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As stewards of the intellectual record, historically libraries developed local print and audiovisual collections to meet readers’ information needs. Changes in the information environment and user expectations have impacted collection development methods. As a result of the transition from print to electronic publishing, libraries are shifting resources to support electronic collections. Steady increases in open access publishing increase the breadth of available content, remove access barriers, facilitate the use and reuse of information and research, and expand library publishing services.

As a result, the scope of the collection is broadening to include an array of formats, and is no longer merely a physical collection housed within the library or shelved remotely. Content that is accessed virtually is often dynamic in nature—whether owned electronic content, leased access to aggregated electronic content, or locally digitized or open access digital content—requiring libraries to develop new strategies for evaluating, selecting, and managing access to information.

Although various types of libraries have different goals and approaches for serving their readers’ information needs, a common goal is to provide access to a barrier-free collection that supports reader preferences for analog as well as digital content. Local libraries are challenged by inflation and escalating prices in the face of budgets that remain flat or decrease; by the infrastructure needed to support reliable access, discovery, and delivery; by user expectations for seamless access from point of discovery to delivery of content; and by the re-purposing of library spaces. Their investments in collections and the associated services that support them are changing.

Increasingly libraries of all types are pooling resources to purchase and store, as well as to provide access to materials that serve their readers’ expanding information needs. The shift from institutional stewardship and resource sharing of local collections to building collaborative collections and managing shared collections in various formats continues to evolve.
Preface

Policies and best practices for creating and managing shared collections will continue to develop. This book reviews some current models for curating content at the collective level. The three parts of the volume highlight strategies for intentional decision-making for developing and managing shared collections and leveraging resources to meet users’ complex information needs.

**Part I** outlines general considerations influencing relationship building when developing shared collections, including:

- arenas for collaborative collection building (chapter 1)
- governance and business models that contribute to the sustainability of shared print collections (chapter 2)
- assessing risk for evaluating retrospective print collections for deaccessioning or moving materials offsite to ensure preservation of the optimal number of copies to meet user needs (chapter 3)

**Part II** comprises case studies, ranging from local and regional efforts to consortial approaches that leverage institutional resources for developing a collective collection. The case studies describe:

- a regional shared print serials retrospective collection that frees up space in individual libraries and ensures long-term access to back runs of print serial volumes (chapter 4)
- domain-based collaborative stewardship of federal government documents (chapter 5)
- a statewide approach for managing multi-type libraries’ distributed shared print monograph legacy collections (chapter 6)
- developing a collective collection of low-use scholarly monographs published by university presses and foreign language publishers as well as foreign language open access publications (chapter 7)
- a consortium’s ebook demand-driven acquisition program that allows members to access a wider spectrum of materials than the print books on local library shelves (chapter 8)
- shared digital asset management of a university system of aggregated digitized special collections materials that enables individual libraries to utilize a shared infrastructure that supports storage, discovery, and use of digitized special collections (chapter 9)
Preface

**Part III** suggests future directions for both retrospective and prospective shared collection building and management as libraries transition from maintaining local isolated collections to robust collaborative stewardship of the intellectual record (chapter 10).

Strategies for developing and managing shared collections that meet the information-seeking behaviors of particular user communities will continue to emerge, and the concept and composition of “the collective collection” will evolve. The challenges of providing access to increasingly diverse content demand innovative approaches, risk-taking, and close collaboration to leverage the respective strengths of all stakeholders. Contributors to this volume offer considerations and experiences for those engaged in developing strategies for building, managing, and providing access to shared collections that meet the needs of current and future generations of readers.

Special acknowledgment goes to the contributors, as well as to the members of the ALCTS Monographs Series Editorial Board, Christine McConnell, and Helayne Beavers, whose guidance and insights have been invaluable in shaping this volume.
BUILDING SHARED COLLECTIONS

PART I
COLLABORATION
The Master Key to Unlocking Twenty-First Century Library Collections

Karla L. Strieb

The nature and function of library collections continue to evolve in response to the emerging online environment. Rapidly developing digital library collections exert powerful transformative pressures on libraries’ print collections. Yet collections are not simply shifting from print to digital. Instead, they are diversifying, embracing a wider range of formats, and supporting more kinds of uses. New strategies for managing both print and digital collections should reflect the understanding that print content will play a different role in complex ecosystems than it does in isolated print monocultures. In turn, although digital collections will sometimes mirror print collections, they increasingly will expand to encompass new forms free from print’s limitations.

