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Eliminating Duplication in A Shared Storage Facility: Practical and Political Issues

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Against the Grain

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JUNE 2001

Against the Grain

"Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians"

Eliminating Duplication in A Shared Storage Facility: Practical and Political Issues

by **Joanne Oud** (Collections Manager, Wilfrid Laurier University Library, 75 University Ave. W., Waterloo, ON Canada N2L 3C5; Phone: 519-884-1970 x2073; Fax: 519-884-8023) <joud@wlu.ca>

Introduction

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of shared remote storage facilities being constructed, as libraries facing space shortages see the value of sharing storage costs. As shared facilities become more common, the issue of how to deal with multiple copies is emerging as a concern in cooperative collection development.

The library systems at the **University of Guelph**, the **University of Waterloo**, and **Wilfrid Laurier University**, three public institutions physically located within a short distance of each other in Ontario, Canada, constitute the **TriUniversities Group of Libraries (TUG)**. These libraries built a shared storage facility called the **TriUniversities Annex** in 1996 to address chronic space shortages. Initially, 25 years of space was projected. Although the original

intention was to integrate collections, it was decided not to eliminate duplicates in initial shipments because of difficulties identifying overlap in the three separate online catalog systems, which were in the process of being merged into one database.

Only a few years later, transfers have happened at a much higher rate than expected and the **Annex** has only 5-7 years of space left. Concerns about space taken up by duplicate copies have resurfaced. This article discusses issues examined by the **TUG Information Resources Committee**, made up of the chief collections officers at each of the three institutions, to determine if eliminating duplicates in storage would be a feasible way to address looming space crises. Two options were considered: deselecting duplicate copies already in storage, and refusing to accept items sent to storage if a

copy from another library is already housed there. Except for some staffing and workflow implications, issues are similar for both.

Collection Use and Condition

Arguments for discarding duplicate copies are compelling: if materials are used seldom enough to be sent to remote storage, multiple copies are unlikely to be needed. Keeping only one copy would therefore free up much needed and expensive space with little effect on service to users or access to materials.

However, the issues involved with discarding duplicates are complicated, and few libraries have experience dealing with the situation.

continued on page 20

If Rumors Were Horses

SIRSI Holdings Corp., a privately held company, and **Data Research Associates, Inc.** (NASDAQ: **DRAI**) have jointly announced the signing of a definitive merger agreement providing for a subsidiary of **SIRSI** to purchase all outstanding common stock of **Data Research Associates (DRI)** for \$11 per share in cash, or approximately \$51.5 million. When combined, the new **SIRSI-DRA** company is expected to be a leader among vendors in the library automation industry, based on a number of installed systems, according to data compiled and published in the March 2001 issue of *Library Systems Newsletter*. **Michael J. Mellinger**, **DRA's** Chair of the Board, will remain an integral part of the management of the combined organization. He will serve as chairman of the new **DRA**, which will become a wholly owned subsidiary of **SIRSI**. He will

also serve on the board of directors of **SIRSI**. www.dra.com.

Seems to be more than just a rumor. The potential merger of **Swets Blackwell** and **Nijhoff** was recently discussed in the Dutch trade magazine, **Boekblad**. See <http://www.boekblad.nl/> Yours truly called **Nijhoff's Ineke Middeldorp** <middeldorp@nijhoff.nl> and **Bas Guijt** who say that, with all the "electronic capabilities" out there, they are "talking with several companies" to "form partnerships, alliances." More to come?

An **eBook lawsuit** is in the works in Manhattan's federal court. **ZDNet News** (May 4, 2001) reports on **Random House vs.**

continued on page 6

What To Look For In This Issue:

<i>Digital Archiving, A Work in Progress</i>	28
<i>Alibris and 21 North Main: Breaking New Ground in the Search for O.P. Books</i>	32
<i>Domain Names, Cybersquatting and the ICANN System</i>	71
<i>The Real Cost and Price of Ejournals</i>	82
<i>Some Trends in Electronic Publishing</i>	84
<i>Anatomy of a Used Book Sale</i>	89

Profiles Encouraged

<i>University of Cape Town Library</i>	46
<i>Digby Sales</i>	50
<i>A.K. Peters, Ltd.</i>	52
<i>PaperPath</i>	54

