



GEORGIA PUBLIC  
LIBRARY SERVICE

# White Paper

## PINES/Evergreen/Equinox

### August 2009

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#### Definitions

**PINES** – **Public Information Network for Electronic Services** - the voluntary consortium of Georgia public library systems that participate in a unified integrated library automation system (ILS) and provide their users with a statewide library card.

**Evergreen** – the open-source ILS software developed by GPLS upon which PINES has operated since September 2006.

**Equinox** – the library software support company founded by the Evergreen developers after they left the employment of GPLS.

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## **PINES Origin and Development**

In 1998, a white paper was prepared by Georgia state library agency staff that explored the concept of a statewide public library card. It argued that such a universal library card, accepted in all participating libraries, would be of great benefit to the residents of Georgia. But, it would only be feasible if these libraries were unified electronically under a single integrated library system (ILS). The ILS is the mission-critical library software that handles circulation, patron registration, cataloging of materials and the on-line public access catalog.

A single ILS for the state's public libraries would provide a unified, searchable catalog of holdings and use a single database of registered borrowers. In addition to the obvious benefits to the library-using public, the 1998 white paper made the case that such a system would produce significant cost savings for each participating library. Each one could avoid the cost of buying and operating its own individual ILS. Even labor-intensive clerical functions such as overdue notice production could be centralized, achieving even greater economies of scale.

Administered by what was to become the Georgia Public Library Service (GPLS), The Public Information Network for Electronic Services (PINES) progressed from concept to reality in 1999. It began life as a Y2K state-funded project to address the critical needs of the public libraries with non-Y2K-compliant ILS computer services.

As part of the planning to address the Y2K computer bug, the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE) – at that time the parent agency of the state library agency – conducted a statewide assessment of public library technology. Sixteen library systems in Georgia were identified as having ILS components that were not Y2K compliant. These obsolete software programs were located primarily in rural library systems that had few resources with which to replace their outdated technologies. In addition, several library systems were still operating manually, without any library management automation.

With the very limited local funding available to these smaller library systems, the feasibility of purchasing new individual ILS hardware and software in the short time available before the year 2000 was minimal. It was determined by DTAE and state library staff that a significant economy of scale might be achieved through collaboration of these systems under a single software umbrella, using a shared ILS. This was the origin of the PINES program, a state-funded initiative to update ILS services for this group of public library systems.

Building upon the concepts first articulated in the 1998 white paper, the initial PINES consortium agreed to a common set of rules and policies. This was to ensure a consistent, quality user experience for patrons across the state. A single library card, one issued under a single set of policies, could be used by the card-holder at any participating

library. Further, this would greatly facilitate the sharing of library books among these participating libraries, thus leveraging the invested resources of these collections for the benefit of a much larger segment of the state's library users. This was groundbreaking in the public library world, as individual libraries gave up their long-held local policies and agree to cooperate, collaborate and share materials in new ways. By removing these differing local barriers, the participating libraries brought a much higher level of service to all of their patrons.

In late 1998, DTAE initiated an RFP process through the state Department of Administrative Services for the ILS vendor selection. On April 8, 1999, KPMG Consulting was awarded the contract for an “Integrated Library System (ILS) and Related Services.” KPMG Consulting partnered with the SIRSI Corporation and Sun Microsystems to provide the SIRSI Unicorn software. Data conversion and the loading of catalog card bibliographic records were also included in this contract.

Phase 1 of PINES went live in December 1999 with 98 libraries. Recognizing the initial success of this phase, a number of the larger library systems that had aging ILS software and that recognized the improved benefits to patrons asked to join PINES. Thus, PINES expanded in 2001 (Phase 2) with 111 more libraries. Since the completion of Phase 2, a number of additional library systems have joined the PINES consortium.



