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Curating Collective Collections — Shared Print Collections

Reaching Maturity

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This month we’ll take a look at the evolving “big picture” of shared print collections for journals and for books.

Lizanne Payne provides an update on two mature journal archiving programs: WEST and the United Kingdom Research Reserve. And I commend to your attention a must-read report for librarians working to develop coherent models for shaping and sharing supr-institutional collections of printed books. Print Management at “Mega-scale” — A Regional Perspective on Print Book Collections in North America by Brian Lavoie, Constance Malpas, and J. D. Shipengrover (OCLC Research, 2012).

The following is just a teaser to prompt the reader to Google the report and enjoy a glimpse into a possible future, and to speculate on how your library will participate in the emerging collective collections.

Following on the brilliant Cloud-sourcing Research Collections: Managing Print in the Mass-digitized Library Environment (OCLC Research, 2011), in the “Mega-scale” report Constance Malpas and colleagues at OCLC Research’s paint a picture of a possible “mega-regional” framework for regional shared print collections. While the “Cloud-sourcing” report focused on the implications of mass-digitization for preservation of a national shared print collection and on models like JSTOR (the Stock Model), WEST (a Distributed model), and CIC (a Hub model), the “Mega-scale” report begins to describe the characteristics of a Flow model, as exemplified by BorrowDirect. The Flow model addresses the reality (amply demonstrated in the fascinating analysis of WorldCat data included in the report) that the North American Book collection is highly diffused by positing the formation of a virtual collection that integrates discovery and delivery across thousands of local collections.

The concept of “mega-regions” is derived from satellite imagery capturing night-time clusters of light around the globe that transcend political boundaries and map concentrations of population and economic activity. This results in 12 mega-regions in U.S. and Canada, such as BOS-WASH, CHI-PITTS, TOR-BUFF-CHESTER, CHAR-LANTA, and SO-CAL. Borrowed from a paper by Richard Florida (etc.), OCLC Research used this geographical framework to analyze WorldCat data for U.S. and Canada using zip and postal codes to define the clustering data on the North American book collection (collected of “distinct imprints or editions of books in printed form”). National and regional collection metrics on the 45.7 million print books (889.5 M holdings) in N. America include: degree of uniqueness and overlap within and across regions, extent of holdings in academic libraries and in public libraries, measures of rareress and scarcity, global diversity of holdings, extent of “regional” “uniqueness, analysis of pairings of large regions, and examination of the aggregate holdings of “extra-regional” libraries that fall outside the 12 mega-regions.

Based on these data, the authors examine implications for shared print models including: the need for supra-institutional coordination; why and how scale and models of cooperation will likely vary among regions; possible pairing of regions and thoughts about the challenges of addressing preservation of extra-regional collections; the key role of the HathiTrust digital collection in shaping large, multi-regional collection management; and the financial implications of a tendency of smaller institutions to view stewardship of print legacy collections as the responsibility of a small number of research-intensive institutions.

The picture painted in this report is of a rich, highly diffused, and asymmetrically-distributed national collection that will be challenging, but not impossible, to shape at mega-regional scale. While existing models such as CIC, ASERL, Orbis-Cascade, MINITEX, NLM, COPPUL, and WEST have much to commend them, this report suggests that existing cooperative infrastructure may not be equal to the task of shared print management at mega-regional scale. In addition, the authors point out that to round out the “supply-side” picture presented in the “Mega-regional” report, there is a need for a more complete characterization of the “demand side” through large-scale analysis and projection of inter-library lending data. It is their hope that this is a more enabling view of potential paths forward in evolving shared collection management for print books. Check it out!

Shared Print Collections —
Reaching Maturity

Libraries around the world are grappling with the transition from print to digital collections and limitations on space for print volumes. Dozens of initiatives to share print collections have been established in the United States and abroad, usually within existing library consortia, as a mechanism to free space in participating libraries while insuring long-term preservation of research materials.

For decades, libraries have extended their collections by relying on national libraries and repositories in a nonspecific relationship: the Library of Congress, the British Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the National Diet Library of Japan, the National Repository Library in Finland, and many others. In North America, libraries can join the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in an explicit membership to gain access to its collections (among other benefits). A number of library consortia have developed shared storage facilities to house and share library collections for multiple libraries (e.g., Five Colleges, Inc; Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP); Washington DC Research Library Consortium: Preservation and Access Service Center for Colorado Academic Libraries).

For purposes of this report, however, the term “shared print program” means something different. It means a formal agreement among multiple libraries that establishes retention commitments and access provisions for specified sets of library materials. Many of the shared storage facilities have retroactively defined such agreements even though they may have originally been accepted ad hoc deposits of materials from member libraries with no explicit retention agreement. In a growing number of cases, library consortia or other groups have defined a new program specifically to establish shared responsibility for long-term preservation of collections.

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Some of these programs are beginning to reach operational maturity and can demonstrate completion of specific milestones. At the same time, some necessary infrastructure has been developed that will facilitate disclosing these shared collection commitments around the world. This report will describe recent accomplishments and plans in two large-scale shared print initiatives worldwide and will outline these advances in infrastructure.

Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)

WEST is a distributed retrospective print journal repository program serving more than 100 research libraries, college and university libraries, and two library consortia in the western part of the United States. WEST is the largest shared print program in the world so far, measured by the number of participating libraries.

