Operationalizing the collective collection: a case study of consolidation vs autonomy

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Great Lakes: 21% of world’s surface fresh water

BTAA: 22% of North American print titles

North America
56.2M publications
987.4M holdings

Data represents print book holdings in WorldCat as of January 2018. Circles are scaled to reflect the number of distinct print book publications in each mega-region.

Lavoie, unpublished data, CCLC Research, 2018
The BIG Collection
Commitment to an Interdependent Future:
A Statement by the Big Ten Library Leadership

We, the leaders of the libraries within the Big Ten Academic Alliance, are committed to coordinated stewardship of the print scholarly record. Our history of collaboration positions our libraries to play a significant role in sustaining access to the unique and distinctive resources held in our collections, and our growing network capacity offers significant potential for working at scale to effect greater collective impact going forward.

Networks are inherently interdependent. The reality of today’s world of networked access to information means that research libraries are increasingly interdependent. The current dominant approach, which has each library acting independently and cooperating with others when it is to its advantage, worked incredibly well in a pre-networked society. The Big Ten Academic Alliance libraries believe this model motivated by self-interest must transition to an approach leveraging the affordances of a networked reality.
Motivations

1. To **extend the reach** of materials available to users, especially as any individual library is collecting a progressively smaller part of relevant resources,
2. to make their management more efficient (by **sharing costs and responsibilities**),
3. to coordinate collections above the individual library level, allowing individual libraries to **specialize** and contribute within a defined network of responsibilities
4. and to **collaboratively steward** the scholarly and cultural record.
Retrospective coordination

• Resource sharing: benefiting from the aggregate.
• Shared print: rebalancing collections across libraries and hubs.
• Digitization: release the content of books, broaden access, preserve.

Prospective coordination

• Shared collecting responsibilities. Central purchasing/selection.
• Libraries focus on distinctive.
• Shared description and transaction data for decision support.
• Collections/Acquisitions/Resource sharing

Post hoc coordination of autonomously developed collections.

Believed to be unsustainable but not changing.

Optimal distributed collection. Coordination at the network level.

Believed to be desirable but not happening.

“The traditional model of building large stand-alone collections is inefficient and ineffective” D. Way
Current environment
Integrated user experience
Ease of management
Reduced coordination costs
Consortial agency

Local optimization
Close to the user
Control of costs
Pragmatic
Institutional agency

Trade-offs:
Efficiency vs control?
Systemwide vs local optimization?
Integration vs interoperability?

Degrees of coordination: tradeoff between autonomy and consolidation

Consolidation

Cooperation (autonomy)
“a coordination explosion at the margins”

**Strategy to set expectations?**
- Policy regime?
- Different network practices?
- Multiple working groups. Boards.

**Vertically integrated stacks.**
- No unified discovery.
- Manual connections.
- Disjointed and limited management information

**No systemwide metadata.**
- No systemwide shared print commitments.
- No systemwide view of digitized.
"conscious coordination"

- Optimally distributed collections
- Explicit commitments
- Systemwide awareness
- Efficient network fulfilment
Collective collections

**Build**
- Optimally distributed collections

**Manage**
- Systemwide awareness

**Share**
- Efficient network fulfilment

**Commit to**
- Explicit commitments
  - ... manage, build & share a collective collection for 22% of the US’s books – shared strategy, process and policies.

Create **stronger systemwide awareness** through consolidated metadata management and Dashboard

- More strongly coordinate collections for optimal distribution/creation (prospective collection coordination, shared print, digitization)

- Improve **resource sharing (across networks)** and integrate it into the collection dev process