G E O R G I A L I B R A R Y  
**PINES**  
Public Information Network for Electronic Services

Today, PINES includes 281 libraries, bookmobiles, and other service outlets in 51 of Georgia's 61 library systems, covering 125 of Georgia's 159 counties. 2.2 million PINES library cards are currently in use by Georgia residents. Just over 10 million items are in the PINES catalog. Details on PINES, including a map and list of member libraries, can be found at <http://www.georgialibraries.org/pines/>. Originally funded with state Y2K special funding, PINES is now supported through a combination of state general fund appropriations and federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) allocations.

## **PINES Governance and Administration**

While PINES is an operational service of GPLS, it is important to note that the governance of the PINES consortium resides with the member libraries. The PINES consortium was carefully structured to ensure that the member libraries held decision-making authority. An Executive Committee, composed of elected nine member-library directors and representing all sizes and types of library systems in PINES, serves as the governing board. This is the sole policy-making body. Members serve three-year staggered terms. Executive Committee decisions are informed by the efforts of functional subcommittees – groups of front-line staff with specific software module expertise – who consider policy and operational questions and make recommendations.

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### **PINES Executive Committee – FY2010**

*Elections for the Georgia Library Public Information Network for Electronic Services (PINES) Executive Committee are held at the PINES Users Group Annual Meeting in May. PINES Executive Committee members serve three-year terms.*

Marsha Christy, Houston County Library  
Single County, Represents: At-Large  
Term expires: 6/30/10

Lecia Eubanks, Chair for FY2010, Cherokee Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: At-Large  
Term expires: 6/30/11

Claudia Gibson, Chestatee Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: Small Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/11

Alan Harkness, Piedmont Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: Large Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/12

Sandy Hester, Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County Library  
Single County, Represents: Small Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/12


Donna Howell, Mountain Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: Medium-Size Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/10

Thomas Jones, Middle Georgia Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: Large Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/11

Lace Keaton, Okefenokee Regional Library System  
Multicounty, Represents: Medium-Size Systems  
Term expires: 6/30/12

Nancy Tillinghast, Thomas County Library System  
Single County, Represents: At-Large  
Term expires: 6/30/10

<http://www.georgialibraries.org/pines/pines-executive-committee>



GPLS/PINES staff facilitate discussions, provide technical advice and enforce the policies adopted by the Executive Committee. These staff also support the Executive Committee by conducting research, providing statistical analysis and training as requested. PINES staffing has grown along with the consortium, and it now includes eight full-time employees.

## **Evergreen Development**

In 2004, with the end of the five annual renewals of the KPMG/Sirsi contract on the horizon, GPLS staff began to explore software options for the PINES libraries. Because the Sirsi Unicorn ILS was not really intended for use in multilibrary consortial environments, the intensive use of this ILS in PINES libraries uncovered a number of significant software limitations that hampered the effective use and expansion of the product by Georgia's PINES libraries.

Upon being advised by Sirsi that no more libraries could be added to the consortium under the Sirsi Unicorn hardware and software configuration, GPLS began to actively survey the library automation marketplace. The agency conducted vendor demonstrations, discussions and site visits to investigate all available products. At this same time, GPLS staff worked with PINES member libraries to create a list of both

technical and functional requirements for any new software. The intensive discussions with vendors and on-site demonstrations of their ILS products clearly showed that no commercially available ILS packages on the market at that time could adequately handle the complexities of a statewide consortium of the magnitude of PINES.

Two of the GPLS/PINES staff members who handled system administration duties proposed an in-house developed open-source software solution. The case was convincingly made that GPLS could utilize proven and free open-source database software components to develop a custom ILS – one that would be specifically designed to meet the exact and unique needs of the PINES membership.

After extensive discussions with PINES library directors, colleagues at the Board of Regents and its Office of Information and Instructional Technology (OIIT), GPLS made the commitment to pursue this open-source software proposal. On June 4, 2004, the state librarian issued a press release outlining the plans for a two-year development of this new PINES ILS software.