Key features of WEST include:
- Journal titles are selected for retention based on a customized analysis of member holdings, grouping titles in title richness categories (e.g., availability of digital versions, print-only).
- Funding primarily supports the work of Archive Builders to review journal runs for completeness, call for holdings to fill gaps, review volumes for condition, and update metadata.

WEST recently announced completion of its first round of print journal archiving under a three-year program jointly funded by WEST members and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In 2011-12, twelve WEST libraries contributed to the shared collection more than 6,100 journal titles in 4,300 journal families, comprising more than 160,000 volumes. These totals include almost 5,100 titles archived at the Bronze level (no validation, also have digital preservation), more than 500 titles archived at the Silver level (validated for completeness at the volume level), and more than 500 titles archived at the Gold level (validated for both completeness and condition at the issue level).

Archive creation for WEST Cycle 2 is under way, and collection analysis for WEST Cycle 3 will begin in fall 2012. More information about WEST is available at http://www.cdl.org/west.

U.K. Research Reserve (UKRR)

The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) is a partnership between the British Library and 29 higher education institutions in the U.K., designed to preserve and provide access to low use print journals. Under the UKRR program, the British Library retains and provides access to UKRR titles, with additional copies held at two other UKRR institutions to insure sufficient copies for the higher education community. After an initial pilot phase in 2007-2008, UKRR received funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to support a five-year Phase 2 (2009-2014).

Key features of UKRR include:
- Member libraries propose journal titles they wish to withdraw, that are then compared to titles already held in the program or represented in other member library collections.
- Funding primarily supports ingest efforts at the British Library and the work at participating libraries to donate volumes and to deselect local holdings based on UKRR titles.

As of mid-2012, UKRR has processed 50,000 titles into the program, equivalent to 68,000 linear meters of shelving space. UKRR is the largest shared print program in the world so far, measured by the number of titles designated. UKRR is undertaking a strategic review to inform planning for ongoing sustainability after the current program reaches its conclusion in 2014. More information about UKRR is available at http://www.ukrr.ac.uk/.

Others in planning

Some other programs being planned are worth following as they move from planning discussions into implementation:
- Canada: Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) Shared Print Archive Network (SPAN) is a distributed print journal collection using an approach similar to WEST (titles categorized by risk). In Phase 1 beginning in 2012, archive holders will commit to retain low-risk titles for a 10-year period. See http://www.coppul.ca/projects/SPAN.html.
- Hong Kong: Joint Universities Research Archive (JURA) will be a shared facility and collection agency to tertiary education institutions of Hong Kong. Construction of JURA, an automated storage and retrieval system (ASRS) housing up to 7.4 million volumes, is expected to be completed in 2013. See http://www.jula.org/project/index.html#JURA.
- United States: Center for Institutional Cooperation (CIC) Shared Print Repository is a program of ten CIC members to share Elsevier and Wiley journals housed at Indiana University’s Auxiliary Library Facility (ALF). See http://www.cicnet/Home/Projects/Library/
- United States: HathiTrust members approved a recommendation in October 2011 to establish a distributed archive of print monographs corresponding to the digital copies held in HathiTrust. Detailed planning is expected to begin in 2012-2013. See http://www.hathitrust.org/constitutions/constitutions/2011_11octoberproposal1.

Infrastructure for Sharing Collection Commitments

Most shared print programs use a local database or catalog to analyze and share information about materials that are to be retained. To disseminate such information widely outside the regional group, a more global approach is needed.

In 2011-2012, a working group from the shared print community, including OCLC staff, developed and tested a recommended data structure designed to make collection commitment information available in a standardized form to libraries worldwide through the WorldCat database. A description of the pilot project and its final report with detailed metadata guidelines is available at: http://www.oclc.org/productworks/shared-print-management.htm.

During a similar time period, the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) developed the Print Archives Preservation Registry (PAPR) knowledgebase, with the California Digital Library (CDL) as development partner. PAPR includes a directory providing information about shared print programs and their participating libraries, and a database of Archived Titles contributed by shared print programs. PAPR currently includes Archived Titles from WEST, CRL’s JSTOR Collection, ASERL, and others. The PAPR knowledgebase is freely searchable at http://www.printregistry.edu.

Groups and libraries that are embarked on shared print agreements are urged to share information about affected titles through these WorldCat and PAPR knowledgebases. Amassing consistent data about worldwide shared print retention commitments will enable all libraries to make informed decisions about managing their local collections and will promote comprehensive preservation of research collections.

Random Ramblings — Does the Focus on Banned Books Subtly Undermine Intellectual Freedom?

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I write this column with trepidation because I am a hardcore advocate for intellectual freedom. Ever since I was appointed Chair of the ACRL Intellectual Freedom Committee in 2002, intellectual freedom has been my focus within ALA. I’ve served on the Intellectual Freedom Roundtable (IFRT) Executive Committee, chaired the group, and will now represent IFRT for the next three years on ALA Council. I attend as many meetings as possible of the Freedom to Read Foundation (I also regularly send a check) and the ALA Intellectual Freedom Committee. I write on intellectual freedom. The hundreds of students who have taken my collection development course get a rousing unit on intellectual freedom.

I am not questioning the exceptional success of the efforts to publicize Banned Books Week. ALA and all its units involved with intellectual freedom garner attention and much public support with this event. During Banned Books Week, libraries have exhibits of banned books, sponsor readings from them, and generally increase awareness of intellectual freedom. Intellectual freedom continued on page 83