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Introduction

Not so long ago, yet in another age of librarianship, **Evan Farber** urged college librarians to avoid what he called "the university-library syndrome."[2] **Farber's** diagnosis and prescription concern themselves with asserting the teaching mission of the college library, but implicit in his description of the syndrome's etiology in graduate education, university faculty behaviors and predilections, and university library programs is a corresponding de-emphasis of a collection-centered view of a college library's role among students. Some decades before Farber's 1974 essay, **Ranganathan's** fifth law[3] stipulated that a library is a growing organism. Two different, though not necessarily contradictory impulses, then, inform the work of a college library, growing a collection and teaching, a tension exacerbated these days by the ever-proliferating body of materials being published and the adoption at prominent liberal arts colleges of "research" as the mode of learning and of student/faculty interaction.

Libraries large and small have addressed at least the growth dimension of this tension with programs for sharing resources. Thus, even before **Ranganathan** promulgated his laws and long before **Farber** wagged his minatory finger, programs of materials delivery took root and flourished, and programs of coordinated collection development and joint purchasing were not far behind. Resource sharing became a more exact science with the publication of the Great Green Wall of *NUC Pre-56 Imprints* at a time that also witnessed the development of **OCLC**, **RLIN**, and regional or system-wide catalogs. Since then, interlibrary and commercial services have seen a steady acceleration both of traffic and turnaround time as information systems and delivery methods have helped users identify off-campus resources and obtain more of them faster from an increasing number of trading partners.

Any given library has always existed to some extent, then, as a consortial or networked enterprise, but technologies now available for sharing materials and information about materials have emphasized this aspect of libraries to the point where users expect a universal library. A major shift in the local/consortial, owned/accessed balance has occurred, and for an increasing number of users obtaining something fast and picking it up on the run is more important than where it comes from. In **Ranganathan's** and **Farber's** times, and even into the new century, having large numbers of printed books, journals, and other analog materials on site was the only way to ensure access to a lot of information fast.[4] Now, driven by the broad communication, publishing, and knowledge distribution changes set in motion by the commercial exploitation of the Internet in the last 15 years, the access vs. ownership debate that started in the 1990s is being won decisively for many libraries and users by the access side, not least because of the affordances of electronic text and the pressures exerted by campuses to reuse library space and by the economic downturn of the last few years.

Let us remind ourselves as we look at the future of college library print monograph collections that a library is many things — a group of materials, a set of services that helps people identify and use them, a set of (increasingly electronic) spaces where people interact with them and with each other, a cultural memory institution, a node in a network of similar institutions, and a space for teaching and learning. Couple this generic definition with the several new realities occasioned by Websearch, the advent of the "cloud" library and attendant changes in library collections practices and discovery systems, the increasing reliance on electronic text, and emergent practices or models that are refashioning scholarly publishing, and it becomes clear that the idea of a library is not dependent on "books" (except insofar as information continues to be published only in that printed form), indeed that the library's general collection is now, as it has always been, about interaction with and use of texts, sounds, and images, not about books, discs, film, or paper.

Printed Monographs and the Occidental College Library

How does a college library respond to this new ecology of information, in which electronic texts are becoming predominant and the forms and modes of publication, the models for distributing texts, sounds, and images, student and faculty work practices, and the relationships among cultural institutions are shifting most of the patterns or relationships that we have come to think of as "traditional?" In addition to responding to these environmental changes, as every other library must, **Occidental**, again like many colleges and universities, is also repurposing for other academic purposes prime campus real estate devoted hitherto to housing physical library materials.

A four-year liberal arts college in Los Angeles with roughly 2,000 students and 190 FTE faculty, **Occidental College** (*http://www.oxy.edu/*) offers strong research-based humanities, social sciences, and science programs with an "interdisciplinary, hands-on approach to the liberal arts" in a region rich in libraries. We predicate a plan for 21st-Century "collection redevelopment" or "collection renewal" on the following premises:

- robust user-initiated borrowing networks already exist, and additional networks can be established,
- a cooperative regional and national plan for storage/archiving of journals will emerge in the next one to three years and for other kinds of materials in three to five years,[5]
- the library will continue to grow, but it will grow mostly in electronic resources or through the strength, number, and variety of access partnerships,
- even though we know that most people say at this point they like eBooks for some purposes but will not read extended text on screen, mass digitization and reading device/software improvement will eventually create a shift away from print,
- we will continue to buy monographs in print until e-publication and screen reading become generally accepted,
- **Occidental** should avoid storing its print materials in favor of partnerships for access or of placing our materials in already existing storage facilities,
- the College will budget for increased access activity or support of the institutions that afford access to their print materials,
- faculty and disciplines are not all alike in their preferences and habits with respect to library materials, which means we can accomplish a lot without accomplishing the same thing in all areas of the collection,
- it will be to our benefit to seek joint acquisitions programs for printed monographs with our closest or most vigorous trading partners.

