



# OPALS-NA

## News

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Open Source Automated Library System - North America

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### Federated Search Enabled Databases

#### "NOVEL" Components:

##### Ebsco

Master File Select  
Primary Search  
Topic Search

General Science Collection  
Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia  
Ebsco Animals

##### Gale

Infotrac Junior Edition  
Infotrac Custom Newspapers  
National Newspaper Index  
Virtual Reference Library:  
*Health, History, Business*  
Health Reference Academic  
Company Information Data  
Associations Unlimited  
Informe (Spanish)

##### Proquest

##### Grolier

CERF K-12 Website Directory

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**239.50 Client & Server Integration**

## OPALS-NA Federated Search

### *Search Portal Information Broadcasting*

#### *What is "federated search" and why bother?*

OPALS-NA cooperative member libraries can provide "federated searching" to their patrons. Why was this feature a priority and what does it deliver?

Libraries subscribe to a variety of information databases that enrich their collections with newspaper and magazine articles, reference encyclopedia, authentic information Websites, and emerging "e-Book" resources. These resources are usually listed on library or school homepages and are accessed individually. Users must remember to click on each information provider, master a different search interface, and re-enter the search argument to access each database resource. If the resource provider cannot authenticate the library computers' IP ranges, users also have to remember usernames and passwords. While it is desirable for users to know how to navigate this information complex, there are other influences that seduce many if not most away from the library's reliable information resources.

A cumbersome search process is alien to patrons that use Internet browsers. Although these browsers return thousands of sites that can include commercial and tainted information, patrons perceive that they are easier and therefore better. Ironically, they choose to toil through those thousands of results, rather than navigate a complicated search process even if the information is better.

OPALS members respond to this high-touch challenge by transforming their Web-based public access catalogs into search portals that seamlessly authenticate and access major information databases. In New York State, this access includes Ebsco and Gale components of the LSTA/state-sponsored "NOVEL" initiative in addition to ProQuest, Grolier and CERF Website databases. Members have approached other vendors to add more portal choices. Resource-based instruction encourages students to consult textbooks, library materials, newspapers, magazine articles and Websites. OPALS' easy federated search enriches their learning experiences with library-approved information, effectively broadcasts these rich resources and markets the library as an efficient 21<sup>st</sup> century safe haven for lifelong learning.

