Collections and Intersections: A Facilitated Library Collection in Action

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Abstract
Over the last several years, Queen's University Library has undertaken numerous collections initiatives in response to space and financial imperatives, increases in new academic programs and the launch of a shared library services platform. Further, the library has placed an increased emphasis on inclusive collections and Indigenous voices. These collections initiatives are examined within the frameworks of facilitated and collaborative collections, regional, national and North American partnerships and consortia, and intersections with shared print, access, resource sharing, digitization and preservation.

Keywords: shared print, collective collections, facilitated collections, resource sharing, inter-library loan

Introduction
Canadian academic libraries have a distinguished history of working collaboratively and consortially to provide library services to their individual institutional faculty, students, staff, and community members. For example, the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) is comprised of 91 members across the country and grew out of the Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP), whose mission included negotiating favourable licensing terms and pooled buying power for many scholarly electronic resources [CRKN, n.d.-b]. The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) is a provincial consortium of 21 academic libraries committed to “advanc[ing] research, teaching, and learning by collaborating at scale in the development and delivery of innovative and transformative services, resources, and digital research infrastructure for Ontario's universities [OCUL, n.d.]. One of its main strengths is a robust online infrastructure, Scholars Portal.

Over the last few years, numerous factors converged to prompt the Queen's University Library to reconsider its approach to collections in relation to access, shared print, resource sharing (inter-library loan), digitization, and preservation. Thought leaders in the field have given us several perspectives and models to consider, including facilitated collections [Dempsey et al., 2014; Dempsey, 2016], collective collections [Malpas & Lavoie, 2014; Lavoie et al., 2020], and collections as a service [Linden et al., 2018]. This paper will examine specific drivers, and actions taken, that have helped the library to begin reconceptualizing collections and the services we offer.

Drivers
Space Pressures
The Queen’s University Library was founded in 1841 and is comprised of six libraries and four cross-library divisions supporting the university’s academic mission. While some of the libraries with smaller footprints have adopted weeding as a regular practice, the flagship library, Stauffer Library for the Humanities and Social Sciences, had not since its opening in 1994. The lack of off-site library storage space likely contributed to this reality, and by the 2010s, was becoming acute. The Vice-Provost and University Librarian at Queen’s, along with counterparts at four Ontario academic libraries, found common ground in discussing the need for off-site storage for low-use library collections as demand for on-campus library spaces increased. The University of Toronto
Libraries recommended a shared print solution using their existing purpose-built storage facility located in Downsview (north of Toronto), and the Keep@Downsview idea was born with Toronto, Queen’s, McMaster University, the University of Ottawa, and Western University.

Financial Pressures
Following in the footsteps of many academic libraries in the 2000s, Queen’s became an active participant in CRKN-negotiated licenses for “Big Deal” content from major academic publishers. These deals sell online access (and sometimes perpetual access) to all or almost all scholarly journal content published by select vendors. Libraries enable access to content from an extensive title list of journals, but lose the ability to curate individual titles based on institutional needs. For Queen’s, the library’s acquisitions budget became heavily weighted to Big Deal expenses, to the detriment of other important information resources in various formats.

Furthermore, over 80% of the library’s acquisition expenditures are in U.S. dollars, resulting in the potential for wide fluctuations on the library’s purchasing power from year to year. For example, from 2014 to 2015 the value of the Canadian dollar dropped by over 19%, necessitating a re-prioritization of collections decisions and a move into a deficit situation.

Increase in new academic programs
In the last several years, Queen’s University has introduced many new programs, ranging from certificates to undergraduate, Master’s and Ph.D.-level degrees, in all Faculties, using in-person and/or online delivery methods. Some initiatives are in subjects not previously covered by the library, such as Arts Management/Leadership and Mining Engineering Technology, while additional investment in streaming videos and ebooks is required to support programs such as the Bachelor of Science and Graduate Healthcare Quality online degrees. With the increase in fully online programs, the library is seeking novel ways to collaborate to meet the needs of users in dispersed geographic locations, such as controlled digital lending and inter-library loans for full e-books.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusivity and Indigeneity
In 2018 the library developed an Action Plan to Support Anti-Racism, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenous Cultures and began work on our Inclusive Collections project seeking to decolonize our collections and incorporate diverse voices and ways of knowing into information resources acquisitions, discovery and access.

