

CRL Conference: Creating New Strategies for Cooperative Collection Development

"Eliminating Borders: What are the implications and opportunities presented to cooperative collection development by the growing unimportance of national borders and other geographical restraints? Can technologies provide new forums for cooperation? Can we grow new partnerships?"

From Farmington Plan to the Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance: new strategies in developing international collections

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Abstract

Many landmark initiatives in the development of international collections in the United States were inspired or triggered by national and international events. World War II inspired the Farmington Plan. Sputnik triggered the National Defense Education Acts. Agricultural surplus money funded the PL-480 programs. These were unilateral endeavors of the United States, mostly from government agencies. As the significance of the events faded, the related programs were forgotten, leaving neglected collections scattered around the country. Recent economic prosperity and technological advancement around the Pacific Rim region have given rise to a new kind of cooperation to provide widespread access to diverse information resources. The Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance crosses political, geographical, and cultural boundaries with an interchange of library information resources, personnel, and technology. The Alliance, built upon a foundation of mutual trust and confidence, supports cooperation by capitalizing on the strengths and collections of its members without the limitations of traditional coordinated collection development. This paper briefly reviews the history of international collection development in the United States, but its focus is on the new dynamics of the Pacific Rim and the experience of the Alliance in implementing new strategies for access to collections for the benefits of library users.

International Collection Development in the United States

Many landmark initiatives in the development of international collections in the United States were inspired or triggered by national and international events. World War II inspired the Farmington Plan. Sputnik triggered the National Defense Education Acts. Agricultural surpluses provided funds that led to the PL-480 programs.

Over the years, research libraries have pursued a number of strategies to build comprehensive collections through cooperation in collection development. The establishment of the Farmington Plan after World War II was the most far-reaching effort to ensure that "one copy of every important foreign book" was available in the United States. The Farmington Plan exemplified the large-scale, decentralized system of specializations by voluntary agreements among American research libraries. By 1972, tensions between cooperative collection responsibilities and institutional priorities, the complexities of the subject allocations, the high costs of acquiring and processing materials, and the perceived inclusion of materials marginal to local interests all contributed to the decision to terminate the Farmington Plan.¹

The National Defense Education Act of 1958 was the most important federal bill related to higher education since the 1862 Morrill Act. ... The general provisions of the act articulated the Cold War motives of Congress: "an educational emergency exists and requires action by the federal government. Assistance will come from Washington to help develop as rapidly as possible those skills essential to the national security." Federal expenditures for education more than doubled. For higher education, this included funding ... for curriculum development in the sciences, math, and foreign languages. ...[I]ts greatest impact was within the realm of an evolving and expanding network of research universities.²

PL-480 was an ...

1958 amendment to the Agricultural Trade and Assistance Act of 1954 which permitted the U.S. to accept foreign currency in exchange for agricultural products and to spend the foreign currency in that country, for such materials as books and periodicals. PL-480 allowed selected research libraries in the United States to acquire current publications from some developing countries.³

These were unilateral endeavors of the United States, mostly from government agencies. As the significance of the events faded, the related programs were forgotten, leaving neglected and orphan collections scattered around the country.

Of course, credit must also be given for direct initiatives within the research library community.

Among these is the National Program of Acquisitions and Cataloging at the Library of Congress, which supports acquisition and cataloging of research materials published throughout the world. The collecting programs of the Center for Research Libraries have enriched access to specialized foreign materials, especially to foreign newspapers, foreign dissertations, and foreign government publications. The Shared Resources Program of the Research Libraries Group is another important effort. Central to the RLG program is the assignment of primary collecting responsibility for certain categories of materials. Still another example is the Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials (SALALM), which has concentrated on improving support for and access to Latin American research resources. In addition to these highly visible cooperative efforts, many regional, state, and local cooperative arrangements have been carried out over the years.¹

Additionally, private foundations such as Ford, Luce, Mellon, and Rockefeller have fostered

coordination and collaboration for the acquisition of foreign materials.

All of these efforts, both past and ongoing, provide valuable experience in coordinated collection development and help to define the limitations. They underscore the fact that libraries have achieved significant progress through collective action, but they also bring into sharp focus the fact that current efforts are quite limited. While some areas of the world receive needed attention, many others are without cooperative programs. Many of the questions that past cooperative efforts tried to address remain, but technology provides a new framework and new opportunities to address the issues.¹

New Opportunities for International Cooperation

The increasing ubiquity of the internet and ease of access via the world wide web have opened the door to new opportunities for delivering information resources to our faculty and students. In the past, research libraries in the United States have tried to coordinate collection development in order use finite financial resources to physically acquire at least one copy of scarce publications that could then be shared. These scarce publications were kept together in physical collections that enabled scholars to identify where to seek selected materials. Interlibrary loan or individual travel to the holding library provided access. Within the United States, we pride ourselves on our interlibrary loan structure and our willingness to share our collections.