This new environment challenges many of the shared assumptions about collections that underpinned library professionals’ twentieth-century consensus regarding best practices. Collection building strategies, collection management practices, access policies, and resource sharing arrangements that were state of
Part I ~ Building Shared Collections

the art in the pre-digital world are no longer sustainable or acceptable. Dempsey, Malpas, and Lavoie argue that the network context is shifting the boundaries of organizations and collections, thus motivating a range of reconfigurations in library infrastructures. Cooperative strategies are highly incentivized by perceived economies of scale for both print and digital collections. Progress in collaboration around either print or digital collections can initiate a shift in management of the other. Institutions are constantly searching for opportunities to coordinate between local activities and the networks in which they participate. As a result, management of collections occurs at multiple levels—both within the institution and above the institutional level. While this complexity often requires new thinking and resource investments, it also promises to make collections more valuable to users and offers new efficiencies for libraries. This volume collectively addresses the challenges of learning how to operate cooperatively and to reorganize and repurpose past investments.

THE CASE FOR SCALE

One of the shared imperatives of collection management in a digital age is reconfiguring collections to function effectively within, and contribute to, new architectures of scale. This impetus to scale collections is analogous to drivers Wheeler and Hilton describe in the realm of information technology. In considering different strategies for institutions to move to scales above the institutional level, they offer a helpful distinction between communities of cooperation and communities of collaboration.

Communities of cooperation are formed around shared principles and shared aspirations, but individual members fundamentally retain their autonomy.

Communities of collaboration are bound together by a shared and fairly specific vision. Participants in communities of collaboration embrace intentional interdependence as instrumental to their individual success. These communities are built on principles of shared investment and coordinated action designed to achieve mutually desired outcomes within a defined period of time.

Cooperation and collaborative communities are visible in coordinated activities around library collections as well. It is now normal for libraries to participate in multiple communities of cooperation and collaboration as each strategy aligns with a library’s mission for various purposes or at different times. In many cases, collaboration becomes a trust-building experience, or may produce lightweight structures that later provide foundations for the deeper
investments required for collaboration. In other instances, where cooperation proves insufficient to achieve desired aims, it incentivizes truly collaborative approaches. Communities of collaboration can also provide centers around which more extensive communities of cooperation are able to operate.

While the benefits of building collection management capacities out to scales beyond the institution are tantalizing, it is far from clear how to create such capacity and how to re-architect legacy collections into a new alignment with an emerging networked collection. It has only recently become possible to describe a collective collection that could be shared by libraries. Perhaps the most influential descriptive studies have come from OCLC Research, which has shared reports outlining levels of uniqueness, as well as duplication, among various aggregations of library collections. This growing body of computationally intensive analysis of the collective collection has also begun to clarify geographic distribution and other key characteristics of library collections relevant for making decisions about coordinating activities. There is a new understanding of collections at scale. Libraries can better assess past successes in coordination and cooperation and map new frontiers for collaborative activities as well as clarify potential efficiencies and opportunities.

FOUNDATIONS FOR A NEW ERA OF COLLABORATION

Today’s new programs and strategies for coordinating library collections leverage the capabilities of an online era, but simultaneously build directly on deep foundations of earlier collections-focused cooperation. Long-standing efforts to cooperatively build print and, more recently, digital collections offer valuable lessons. In many instances these efforts created the vibrant collaborative infrastructures that underpin the current flowering of initiatives. The cooperative efforts described in this volume owe a great deal to earlier innovations in cooperation. A handful of the most formative early experiences in library cooperation provide a flavor of the key ingredients that lead to success or hint at missing elements that might stymie visions of new efficiencies.

