



## AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein  
November 26, 2004

*“Opening WorldCat records to the Web helps libraries and other institutions provide a fast, convenient service to current and potential users through familiar Web channels. Open WorldCat points more people – even those who don’t typically visit libraries – to library collections as a first source of information.”*

-From the OCLC website,  
[www.oclc.org/worldcat](http://www.oclc.org/worldcat)

I was searching on Google for an obscure name - Bunford Samuel - the other day and one of the hits listed started with the words “Find in a library.” This was the first time I’ve seen this, so naturally I clicked on it to find out more.

The next screen gave me the title and author of a book and a place to enter my zip code. I did that and up popped a new screen, showing which libraries near me have the book, how far the libraries are from my zip code and a link to the libraries’ online catalogs. I was amazed and impressed, so I decided to find out more about this.

It turns out that this program, called Open WorldCat, was originally a pilot program, started in 2003 by OCLC. OCLC, in case you are wondering, stands for Online Computer Library Center, and their website describes it as: “a nonprofit membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated

to the public purposes of furthering access to the world’s information and reducing information costs. More than 50,540 libraries in 84 countries and territories around the world use OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend and preserve library materials.”

Basically, all these members help maintain and produce WorldCat, a catalog that includes records from all these libraries. The original pilot program for Open WorldCat included about 2 million items primarily from these members. But it was so successful that by the end of November 2004 an abbreviated version of most of the 56 million records in WorldCat will be available online for searching.

After June 30, 2005, however, only the members who belong to FirstSearch, which is a subscription service through OCLC, will be listed in the Open WorldCat database. So, for your local libraries to come up in a search on Google,

*continued on page 2*

Yahoo! search, and other websites, like Alibris, Abebooks and Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America, they must be members. For now, though, any libraries that contribute information to WorldCat are included.

My search for Bunford Samuel gave me listings for the San Leandro Public Library, for instance, as well as UC Berkeley and Santa Clara County Library.

Okay, so who is Bunford Samuel? Well, I received part of an article about the “father of American libraries,” and at the end of it was the name Bunford Samuel. Curious, I did a search and came upon one of those wonderful and unexpected (for me, anyway) sites where you get to see an image of original text, published a long time ago. In this case, it was on the Cornell University Library website, part of their Making of America (MOA), which is described

as “a digital library of primary sources.” The Samuel article is from *The Century: a popular quarterly* and the publication date is May 1883.

The article starts “It was in the year 1731, the fourth of King George the Second’s reign, that the Philadelphia, the oldest American library, and, so far as is known, the first of all lending libraries, took its beginning.” It then goes on to describe, in charming detail, the history of the Philadelphia library, up to 1883, with illustrations included. Samuel’s final paragraph includes these words, which will always, I hope, describe the American library: “I have tried briefly to show that this oldest American library has had an honorable career, and exerted an appreciable and wholly good influence.”