

Green Mountain Library Consortium *vokal* project

What is *vokal*?

vokal is the Vermont Organization of Koha Automated Libraries, a project of the Green Mountain Library Consortium.

Background

In the Fall of 2007, several Follett-automated libraries decided to not make the upgrade to the company's new product, and decided to investigate the open source ILS options. After reviewing the major open source ILSs available, including Evergreen, the original committee of Richard Pritsky (Hinesburg), Lynne Gately (Randolph), Stephanie Chase (Stowe) and Sheila Kearns (VT DOL) settled upon Koha.

Koha was more stable and better supported than the other smaller-scale ILSs, and the committee felt Koha was more easily scalable up than Evergreen was able to be scaled down. Koha has a rich international network of programmers, coders, and users that provide a great deal of development and support for free.

Koha would work for the smallest library in Vermont right up to the largest. Koha is scalable to a degree that it could function as a statewide unionized ILS.

vokal Participants

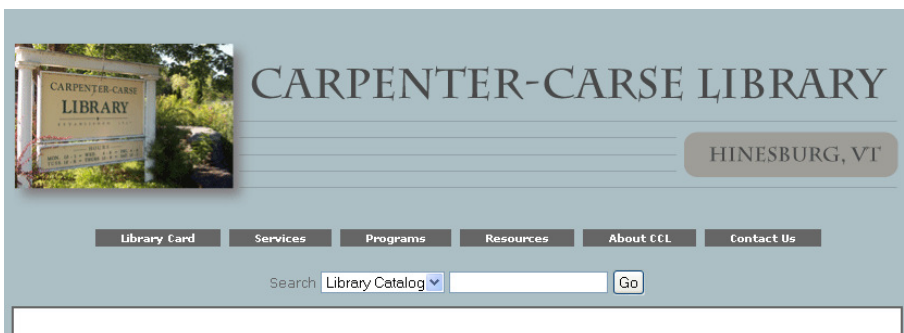
vokal is now made up of nearly 30 members or "Friends of *vokal*." As a group, these libraries have agreed to "buy in" to a beta-version of a Vermont-specific, custom version of a Koha system. The funds these libraries put in will go to hiring a programmer to program specific features the beta-member libraries desire as well as to hire a designer to make the system look professional as well as identifiable with Vermont.

Members run the range from small – under 5,000 items – to large, over 50,000 items. Members include public, school, and special libraries.

What if I want to join?

We are no longer accepting development partners for Phase I, although libraries are more than welcome to participate and show their support for the project as Friends of *vokal* at the \$50, \$100, or \$250 level. Friends of *vokal* are allowed a deep involvement in the development and features of the ILS, but may not beta test.

We are accepting development partners for Phase II, set to begin Fall 2009, to work on developing a consortium version of the *vokal* ILS. Libraries may join at a cost of 3 cents per bibliographic record, with a \$250 minimum.



FOCUS

The focus of the *vokal* project is to bring to our patrons a simple, easy-to-use, patron-centered ILS that will look and act familiar to their other online experiences. For example, participant libraries will have the gateway to their catalog, and their collections, directly in

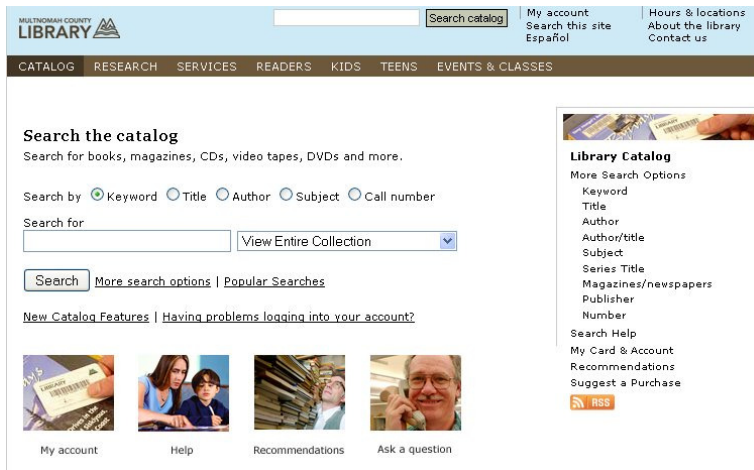
their web sites.

Koha automatically comes with features patrons like, such as book covers, the ability to see the most popular items or searches, patron-initiated holds/reserves, renewals, etc, and self-checkout.

We are very much looking to replicate the experiences of patrons at libraries like the Ann Arbor District Library, the Darien Library, or the Multnomah County Library.

Timeline

Currently, the project is in its *beta* testing stage. Changes are continuing to be made to the test system, modules are modified and added, and committees are looking into each function of the ILS.



The Carpenter-Carse Library in Hinesburg has been running the *vokal* Koha ILS since November 2008; the Stowe Free Library, the Norwich Public Library, the Warren Public Library, the Tunbridge Public Library, and the Marlboro School are set to go live by Summer 2009.

By Summer 2009, this group expects to have a professional, thoroughly tested, Vermont-specific version of an ILS based on Koha available for any library in Vermont to use for free.

In Fall 2009, the group expects to turn this system from a site-specific beta version to a consortium-based ILS. This would allow all libraries to show only their information to their patrons, but also be able to access the holdings of other participating libraries. This could ease ILL and also benefits groups set up with a shared library card system, such as Chittenden County's Homecard.

Moving to a consortium-based ILS also allows all member libraries to reap the benefits of additional features that might otherwise be unaffordable – such as adding LibraryThing for Libraries, Aquabrowser, ChiliFresh, or other user-focused “bells and whistles.”

vokal Executive Committee

Stephanie Chase, Stowe Free Library
Joe Chellman, *design*
Lynne Gately, Kimball Public Library
Scott Hepler, *development and coding*
Richard Pritsky, Carpenter-Carse Library

With assistance from:
Vermont Area Group of Unix Enthusiasts, *open source enthusiasm and other support*

For more information or to participate, please contact the *vokal* project at vermontkohaproject@gmail.com.