Interviews

<i>Keith Courtney</i>	42
<i>Mike Markwith</i>	42

1043-2094(200106)13:3;1-4

Eliminating Duplication from page 1

A literature review followed up by questions posted to various listservs yielded much interest but few concrete experiences with discarding duplicate copies in shared storage. Articles on collections issues in remote storage (Hazen 2000, Powell 1998, Seeds 2000) touch only briefly on storage facilities shared by multiple libraries. In the only article devoted to duplication in shared storage, Michael Buckland (1990) examines the arguments for eliminating and keeping duplicates in shared storage. The discussion raises several issues, including:

- Materials vary in popularity over their lifespan and a low use title may become popular again.
- There may be restrictions on use of some copies; others may have restrictions on withdrawal.
- If no copies are in good condition it may not be prudent from a preservation standpoint to leave only one.

These have all been major considerations for the **TUG Libraries**. In particular, two libraries have collections with restrictions on withdrawal, in one case because of agreements made when accepting gift collections and in another because of legal ownership by an affiliated unit of the university.

Librarians and patrons also have reservations about withdrawing copies without ensuring that the best copy is kept. In the case of journals, a complete run without gaps may need to be constructed out of the holdings of more than one library. Retention of multiple copies may be necessary in some cases, such as poor condition, first editions, or special provenance. In all cases, examination of physical items located in different buildings would be necessary to make a decision. This requirement would significantly impact on staff workload and slow the transfer process.

Most discussion about discarding duplicate copies in storage is based on the assumption that collections in storage are infrequently used. However, some collections in the **TUG Annex** actually receive regular use, either because severe space shortages forced the transfer of higher use collections or because the items were placed there for reasons other than use. Keeping only one copy of these items to serve three institutions would present access problems for users.

Ownership and Access Issues

Issues of ownership are thorny and have both political and practical dimensions. Deciding to keep only one copy for three libraries means giving up local control of your library's collections in those cases. Giving up this kind of local control over collection decisions may be an uncomfortable and unfamiliar situation for librarians, faculty, and administrators. In **TUG**, even though the

three libraries have a good relationship and have worked closely on collection and service initiatives for years, true cooperative collection development is still in its early stages, and an agreement to preserve access to the last copy was seen as essential.

As we discovered, however, implementation of any formal agreement brings up difficult legal and institutional details. There are legal and institutional complications surrounding issues of joint ownership, which an agreement implies; all three universities also have institutional regulations governing formal legal agreements. For a number of political and practical reasons **TUG** is not a formal legal entity and cannot therefore legally own anything; ownership must remain with the constituent libraries individually.

After deciding that a formal agreement on joint ownership of collections had too many legal and administrative roadblocks to be feasible, the **TUG Libraries** agreed that a more informal arrangement would work. A strong existing relationship between the libraries for access to collections exists, which includes an integrated library catalog with a shared database for all libraries, and a heavily used one-day book and journal article delivery service from any library or the **Annex**. This past and current level of cooperation is considered to be assurance of continued future access. In addition, policies at each library can be changed to prohibit withdrawal of unique titles from the **Annex**, and records in the shared online catalog database can be changed to reflect joint ownership for remaining titles when a duplicate is withdrawn.

This type of shared ownership, whether formal or informal, brings up highly political issues surrounding counting, statistics, and rankings. Two of the **TUG Libraries** belong to **ARL**, and all contribute library statistics for Canadian university rankings considered vital by campus administrators. Such statistical rankings rely heavily on number of volumes, and often specifically exclude shared collections. Libraries sharing ownership of single copies in storage are not taken into consideration. Options would be either to report volume decreases to ranking agencies or to include shared collections in volume counts despite instructions to the contrary. The counting problem presents one of the biggest obstacles to shared ownership and generated much discussion in **TUG**. As more libraries face space shortages and attempt to save costs by sharing remote storage facilities, we hope there will be more recognition of joint ownership.