Forums were held with Georgia's library systems to discuss the implications of developing and implementing open source ILS software. Two developers were hired on contract to supplement the efforts of the two GPLS/PINES staff members. Accompanied by other GPLS staff, these four began their software development work with a series of focus groups throughout Georgia to meet with all levels of library staff. “Pretend it's magic” was the invitation to the focus group attendees. “Forget what you know about the limitations of your current software. What would you like for this new software to do?” was the question.

The clear intent of these sessions was to build a blueprint for the new software. It was deemed critical that library staff who actually used the existing PINES ILS have an important and direct role in the design. PINES staff spent many hours recording notes and brainstorming with librarians and library staff from PINES and non-PINES libraries. They emerged from these focus-group meetings with voluminous notes that became the foundation and roadmap of the open-source ILS design.

One year later, the PINES development staff demonstrated significant progress on the software with a beta version of key functional areas. Based on this success, OIIT/BOR and GPLS administration gave the green light to devote the additional year toward completion. Libraries around the state became involved in testing the software. At the same time, a worldwide community of library staff who were also interested in developing the open-source ILS began to coalesce. Dozens of these librarians/developers outside of Georgia contributed to the writing and testing of the emerging software. The project and the software were christened “Evergreen.”



September 2006 was set as the “go live” date for PINES libraries to switch to the Evergreen ILS. This time was necessitated by the expiration of the one-year extension of the Sirsi contract. Summer 2006 was a whirlwind of training, with over 3,000 library staff across the state trained on this new software. Labor Day weekend 2006 was spent on the enormous task of migrating all library records (items and patrons) and all transactions (circulations, holds, billing and payments) to Evergreen. The Sirsi Unicorn system was brought down at 5 p.m. on that Friday, Sept. 1. By the following Tuesday morning, Sept. 5, Evergreen was fully operational, running on a new array of servers and disc drives that cost only about a quarter as much as had the Unicorn server.

Even under ideal conditions, migration of a single library to any new ILS is a challenging and time-consuming process. This is why it is considered such a significant achievement that all 253 PINES libraries went live on the Evergreen ILS at the same time.

It is important to note that the Evergreen software placed into use in September 2006 included only the basic functionality of an ILS system. While it was a major improvement in many important aspects from the replaced vendor-supplied software, it did not yet contain all of the planned enhancements. The development resources of time and staffing available in the 2004-2006 time frame only allowed for the creation of the most critically required functionality. However, the Evergreen architecture did anticipate and will accommodate new features over the coming months and years. Evergreen is still very much at the beginning of its software life cycle.

The open-source Evergreen ILS is licensed under the GNU General Public License (see <http://www.gnu.org/>), enabling the software to be freely distributed at no cost to users. It only requires that modifications and additions by these subsequent users are shared and made available to the entire Evergreen community. GPLS holds the license and makes Evergreen available for download to all users. Evergreen software is free in all senses of the word – free to download, free to use, free to view, free to modify and free to share. See <http://open-ils.org/about.php>.

GPLS is now recognized throughout the library world for the bold and creative initiative of developing a complex and much-needed product. By late 2006, libraries across the United States and Canada were beginning to download and test the Evergreen software on their own servers. For the latest list of Evergreen libraries, see [http://open-ils.org/dokuwiki/doku.php?id=evergreen\\_libraries](http://open-ils.org/dokuwiki/doku.php?id=evergreen_libraries).

The Andrew Mellon Foundation awarded GPLS its *Mellon Award for Technology Collaboration* for Evergreen in 2007. Accompanied by a \$50,000 stipend, this marked the first time Mellon had presented this prestigious award to public library projects.

## Equinox

Soon after the successful implementation on that Sept. 5, GPLS/PINES staff became overwhelmed with out-of-state requests for assistance in the use and continued development of Evergreen. It was clear that GPLS could not subsidize such a quantity of work on behalf of libraries outside Georgia, even though such usage of Evergreen by libraries in other states and countries would ultimately benefit Georgia's libraries through enhancements and further innovations.