Interestingly, interlibrary loan is not yet well developed among Asian libraries. There are complex and myriad reasons, but one factor is the strong cultural bias toward self reliance: "My library should have the best collection possible for my faculty and students." Before you judge this environment, stop and think about the pride that U.S. libraries have for our interlibrary loan structure. We proudly loan to each other, but our library materials only cross our national border under exceptional circumstances. Granted, time and cost factors are significant issues for international interlibrary loan. Nonetheless, consider the cultural bias that is implicit. Could it be argued that U.S. libraries have a history of acquiring foreign library materials through coordinated collection development in order to be self reliant within our borders?

National identity is inherent in who we are. Instead of trying to overcome cultural bias in relationships among libraries in different countries, we should seek ways to capitalize on these differences. "Eliminating Borders" is one of the themes of this conference. We don't need to eliminate Borders. Borders help define us. We need to make them easier to cross. Ultimately, the scholar doesn't care which library owns an item as long as he can quickly put his hands on the information inside it. Can we develop means that truly facilitate international sharing of limited information resources? Can we make it as easy to deliver from across the Pacific Ocean as it is to retrieve an item from our local off campus storage?

With these thoughts in mind, we pose that it is time to move beyond nationally focused coordinated collection development. However, knowing the inherent limitations of the coordination model, it is clear that simply transplanting that strategy into an international venue is not a useful venture. Instead, it is time to shift our focus to international cooperation.

Recent economic prosperity and technological advancement around the Pacific Rim region have given rise to a new kind of cooperation to provide widespread access to diverse information resources. The body of information produced about and throughout the Pacific Rim during the

last few decades has been increasing at a rate far in excess of what a single library can acquire and provide for its users. The development of comprehensive collections of foreign publications is particularly challenging. More and more, libraries have come to rely on borrowing from each other to meet the needs of their users. This principle of resource sharing via interlibrary loans is sound, but there are significant obstacles that manifest due to political, language, geographic, and technical issues.

The **Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance** was formed in an effort to overcome these obstacles using the strategy of practical projects and agreements to improve scholarly access to the collections held by its members. Through this cooperation, we believe that over time the Alliance will profoundly affect intellectual exchange and mutual understanding between East and West.

History of the Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance

In 1995, the University of California, San Diego Libraries received a two year grant from the National Security Education Program to develop a multilingual computer server to provide international access via the internet to online information in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean scripts. As part of the NSEP grant, the UCSD Libraries hosted a seminar in December 1995 and invited technical specialists from Pacific Rim countries to provide input into the development of the multilingual server. Further developing these relationships, the UCSD Libraries initiated bilateral arrangements with key participants to use the internet to expand traditional library exchange arrangements. One of the first agreements enabled the provision of scientific information from UCSD in exchange for access to Chinese language databases from Academia Sinica in Taiwan. This unprecedented electronic exchange of diverse scholarly information across academic disciplines and national boundaries has been highly successful and is greatly valued by scholars at both institutions. Since then, similar exchanges have been launched with Peking University, Hong Kong University, and the Australian National University.

The success of these initial bilateral exchanges inspired the concept of a multilateral partnership among libraries from major academic institutions around the Pacific Rim. In June 1997, UCSD hosted a conference during which the Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance was conceptualized. Invitees to the conference included senior management from institutions that were represented at the December 1995 seminar and from other institutions with whom close personal working relationships had been established. The Alliance was formally ratified by its members in October 1997.

The Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance is a consortium of thirteen prestigious academic libraries in Australia, Canada, China, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Singapore, Taiwan, and the United States. The goal of the Alliance is to facilitate improved access to scholarly research materials throughout the Pacific Rim. Resource sharing, document delivery, cooperative collection development, personnel exchange, and the use of technology are seen as key cost effective strategies for overcoming budgetary constraints and the barriers of distance, language, and culture.

The charter members of the Alliance include:

- Academia Sinica, Taipei

- Australian National University Library, Canberra
- El Colegio de Mexico Library, Mexico City
- Keio University Library, Tokyo
- National University of Singapore Library
- Peking University Library, Beijing
- Seoul National University Library
- University of British Columbia Library, Vancouver
- University of California, Berkeley Library
- University of California, San Diego Libraries
- University of Hong Kong Libraries
- University of Washington Libraries, Seattle
- Zhongshan University Library, Guangzhou

The National Institute of Japanese Literature, Tokyo, is an associate member. The Alliance also has technical partners in support of the complex issues that are found in creating and managing digital library resources:

- Council on Library and Information Resources, Washington, D.C.
- Digital Library Federation, Washington, D.C.
- San Diego Supercomputer Center and Center for Advanced Computational Science and Engineering

Significant infrastructure funding for the Alliance has been provided by the Henry Luce Foundation. The Alliance has also received private individual financial support and a software contribution from Innovative Interfaces.