We are building staff skills and conducting diversity mini-audits of library collections. We anticipate the need for additional ongoing acquisitions funds to support both a retrospective decolonizing of existing collections and a new acquisitions focus on representing diverse cultures and perspectives, and preserving at-risk knowledge from underrepresented communities across all subject areas. It is anticipated that our users will benefit from increased resource sharing networks and access to shared print/digital collections through the facilitated collections model.

Collaborative Futures – Shared library services platform
A majority of OCUL members participated in the adoption of a shared library services platform (Alma), launched in December 2019. This common infrastructure is an important building block for deeper collaboration amongst members for surfacing collections, improving resource sharing, understanding and visualizing the collective collection, and considering new ways of cooperation, such as shared collection development.

Actions Taken
No library can collect all of the world’s scholarship, either in print or electronically. While libraries strive to meet users’ needs by developing collections “just in case”, this model is not sufficient to meet the depth and breadth of research and teaching that is occurring at our institutions. Libraries
continue to invest heavily in procuring information resources in key areas of scholarship for their institutions, but increasingly there is a shift from ownership to access [Levenson, 2020].

The library took several steps to respond to the drivers listed above. Many, but not all, of the initiatives were undertaken as part of a larger Information Resources Strategy to move us closer to realizing a global knowledge commons of research results [Whitehead, 2016]. In 2017 and 2018, the library crafted a vision to guide the library’s provision of information resources in an evolving academic research ecosystem, and solicited feedback from the Senate Library Committee and Library Advisory Committees for each faculty. The resulting statement follows, along with its guiding principles: “Queen’s University Library provides leadership in the development of a global knowledge commons that enables high impact research and scholarship, reflecting our values of diversity, inclusion and open access to information”, guided by the principles of collaboration, access, curation & preservation, fairness, creation, dissemination, cultural heritage, and promotion & use [Queen’s University Library, n.d.].

Now a few years in, it is useful to examine the library’s various collections initiatives through the lens of Lorcan Dempsey’s “facilitated collections” framework [Dempsey, 2016].

Collections available locally – owned and licensed
In 2016, the library embarked on a multi-year project to modify our acquisitions practices to address the unsustainability of our acquisitions budget trajectory. In consultation with the Senate Library Committee and Faculty Boards, the library raised the issue of untenable scholarly communications models based on an oligopoly of publishers attaining profit margins of 28 to 40% for publishing predominantly publicly-funded research [Larivière et al., 2015; Shearer, 2018]. Under the leadership of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network, this author led a Licensing Transition Task Group in 2017; in addition, CRKN led a nation-wide Journal Usage Project (JUP) to better understand the value of individual journal titles to our institutions’ users. As expected from an earlier deployment of the survey, the national results indicated Pareto distribution where approximately 20% of the journal titles account for 80% of the value to users as measured by usage, citations, and qualitative feedback [Mongeon et al., 2021].

Given the results and further input from our users, the library decided to pilot the unbundling of a Big Deal and deploy any savings to support more open initiatives, unmet information resource needs, and new academic programs at the university. The library continued to focus on providing faculty, students and staff with the information that they needed in a timely manner, but trialed alternatives methods of access to meet these needs.

Based on the JUP data for Queen’s, the library ceased its involvement in CRKN’s Big Deal for Springer journals, and instead enabled subscriptions to Springer journals that were deemed of high value by our faculty and graduate students; furthermore, we employed the adjusted cost per use methodology [Jabaily et al., 2016] to determine which high value journals were not cost effective to purchase as a subscription, and enlisted the services of Reprints Desk to enable demand-driven electronic access to a requested article within 10 minutes, on average.

