

REPORT OF WORKING GROUP TO MAP CURRENT COOPERATIVE COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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CRL charged our working group to develop a “map” of current cooperative collection development projects and present prospective collaborators with a “tree of possibilities.” The map (<http://www.crl.edu/info/ccd/ccdsurveyresults.htm>), the product of a survey process described below, incorporates data submitted by 89 active projects throughout the world. We believe it fulfills our charge through illustrating the span and variety of collaborative endeavors currently underway and offering a view of the potential of CCD. Though it represents an unscientific sample of CCD projects, it offers an opportunity to assess the state of cooperative collection development at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In 1987 Joe Hewitt and John Shipman conducted a landmark study of cooperative programs in ARL libraries. They reported that CCD programs were widespread among ARL members. Collaboration occurred in multiple settings, including national, regional, and local consortia, state university systems, and bilateral agreements. Programs most often took the form of general agreements to purchase expensive materials and the selection and deselection of serials. Further, they found that “cooperative collection development programs involving formal, structured assignment of areas of concentration based on subject,

language, or country are rare. Such programs, when they occur, are typically narrow in scope.”* Our map and the Hewitt-Shipman report are not directly comparable. They surveyed ARL libraries; we solicited information from projects including all types of libraries. Yet we can, in a broad sense, examine how CCD has evolved in the fifteen years since the earlier study and whether there is reason to revise our perceptions of the extent and penetration of CCD programs.

The working group developed a web-based survey as the instrument for building the map. After testing a draft survey form on a small group of respondents, we disseminated a revised form (<http://www.crl.edu/info/awccconf/ccdsurvey.htm>) internationally through over thirty library listservs and distribution lists, including a list of all those who attended the first Aberdeen Woods conference, in the fall of 2001. After the initial return date we contacted known consortia that had not responded and encouraged them to participate.

The survey form requested information about CCD projects, not consortia. Thus a single consortium could—and some did—submit separate responses for multiple projects. The group felt this approach was best suited to eliciting useful data about discrete CCD activities that might offer guidance to librarians considering collaborative projects or seeking to join active projects. We asked respondents to describe their projects briefly, answer questions about subjects and formats covered, and note types of cooperation incorporated in the projects. We also asked about types of working agreements and funding arrangements, and the form included fields for contact information about project directors or

coordinators. We mounted the survey responses on a web database at CRL that permits users to browse by project names, subjects, formats, types of cooperation, geographical descriptors (assigned by the group), director/coordinator/contact persons, and sponsoring consortia. Most of these fields, plus descriptive information, will soon be searchable.

The 89 submitted projects are preponderantly North American, but 20% of them feature participation by overseas libraries, particularly in Australia and the United Kingdom. How closely the international distribution of the responses mirrors the distribution of CCD projects is, unfortunately, a matter for conjecture since we lack reliable information about the extent of worldwide collection development collaboration.

Likewise we can only speculate about whether the 89 projects embody a clear majority or unrepresentative minority of American CCD ventures. It may be instructive that only 26 of the 151 members of the International Coalition of Library Consortia responded even though we explicitly included database-purchasing consortia in our description of CCD and solicited participation from ICOLC affiliates. Their return rate could be evidence that the survey data is a disproportionately small sample. It could, however, illustrate the lack of a broadly accepted definition of cooperative collection development. Most ICOLC members may not think of themselves as practicing CCD. While 60% of our respondents reported that the shared purchase of electronic products was among their activities, only 15% reported electronic purchasing as their sole cooperative

endeavor. Consortia whose only collection development function is acquiring electronic resources might have considered themselves so far outside the conventional rubric of CCD that responding would be inappropriate.

At a minimum the database offers an informative snapshot of the current state of collaborative collection development and management. The survey responses indicate, for example, that for most participating libraries CCD is a relatively recent undertaking. Fully 72% of the reported projects were born in the 1990s, confirmation of the emergence of database-purchasing consortia during the decade. Those projects where print-based activities are major components tend to have been in operation longer. While 52% of them began in the 90s, 33% date their origin before 1980.