Political Issues

Many librarians and library patrons do not like to see library materials discarded. Com-

bined with uncertainty over relying on another library for access and preservation of titles formerly controlled locally, there may be internal and external political resistance to the idea of discarding duplicate copies in storage. The level of resistance has varied considerably at the three **TUG Libraries**, depending on institutional climate. There has been agreement, however, that keeping only one copy makes sense for large sets or runs of journals, especially those with duplication in other formats. Concerns about what would

happen if the use of an item increases and the original owning library decides to move it back from storage still need to be addressed. Options include a policy agreement to keep

items with shared ownership in the **Annex** permanently, and a committee with responsibility for administering shared ownership collections in storage which would make decisions in disputed cases.

In addition, there are different regulations about how university property can be disposed of that need to be taken into consideration. Since all **TUG** cooperation has been between the three library systems as opposed to the three universities, campus lawyers and financial auditors unaccustomed to thinking about collective ownership issues have been hesitant about approving the concept.

Staffing and Processing Issues

Items to be transferred to the **Annex** are currently processed at the originating library before the books are shipped. Locations are changed, a storage number assigned to each item, and volumes are packed into boxes. Books are shipped to the **Annex** and unpacked by **Annex** staff. They are shelved by storage number in different areas of the building according to owning library. Changes to these processes and staffing requirements would depend on the approach taken to eliminating duplicates.

If we decided to deselect duplicates already in the **Annex**, staffing requirements would be for a one-time project. Staff would be required to identify duplicates, examine items located in different locations of the building to determine best copy, then send to owning libraries for withdrawal from the catalog and discard. Retrieving items from **Annex** shelves and shifting collections after space has been freed would be daunting, staff-intensive projects since shelving units are 14' high. **Annex** staff are not trained subject specialists, so in many cases librarians would need to examine items individually since preservation and provenance concerns may prevent withdrawal of duplicate copies.

Difficulties would also arise in determining which items are duplicates. Although the

continued on page 22

Eliminating Duplication from page 20

three library systems share a single catalog database, separate records still exist for many older items. Older records often were created using previous cataloging standards and may have varying forms of title entry. Records for older materials are also unlikely to have ISBNs or ISSNs for easy matching. Generating an accurate list of duplicate items from the catalog is therefore problematic.

If we decided to stop sending duplicate items to the Annex, staffing requirements and processes would be slightly different. Currently, transfers at two of the libraries are done by students or night circulation staff since processes are straightforward and require minimal training. Barcodes for volumes are wanted, changes to location and storage number are made, and the record is saved. Changes that require searching for duplication first would require staff trained to do relatively complex bibliographic searching. At the **TUG Libraries**, that would mean responsibilities for the transfer workflow would need to shift from casual, less trained staff to more qualified permanent staff members not currently involved in the process, at a higher rate of pay.

Other transfer processes would also become more complex, since records need to be deleted and new holdings records added to show shared ownership for items already in the **Annex**. A workflow analysis at one of the libraries found that the revised transfer process would take 2.5 times as long as the current process. Subject specialists would also need to double check titles about to be withdrawn to catch volumes with special circumstances requiring retention, since Cataloguing staff is not trained to do this type of assessment.

Space Gains

So far, discussion has been on the issues determining the costs of a shared storage deselection project for the **TUG Libraries**. These costs must be examined in the context of potential gains in space. Since it is not easy to get lists of duplicate items from the **TUG** shared catalog for the reasons discussed earlier, it is not easy to determine accurately what space savings would be made by eliminating duplicates, especially for monographs. However, a study was done for **TUG** by an outside consultant on serials overlap among the three library systems in late 1997. The study concluded that about 4% of the total number of journal titles held in the **Annex** at that time were duplicate volumes. The **Annex Management Group** updated this study with a report in summer 2000 which calculated that 16% of journal titles sent to storage after 1997 were duplicate volumes. Current estimates are that these duplicates, if discarded, would free space equivalent to 8 months of shelving at current growth rates.

Conclusion

Based on an examination of the costs and gains involved in eliminating duplicate materials in the **Annex**, the **TUG Information Resources Committee** has recommended that more detailed study on the possible gains be completed before proceeding with individual monograph titles. There are many complicating factors and unclear potential savings for eliminating monograph duplication. Before a large-scale project is undertaken, comparisons of potential savings with costs of other space options need to be compared.

However, large monograph sets and serials runs have clearer potential for space savings at less cost. A test project will be started with a small number of non-current serials and monograph sets in shared storage to get a better idea of the details of the processes and savings involved.