Resource Sharing
A key ingredient of a successful Modifying Acquisitions Practices initiative was to provide timely access to non-subscribed articles via online interlibrary loan (ILL). OCUL’s current ILL system, Racer (VDX) is approaching end-of-life. The library was monitoring developments in the ILL ecosystem when the opportunity arose for a free 3-month borrower trial to RapidILL as a member of the covid-19 pod. While relatively well-known in the United States academic library market, RapidILL was less know in Canada at the time with only a few subscribers. Rapid’s strengths are its ability to deliver timely and accurate results by searching loaded holdings from members who have agreed to a 24-hour response time. Furthermore, the system load balances borrowing and
lending within an institution, and taps into its global membership to leverage time zone differences. The library has begun integrating RapidILL with our Alma library services platform to improve the user experience and move away from cumbersome ILL forms and sign-in procedures.

Recently, OCUL’s Collaborative Futures partners have begun a soft launch of the Alma Fulfillment Network (AFN) for print materials. Similar to the RapidILL-Alma integration, the AFN will improve the discovery and sharing of print materials between CF partners, improve the user experience, and allow for all borrowed items (Queen’s and external) to be listed on the patron’s Alma account. Although AFN will be beneficial in many ways, it cannot function as a full replacement for Racer.

In 2019 this author was asked to co-led an OCUL working group on Collections and the Future of Resource Sharing to plan strategically for Racer’s replacement, and recommend a set of principles to follow to ensure that decisions about resource sharing infrastructure consider all of the intersections with other developments in collections, such as access, shared print, digitization, and preservation. The working group recommended bold thinking to take resource sharing to the next level with increased e-book lending, broader access to unique collections, proactive and collaborative priority-setting for digitization, and consideration of the emerging context of shared collections at the networked (provincial) level and beyond [OCUL Collections & the Future of Resource Sharing working group (unpublished), 2020]. In addition, the report recommended an investigation of controlled digital lending [Hansen & Courtney, 2018].

During covid-19, Ontario academic libraries paused physical ILL for almost 11 months. Many articles could be sourced electronically, but print monographs could not be obtained from our regular partners, including American libraries as border closures slowed the delivery of goods between countries. The library tried to meet these needs by purchasing e-books where possible, and even purchasing print books that would normally be obtained by ILL since they were out-of-scope for our collecting. One glaring limitation was the inability to borrow or lend e-books due to publisher restrictions.

Although the library provided curbside pickup and scanning for patrons, and enabled the HathiTrust Emergency Temporary Access Service (HT ETAS), it was noted that our ability to serve faculty and students outside of the Kingston area was limited. This experience has generated informal discussions with Canadian colleagues on how we could all better meet the needs of our users who are dispersed across Canada, and how existing reciprocal arrangements could be deepened, and even extended, to collaborate with public libraries to facilitate access to information and material pick-up.