Based on these premises and in order to begin to recover space in the library building for the development of the Academic Commons, librarians at **Occidental** have spent academic year 2009/10 reviewing standing orders and the reference collection, removing reference works and journals that are in low-risk electronic form, increasing our commitment to electronic journals and reference works, and assessing special collections with a view to refocusing them on a smaller scale. We have joined the **Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)**[6] for journal archiving and have entered into discussion with potential partners for a joint approach to journal access and for building on existing provisions in research library lending policies that allow regional faculty direct borrowing privileges. We have commissioned extensive analysis from **Library Dynamics** to understand better the composition and use of our general collection, to identify potential candidates for deaccessioning, and to gauge the overlap between our circulating collection and those of consortial partners as well as a local research library, in particular to know the extent to which our collection houses scantly or uniquely held items.

Our plan is to redevelop the College's collection of printed books to consist of well-used titles of current and, in some fields, classic interest and those that have artifactual value in teaching. How big such a collection might be is open to question, but it's probably low six rather than high six figures; it is a collection that behaves more like a large reserve collection than it does a "what-if" research collection. As we divest of materials, we will give to libraries of record those scarcely or uniquely held books we no longer want as a contribution to maintaining the record of publication. Although we will be reducing the size of the print collection and shaping it to rely on other libraries for older, lesser-used titles, we will also work with faculty to renew areas of the collection that they feel need updating in order to meet their teaching needs. In some respects, then, we will be reverting to an older notion of an undergraduate library as a "core collection," problematic though that notion is in a day of expansive and mutating curricula and an emphasis on student research.

According to our book vendor **YBP**, upward of 20% of the 60,000 books they treat annually appear in an e-version within two years of publication of the p-version, which means that, until we see a general shift from page to screen reading and until e-publication has become the norm, we will continue, perhaps in partnership with other libraries, to purchase current monographs of the sort we now do because the content is not otherwise available. We will keep those for some years, probably ten, and then remove them from the collection unless we know they are being used. In other words, we will regard much of what we buy as consumables rather than long-term investments.

Access arrangements on the scale **Occidental** hopes to develop will require a "membership" fee or a similar form of annual commitment to the housing of collections by other entities, perhaps with the addition of transactions fees, so that we will pay, as we do now in many cases, not only for direct services but to subsidize the long-term costs of preserving print and digitized collections in the region. Given the life-cycle costs of maintaining print materials and the difference in life-cycle costs between print and electronic resources,[7] such payments will look like new money but are in fact a relatively small percentage of the opportunity cost of maintaining print collections on campus.

As an experiment in patron-driven acquisition, we will order this year only those titles that our users request. We are trying to make it easier for them to make suggestions, and our hope is to go beyond "just complete the online suggestion form" or "send us a marked-up publisher's catalog" to creating a browser-based "request" button that allows users to capture bibliographic information wherever they are on the Web and forward it to us in one step. We will also keep our eye on print-on-demand (POD) services as an important means for just-in-time access to books as more monographs become available electronically and perhaps as a replacement for purchasing books.[8] We feel we should not invest in a POD machine of our own until, at the very least, the **Google Books** settlement has been assured. Even then, it might be more economical to establish a partnership with other libraries that sets up a regional machine, perhaps at a regional storage facility.

The final piece of our program is a strengthening of the systems that allow our users to request materials held at other libraries. In addition to national interlibrary loan and document procurement channels, **Occidental's** current partnerships are **Link+** for monographs and media,[9] **Rapid** for journal articles,[10] and a special arrangement with all **Oberlin Group** libraries for fast turnaround of articles and books. We are experimenting with **WorldCat Local** in order to test the large-scale resource discovery and borrowing integration it promises and will watch closely the development of **OCLC's WMS** services.

In short, based on our reading of the auguries of change in higher education and until such time as the mass-digitization projects, their legal arrangements, and reading software/devices have matured, we think that faculty and students will embrace a networked, distributed, "cloud" library model for printed materials if they can 1) borrow from a much larger body of (more specialized) resources, 2) discover and request items easily, 3) easily browse and evaluate the content of items using online data or e-surrogates, 4) obtain journal articles within 24 hours and books within 48-96 hours (the current **Link+** speed), 5) and retain items for a period they regard as reasonable.