The four Evergreen developers had originally hoped to stay on the GPLS payroll and continue their development/support work for PINES. They expected to offer some support services on personal time to a modest number of out-of-state Evergreen users. Initial conversations with the Board of Regents Office of Legal Affairs indicated that this would be permissible and that there would be no conflicts of interest, given appropriate safeguards and precautions. The developers had thoughts of spinning off into a private company in several years.

Upon further review and consideration, BOR Legal Affairs revised its position. Legal Affairs determined that such outside work posed considerable potential for conflict of interest. If these developers had the intention of creating an Evergreen support company, they should implement that plan immediately. This change in legal opinion, coupled with the much-greater-than-anticipated interest in Evergreen outside of Georgia, produced the conditions that existed in April and May of 2007.

BOR Legal Affairs, in close consultation with GPLS, determined that the two staff members and the two contractors should leave GPLS employment at the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2007), allowing them to form their independent software support company. Equinox Software, Inc. was established to provide support, training, migration services and continued development of the Evergreen open-source software.

As a direct consequence of these developments, it was of supreme importance for GPLS to continue having access to expertise lost from the GPLS/PINES staff with the departure of these individuals. The PINES services to the member libraries throughout Georgia could not be permitted to falter or diminish because of these changes, but the resulting reduction in PINES staff size was a critical challenge. Therefore, it was deemed essential that GPLS contract for support, system administration and continued development of Evergreen for the PINES libraries.



Given the strong working relationship already in place, the unparalleled expertise held by the core developers, and their singular familiarity with PINES/Evergreen structure, it was unquestioned that PINES libraries would be best served by implementing a professional services agreement with Equinox for uninterrupted services. The BOR Office of Legal Affairs supported this position. Therefore, Legal Affairs developed and executed a *Service Level Agreement* “by and between the Board of Regents and Equinox Software, Inc.” Dated July 1, 2007, this agreement provides for Evergreen production support for PINES, system administration, hardware management, continued Evergreen software development, helpdesk support, training and transition services.

The *Service Level Agreement* contains provisions for annual renewals, and the Board of Regents has exercised this provision for subsequent years of service. This agreement and addenda may be found at: <http://www.georgialibraries.org/pines/gpls-contract-equinox-software-inc>.

GPLS - Equinox Contract Costs

\$500,000 - FY 2008

\$525,000 - FY 2009

\$548,625 - FY 2010

The “Evergreen” trademark remains clearly the property of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Exhibit B of the *Service Level Agreement* spells out the rights and responsibilities of Equinox for the use of this trademark.

## **PINES/Evergreen – Continued Development**

Since 2007, other firms and nonprofit organizations, including Lyrasis (formerly SOLINET) and the Michigan Library Consortium, have begun to also offer support for Evergreen. Equinox has no proprietary control over the use and development of Evergreen, although Equinox remains a key partner in this collaborative activity. GPLS continues to work very closely with Equinox, using a development priorities list to drive new features and modules. The Equinox helpdesk serves as backup to GPLS staff in cases of complex software issues and bugs.

GPLS maintains an up-to-date development roadmap for PINES and Evergreen development.

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## Development Roadmap

These are highlights of **high-level, outward-facing developments** implemented or planned for [PINES](#). It is intended to help Evergreen stakeholders plan the future, but it is **fluid and subject to change** as the consortia's needs evolve.

<http://www.georgialibraries.org/pines/pines-development>

PINES Development Roadmap is attached here in pdf format.

Please keep in mind that it is always a work in progress and is continuously subject to change. ALL changes will be announced.

You will see the roadmap broken into quarters of the year. As the months progress, the next quarter of the year will start to fill in with more detail.



### **NEW ROADMAP AND PRIORITIES SPREADSHEET LINKS BELOW!**

Development Roadmap -- high-level overview of software development, working group activity and training to come in the next three months.

