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Nylink's Shared Collection: A Collaborative Introduction of a New Technology

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An additional note needs to be stressed very importantly in evaluating circulation results. As stated before, **The NC State University Libraries** has made a concerted effort to add holdings to our online catalog for all the purchased **netLibrary** titles. Students looking for a title or subject will find an eBook citation just as they would if the title was available only in print format. Patrons do not need to access some other list of electronic resources for their only access to the eBook collection. This is an important consideration when evaluating our, or any, academic eBook collection and its inherent circulation. Libraries that do not provide this access have reported less than satisfactory use of their eBook collections.

This notation is also valuable when examining total circulation figures, both for our **NCSU Libraries** circulation statistics and for the **NC LIVE/Solinet** collection. The **NCSU** collection was selected by our collection managers and has been described bibliographically

in the online catalog for over two years. The **NC LIVE/Solinet** collection was selected by that staff, is of a more general collection, and bibliographic records for those titles have just recently loaded into the Libraries' online catalog. Not knowing access was available to an electronic title would significantly skew circulation data. The chart on pg. 24 shows circulation statistics for each of these categories.

Several libraries and consortia that were beginner customers to the eBook market have stuck with the products; increased the number of titles to which their institution subscribes; and are reporting positive results with eBooks. Although the utility that provides those eBook collections may vary, change, or differ between institutions or over the course of time, most early adopters of this technology know it has a place in our book collections.

Yes, there are many innovations we would like to see as this technology progresses. Among these are persistent title collections, simultaneous access models, bits and parts of books being accessible for use in reserve collections and course packs, simultaneous dis-

tribution of eBooks and pbooks for purchasing decisions, consistent standardized formatting, ability to incorporate text, video, and audio, front-listed titles, offline and online access, and perpetual access. As for the hand-held devices: many disciplines are looking at this technology for researchers and corporate documents. Medical doctors consult their copy of the *Physicians Desk Reference* on their **PalmPilots** to prescribe a drug for patients. Corporations are considering loading supply manuals and office policies onto these devices for their managers. Booklovers needing large-type print for reading comfort enjoy the ability to increase type font size while allowing them to read many more non-fiction titles than available in their local libraries.

All of these wants and desires will come as we embrace this new technology and find different ways for it to work in our library environments. eBooks might never replace the printed book for true reading enjoyment or textual scholarship, but they have a place in our collections and provide a service to our users. And they will evolve to meet patrons' needs. 🍌

Nylink's Shared Collection: A Collaborative Introduction of a New Technology

by **Mary-Alice Lynch** (Executive Director, Nylink, State University of New York, State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246; Phone: 518-443-5444) <lynchma@Nylink.suny.edu>

Give us your money and see what we do with it! That is an offer that most of us with any semblance of frugality could easily refuse. Yet it is the concept on which the **Nylink/netlibrary** shared eBook collection was formed.

In late 1999 and early 2000, what we now see as a natural evolution of the access to electronic information was emerging with the introduction of eBooks to the marketplace. Most libraries had experience with electronic databases and were still struggling with the budget pressures and management issues of incorporating electronic full text journals into their collections. As eBooks began to emerge, the world of electronic information was now poised to add a new level of complexity to the most sacred area of library collections—books themselves.

Nylink is a not-for-profit library membership organization whose mission is to enhance collaboration and cooperation and to facilitate access to and implementation of quality, cost effective information technologies and services. **Nylink** is located in New York State, a state historically rich in library resources with approximately 7,000 libraries, including 11 ARL libraries and approximately 250 higher academic institutions.

Since one of **Nylink's** major objectives is to facilitate collaboration in the adoption of new technologies, **Nylink** entered into an

agreement with **netLibrary** in early 2000 in order to provide a mechanism for libraries in the region to introduce eBooks into library collections, initially through a shared collection. That spring, **Nylink** opened a trial of the then-current **netLibrary** collection to interested libraries in the region. This trial provided libraries an opportunity to experiment with and take their first look at eBooks.

While the trial was progressing, **Nylink** staff struggled to develop a pricing model that would encourage the broadest possible participation, yet accumulate enough funds to actually purchase a collection with enough critical mass to be a viable and substantive addition to library collections. This was a formidable challenge.

netLibrary offered two pricing models. The first included the price of the book plus an additional 50% for perpetual access. The second model included the price of the book plus a yearly access fee, with access eliminated upon the termination of that fee. **Nylink** chose the first model for its shared collection, primarily for two reasons: libraries were accustomed to "perpetual access" to their paper monograph acquisitions, and the management of making access decisions on a per title, yearly basis for both **Nylink** and participating libraries seemed too complex to embrace.