Conclusion

Over the course of the 2010/11 school year, planning for the renovation of the library building into an Academic Commons will engage the campus about the many dimensions of the work that we do in and with a library. Much remains to be done with our librarians, students, and faculty about the changes discussed above, which, not surprisingly, are contrary to the way we have experienced or think about a library. In addition to the, for many, counterintuitive notion of a small printed book collection in a prestigious college's library, the transition from page reading to screen reading is problematic for many of us, and much remains uncertain in terms of the future of scholarly publishing and of the legal arrangements needed for access to digitized copies of in-copyright works.

All that said, the move to digitized text is inexorable and financially desirable and we fully expect that in the next 10-20 years most printed texts will be treated the way we now treat special collections, that is, they will be used by certain readers for certain purposes, not for general academic reading. We at **Occidental** therefore anticipate the day in the not too distant future when most libraries devote less campus space to housing print materials, most materials are delivered or accessed electronically by most users, most print materials are housed cooperatively, and most libraries have turned most of their collection "development" energies to managing collection relationships and to creating and maintaining electronic materials.

That's another way of saying we foresee a resolution of the tension between **Farber** and **Ranganathan** with the advent of a network of print resources and a "universal" library of digitized text. The library literature is replete these days with calls to concentrate on building services that help users to access and use (online) information more intelligently and efficiently, to help students and faculty do their work rather than "merely" providing large collections. The college library is well positioned, then, both to spend more time on its teaching mission with students even as it offers them the array of resources that has been, until the digital age, the province of the university library. 🐘

Endnotes

1. This article is based on experience with the TriCollege Consortium of the **Bryn Mawr**, **Haverford**, and **Swarthmore College** libraries, to whom, as always, thanks for the memories. Discussion over the years with projects among liberal arts colleges in Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and Ohio, which have tried to treat several academic libraries' collections as one in terms of retention of existing or of purchase of new materials, have also been influential in developing the position outlined here. **Ivy Anderson**, **John Elliott**, **Sharon Farb**, **Howard Harris**, **Constance Malpas**, **John McDonald**, **Bob Nardini**, **Lizanne Payne**, **Bernie Reilly**, **Mark Sandler**, **Karen Schmidt**, **Roger Schonfeld**, and **Emily Stambaugh** as well as numerous colleagues in the **Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)** planning group and in the ad hoc "Friday morning cooperative collections group" at **ALA** have helped to deepen and refine this thinking.

2. **Evan Ira Farber**, "College Librarians and the University-Library Syndrome," *The Academic Library: Essays in Honor of Guy R. Lyle*, ed. **Evan Ira Farber** and **Ruth Walling** (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1974) 12-23.

3. **S. R. Ranganathan**, *The Five Laws of Library Science* (Madras: Madras Library Association, 1931).

4. I am grateful to **Janet Scannell** of **Bryn Mawr College** for introducing me to this formulation of the case for rethinking the library collection.

5. See work underway at the Center for Research Libraries *http://www.crl.edu/archiving-preservation/print-archives*, **WEST** *http://www.cdlib.org/services/collections/sharedprint/westinitiative.html*, and an informal group organized under the leadership of **LYRASIS** *http://www.against-the-grain.com/2010/08/lyrasis-awarded-imls-grant* (all accessed 6 September 2010).

6. **WEST** 6 September 2010 *http://www.cdlib.org/services/collections/sharedprint/westinitiative.html*.

7. **Paul N. Courant** and **Matthew "Buzzy" Nielsen**, "On the Cost of Keeping a Book," The Idea of Order: Transforming Research Collections for 21st Century Scholarship (Washington, D.C: Council on Library and Information Resources, June 2010) 81-105, 6 September 2010, *http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/pub147abst.html*.

8. See **David W. Lewis's** provocative proposal, "The User-Driven Purchase Give Away Library: A Thought Experiment," July 2010, 6 September 2010 *http://idea.iupui.edu/dspace/handle/1805/2212*.

9. **Link+**, 6 September 2010, *http://csul.iii.com/screens/linkplusinfo.html*.

10. **Rapid**, 6 September 2010, *http://rapidill.org/Default.aspx*; an **Oberlin Group** pod now brings 45% of our borrowed articles, but that number will rise with the formation of a new California pod.