Pacific Rim Digital Library

We are creating a Pacific Rim digital library that will directly serve Alliance students and faculty. Construction is underway for a virtual "building": <http://www.prdla.org>. The catalogs for Alliance libraries are now available from this site. Work has begun to mount the first exhibit: a digital Pacific Explorations Archive which will include books, diaries, ships logs, atlases, manuscripts, sketches, photographs, etc. The Chinese Digital Library will comprise another very large "wing". The Chinese Digital Library project charts new territory that requires the integration of varied technologies across operating systems, character codes, proprietary software, mass data storage, and cultural boundaries. In addition to the international academic partners, we are working closely with four companies that have exceptional multilingual

capabilities: Superstar (Beijing), Star+Globe (Singapore), Digital Heritage (Hong Kong), and Innovative Interfaces (Emeryville CA).

As this paper is being written, we are finalizing the acquisition of a server at the San Diego Supercomputer Center to provide the technical support for internet access to some of the collections in the Chinese Digital Library. These are databases of fully digitized Chinese language books including the Qing Dynastic Library and a large corpus of recent acquisitions by the national Library of China. These digital libraries are of significant importance to scholars, but they also contain works that are of interest to the general public, e.g., literature and history. The initial implementation in the early fall of 1999 will require 200 gigabytes of active disk. Plans are being finalized for the Chinese Digital Library to provide a mirror site for major databases in Beijing, Hong Kong, and Taipei within the next twelve months, possibly creating the largest Chinese digital library site in the world. Growth is expected to be in the terabyte range within a few years. The UCSD Libraries and SDSC will use the composite database as a test bed to conduct research and development in the scaling issues inherent with managing very large library databases. Additionally, the Libraries will develop emerging technologies for the creation of digital images and for the management of multiple-byte character sets. Within copyright constraints, all data will be accessible free of charge to anyone who has a web connection.

It should be noted that the Alliance is not predicated upon Chinese studies or even a broader Asian studies focus. Chinese language materials are not the motive; they are the opportunity. The readily available Chinese language materials form the corpus of an early venture into full text online, but don't forget the earlier reference to scientific information supplied by UCSD. For example, we have faxed thousands of pages of photocopied science and engineering articles to our Alliance partners in Taiwan and Hong Kong in exchange for online access to their proprietary databases. The Alliance institutions support all disciplines in a multilingual environment that includes users who natively speak Chinese, English, French, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish.

The potential resources are enormous. A conservative estimate concludes that there are more than 50 million printed volumes among the combined holdings of the Alliance libraries. An important by-product of this effort is that access to many Alliance resources will become available to anyone who can connect to the internet, whether or not they are associated with Alliance universities. Electronic document delivery and interlibrary loan will provide access to materials that are not available online.

Networked digital technology provides the focus for tangible products of Alliance cooperation. However, equally important is the effort to create a sustainable organizational infrastructure. To be successful, it is imperative that we understand our cultural strengths and weaknesses, and that can be done only through long term personal relationships. To that end, we have begun a series of long term personnel exchanges. We also have supported numerous site visits among the Alliance members. It is possible to accomplish international business by using email, but it is orders of magnitude more effective to meet face to face when planning and implementing complex technical projects. Along the way we become friends and colleagues and establish trust that helps us use our cultural differences in positive ways. This is a long term investment that will be enjoyed by future generations.

The Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance is unique in that it is directly driven by leadership from

university libraries and those who are most knowledgeable about and committed to the services that can be provided. Administrative bureaucracy has been minimized, pilot projects with rapid results are preferred over "grand schemes", and cooperative ventures among subsets of the membership are encouraged. Successful pilot projects quickly deliver needed information resources to scholars and, at the same time, provide the foundations and test beds for the development of even more substantial resources. Each successful bilateral arrangement opens the door to include additional partners in the future. Each personnel exchange is an investment that will be repaid many times through long term relationships that will ultimately benefit our users.

Conclusion

The traditional role of the library to acquire, organize, and deliver information is an enduring one. However, rapid changes in both the quantity and the formats of information resources have combined with budgetary limitations to undermine the viability of the classic library founded on large, comprehensive collections. We seek to overcome these constraints through aggressive resource sharing and the use of technology in support of document delivery. The Pacific Rim Digital Library Alliance seeks to overcome associated political, language, geographic, and technical obstacles through a variety of practical projects and agreements. The Alliance members believe that this strategy is an opportunity to profoundly affect intellectual exchange and mutual understanding between East and West.

References:

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