A PERSPECTIVE ON U.S. COOPERATIVE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT*

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Abstract: This paper gives a brief summary of recent efforts at cooperative collection development in U.S. academic libraries, highlighting science serials and the impact of electronic journals. The report is offered with the hope that these projects may offer instructive examples for U.S. and international libraries.

Introduction

Only a few years ago, interest in cooperative collection development in U.S. libraries seemed to be dead. Despite much rhetoric and effort in favor of rational and planned cooperative collection development in U.S. academic libraries, the results were disappointing. One could point to only a very few significant shifts in collecting based on planned dependency and to even fewer formal written agreements. The Farmington Plan of the 1950's was discontinued; the proposal in the 1970's to create a national serials center came to nothing, and in the 1980's the Research Libraries Group, after years of effort to use the conspectus as a vehicle for cooperation, dissolved the Collection Management and Development Council that originated it.

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) offers an example of longstanding successful cooperative collection development, although the focus is on little-used, peripheral, esoteric, scholarly materials. Its efforts are not to be denigrated, but one might argue that its programs have not significantly altered the cost, size, or overall shape of its members' collections.

There is no national library materials collection plan in the U.S.

There is little or no point in trying to construct a 'distributed national collection' as a matter of active policy (as opposed to providing access to what the nation's libraries happen to acquire.) There is no way of predicting what is wanted either in the present or the future, apart from obvious materials, which are acquired by libraries anyway. ...

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For copiable materials that are not acquired by local libraries, there is no point building up a national collection; they are or soon will be easily and cheaply accessible from anywhere. For non-copiable materials such as monographs, there would seem to be more of a case for building up a comprehensive national collection. ... if local libraries are built up with good collections of books, a country would have a good national collection without the necessity of further effort. [1]

Contrary to the high hopes and frustrated expectations typical of U.S. libraries' efforts, three universities in the state of North Carolina reported what seemed to be an almost unique history of cooperation dating back over fifty years. The paper by Patricia Buck Dominquez and Luke Swindler describing was so remarkable it won a national award. [2]

Recent developments

The following is an overview of some recent cooperative collection development activities in the U.S., offered to demonstrate that many of the largest research libraries, working with national library associations, are once again getting excited about cooperative approaches to collecting. The Internet and the WorldWideWeb (WWW) are major reasons for this. Indeed, much of the following information was gleaned from the Web. Not only is scholarly information, particularly in the sciences, now widely available in significant amounts over the Internet, but the ability to discuss and document cooperative collecting decisions is enormously enhanced. Cooperation has taken a new lease on life.

When Cooperative collection development appeared on the agenda of the Chief Collection Development Officers of Large Research Libraries (the so-called "Big Heads") meeting at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association (ALA) in June, 1995 a half-dozen librarians from among the fifty largest libraries in the country contributed reports. [3]

A recently completed CRL Strategic Plan calls for "strengthening collections of peripheral and essential (italics mine) research materials as a means for North American research libraries to avoid costs of acquisition, storage, preservation and delivery." The Center is currently engaged in more than 35 programs. Balloting for cooperative purchases now occurs over the Internet. [4]

The thirteen university libraries comprising the Committee on Interinstitutional Cooperation (CIC) recently launched a Virtual Electronic Library project, one aspect of which is cooperative collection development. Bibliographers in the sciences, Korean studies, Japanese studies, and Scandinavian studies met and drafted plans for cooperation, and others are to follow. [5]
The CIC mandate for cooperation recognized the impact of the Internet: "In the modern library environment with online access to cataloging information for most acquisitions of most libraries, every time avoidance of unnecessary duplication and expense occurs for little-used research material, a net increase in resources available for the nation results." Added to which is the realization that WWW sites, electronic mail and listservs serve to meet "the challenge to create an environment in which ties at the selector level can flourish...." [6]

In the University of California (UC) system about twenty groups of bibliographers are at work on cooperative collection development projects. [7] Clinton Howard reported at the above-mentioned ALA Big Heads meeting that a shared purchase program in the UC system had made a total of $1,000,000 available over the past several years. He also noted the importance of electronic access to a shared catalog, and of access to shared issue-level periodicals holdings information.

In contrast to the CRL, which is mainly occupied with paper-based resources, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) is digitizing and sharing electronic texts. A joint venture with the American Association of Universities begun in 1993 and called the Research Libraries Project includes pilot projects to pursue the networked, digitized and distributed acquisition of materials originating in Latin America, Germany, and Japan.