If our virtual map of US-based CCD projects overlaid a real map, it would reveal a geographic distribution inconsistent with the distribution of population. When we assign regional identifiers to each project based on the locations of the critical mass of its participating libraries, the Midwest is home to the most (36%), the Southeast the second most (22%). Only 13% are located in the Northeast, 3% in the Southwest, 7% in the West. Nineteen percent of the projects can be classified as multi-regional or national.

State-based projects, many initiated through government funding, are prevalent among the US respondents. Fifty-six percent of the projects report all their participants located in one state. Even where state mandates are not at issue,

libraries are inclined to seek partners in fairly compact geographic zones. In 75% of the projects all participants are located in no more than two states, in almost all cases contiguous states. Where print-based activities are paramount, it appears that mutual interest is somewhat more determinative than proximity. Only 45% of these projects are based in a single state.

The database suggests that CCD is primarily an endeavor of academic libraries, though the response set may be weighted toward academics because we publicized the survey in venues that reach more academic than public or special librarians. In only one project do public libraries comprise all the members, and very few multitype projects responded. Large academic libraries participate more frequently than smaller academics. Many state-based consortia include both large and medium-to-small academic libraries, but few cooperative ventures consist exclusively of medium-to-small academics.

Responses to survey questions about the subject focus of collaborative enterprises are not enlightening. Because consortia typically acquire electronic products across the range of disciplines, no subjects can be said to hold preferred status. The subject area with the lowest level of reported activity is “language” (43% of the projects); the highest is “social sciences/law” (57%). Unsurprisingly, 69% of the respondents cite multidisciplinary projects. Many print-based projects collaborate on area studies (as revealed in their survey descriptions and websites), which also tend to be multidisciplinary in nature.

Format preferences are clear. Seventy-five percent of the projects engage in activities related to electronic resources, while 54% incorporate one or more print-related endeavors. Other formats attract considerably less consortial attention: microform 33%, video 21%, audio 18%.

Reports of type of cooperation serve to underscore the degree to which the acquisition of digital resources has become a powerful generator of library collaboration. Sixty percent of the projects broker the shared purchase of electronic products. A comparatively small 33% participate in the coordinated selection or purchase of monographs (print or electronic), 38% the coordinated selection or purchase of serials, 30% the coordinated selection or purchase of other materials. Ten percent are building joint print serial archives; 16% are working toward the joint storage of print materials, and 12% on the joint storage of non-print materials. Of the approximately one third of the projects that include active print-related cooperative programs (more on this below), 71% coordinate monograph selection, 65% serial selection.

Over half the projects (54%) operate through formal working agreements, including charters or instruments of incorporation. Thirty-five percent consider themselves the product of informal arrangements among participating libraries. Whether consortia are chartered or not, collaboration is a heavily self-supported endeavor. While many groups report multiple funding arrangements, 75% of all projects receive funding from member institutions. Twenty-eight percent receive government funding, and 23% have obtained grant funding.

Though the selection and management of electronic materials is the dominant mode of contemporary cooperative collection development, CCD was born as a strategy for coordinating the acquisition and retention of print resources. A careful analysis of the survey responses enables us to measure how successfully consortia have negotiated this traditional and still very challenging form of collaboration. No one would describe consortial electronic purchasing as problem-free, but initiating and sustaining print-based cooperation demands far more intensive planning and consultation among participants. The relatively small number of projects reporting significant print programs testifies to the degree of difficulty inherent in pursuing collaborative print collection building. While over half the projects indicate some print-based interest or activity, a close review of project descriptions and follow-up interviews reveals that far fewer incorporate a viable print component. Slightly over one third of the 89 projects engage in the cooperative selection of print resources or the cooperative storage of print materials.

Print-focused CCD is often defined as a tripartite operation consisting of coordinated multi-library selection, bibliographic access to group holdings, and expedited document delivery. Many consortia that have put the second and third parts of this triad in place find that implementing the first part remains elusive. Survey responses, particularly project descriptions and comments, document that coordinated selection is a widely shared goal, but the same data frequently illustrates the complexities of closing the gap between intentions and results. For

many projects reporting print activities, comments or websites frame accounts of coordinated selection in cautious phrases:

- explore the coordination of acquisitions
- conducting research into collaborative collection development
- under consideration as outcomes
- cooperative book purchasing is under investigation
- to be discussed and formulated
- has established a committee to explore collaborative collection development

The survey provides sobering evidence (as if more were needed) that those contemplating cooperative print collection building have taken on a formidable task.

