

CRL's Place in the Shared Print Landscape

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CRL recently laid out its [Agenda for Shared Print, 2017 - 2026](#). The agenda is part of CRL's response to profound change in the world of research libraries, knowledge and information. This "sea change" has created the need for CRL operations and services to evolve.

During the last fifteen years, with the advice and expertise of leading thinkers in the collection development community, CRL's Board of Directors and management laid the groundwork for that evolution. We are now at the point when we must make consequential decisions on how to invest and allocate CRL resources to realize the ambitious goals we have set. Today's forum is one of several opportunities throughout the year (webinars, site visits, the annual meeting) when representatives of CRL libraries can help shape CRL's agenda and can weigh in on the appropriate scope and benefits of CRL's work.

1. Realities and Challenges

Today's forum is about the new partnerships that will be vital to CRL's future, and about what we should look for in such partnerships. Certain economic and operational realities CRL is facing are relevant to the discussion.

First, economic distress:

- Severe cuts--some as much as 33%--in U.S. library budgets, particularly at public universities, plus an exchange rate that recently reduced the buying power of Canadian universities by 25%. Because CRL operating revenues are tied to materials expenditures the result of the cuts is downward pressure on CRL funding.
- A lessening of the ability, or in some cases willingness, of many research libraries to support access to low-use collections, as collections come to figure less prominently in library priorities.
- Retrenchment at the federal level in the U.S. and Canada, as spending at national libraries and national funding agencies is curtailed, shifting the onus of print preservation to the research libraries community.

Second, high fixed costs at CRL:

- The financial burden of maintaining an aging CRL corpus of print and the cost of maintaining the CRL collections facility are substantial and non-fungible.

- The collections facility is geographically “landlocked”, and thus not expandable to accommodate new and future demand.

Third, new digital norms:

- As the use of digital resources is now the norm rather than a preference, ILL is low and dropping, creating the need to increase usage and/or bring down the cost of CRL;
- This further intensifies pressure on member libraries to contain, and even “manage down” print collections;
- Researcher access to materials in traditional CRL areas of strength (news, commercial and government information) requires growing investment in licensing and digitization.

Therefore we must be realistic in framing a systematic, orderly and defensible process for helping members manage down print.

2. CRL Planning and Evolution

Efforts to reposition CRL to more effectively confront these challenges have been guided by many in the community. The transformation of CRL operations and services to date was the product of deliberation and planning at several key moments.

In 2001 the CRL Collections Assessment Task Force, led by the late Ross Atkinson of Cornell University, undertook a critical appraisal of CRL collections and programs at the turn of the century, to provide a basis for strategic planning by CRL’s Board and management. In their report Ross and his colleagues on the Task Force recommended a host of specific measures. Many of the recommendations CRL has since accomplished; others were rendered inoperative by subsequent developments in the field.

More broadly, the Task Force pointed out that CRL had by 2001 evolved from a depository of low-use materials to a center for cooperative collection development, and their report prescribed how it should evolve further. Three recommendations in particular have guided CRL planning in the intervening years:

- First, “CRL should take responsibility for coordinating the collecting and preservation of traditional materials among its membership . . . [and] should view its holdings no longer as an isolated collection, but rather more as a mechanism to assist the coordination of the nation’s collections.”
- Second, CRL should narrow the scope of its collecting, and actively build in certain strategic areas, rather than continuing to passively accept materials designated as low use.
- Third, CRL’s building in those strategic areas should mimic the “cooperative collection development programs that are driven by member demand”, i.e., should address known member needs rather than building resources on a speculative basis.

The 2009 discussion paper by the late Dan Hazen, [*Rethinking Collections in the Harvard College Library: A Policy Framework for Straitened Times, and Beyond*](#), a seminal analysis of the condition of research libraries in the early twenty-first century, also influenced CRL planning. The longtime chair of CRL's Area Studies Council and Board member, Dan called attention to a "deepening structural mismatch between available resources and our community's expectations" that rendered obsolete many "time-honored approaches to acquisitions and collections." He saw that key disruptions in the information landscape brought about by digital technology presented new challenges for the Harvard Libraries -- and for CRL. For CRL the issue of greatest concern was the "longstanding trend toward monetization and privatization" in the realm of mass communications and publishing, which Dan wrote, threatens the very flow of information that the academy requires. He exhorted librarians to "actively engage in reformulating [those] information flows . . . in order to protect future research and learning."

In 2012 the conference [*Global Dimensions of Scholarship and Research Libraries*](#), co-sponsored by Duke University and CRL and supported by the Mellon Foundation, brought together educators, librarians, funders, and scholars to discuss a matter of particular concern for CRL: a breakdown in the longstanding apparatus for acquiring and preserving materials to support area and international studies. Factors in that development included cutbacks in the Library of Congress Overseas Operations and Cooperative Acquisition Programs; the reduction and merging of area studies staff at major research libraries; and drastic cuts in the Department of Education's Title VI Resource Centers and TICFIA program.

Forum attendees noted that the breakdown was occurring at a time when demand for materials for international studies was growing. The forum report, by Dan Hazen and Duke University's Deborah Jakubs, called for a new, collective effort to expand electronic access to international materials. Three recommendations in particular resonated for CRL:

- Digitize the massive legacy of international collections built by North American libraries over the last century
- Pursue national and/or research library-wide site licenses for digital materials
- Broaden the base of cooperative collection development to include institutions outside North America.

3. CRL Baseline Services

To respond to the challenges and trends identified, CRL put in place a number of services and activities that are relevant to considering how to expand the shared collections.

