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MAKING THE MOST OF THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH LIBRARIES: A MEMBERS ROUNDTABLE

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ABSTRACT

As university budgets strain under the pressure of the economic downturn, consortia bodies are increasingly relied upon to maintain the purchasing power of the acquisitions budget. Membership in CRL provides universities, colleges and independent research libraries with both conventional and electronic access to its rare and unusual collections. How are member libraries making the most of these resources? How are they being promoted? How are faculty incorporating the resources into their courses and assessment? Bring to the table your experiences, examples, and questions and benefit from the collective knowledge of your colleagues.

Queen's University is located in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. With 17 faculties and schools, Queen's is one of Canada's leading research intensive universities. More than 20,000 students and 1300 faculty and researchers conduct their scholarly work with the support of Queen's Library system, which is comprised of 6 campus libraries in five physical locations. After a long-standing desire to join the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), Queen's University Library became a member in 2006 as a result of the strong fiscal environment at that time. The Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) is comprised of 73 members and spans coast-to-coast in Canada. This partnership, dedicated to building research capacity among Canadian Universities, brought member libraries aboard en masse in 2007. At that time Queen's CRL membership was absorbed in the consortia purchasing agreement.

Librarians at Queen's viewed membership in CRL as an opportunity to increase the collection size of the virtual holdings and offer researchers access to a wealth of collections from outside the traditional collection strengths of Queen's University. Out of a desire to see CRL's rare collections used by researchers at Queen's, Queen's librarians have sought new and innovative means of raising awareness and use of CRL.

In assessing the Queen's experience we have found that librarian knowledge and promotion of CRL is vital to seeing the type of borrowing which the investment in CRL membership would justify. Without the personal commitment to getting the resources to the faculty, researchers may be missing valuable material for their own research and innovative methods for improving student researchers ability to handle and assimilate primary source documents.

Queen's Library undertook a manifold promotion and awareness campaign to promote the collection and services of CRL to our campus community. The library's team structure allowed the library units to deliberate how to best present the material in CRL to our community of scholars. The merits of loading CRL records in the local catalogue was the first step in raising awareness and putting the material in the view of researchers.¹ This resulted in loading the

¹ For more information on how to load the records see: <http://www.crl.edu/membership/connecting-crl/record-loading#at>

electronic records linking rather than loading the entire CRL records into the local catalogue.² Instead the CRL catalogue is linked within the local catalogue and on the library homepage.³ The library broadcasts news announcements on its homepage thereby regularly drawing attention to FOCUS releases. Each subject librarian sent an email out to all Departmental Library Representative informing them of the newly acquired membership and offering an orientation.

S. Andrychuk and M.C. Vandenburg published an article for the faculty and staff newspaper, giving a taste of the varied sources available in the Center for Research Library and, again, offering more information.⁴

In September of 2008 Bernard Reilly, President, Mary Wilke, Member Liaison and Outreach Services Director, and Virginia Kerr, Digital Program Manager, CRL made a site visit to Queen's as part of a tour of Ontario University Libraries. We aggressively promoted the workshop using the School of Graduate Studies communications channels. One history professor brought her graduate class in Post/Colonialism: Britain and the Empire, 1780-1947. This class was tasked with using materials from CRL to support their course work, thus integrating CRL into the course curriculum. The graduate history class, combined with interest from across the departments resulted in an excellent turnout and a good number of follow up reference questions for Mary Wilke. Mary Wilke keeps the local librarian in the information loop by copying the subject specialist librarian on the e-mail reference questions she takes from students. This allows a researcher the benefit of two people working on their research query, and increases the home librarians' role in mediating requests. This truly makes CRL another campus library. In an effort to make CRL collections visible in the regular course of research, librarians have placed relevant Focus issues, and links to Topic Guides in course guides and subject guides. The collections available at CRL have been highlighted in History graduate and undergraduate courses and workshops; for instance, an upper year seminar on the making of modern India, utilized the *Resources for the Indian Uprising of 1857*.⁵

The CRL subject guide, supported with high resolution images drawn from a CD-ROM of visuals provided by CRL, is now available alongside our subject guides.⁶ This allows researchers and librarians quick access to comprehensive CRL holdings information. All these means of promotion are supported by CRL with images, flyers, usage statistics, Queen's specific brochures, and individualized home institution mediated reference support.

The usage statistics provided by CRL allows Queen's to determine which areas of the Center's collection are most used and where a subject librarian might initiate outreach in under-utilized areas, or extend to new faculty in likely area studies. This type of evidence base also allows the newer librarian to quickly comprehend what the faculty on her campus are seeking from auxiliary collections such as CRL and suggest an "in" for further collaboration.

