

FPR Status Report
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PAN Forum, June 22, 2018
(report made from notes used at the PAN meeting)

Short version: the future of the Future of the Print Record Working Group (FPR) is now in the past.

Long version: FPR grew out of a 2010 workshop funded by IMLS to Lyris and partner consortia, “A National Planning Framework for Large-Scale Collaboration on Legacy Print Monograph Collections.” Lizanne Payne and I reported on the event and summarized its outcomes in [Collaborative Librarianship 2:4 \(2010\)](#).

The agenda was not unlike that of the April 2018 EAST Summit and some of the same parties attended. The workshop enumerated a number of research and demonstration projects the shared print community might undertake, along with a few other possibilities for future action, including obtaining a planning grant for a “subject-oriented project, including discussion with society executives, to develop a plan to engage professional associations.”

Since CLIR had experience bringing together scholars and librarians on library collection matters, Chuck Henry, President of CLIR, and I convened a meeting in July 2011 in Charlottesville, VA, of reps from the Modern Language Association, American Historical Association, American Council of Learned Societies, and ARL (CRL was invited but eventually unable to attend) to get a handle on what such a plan might mean in the context of statements made in [1995](#) by a group of MLA members and reports from [ARL](#) and [CLIR](#) about matters related to print and digital collections preservation and access.

We in the group felt it was important for scholars and librarians to make a national, “bipartisan” case for a network-level, collective approach to general, circulating print collections as libraries experienced individual incentives to downsize. Librarians’ decisions to adopt library space and collection management strategies that sent materials off-site or deaccessioned them in favor of digitized or partners’ print copies, along with a host of familiar technological, social, and cultural changes since the advent of the so-called digital age, had created and continue to create difficult and contentious discussions with scholars on campuses. We wondered whether library organizations and professional societies could work together on a strategy that would help individual campuses and the community of librarians and scholars as a whole understand and plan for collective action on the preservation of print collections at a time when shared print projects had begun their work.

From 2011-2013, we had individual and group meetings, expanded our membership roster, and probed various approaches we might take:

- holding discussions at scholarly meetings,
- creating a tool kit for local campus discussions,
- holding sessions for librarians and scholars on campuses or consortia of campus,
- developing a think piece or report for wide distribution,
- clarifying, updating, or revising the work done in those 1995, 1999, and 2001 reports.

As we searched for a focus, we:

- held meetings at MLA at the 2013, 2015, and 2017 conventions with the help of an MLA discussion group called Libraries and Research Forum,
- published a blog post on [Humanities Commons](#) in 2015 about the issues we saw with books in library collections,
- published a white paper, again through [Humanities Commons](#), in late 2016 (revised slightly, spring, 2017) in which we described the problems to be addressed, the benefits to scholarship of a collaborative approach by libraries on collections, a research and planning agenda, and a system for collaboration (much of what we wrote will be familiar to librarians working in the share print space and is in line with, for example, the outcomes of the 2010 workshop and the more recent EAST Summit),
- held face-to-face meetings in Feb 2016 and Jan 2017 to settle on a focus,
- reviewed a report and recommendations about the future of the group that I wrote with sponsorship from ARL and CLIR in the summer of 2017; the report sketches the current shared print landscape for monographs based on interviews with librarians and consortial executives in an effort to help the group determine where its work might find a place in that landscape.

Based on the report we decided to declare victory and disband, leaving behind our blog posts and reports as contributions to the ongoing discussion of library collaboration and looking to the library community to carry on the development of a shared collection informed by the interests of scholars (and such research as done by Andrew Stauffer and colleagues at the University of Virginia). Scholars are certainly interested in the collection management practices of libraries and vital to the design of library collections. Given, however, the several ways scholarly societies are organized and set their agenda and the other claims on the time of and turnover among the members of our group, we couldn't find a way through professional societies to engage scholars in systematic discussion at the national level.