Shared Print & Digitization
The library’s first foray into shared print began in 2015 with the Keep@Downsview partnership. Although it began as a shared storage facility, it became clear that the initiative would be larger than five libraries independently making local collection management decisions. The recommended strategic direction for the next five years is to position K@D in the global context of network-level collective collections through four areas of activity: Develop Partnerships; Explore Collaborative Collection Development; Focus on Access and Preservation; and Assess Resources in Relation to Anticipated Growth [McMullen et al., 2021]. The K@D shared print initiative uncovered many avenues for collaboration with other shared print programs in North America through the Print Archive Network (PAN) meetings organized by the Centre for Research Libraries (CRL), to the emerging Partnership for Shared Book Collections, for which members of K@D have volunteered. These organizations and interest groups provide a wealth of experience and ideas on services, strategic planning, best practices, communications, and more. Based on the positive experience of the K@D initiative, member libraries are drawn to deeper collaboration in planning digitization priorities, and moving from an ad-hoc approach to a coordinated one in which partners de-duplicate identified low-use print collections while simultaneously creating digital surrogates and adding them to existing digital corpora, such as HathiTrust or Internet Archive, for improved discovery, access, and preservation.
At the national level, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) and Library and Archives Canada (LAC) established a joint working group in 2018, comprised of representatives from academic, public, and government libraries, along with members active in current regional shared print programs in Canada. Among its achievements, the Canadian Collective Print Strategy (CCPSWG) working group ran a pilot overlap study of Canadian federal government print documents, in which Queen’s participated, and published its final report in September 2020 [CCPSWG, 2020]. The report proposes a national shared print network for Canada, with an emphasis on balancing libraries’ needs to consolidate print holdings with a shared commitment to ensuring long-term retention and access at the national level, with a focus on Canadian materials and intersections with current digital heritage initiatives.[CRKN, n.d.-a] Originally conceived from the 2017 "@Risk North" conference organized by CARL, LAC and CRL, the recommendations of the working group will better position Canada to coordinate at the national level, and operate within the larger landscape of global shared print programs, while prioritizing made-in-Canada solutions to issues such as Indigenous ways of knowing and cultural protocols for information resources.

While perhaps not a ‘shared print’ initiative based the current definition of the phrase, the library is a member of the Centre for Research Libraries (CRL) and HathiTrust (and by extension, the HT Shared Print Program, to which K@D contributes). Both of these organizations are important players in the facilitated collections model for many North American academic libraries, and are well-positioned to work with other stakeholders in areas of mutual interest. One notable development is the collaboration between CRL, HT and the California Digital Library to develop jointly the Collection Comparison tool, freely available to all libraries, to compare serial holdings with retention commitments in CRL’s Print Archive and Preservation Registry (PAPR) [HathiTrust, 2021]. This type of infrastructure is vital for libraries to work at scale in support of collection management, preservation, access and joint stewardship.

Open Scholarship

The savings from a Big Deal retreat, among other factors, permitted the library to increase our investment in open access collections, infrastructure, and community efforts. The library is a member of the international Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR), and recently reinstated its membership with the global advocacy organization, SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition). The library supports other open access initiatives such as the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), Erudit, and an annual grant for Queen’s faculty to create or adapt Open Education Resources (OER). The Open Scholarship Services division in the library promotes and assists with the creation of open journals through the Open Journal Systems and with the deposit of scholarly publications in the QSpace repository. Discovery is also a priority as the library enabled access to Unpaywall's vast listing of OA articles through Alma.

Observations

In response to different drivers, the library has taken action to re-think collections while ensuring that our patrons have access to the information that they need for research, teaching, and learning. While we have a strong commitment to “open”, we have a companion commitment to "available". By looking beyond local print and online collections, and traditional ILL, we have found like-minded institutions grappling with similar intersections of access, ownership, preservation, digitization, resource sharing, and collection management at scale.

Paradoxically, this examination has caused us to become more interdependent in some areas and more independent in others. For the former, our participation in K@D opened new avenues for collaboration with other shared print programs in North America, and a common purpose to develop policies, infrastructure and services to manage a less duplicative but critical corpus of print materials residing in libraries across the continent. Moreover, our provincial consortium launched a shared library services platform at the end of 2019, and will be launching a robust fulfillment
network for print materials in August 2021. Further collaborations are possible on this new shared infrastructure, including collaborative collection development as one example.

However, we felt it necessary to move forward independently on a RapidILL subscription to meet our patrons’ needs for fast online delivery of journal articles and book chapters, especially in the context of our Modifying Acquisitions Practices project to unbundle a Big Deal. This decision, taken outside of our regular provincial ILL framework, allows us to collaborate with over 500 institutions worldwide to borrow and lend library materials online; as of early 2021, there was sufficient interest in Canada libraries to warrant the establishment of a new Canadian “pod”. Furthermore, we have pulled back from one (and potentially more in the future) Big Deals offered by our national consortium, and may decline future enrollment in transformative agreements as in our view they continue to support an unsustainable model of scholarly communications that lacks the flexibility that we need to manage our acquisitions budget at a mid-sized Canadian academic institution.