Our desire to improve and learn from our international colleagues brought us to review many academic library websites to see how CRL was promoted and integrated elsewhere. This in turn illustrated the need for a further survey of colleagues' experiences and successes. In

² See also, Cornell University Library CRL-OPAC Task Force Accessing CRL Holdings Through the Local Online Catalog Action Document: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/colldev/mideast/crl-opac.html>

³ <http://islander.library.queensu.ca/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First>

⁴ Queen's Gazette, April 28, 2008: <http://qnc.queensu.ca/gazette/4815cd94c95ea.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.crl.edu/sites/default/files/attachments/pages/Indian%20Uprising%20of%201857.pdf>

⁶ <http://library.queensu.ca/research/guide/crl>

preparation for that discussion to take place during the Charleston Conference, we, with the help of the staff at CRL, surveyed the membership.

The survey, which was administered in the fall of 2009, received a response rate of 17%. The majority of respondents fell into two categories, recent members within the last five years (48.3%) and those that have been a CRL member for more than 10 years (44.8%). Respondents were asked to identify, based on their own experience, the primary user group(s) of CRL resources at their institution. Faculty use is the highest, followed by graduate students, librarians, and undergraduate students.

When asked how faculty are using CRL resources at one's institution, a few respondents remarked that they were unsure how faculty are using CRL resources, but most respondents reported that faculty are primarily using CRL resources to further their own research. Faculty are also using CRL resources in a course integrated manner with graduate students and undergraduate students. It is worth noting that more faculty are using CRL resources in undergraduate courses than in graduate courses.

In querying member libraries as to how the resources of CRL are promoted, word of mouth promotion by librarians was the primary method. Featuring CRL on the library website and/or providing a link to the CRL catalogue on the library homepage were the two second most popular means of promotion.

Finally, we received a variety of responses to the question "what factors affect how much your researchers use CRL resources?" Patron knowledge of resources, discoverability, ease of borrowing, librarian awareness and promotion, and relevance of collections for faculty all factored in responses.

In her role as Member Liaison and Outreach Services Director, Mary Wilke works with librarians, faculty and students to help them to use CRL collections and programs effectively. Starting with the ten points found on their website page Connecting to CRL⁷, and the links on this page to publicity tools, information on record loading and web consultations, she highlighted various programs and services CRL offers to its library community while navigating their new website. CRL's new website offers pages specifically for librarians⁸, researchers⁹, and prospective members¹⁰. These pages gather together links of interest to specific audiences. For example the one for librarians gathers together over fifty links in these seven categories: Collection Development, Membership & Governance, Borrowing from CRL, Using CRL Services, Reference & Instruction, Archives & Preservation, and Collaborations. Specific examples of Reference Consultations¹¹ were discussed which led to the discussion of the Undergraduate Research Working Group¹² (URWG).

URWG began in the summer of 2007 when representatives from several liberal arts colleges began to identify small, focused collections of primary source material for digitization by CRL to support upper-level undergraduate coursework and instruction. These selections were for topics or themes of broad appeal to many institutions.

⁷ <http://www.crl.edu/membership/connecting-crl/>

⁸ <http://www.crl.edu/librarians/>

⁹ <http://www.crl.edu/researchers/>

¹⁰ <http://www.crl.edu/members/>

¹¹ <http://www.crl.edu/services/reference/>

¹² <http://www.crl.edu/collaborative-digitization/undergraduate-research-work-group>

This program complements the Digitization Services¹³ through which CRL delivers documents, newspapers, books, and other source materials in digital format to support research and teaching by scholars in the CRL community. The use of digitized materials led to a question of usage metrics. As CRL usage metrics come from several different sources, there is no single source available for a library to go to view. Requests for usage statistics can be sent to Mary Wilke.¹⁴

The value of CRL is maximized when a CRL library not only uses the collection but actively participates in its programs. CRL designed the Primary Source Awards¹⁵ in order to recognize and publicize librarians, teachers, and researchers whose innovative use of CRL primary source materials result in activities and initiatives that:

- Use or promote use of primary source materials in specific research projects and research methodologies.
- Employ primary source materials in the classroom, curricular planning, teaching methods, or student advisory role.
- Facilitate access to primary source materials.
- Support research and the creation of new knowledge or innovative research methods and techniques.

The roundtable discussion explored the research services provided by Mary Wilke and her associates. Members noted that all member libraries would benefit if the resource lists that are produced as a result of research consultations were made available on the CRL website. The work of the Undergraduate Research Group and the resulting resource lists generated considerable interest.

Another area of discussion centered on the merits of loading CRL records into the local catalogue. CRL can provide MARC records for all items in their catalogue, as well as subsets such as electronic only or microform. The detailed usage statistics that CRL can provide its member libraries also generated much interest.

This presentation, which is available at <http://hdl.handle.net/1974/5310>, has outlined various methods employed by librarians to actively promote the Center for Research Libraries among their patrons. To maximize the benefits of membership in CRL a member library's users must be aware of CRL, its collections and services. The CRL recognizes this and assists its member libraries by providing a variety of tools to support the promotion and discovery of resources, from promotional aids such as brochures, fliers, images, and text for use in describing CRL, to usage metrics, MARC records, quarterly webinars and research consultation services.

¹³ <http://www.crl.edu/services/digitization-services/>

¹⁴ Email Mary Wilke at mwilke@crl.edu

¹⁵ <http://www.crl.edu/primary-source-awards>