[Ongoing Support for Physical Access to Collections](#)

CRL currently provides access to a combined 90,000 print serial titles from its own collections and those of the Linda Hall Library. Physical delivery of those collections involves extended and generous interlibrary loan terms. In FY 2016 CRL sent 35,816 items on loan.

[Expanded Electronic Access](#)

Through existing CRL partnerships, with the [Linda Hall Library, LLMC](#), and the [US Agriculture Information Network \(USAIN\)](#), CRL adds four to five million digital pages of new scanned materials to its servers each year, as of the end of FY 2016 providing a total 15 million pages. CRL production involves a combination of digitization on request and strategic digitization.

Digitization on Request:

- Each year CRL scans an estimated 500,000 pages in response to researcher ILL requests. Subsequent use of those scans by other researchers involves close to 45,000 downloads annually.
- CRL delivers approximately 12,000 articles from its own collections to member libraries each year, and an additional 6,000 -12,000 articles from the Linda Hall Library.

Strategic Digitization:

- Each year LLMC digitizes approximately 3,000 volumes (four million pages) of historical legal and government serials from CRL collections, adding to a total of 105,000 volumes (64 million pages) accessible online to CRL libraries through the LLMC-Digital database.
 - This year [TRAIL](#) surpassed 61,500 federal technical reports (4.5 million pages of content), which were digitized and contributed to the HathiTrust Digital Library.
 - Each year CRL funding supports additional digitization of historical U.S. agricultural serials, and retention of the source materials by major U.S. academic libraries through USAIN.
 - Over the past ten years 6.3 million pages of historical journals and newspapers were digitized by CRL in partnership with Readex and ProQuest. Those digital files will become openly accessible on CRL servers in the coming years.

Investment in Digital Resources:

Licensing is central to CRL's "actively engaging in reformulating information flows . . . in order to protect future research and learning." In its dealings with commercial and non-profit digital publishers CRL endeavors to supplement its collecting of print materials. The goal is the preservation and integrity of source materials in key areas of CRL strength, particularly news and government information. Cooperation with the NERL consortium, now based at CRL, creates the potential for greater leverage in those dealings.

CRL's collecting of newspapers was designed to ensure that academic researchers have appropriate, persistent access to important and credible news content. The academic site license for the New York Times online was negotiated for U.S. libraries by CRL as a way to address the widening content gap between print and electronic news.

Similarly, securing appropriate terms for online access to critical government information from commercial providers, and supporting open access platforms that expose government information for

historical research is today more likely to result long-term information persistence than collecting such materials in print.

4. The Shared Collections Agenda for 2017-2026

In December 2016, CRL promulgated [an agenda for expanding the shared collections](#) over the next ten years. That agenda consists of five elements.

1) Substantially expand the scope and improve the quality of the shared collections. CRL currently provides access to a combined 90,000 serial titles from its own collections and those of the Linda Hall Library. Most shared print programs focus on widely held materials: English language publications in the STEM fields published in the 1970s and later. CRL will prioritize earlier serials for humanities and social science research. The critical corpus study suggests that the number of those titles is upwards of 500,000.

2) Merge preservation and electronic access. Because the benefits of archiving are multiplied when accompanied by services like digital access and interlibrary loan, CRL will have to substantially increase its investment in digitizing HSS serials both on a systematic basis and in response to researcher requests.

3) Create and promote a “CRL consensus” on the scope, norms and standards of print stewardship. These norms and standards must be consistent with those CRL has maintained throughout its history. The survey conducted in advance of today’s gathering suggests that community consensus is already beginning to form around certain desiderata:

- *Service:* Over 80% of survey respondents said that having electronic access to a title from another repository is a “very” or “highly” important factor in their decisions about retaining local copies. This suggests that CRL partner repositories should provide some form of access to archived materials as a baseline, in addition to agreeing simply to preserve serial titles on CRL’s behalf.
- *Curation versus redundancy:* While the survey results suggest that evidence of redundancy in holdings of a print title is a more significant factor in library retention decisions than evidence of one copy in a “curated” collection. Yet respondents expressed little confidence in the reliability of WorldCat records as an indication of redundancy.
- *Trust, but verify:* Nearly 75% of survey respondents rated documentation or independent verification of an archive’s compliance with retention commitments as “very” or “highly” important in their retention decisions. That suggests that new CRL shared print partnerships should provide evidence or even independent verification of holdings.

4) Forge and formalize new partnerships to achieve greater scale. Although CRL is the largest shared print effort in North America, it will need to engage partner organizations in a rational division of labor to achieve the scale necessary scale. Achieving that scale will require new

relationships with member libraries and coordination with other shared print and preservation programs those libraries support, to avoid unnecessary and costly duplication of efforts.

5) Articulate and promote a clear and convincing narrative for scholars and funders. The supporting narrative of North American print sharing must emphasize the “new goods” that the preservation efforts create, to counter the perception that managing down library collections necessarily entails the loss or degradation of scholarly assets.

5. Moving Forward

Expanding the shared serial collections to a meaningful extent is an ambitious goal. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, CRL’s ability to accomplish its agenda will be limited by economic realities, the high fixed costs of print management, and the demands placed upon member libraries by new digital norms. CRL efforts then will have to be scaled to available resources. The CRL budget proposed for FY 2019, to be submitted for member approval at the May 2018 Council of Voting Members meeting, will therefore outline a reallocation of funds and the changes in CRL operations necessary to begin to achieve these ends.

The formation of new partnerships will be critical to CRL’s future. Decisions about those partnerships will be made by CRL’s Board of Directors and Collections and Services Policy Committee, whose members will be working through these issues during the course of the current fiscal year.

We will keep all members informed on this planning through blog posts, annual reports, forums, newsletters, and webinars throughout the year, and we hope that you will remain engaged in this important collective endeavor.