Of special interest to science librarians, the ARL/AAU Japanese Scientific and Technical Information Project plans to link Japanese and North American libraries by means of the Internet. The pilot project will

1) enhance the WWW page maintained at Ohio State University
2) broaden contacts with Japanese libraries
3) improve abstracting and indexing services' coverage of Japanese titles
4) maintain an electronic list of users who will provide feedback on the projects
5) increase bibliographic access to the selected publications. [8]

If the pilot project succeeds, it will be extended to the humanities and the social sciences.

In 1996, the Research Libraries Group (RLG) announced its new five-year Strategic Plan, which contained the following bold vision statement:

"Between 1996 and 2000, RLG will strive to transform the nature of information access; build a boundaryless foundation for the international research information environment; and enhance its established and distinctive support of fundamental library service needs." [9]
One goal is Integrated International Information Delivery (IIID), a "radically new system of information delivery" to the desktop of the enduser through integrated use over the Internet of RLIN searching, other Internet information resources, commercial document supply services, ARIEL document delivery, and interlibrary loan." The underlying message is that an "unseen hand" -- the effect of the combined, if uncoordinated, efforts of hundreds of selectors in U.S. academic libraries -- will produce the requisite stock of information for U.S. researchers. The scheme focuses on identification of items and on their delivery and nowhere mentions cooperative collection development or planned dependency.

Attendees at the Moscow and the Istanbul IFLA conferences heard about four libraries in the State University of New York (SUNY) system, motivated by the expense of duplicated and possibly little-used science serials, who are actively seeking planned dependency. They documented periodical use, created a speedy and dependable interlibrary loan system, and developed a decision rule for when to purchase and when to rely on interlibrary loan. [10].

The academic libraries in California are implementing a Virtual Electronic Library project that calls for integrated access to the full text of science journals from major publishers, with links to electronic reviews and indexes and to cited references, using MELVYL as the interface. With this project, a major library system turns its attention once more to planned dependence. Another example is the CIC Virtual Electronic Library. There can be no doubt that cooperation is once again flourishing because of the "New Electronic Age."

**Conclusion**

It has probably not escaped the reader's notice that most of the projects described above operate on the fringes of their institution's collections, a common criticism of cooperative collection development efforts. They tend to deal with relatively small collections of non-commercial, non-copyrighted, little-used materials, mostly in foreign languages. By and large, they have not tackled broad subject areas, or costly, duplicated, materials such as those in the sciences.

Unlike the humanities and the social sciences, the bulk of important scientific and medical research is contained in a relatively few, and very expensive, journals, published by a handful of international publishers. These science journals are widely held because they are regarded as essential literature that must be immediately at hand for consultation by scientists and researchers working in fast-moving and competitive areas. Consequently science journals were thought to be unsharable. The research projects undertaken by the SUNY libraries mentioned above confirmed this. Despite significant duplication among the four campuses,
the most costly and duplicated science journals were also heavily used and time-dependent. The concept of one subscription to be shared among the partners by expedited interlibrary loan, was abandoned.

The advent of electronic journals has changed all that. While they might never have considered cooperation in the past, libraries now want to participate in cooperative collection development because of consortial pricing, space saving, enduser delivery, and other attractive features of electronic journals. These journals are largely the costly, duplicated journals in the sciences.

As early as 1995, the CIC institutions identified the cooperative purchase of electronic resources as a major source of savings. In early 1996 a posting to the COLLDV-L list serv documented a dozen cooperative electronic resources licensing projects [11], and the number has doubtless grown considerably since.

The year 1996 saw the formation of the largest higher education consortium in the U.S., consisting of the California State University, the City University of New York, and the State University of New York. It formed with the explicit aim "to pursue group purchasing/contracting opportunities for electronic information." [12] A similar goal motivates the newly-formed consortium of Northeast Research Libraries (NERL).

Many of the largest and most important science-technology-medicine publishers will make their journals available from WWW sites in 1997, some on a "free trial" basis. Libraries are faced with at least four choices: they may subscribe to electronic journals on a title-by-title basis from publishers. Some are only available that way. Libraries may also elect to sign agreements with publishers for lists of its titles, as NERL did with the Ideal service of Academic Press and with Project Muse,. Once again, some publishers will only offer libraries lists, or "libraries" of titles. Alternatively, libraries may enlist the services of vendors such as EBSCO, or Swets, or Blackwell, or use library utilities (OVID, OCLC, etc.) to provide titles from many publishers. Lastly, libraries may opt for delivery of information on an article-by-article basis from services like UMI ProQuest, CARL SUMO, etc. Important questions remain to be answered by libraries as they confront these options. One thing is certain, however: if shared licenses are not significantly less costly, the incentive to cooperate in a big way among libraries will once again disappear.

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