

# Strategic Plan for Improving Access to Global Information Resources in U.S. and Canadian Research Libraries

[July 1995]

The plan is based on the final report of the AAU Task Force on Acquisition and Distribution of Foreign Language and Area Studies Materials that was issued in April 1994 and that was endorsed by the AAU Presidents and the ARL Directors at their respective membership meetings in spring 1994. The Task Force recommended the creation of a "network-based, distributed program for development of foreign acquisitions for U.S. and Canadian research libraries." The Task Force further proposed the implementation of the program with three demonstration projects targeted on research materials that originate in Latin America, Germany, and Japan.

The plan also builds on the discussions at the May 1994 meeting of the ARL Research Collections Committee. It is authored by a subcommittee consisting of Joseph Hewitt, Director of Academic Affairs, Libraries and Associate Provost for University Libraries, University of North Carolina Library, Don Riggs, Dean of University Library, University of Michigan Library, and Don Simpson, President, Center for Research Libraries. The subcommittee was charged to chart the directions of a collaborative program in foreign acquisitions beyond the initial demonstration projects. The subcommittee focused on how best to guide the transition to a larger program and suggests actions the ARL community can take to achieve improved access to and delivery of international research resources.

As envisioned in this strategic plan, the three demonstration projects will serve as the start-up phase. They will provide experience in planning for the medium-term phase that will focus on enhancing the distributed North American collection of global resources. The longterm goal would be to move toward a world-wide effort. The plan provides a conceptual framework for realizing improved access to global information resources through electronic resource sharing. It is not a tactical plan, nor a detailed survey of all issues.

## **PREAMBLE**

As ARL libraries plan for meeting the information needs of their students, faculty, researchers, and other users in the 21st Century, they face unprecedented opportunities and challenges. In the rapidly evolving environment of networked information, remote access, and desktop delivery, technology offers the potential for realizing a seamless web of interconnected, coordinated, and interdependent research collections that are accessible to geographically distributed users. Significant benefits can be seen in sharing specialized research resources ( obviating the need for duplicative investments) and in improving access to the growing universe of scholarly information resources.

The challenges of building this "North American digital library" are manifold. One challenge is how to manage the complex transition to national and ultimately international networked collections. Equally daunting is how to manage foreign acquisitions, when print-based materials will co-exist with digital documents and when retrospective collections will continue to be primarily print- based. It is clear that investments in print-based materials will continue to be necessary through an extended period of transition. There is a critical need to strengthen and advance area librarianship and to expand the number of area librarians with appropriate subject, language and professional preparation to develop, organize and service research collections and resources in a world area. Another challenge is how to balance and harmonize institutional user priorities with the demands of a broadened and enlarged user community. Still other challenges are the technical barriers, capitalization of computing and communications technologies, funding of user access, and management of intellectual property issues. As the pace of technological change accelerates, the pressures will intensify to develop appropriate financial structures and to clarify policies concerning copyright in the electronic environment. The funding that will be needed is substantial. Meeting these challenges will depend on the actions ARL libraries take between now and the end of this century.

The goal is to restore the range of significant foreign publications to the national collection of books, serials, and other forms of scholarly information adequate for the support of research, teaching and scholarship. Despite increasing emphasis, in both the public and private sector, on international interdependence ("on the global village"); and despite increasing commitments in the research universities to fostering "internationalization" in both the curriculum and in research; and despite the exponential growth of available foreign language titles in general, American and Canadian research libraries have had to reduce acquisitions of foreign publication because of financial constraints.

The members of the ARL Research Collections Committee believe that ARL libraries have unparalleled opportunities to work together in developing a program for cooperative collection management of international research resources. They also believe that this collaboration should be guided by an overarching vision and continuing collective consultation and development of an action agenda. To that end, the following articulation of a vision and goals proposes the strategic directions toward developing the architecture and management structure for creating a network-based, distributed program for coordinated collection development of foreign language, area and international studies materials among U.S. and Canadian research libraries. While recognizing that support for cooperation and collections in all areas is needed, the focus of this plan is foreign acquisitions. This strategic plan describes a system in which participating research libraries would share responsibility for collecting foreign imprint

publications, and would function as access nodes in a "distributed North American collection for foreign materials." Implicit is coordination and cooperation in cataloging and preserving these materials.

## **VISION**

By the beginning of the 21st Century, ARL libraries will have made significant progress toward building a seamless web of interconnected, coordinated, and interdependent research collections that are electronically accessible to geographically distributed users. ARL Libraries will play central roles as both providers of print-based global research materials as well as access points for users to global resources that will be increasingly in electronic form. Through shared planning and action, the libraries will broaden the breadth and coverage of global information resources in North American research libraries and serve as electronic gateways for ubiquitous access to these information resources. Coordinated collection management will ensure ownership in the research libraries community of materials needed as well as networked access. What is envisioned is the systematic development of digital library collections and information services. Users will have access to global information resources across different systems.

Realizing this vision of the North American digital library will allow research libraries to move to the "just-in-time" model of resource sharing while offering users "just-in-case" desktop access and delivery capabilities. It will also build the foundation for electronic resource sharing on a global basis.

## **GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES**

### **GOAL I**

To enhance the capabilities of North American research libraries to acquire and make available global information resources in support of education and research.

#### Objectives and Strategies

##### Objective:

To build a broad-based commitment to maintain global information resources adequate to meet scholars' needs.