The library has taken a hybrid approach with respect to addressing offensive Library of Congress subject headings, especially in describing our Indigenous library materials. We began discussions with Library Services Centre to trial their Respectful Indigenous Subject Headings list, which itself is adopted from work undertaken by the Greater Victoria Public Library in British Columbia [Library Services Centre, 2020]. We will be working with Indigenous partners on campus and in the community to trial these subject headings with the Indigenous Teacher Education Program collection. This approach is temporary as we anticipate important outcomes from the Canadian Federation of Library Association’s Indigenous Matters Committee (Red Team), Library and Archives Canada, and other heritage institutions and Indigenous communities to develop policies and infrastructure to move forward as a country [Allison-Cassin & Wolfe, 2021].

With the advent of new engagements with Collaborative Future, HathiTrust, Keep@Downsview, the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, a Canadian national shared print network in the pipeline, and long-standing commitments to provincial, national and North American consortia and organizations, it is worth considering our investments in all of these groups. It is possible that the major shifts we are seeing with collections require these nimble, mission-focused groups to respond appropriately. They may also be natural outgrowths of a movement from local to the networked level, and reflective of a desired state to focus local efforts on distinctive or unique items and how to connect them to larger shared collections.

Interestingly, in Canada we have seen some convergence with consortia and collections work. For example, in 2018 CRKN merged with Canadiana, thereby expanding CRKN’s mission to support the digitization, preservation and access to Canadian heritage content alongside its core journal licensing mandate. CRKN’s Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) Task Group explored the potential to expand the Scholar’s Portal’s TDR of content licensed to members outside of Ontario, and recommended moving forward with leveraging this existing infrastructure.

A final observation that may not be unique to our library is the lack of required staff skills in data analysis. Whether working at the local level or at a larger scale, we have discovered many challenges with fully understanding our holdings at scale and various permutations of overlap analysis and data matching. To make sound data-driven decisions, we need different skill sets to produce complex overlap and retention analysis, modeling scenarios, cost analysis reports, and visualizations for maximum insights and impact. This summer we hired a Data Analytics student intern to understand better how computer science thinking could be applied to our business needs.

Conclusion
While the scholarly ecosystem continues to change, library collections remain an integral component of academic library service [Mays& Rieger, 2019]. Library collections themselves have evolved from mostly print-based and local to a more complex model of shared print stewardship and
broader online access on a larger scale. The Queen’s University Library will continue to re-think how local needs can be met within this broader framework, in consultation with patrons and a growing list of trusted partners, and by monitoring developments such as BTAA’s BIG Collection initiative for collective collections [Dempsey, 20.

At this point there is no clear blueprint to follow, but experimentation and innovation have guided our approach, along with an Information Resources Vision and related principles. It was very useful to have Lorcan Dempsey’s facilitated collections model to frame and assess our work to date, and plan as an institution and with consortial partners. Developments in shared infrastructures, policies and analytics will be essential to move towards more radical collaboration, as will an openness to work with non-traditional partners such as public libraries. As covid-19 demonstrated, timely access to information in all formats is valued by our patrons, and prolonged library closures did have a negative impact on many of our patrons. Fortunately, the library was able to provide access to HT ETAS for a portion of our in-copyright print collection, but this would not have been possible without the years of dedicated work by HT and its founding members to operationalize the bold idea of creating HT. Similar bold leadership will be required to leverage all of the possibilities of large-scale print and digital corpora. Resource sharing will be foundational to the success of these plans, as will a reclaiming of libraries’ rights to lend material in a digital age using a controlled digital lending framework, and loaning full e-books via inter-library loan.


