional Business News
- TopicSearch
- WorldCat

Training Pays Off

These increases can be attributed largely to the training sessions, which were comprehensive and used different approaches for different types of libraries, according to Lisa Priebe, Assistant Director at CLiC, which helped coordinate trainings throughout the state. “Without a trained staff, you can’t train your patrons,” Priebe said.

Table 1
AIRS Database Package Use, 2008 and 2009
Comparing Databases Common to Both FY08 & FY09

Library Type	Number of Sessions		
	Fiscal Year 2008	Fiscal Year 2009	Percent Increase
Academic	1,605,104	2,177,666	36%
Community College	223,621	444,470	99%
K-12	1,135,949	1,832,052	61%
Public	249,178	531,541	113%
Special	25,516	56,091	120%
ALL LIBRARIES	3,239,368	5,041,820	56%

Note: A session is defined as a login by the user to one or more databases from a vendor to find information on one or more topics.



During FY09, the AIRS committee focused on training librarians, in-person and online, on how to use databases in the package. Representatives from EBSCO and CLiC conducted 25 webinars and 37 live training sessions for librarians throughout the state. In addition, BCR taught three classes on OCLC FirstSearch and EBSCO conducted four “Train the Trainer” sessions, which gave attendees the skills to teach their coworkers and patrons about package databases. Between September 2008 and May 2009, 938 Colorado librarians (excluding those who viewed archived webinars) received database training. “The investment in training for library staff throughout Colorado’s libraries had a planned effect. Becoming more informed about the databases meant that staff members promoted them directly to their communities in various settings, both within the library as well as through outreach efforts,” said Jim Duncan, Director of Networking and Resource Sharing.

More Databases, More Use

Investing in training is only half the story. As the database package grew, so did the number of sessions in all types of libraries.

A 2007 survey of library staff identified the topics most frequently requested by patrons, educators, and students. Nine databases related to these popular topics were added for FY09. When the use of these databases is included in the comparison to FY08, the increases in use are even more dramatic. Statewide, the use of AIRS databases increased by 139 percent from FY08 to FY09. Public libraries saw the largest increases with the number of database sessions increasing by more than 800 percent in FY09. Use in special, community college, and K-12 libraries increased significantly as well—more than doubling in a year (see Table 2).

Once again the increased usage was no accident, but instead the result of AIRS Committee initiatives. “The addition of educational and research content, geared to kids for study and homework, addressed the findings of an earlier needs assessment in which libraries reported and stressed their desire to deliver quality K-12 content,” explained Duncan, adding “The demand was already there and primed to consume all of that database content.”

Databases Added to the AIRS Package Fiscal Year 2009

- Auto Repair Center
- Consumer Health Complete
- History Reference Center
- Literary Reference Center
- MasterFILE Premier
- NovelList
- NovelList K-8
- Points of View Reference Center
- Science Reference Center

Note: the Image Collection database was removed in 2009.

Table 2
AIRS Database Package Use, 2008 and 2009
Comparing FY08 to FY09, Including Additional Databases in FY09

Library Type	Number of Sessions		Percent Increase
	Fiscal Year 2008	Fiscal Year 2009	
Academic	1,605,104	2,355,003	47%
Community College	223,621	542,437	143%
K-12	1,135,949	2,436,246	114%
Public	249,178	2,348,402	842%
Special	25,516	68,244	167%
ALL LIBRARIES	3,239,368	7,750,332	139%



Looking Forward

In 2009-10 (FY10), \$1 million was eliminated by the state from the budget line that had been appropriated in 2008 to subsidize the AIRS database package costs. This resulted in a substantial shortfall in funding and some databases were cut. The AIRS Committee negotiated with EBSCO and OCLC to create an affordable, smaller package, in which the number of EBSCO databases was reduced to the resources most frequently used in all types of libraries. The package now contains 12 databases, and 719 libraries are subscribed as of this writing.

With fewer databases available to patrons, where will patrons turn for information? Some believe the Internet has all the answers—for free. However, as Duncan points out, “Individuals and small businesses that understand and value the role of libraries in providing access to high-quality educational content recognize that libraries offer them a competitive advantage. Unlike so-called ‘free’ Internet resources, these databases are available to library users as an integrated mix, drawing together consultation by professional librarians, training in how to search, customized service, and high-value content.”



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