An initial pricing model was developed, but feedback indicated that the price point for most libraries was higher than they were willing to

commit. While intrigued with the prospect of adding eBooks to their collections, libraries lacked confidence in the continued viability of new and emerging technologies, and did not have a clear view of how these resources might be incorporated into their collections long-term.

After much consultation with potential participants, a tiered pricing model was developed whereby academic institution pricing was based on \$1.25 per FTE (full time equivalent); four year institutions paid based on 100% of FTE, 2-year institutions paid on 75% of FTE, and K-12 paid on 50% FTE of grades 9—12. Public, special, and not-for-profit library pricing was based on a sliding scale based on book budget. Minimum and maximum per institution pricing was set at \$2,500 and \$30,000. While initial commitment to the shared collection was smaller than hoped, about 15 institutions signed up for participation by May 30th, 2000. All early participants were higher academic institutions.

The initial goal of this experiment in eBook adoption for libraries was to develop a balanced core collection geared towards the collection needs of the participants, with emphasis on materials with a copyright within the last three years. In order to build a collection that best reflected those needs, a survey was conducted of each participating institution. Libraries were asked to supply the top five subject areas that they would like to see in the collection.

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Responses to the collection development survey were varied; subjects ranged from agriculture to women's studies. However, certain key priorities emerged. Business, computer science, education, and psychology were the most often requested subject areas. All requests, other than one for popular fiction (not available through **netLibrary** and not the intent of the collection) were honored in the selection process. Librarians from **Nylink's Cooperative Purchasing** unit tabulated the results of the survey, and passed their primary criteria on to **netLibrary** collection development librarians who compiled a list of proposed titles to include in the initial collection. This initial list went through many iterations. **Nylink** librarians used their knowledge of participating institutions along with the data they had collected in the survey, and suggestions from **netLibrary**, to shape a collection that would be most reflective of participants' collection development needs. This turned out to be a much more laborious task than anticipated, with selection on a per title basis. **Nylink** librarians were intent on developing the highest quality, most responsive collection possible. They felt this was key to the ongoing growth and development of the collection.

An initial load of approximately 1,800 titles was made available to participants in June of 2000. Once the titles in this initial collection were available, other libraries that were initially hesitant became interested and joined. The same process of surveying collection development preferences was followed for each new member of the collaborative. By winter 2000/2001, the number of participating libraries more than doubled, and included some school and public libraries that were interested in expanding access to the kinds of information in the shared collection. Another round of collection development doubled the collection to approximately 3,600 titles by January 2001.

Throughout the initial months of the shared collection, **Nylink** librarians monitored collection use. Usage reports indicated that most popular subject areas were computer science, economics and business, and sociology titles. Education, which had been in the top four in the survey results, was number eight in usage; psychology titles, also in the top four in the survey, was number ten in usage. Literature and medicine and health titles, which were requested by fewer libraries, were also in the top ten in usage. As more participants joined, actual use statistics began to influence continuing collection development activities, along with the survey data from each participant. Libraries continued to join throughout the year. By the end of the first year's experiment, 58 libraries were participating in the shared **Nylink/netlibrary** collection and the collection had grown to over 4,500 titles. As titles were added to the collection throughout the year, the initial participants incurred no further cost. Librarians were thrilled to see their initial investment grow.

MARY-ALICE LYNCH BIO

Mary-Alice Lynch has been the Executive Director of **Nylink** since 1996 after 25 years of library experience in public and academic libraries. She has filled a variety of roles in public services, technical services, systems and management positions. Prior to her current position, Mary-Alice was the Director of Learning Resources at **Adirondack Community College** where she had overall responsibility for management of the library, academic computing, distance learning, and instructional media.

Mary-Alice has served an active role with **RONDAC** (Regional OCLC Network Directors Advisory Committee) and on the Advisory Committee of the **OCLC Institute**.

Her complete address is: Mary-Alice Lynch, Executive Director, **Nylink**, State University of New York, State University Plaza, Albany, New York 12246. Her phone number is 518-443-5444, and she can be contacted by email at <lynchma@Nylink.suny.edu>. Visit **Nylink's** Website at <http://nylink.suny.edu/maryalic.htm>.