Many difficult issues still need to be worked out in dealing with duplication in shared storage projects like this one. Decisions for other libraries in similar situations will depend on the relationship between the libraries, the climate of the campus and administration, and individual circumstances such as collections overlap, staffing patterns, and ability to generate reports from library

catalogs. Our advice to libraries looking at duplication in shared storage is to examine the issues carefully and calculate the costs and the benefits.

Keeping single copies of low-use items to be shared by multiple institutions makes good sense, but making it happen even on a small scale is a challenge. Making it happen on a large scale will require a change in attitude toward our local collections, more education of our local administrators and our ranking agencies, and more serious thinking about regional or national cooperation over long-term preservation and accessibility of library collections.

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Rumors from page 18

IFLANET at <http://www.ifla.org/V/ebpb/copy.htm>

According to **Liblicense** (April 11, 2001) and *The New York Times* of the same date, **The Borders Group** has closed its online bookstore in favor of having **Amazon.com** serve its customers instead. "Borders Turns Over Its 'Online Book Sales to Amazon'" by Saul Hansell and David D. Kirkpatrick. **Borders** had sales of \$27 million last year while **Amazon** sold \$1.7 billion of books, music and videos in the same time period.

Virginia Commonwealth University has created virtual new book shelves for every user. See the article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* by Florence Olsen (April 17, 2001). <http://chronicle.com/free/2001/04/2001041701t.htm>

Library expenditures as a percent of **university expenditures** data for FY1998 and 1999 is now available on the Web at: <http://www.arl.org/stats/eg/>

I want to give a special public thanks to **Jenny Fuller** (EBSCO Subscription Services) <jfuller1@ebSCO.com> who is the **College of Charleston's** inside Account Representative. Setting up electronic journal subscriptions can be a pain and Jenny is always cool, calm, and collected in the face of the %#!*^% Thank you, Jenny!

Brandeis University in Waltham, MA, has successfully used **Ex Libris' ALEPH500** integrated library system to send monograph purchase orders to **Blackwell's**, **Brandeis'** major domestic monograph vendor. While not a new capability to **ALEPH500**, this marks the first time one of **Ex Libris'** North American customers has used **ALEPH's EDIFACT** capability to dispatch purchase orders. **Brandeis** now plans to switch its ordering activity with **Blackwell's** entirely to the **EDIFACT** arena. www.exlibris-usa.com

With all these mergers and acquisitions, you

should all know about **Rob Richards' Website** <http://www.colorado.edu/Law/lawlib/ts/legpub.htm>. "A Legal Publishers' List: Corporate Affiliations of Legal Publishers (Updated 4/9/2001)" Compiled and Maintained by **Rob Richards**,

This is something to watch. **Microsoft Press** now has **custom books**. Customers who visit the **Microsoft Press Website** can browse and compile individual chapters from selected works, and have them delivered as a single, custom book—either in printed or electronic form. To create a custom book, customers go to <http://mspress.microsoft.com/> and click **Order Custom Books** from the left navigation menu. From the Custom Books page, they can view available titles organized by topic, and drill down to view chapter listings. Chapter content can be previewed while building a custom book, and search capabilities are built into the site to help customers identify relevant material. Once the desired chapters have been selected, users can organize the contents of their custom book and create their own title. Users can order their book either as a printed and bound book, as an **eBook in Microsoft Reader** format, or as an **Adobe Acrobat PDF** file. Printed books will be shipped in as little as four days, and e-books in as little as four hours. Pricing is based on a flat per-chapter charge, which decreases as more chapters are selected. Chapter prices begin at US\$8 and slide to approximately US\$5 per chapter. Initially, customers can select chapters from 30 works on Windows 2000, Exchange Server 2000, SQL Server 2000, Office 2000 and XML. **Microsoft Press** will make more titles available, as determined by customer feedback and demand. **Microsoft Press** previewed the **Custom Book Builder** at a recent meeting of the **Back Office Professional Association**, a Seattle-based user group. Is this the new model for publishing? <http://www.microsoft.com/presspass/features/2001/may01/05-14custombooks.asp>

That's it for now. Have a great summer! See you at **ALA!**

<<http://www.against-the-grain.com>>