



## California Libraries Catalog / OCLC WorldCat FAQs

### What is the California Libraries Catalog?

The State of California, in conjunction with OCLC and Califa, a membership network of California libraries, has embarked on a project to create a union catalog for the State of California. The [California Libraries Catalog](#) is a subset of the OCLC WorldCat, a database that displays holdings for libraries around the globe.

Because so many California public libraries use OCLC as their source for bibliographic records, OCLC is able to provide us with a database of holdings that includes a substantial portion of the libraries in California. The California Libraries Catalog allows you to search by groups of library types, i.e. California law libraries, academic libraries, BALIS Libraries, etc.

### What is Open WorldCat?

Open WorldCat is the second phase to the union catalog concept. OCLC approached several major search engines, including Google and Yahoo, to create a database of library holdings information using records from the WorldCat database. They have started the databases with the OCLC WorldCat titles that are most frequently accessed and continue adding to the list. Patrons can use the Google or Yahoo search engines to look for library material, by entering the title in quotation marks in the search box, and adding the word “worldcat,” as shown below.



The OCLC Open WorldCat record will appear among the top entries on the list of hits. Patrons can click the link to access an abbreviated bibliographic record, which includes a picture of the book jacket (for newer items) and the option to display library holdings for

libraries in the surrounding geographic area. Patrons may use the zip code option at the bottom of the page to determine the geographic area searched. You can select a library from the displayed list. The hyperlink will direct you to that library's online catalog, where you can check the shelf status of the requested item.

**If a title is not found in the California Libraries Catalog/OCLC WorldCat, does that mean that there are no libraries that own this material?**

Remember, there are many search options in the California Libraries Catalog. If you do not find a title in one library group, try another. Remember that libraries, for a variety of reasons, do not always display their entire holdings in the California Libraries Catalog/OCLC WorldCat. For example, many libraries do original cataloging for special collections and do not use OCLC records for those items. Not all libraries are members of OCLC. Some libraries use other bibliographic services like RLIN. Also, a number of libraries do not have their periodicals holdings cataloged.

**If I see a library owns an item the patron is seeking, should I refer them to that library system?**

Even though a library displays holdings of a title in the California Libraries Catalog/OCLC WorldCat that does not mean it is available for the patron to use. Some libraries have fallen behind on their database cleanup and have not deleted old records from OCLC. It is recommended that you click the hyperlink in OCLC WorldCat to check the shelf status of the item first, as not all library items circulate. Many universities keep items in storage, have titles on reserve for students, or have special collections that have certain restrictions for access. Just because an item's status reads "on shelf," does not mean it is actually there.

**Are patrons allowed to request items they find in the California Libraries Catalog/OCLC WorldCat?**

Patrons may request items from the California Libraries Catalog/OCLC WorldCat by completing an Interlibrary Loan Request Form.

**If an item is not found in WorldCat, does this mean it is not available for interlibrary loan?**

OCLC WorldCat is the main source of information for interlibrary loan requests. However, some of the library's main suppliers have parts of their collection that are not shown in OCLC WorldCat, including the California State Library, Library of Congress, Melvyl, Stanford University, and others.