So what have we learned from the initial yearlong experiment? In many ways it was an overwhelming success. Usage statistics show that many titles in the collection "circulated" far more often than would have ever been possible with a single paper copy. Total circulation for the 3,600 titles from the first two loads for the first year was 24,000. One computer science title circulated 335 times in the first year of the collection. eBooks open the content in books to library users anytime anywhere—a growing expectation of those seeking information.

Like all new technologies, the shared collection allows libraries to experiment with eBooks at a time they never would have on an individual basis. Since very few libraries were ready to develop eBook collections on their own, and did not have the funds to commit to a viable eBook collection, by pooling resources they were allowed to experiment and test how eBooks might be used in their libraries.

How libraries incorporate access to eBooks into all available content seems to be key in the success of eBook use in libraries. Library Web page access and MARC record integration into a library's OPAC greatly increase the number of times eBooks are accessed. **Nylink** provided participants in the shared collection the option of obtaining MARC records directly from **netLibrary** or from an OCLC collection set developed specifically for the **Nylink** collection. This later alternative provided many libraries the added benefit of workflow consistency and standardization with other library cataloguing operations.

Use across all institutions is varied. High use libraries include the **University of Rochester**, **Rochester Institute of Technology**, **Rensselaer Institute of Technology** and **Oswego College of State University of New York**. All have been proactive implementers and enthusiastic supporters of electronic information in general and eBooks in particular. Other libraries that have not as actively integrated the eBook collection into their other resources, and have not promoted the availability of the **netLibrary** collection, have seen lower use, and less return on their initial investment.

What are the next steps in eBook collection development in libraries and **Nylink's** role as facilitator? Other eBook models such as

ebrary and **Questia** have developed and evolved since the initial introduction of the **Nylink/netlibrary** initiative. Publishers are exploring and developing other models worth consideration, and **netLibrary** is continuing to look at how models that work for both publishers and libraries might develop in the future. Currently **Nylink** has committed to build on its initial eBook experiment by continuing to develop a core shared **netLibrary** collection, by developing additional subject targeted collections for special needs, and by facilitating the building of additional unique eBook collections for libraries.

The initial shared **Nylink/netlibrary** collection was "closed" as of June 30, 2001, though access to it may still be purchased by libraries at a slightly higher price than for those that initially built the collection. Monies collected will go towards the purchase of duplicate titles as needed in the initial collection, and seed money for the 2001/2002 collection. This allows libraries to purchase access to a specific title list. A 2001/2002 collection, following the initial model, has been opened for both initial and new participants in the shared collections. This allows an opportunity for continued collection growth for libraries, or new libraries that want to participate in the growth and development of the collections.

Additionally, the **State University of New York** System Administration Office of Library and Information Services, has provided the seed money for the development of a shared health and medicine collection that is open for broad participation throughout the region. Working with **Nylink** librarians, **SUNY** selected and provided the funds for 529 titles in the medical area. This topic area was selected due to a large number of academic programs in the health and medicine arena, interest in medical topics in public libraries, and a large number of hospital libraries that cannot normally access expensive electronic medical information. The collection was opened up to the larger library community using the same pricing models, but at a lower cost than the general collection, with the addition of a pricing model for hospitals and nursing homes based on number of beds.

Initially, **Nylink** assumed the management role by choosing the selection, setting policies,

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determining checkout time, etc. Now that there are many participants in the shared collection, and usage statistics are available, **Nylink** has formed an eBook Advisory Committee of representative librarians from all types of participating institutions to help guide us in how we can best meet the current and continuing needs of libraries in their adoption of eBooks and management of shared collections.

As eBooks become more accepted and incorporated into library resources, libraries are growingly interested in developing their own unique collections. **Nylink** has worked out an aggregated discount structure with **netLibrary** so that these unique collections may also be purchased through **Nylink** and receive a volume discount based on all **Nylink** library activity.

Nylink librarians have learned a lot about what it takes to build a cooperative shared eBooks collection. (And had a reaffirmation of what many collection development librarians know—that good collection development is an art as well as a science!) Issues of availability of MARC records sometimes prevented their integration from coinciding with access, thus delaying use.