##### Strategies:

1. Focus national attention on the critical role of research libraries in acquiring and delivering global information resources.
2. Continue ARL's collaboration with the Association of American Universities to monitor the initial implementation of the three demonstration projects.
3. Build partnerships with scholarly associations, such as American Council of Learned Societies, National Resource Center Directors and other international education groups to work in a common enterprise directed toward improving access to global information resources.
4. Promote federal investment in supporting research libraries to develop and maintain comprehensive collections of international research materials.

### **GOAL II**

To enrich collections of global information resources in North American research libraries.

#### Objectives and Strategies

##### Objective:

To build on the richness and strengths of institutional academic programs and collections and to extend the total number of unique titles available in North American research libraries through institutional cooperation and coordinated collection development.

##### Strategies:

1. Organize and implement a North American distributed, networked program for acquiring and delivering global information resources in print and digital formats.
2. Implement the program through an evolutionary process in three phases.
3. Launch in the short-term phase three demonstration projects to test network-based access, delivery, and consultation services.
4. Begin planning for the medium-phase to encompass other areas beyond those targeted by the demonstration projects.
5. Move toward a worldwide effort (long-term phase).

### GOAL III

To achieve effective network user access to global research materials.

#### Objectives and Strategies

##### Objective A:

To improve access to and delivery of information, with emphasis on building the electronic infrastructure.

##### Strategies:

1. Develop the infrastructure to acquire, store, organize and distribute large collections of digital information.
2. Utilize existing national efforts and build on the experiences of cooperative regional programs (e.g., National Federation of Digital Libraries, CAN-Linked Initiative, Research Triangle University Libraries, CIC Universities, etc.)

##### Objective B:

To speed the availability of electronic resources both through funding institutional digitization projects and encouraging publishers to make materials available in electronic formats.

##### Strategy:

Promote and monitor pilot projects to convert research materials to digital format.

##### Objective C:

To improve document delivery services.

##### Strategy:

Build on the efforts of the ARL Interlibrary Loan and Document Delivery (NAILDD) Project to redesign interlibrary loan and document delivery systems.

### GOAL IV

To develop the management structure for overseeing and guiding the technical and policy aspects of the evolving program.

#### Objectives and Strategies

##### Objective A:

To develop a stable mechanism to provide continued leadership in extending the program to a North American program for improved access to global resources.

##### Strategies:

1. Charge the ARL Research Collections Committee to propose a management structure and funding strategy that will guide the ongoing operation of the program and support the goal of a distributed North American collection.
2. In cooperation with the ARL Statistics Committee prepare benchmarks/guidelines for ongoing analysis of the state of foreign acquisitions and the cataloging of foreign materials in specific disciplines.

##### Objective B:

To utilize existing programs such as those operated by the Center for Research Libraries, the Library of Congress and other consortia.

##### Strategy:

Examine existing, complementary cooperative arrangements and information delivery services.

##### Objective C:

To provide effective involvement of all stakeholders.

##### Strategies:

1. Plan a symposium on foreign acquisitions to be sponsored jointly by ARL, ACLS, and the Library of Congress.
2. Engage the scholarly community in shaping the North American program for managing foreign acquisitions.

Objective D:

To promote the education and continuing development of area librarians.

Strategies:

1. Work with the library education community to meet priority professional preparation and development needs of area librarians.
2. Support the evolving national action plan to strengthen and advance area librarianship.

## **GOAL V**

To develop the North American distributed library for access to global information resources.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective A:

To build the network of coordinated, interdependent collections.

Strategies:

1. Charge the ARL Foreign Acquisitions Task Force to address the operating issues in the implementation of the demonstration projects.
2. Develop a three-year tactical plan to scale up and to extend the program to areas beyond those encompassed by the three demonstration projects.
3. Work with foreign area library committees (e.g. Africana Librarians Council, CONSALD, WESS and similar groups) to develop plans for coordinated collection growth and resource sharing.
4. Establish a process for developing collaborative selection mechanisms and collecting agreements among research libraries for expanding North American holdings and access to global information resources.

Objective B:

To ensure the protection of fair use rights.

Strategy:

1. Monitor efforts to strengthen copyright legislation in relation to intellectual property rights in the electronic environment.

## **GOAL VI**

To develop and maximize financial resources for building and maintaining the North American distributed collection of global resources.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective:

Develop a longterm financial strategy for sustaining the program.

Strategies:

1. Seek funding for demonstration projects.
2. Promote reallocation of acquisitions funds to support shared access to digitized resources.
3. Develop multiple funding sources, including national investment, to support the North American distributed library for access to global information resources.

## **GOAL VII**

To strengthen collaborative programs with foreign libraries, archives, and information services.

Objectives and Strategies

Objective A:

To support and strengthen exchange programs between North American and overseas research libraries.

Strategies:

1. Promote closer coordination and better understanding of existing exchange programs.
2. Explore collective exchange programs.

Objective B:

To promote electronic resource sharing on a global basis.

Strategies:

1. Work with the Library of Congress, National Library of Medicine, National Agricultural Library, National Library of Canada, Canada Institute for Scientific & Technical Information, and other "national" institutions in forging collaborative programs with foreign national libraries.
2. Establish partnerships with cooperative programs in other parts of the world.

Approved by:  
The Research Collections Committee  
October 19, 1994  
Endorsed by ARL Board of Directors  
July 25, 1995