Yet there is also much to remind us that print collaboration is not impossible.

The map illustrates that print-based CCD is, if not exactly thriving, certainly alive, well, and even rich with opportunities for those able to stay the course and build sustainable programs.

- The University of Michigan and Michigan State University cooperate in building eastern European resources in the humanities and social sciences. UM is responsible for the Balkans, while MSU collects materials on the Baltic states.
- Michigan and Indiana University have joined for almost twenty years in a similar project in Slavic collection development. Indiana focuses on

Georgia and Slovenia, while Michigan concentrates on Armenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

- Duke, North Carolina State, and North Carolina-Chapel Hill are building cooperative monographic collections in Bengali, Farsi/Persian, Hindi, Urdu, and Tamil. They also collaborate in acquiring serials, non-print materials, and microforms.
- Duke and UNC-CH share in developing research level collections on Latin America; each acquires specialized resources from assigned countries.
- The Minnesota State College and University System, supported by state funding, has organized a program that enables each member institution to designate collecting areas in which it will specialize. Other libraries can choose to reduce acquisitions in these areas.
- The Research Library Cooperative Program unites California-Berkeley, Stanford, and Texas-Austin in an ambitious venture to jointly build and share collections. They have reached formal agreement on distributing responsibility for building research collections in carefully defined focus areas of Latin American studies.
- The Tri-College Consortium, a project of Byrn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore, features a shared approval plan (for two of the libraries). The members have also reduced duplication in their government documents collections.
- The Tri-College University Libraries (Concordia College, Minnesota State University, and North Dakota State University) divide responsibility for collecting items reviewed in *Choice*.

Area studies appear to form the surest path to success in collaborative print collection development, at least among large academic libraries. Incentives for cooperation may be stronger in these fields since building intensive multidisciplinary collections covering all of Latin America, Eastern Europe, or South Asia is beyond the means of even the most well financed libraries. Prospects for reaching agreement on collecting responsibilities are doubtlessly strengthened in focus areas that lend themselves to organization by country, language, or material type.

Several responses demonstrate that even where establishing a matrix for shared collection building is politically or organizationally unattainable, there are still avenues for cooperation. They are instructive of the scope of collaborative possibilities.

- The Brittle program, founded at the University of Kansas, includes over 60 member libraries. Members intending to make preservation photocopies submit their selected titles to a listserv. Other members have the option of requesting copies for themselves at reduced prices.
- PANDORA, a consortium of Australian libraries, is establishing a shared archive of Australian online publications.
- The Washington Research Library Consortium operates a shared offsite storage facility that serves seven libraries.

- The Southwest Regional Depository provides a storage facility serving Miami University, the University of Cincinnati, Wright State University, and Central State University.
- The University of Arizona and Arizona State University share the services of a Slavic studies bibliographer.

What does the survey tell us about the state of contemporary cooperative collection development? Thanks to the proliferation of shared electronic purchasing, collaboration is flourishing. But if we assess only the traditional forms of CCD, principally joint print selection and storage, the picture is considerably less sanguine. In fact, there is little to convince us that much has changed in the fifteen years since Hewitt and Shipman conducted their study. CCD characterized by formal, distributed assignment of areas of concentration is still rare and, for the most part, narrowly focused on area studies.

There is, however, reason to assume that CCD in all its forms still has the capacity for growth. The economic pressures that first caused it to appear as an attractive strategy have certainly not relented. Electronic resources promote CCD not only as products for consortial purchase, but also as enhanced tools of bibliographic access and document delivery. Response to the first CRL CCD conference signifies libraries' continuing interest in the topic. And though they may be relatively few in number, those projects that have overcome the barriers to shared collection building show us that progress is possible.

* Joe A. Hewitt and John S. Shipman, "Cooperative Collection Development Among Research Libraries in the Age of Networking: Report of a Survey of ARL Libraries," in *Advances in Library Automation and Networking* (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1987), 191.