Challenges still to be met include how **Nylink** and libraries will deal with dated titles. Normally libraries do not retain books in certain subject areas indefinitely. For example, accrediting organizations require that an academic or hospital library does not keep medical titles, except those of historical interest, that have copyright dates of older than five years. Methods of keeping collections viable long term still need to be resolved.

While **netLibrary** has come a long way with developing statistical reports, there are still areas that need attention, such as the ability for the consortia to track use by institution across all participating libraries, and the need to classify a large number of "titles which have not been assigned a subject."

The introduction of new technologies is always more challenging than anticipated. **netLibrary's** recent financial problems and subsequent filing for bankruptcy is a clear indication of the substantial risk in any new ini-

tiative. The issues around standards or lack thereof, the limitations and rapid obsolescence of eBook readers, and the fundamental reticence of moving to new information delivery methods have been more formidable obstacles than initially anticipated. Economic downturns have taken their toll on what has been considered the most viable solution for eBooks in the library environment.

The proposed purchase of **netLibrary** by **OCLC** is generally viewed positively by the library community, since, as a not-for profit library collaborative with a long history of success, there is new confidence in the long-term viability of eBook collections in libraries. Publishers, who do not have the long history of a relationship with **OCLC**, may be more reticent. However, the infrastructure that already exists in **OCLC**, including its established infrastructure for delivering content to libraries, its role in providing cataloging and metadata services, and its worldwide local connections through networks and service centers provide a platform for a more rapid expansion of adoption.

It seems inevitable that eBooks will become a growing percentage of library acquisitions, just as Internet use has exploded in the last six to eight years. Users expect to be able to access information no matter where they are; if libraries are going to retain their viability, they need to deliver on

their patrons' expectations. But do current models make the most sense? Some publishers are fearful that eBook sales might cut into their paper sales and thus undermine their very existence, so are hesitant to divert from traditional pricing models. eBooks present a formidable new set of challenges for libraries whose fundamental systems are geared towards the printed word. Transition to eBooks is frightening because it means that access control is not solely in the hands of librarians, and the acquisition, maintenance and continuation of eBook collections mean a fundamental change in how libraries do their work.

Will eBooks replace the printed word? As a long-time bibliophile, with offspring who are passionate book collectors, I seriously doubt it. Paper books have proved to be an accepted and stable method of communication for hundreds of years. However, eBooks are now an assumption of the information age, and will comprise a major part of information communications in the future. Adoption of the Open eBook Standard by **netLibrary** and others, the evolution of eBook devices, and the growing number of publishers interested in participating in eBook initiatives preclude a growing acceptance of eBooks by publishers, librarians, and the reading public. The potential impact of eBooks is still in its infancy. The evolution has just begun! 🌱

The eBook and the National Library

by **Mark Bide** and **Kim Richardson** (Rightscom, 10 Leake Street, London, England SE1 7NN; Phone: 44 20 7620 4436) <kim.richardson@rightscom.com>

What is the appropriate strategy for a national library in the age of the eBook?

To some, this may seem an almost entirely irrelevant question, at such a nascent stage in the development of the eBook market. The age of the eBook seems a long way off; indeed there are many who believe (or maybe hope) that it will never come.

Is this expectation realistic? Probably not. The last ten years has seen an explosion of publishing (predominantly text-based) in an

online medium – the World Wide Web. There are differing estimates of the size of the Web, but there are certainly billions of pages of content, and this is growing at the rate of millions of pages every day. Much of this may not be very good publishing – or very profitable publishing – but publishing it most certainly is.

How and when the online distribution of textual content will have a measurable impact on "book publishing" as we have traditionally known it remain unanswered questions. However, the "eBook business" has been attracting expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars in the provision of infrastructure and services – and that's before the book publishers themselves begin to spend very significant amounts on making their books available in electronic formats.

The world's largest software businesses are betting substantial sums on the eBook revolution. The world's largest consultancies have been advancing extravagant forecasts for the growth of the eBook market over the next four or five years.

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MARK BIDE BIO

Mark Bide joined **Rightscom** from **Mark Bide & Associates** bringing thirty years experience in the publishing industry, as a director of the European subsidiaries of both **CBS Publishing** and **John Wiley**, and since 1992 as a consultant, writer and speaker on the impact of technology on intellectual property. He has researched and written extensively on issues related to the management of rights in the network environment and has continued to be closely involved in metadata and identification initiatives.

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