Priorities Spreadsheet -- a deeper dive into each software development issue, including statuses, ETA's and work being done by working groups.

<b>Attachment</b>	<b>Size</b>
<a href="#">roadmap_Q3_Q4.doc</a>	47.5 KB
<a href="#">PINES_priorities_0709.xls</a>	45 KB

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In the spring of 2009, GPLS, Equinox and Lyris served as planners and co-sponsors of the first Evergreen International Conference and User's Group meeting in Athens. Over 150 library staff and software developers from around the world attended this conference. This conclave enhanced the already considerable enthusiasm for Evergreen as a viable open-source alternative to vendor-based products for libraries that are seeking cost-effective and flexible ILS solutions.

GPLS is very pleased that it can continue making significant contributions to the worldwide Evergreen and open-source communities. Recognizing that partnerships and collaborations accrue benefits back to Georgia's PINES libraries, GPLS/PINES staff

members have performed speaking engagements around the world when invited to share their experiences. The software developments that GPLS funds are shared throughout the Evergreen community. Likewise, developments subsidized by other Evergreen users outside of the state become freely available to Georgia's PINES members.

Evergreen benefits from a thriving and enthusiastic user/developer community. Opportunities for further collaboration and partnership are continually arising. GPLS is currently exploring the feasibility of an Evergreen Foundation to help ensure the continued growth and development of this successful software project.

The GPLS contract for Evergreen support will be re-bid in 2012. GPLS staff, assisted by the PINES community, continually evaluate the effectiveness of the Evergreen software to meet the needs of Georgia's PINES libraries. They also monitor library ILS developments throughout the industry, watching both vendor and other open-source products. It is the goal of GPLS to provide the highest and best level of product and service to PINES libraries and patrons through continued and sustained software improvement.

User satisfaction with PINES has risen to unprecedented levels since the move to Evergreen. Over 93 percent of patrons completing the 2009 survey indicated satisfaction with the PINES statewide library card system. GPLS annually surveys users to help identify issues and concerns. PINES staff members visit PINES libraries regularly to confer with front-line staff and directors regarding development needs and software issues.

GPLS continues to consult with non-PINES library systems in Georgia that are considering PINES membership. GPLS migrates new member libraries onto PINES just as quickly as schedules and resources permit. PINES membership is free and voluntary, and several of Georgia's systems are considering membership this year. GPLS, as the PINES/Evergreen operating entity, continues its commitment to the highest level of customer services to both libraries and their patrons.

The Evergreen ILS coupled with the PINES consortium is one of the most courageous and innovative projects in the world of library resource sharing and technology. It continues to be the topic of articles in professional journals and presentations at professional gatherings.

PINES/Evergreen is a distinctive example of the effective utilization of resources to address an expensive and frequently frustrating aspect of library service. It is most gratifying to observe the ongoing development and the sustained enthusiasm of the worldwide Evergreen community. In Georgia, PINES/Evergreen has leveraged economies of scale, partnerships and grassroots cooperation to bring to Georgia's libraries a cost-effective, state-of-the art technological solution to everyday library functionality.

Most importantly, PINES/Evergreen has significantly enhanced library service by greatly expanding access to the collections of the PINES member libraries for all of Georgia's residents. The many hundreds of thousands of books ordered annually from other libraries by library users through the PINES system are convincing evidence that the vision first articulated in 1998 was not a pipe dream – it is an achievable and sustainable reality.

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Georgia Public Library Service, August 13, 2009

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## **PINES/Evergreen/Equinox**

### **Web Links for Additional Information**

Evergreen site:

<http://www.open-ils.org/>

Evergreen Blog:

<http://evergreen-ils.org/blog/>

PINES Team site:

<http://www.georgialibraries.org/pines/>

Equinox site:

<http://esilibrary.com/esi/>

Georgia PINES catalog:

<http://gapines.org>

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