The Center for Research Libraries

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) is one of the longest running and most active library organizations dedicated to collaboration in collection
Part I – Building Shared Collections

building and management. Launched in 1949, it has focused on gathering and providing members with access to distinctive content that has not been widely collected. The model leverages a separately housed, centrally located collection managed by a membership organization. Members provide funds for supporting the shared collection and access to the shared collection is predicated on membership. The CRL organizational model and collection strategy have proven sustainable over a long period, perhaps because its collection has remained very tightly focused on distinctive, rarely duplicated materials. Even within this scope, there have been limited resources to support substantial growth of the analog collections—limited for acquisitions, and largely non-existent for space.

The Conspectus Experience

The other most influential twentieth-century experience with print coordination, the RLG Conspectus program, taught some rather different lessons. Promoted as a foundational tool for coordinating collection building, the RLG Conspectus provided a framework for collection analysis that could enable institutions to make bi- or multilateral agreements. It was expected that these collection analyses would lead to widespread coordinated, distributed collection building. Conspectus was widely deployed and publicly supported by a range of influential library organizations. Ultimately, its common vocabulary for collection description has proven highly valuable to the community. However, it proved difficult to catalyze coordinated collection development or management once the descriptive framework was applied, and almost no coordinated action around either collection building or management emerged from the project. The Conspectus experience demonstrated that data may seem a necessary precursor to coordination but it is not a sufficient driver by itself.

E-Resource Licensing

Cooperative licensing of electronic resources grew rapidly late in the twentieth century. It powerfully demonstrated the substantial benefits achievable with coordinated collecting of digital resources. Licensing ejournals and databases provided a fresh raison d’être for existing consortia originally formed to advance print resource sharing and seeded a crop of new consortial entities.
Unhindered by the need to physically house the shared collection, consortia collected content that could be owned equally by all members and delivered instantaneously to all of their users. Cooperative licensing initiated a range of new sociotechnical infrastructures to manage licensing, implement funding models, and in some cases develop shared infrastructure to store and make accessible digital content. Within the first decade of the current century, most academic and many public libraries formed and joined consortia charged with creating and managing digital collections on their behalf.¹¹

**Mass Digitization**

Hard on the heels of the era of cooperative ejournal collecting, Google challenged the powerful preconception that because moving content from print to digital formats was prohibitively laborious and expensive, print and digital collections could be conceptualized and managed independently.¹² With the announcement of Google's plans to scan millions of volumes in just a few years, “mass digitization” created a new arena for digital collection building.¹³ Mass digitization built large digital collections that connected directly to existing print collections. By converting existing print collections, creating a publicly accessible resource, and offering partner libraries digital copies of print works in their collections, large-scale scanning opened new vistas for coordinated action. Suddenly cooperative housing and delivery of multi-million-volume digital collections became conceivable with contemporary technology. The Google scanning project rapidly led to a new kind of collaborative digital infrastructure project to build a large scale shared digital collection, HathiTrust.¹⁴ The HathiTrust was created to provide preservation and access to the large-scale scanned collections created by mass digitization programs.¹⁵

**ARENAS FOR ACTION**

Only a few decades into this new era of networked, hybridized library collections, a plethora of cooperative initiatives have emerged and many more are being contemplated. Any careful observer will notice the diversity of efforts and how they vary in scope, pace of progress, and degree of success. The contributions to this volume also highlight the richness of emerging cooperative ventures. As collaborative strategies have become mainstream, traction for
progress is proving to be somewhat variable among different segments of library collections. Success is not guaranteed and librarians must weigh when, why, and how to engage with collaborations.

Four general arenas of opportunity for planning, assessment, and decision-making are shaping up around two primary axes of focus: prospective and retrospective collection management, and monographic and serial publications (see figure 1.1). Prospective and retrospective arenas for collaboration currently diverge by format, with retrospective collaboration engaging around print and digitized print and prospective collaboration focusing on digitally published content (although dual-format publishing is still common).

The challenges are quite different and frontiers of opportunity are opening at different times, as the collaborations discussed in this volume show. The serials arena has emerged more quickly as a source of opportunity for both prospective digital collecting and retrospective print management. The arena for monographs is developing more slowly in seeding collaborative action. Because no field of collaborative activity is yet mature, there are many opportunities to translate lessons back and forth, but it is risky to extrapolate success in one arena to another.

Figure 1.1 | Arenas for collaborative collection management
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