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Give us the Tools: The CURL-CoFoR Project in Britain

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Origins of the Project
CURL-CoFoR has its roots in the earlier COCOREES project, which ran from 1999 to 2002 as one of several Collaborative Collection Management (CCM) initiatives launched by the Research Support Libraries Programme (RSLP) with the support of UK government funding agencies for higher education. For the first time, it provided the resources with which to lay the groundwork for the major British collections in Russian and Eastern European Studies (REES) to work together systemically on improving library provision for researchers in the field. Four interim COCOREES reports and its Final Report are accessible on the project Website.1,2

Early in 2002 the project management was approached by the Consortium of University Research Libraries (CURL), representing 25 of the largest academic libraries in the British Isles. CURL’s Task Force on Resource Management was looking to work up and implement a range of procedures and documentation ("tools") to support CCM for a variety of subjects in research libraries, and saw in COCOREES a promising platform for further development, testing and demonstration. In October 2002, shortly before the COCOREES project ended, the CURL Board accepted the proposal for a successor. While Russian and East European Studies remains the subject focus, the new project’s remit has been to produce tools for CCM which can be widely applied in other fields.

The Project in Brief
The CURL-CoFoR project runs from December 2002 to August 2004. It is a partnership of twenty UK libraries, all with important collections in Russian and Eastern European Studies, with two further associated institutions (for a full list of partners, see Appendix). CURL has provided funding to support a part-time Project Manager and two part-time Project Officers, while certain other partners— notably the British Library—have generously contributed additional staff resources and other facilities. The project is committed to delivering tested and agreed procedures and tools (model agreements, protocols, templates, etc.) to serve as a practical basis for the Collaborative Collection Management (CCM) of research resources in UK libraries. All deliverables have REES materials as their sub-
ject matter, and academic REES research as their primary object of support; but it is fundamental to the project that the outcomes should be delivered in forms that allow wider subject applicability. The committees of the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) and of the Council for Slavonic and East European Library and Information Services (COSEELIS) are the project’s academic and professional advisory bodies respectively.

The COCOREES Inheritance
CURL-CoFoR is much more than a simple extension of the RSLP COCOREES project, but COCOREES has provided CoFoR with an essential set of products, people and relationships:

- A searchable set of descriptions for research collections in REES in 80 UK libraries.
- A searchable location list of Russian and Eastern European serials held in 52 UK libraries, currently recording c. 35,000 titles.
- Standard-format collection policy statements for partner libraries.
- A National Desiderata List of major research resources for REES to act as a basis for consortial acquisition.
- Development of an IT infrastructure for the above, all of which are accessible on the project Website at http://www.cocorees.ac.uk
- Accessions and expenditure data for REES from partner libraries.

CURL-CoFoR has benefited immensely from this inheritance of several major bodies of factual information about the library resources with which it is engaged, as well as from the experience of area/subject-specialised IT development work. There has also been the advantage of continuity in personnel. All four members of the COCOREES management, including the present Project Manager, joined the new Management Team, and both Project Officers also transferred to CURL-CoFoR.

The Partnership Agreement
CURL is committed to playing a leading role in seeking to maintain and develop a governance structure for a UK-wide CCM scheme beyond the completion of the CURL-CoFoR project in August 2004. This is likely to continue on page 20.
to be in concert with the Research Libraries Network (RLN) now being set up to lead a UK-wide strategy for research information provision. With this perspective in view, the project deliverables have been centred around the evolution of a long-term Partnership Agreement on the retention, transfer and acquisition of REES research materials. In February 2004, after a complex consultation process, CURL invited all the partner libraries to join a ten-year Agreement covering:

Retention. Most partner libraries which do not already have a policy of near-total retention are asked to commit themselves to retaining REES material in designated fields for the ten-year period of the Agreement. In most cases they are also asked to agree to:

Acceptance of Transfer. This allows for the transfer of material in circumstances where a partner may have legitimate reasons to dispose of it, but where it is important to retain the material in support of REES research. Transfer will be by agreed procedures to a library accepting a retention commitment for the area concerned, with safeguards against the accumulation of multiple or inferior copies.

Acquisition. The commitment here will be principally to the maintenance of specific serial titles identified through the project’s serials de-duplication exercise (see below), with special attention to the protection of holdings unique in the UK. A select number of partners are also asked to maintain collecting levels of a wider range of material in specified subject/country combinations, for periods to be individually negotiated.

The Agreement is accompanied by a detailed scheme of proposed commitments for each partner, worked out from a wide range of inputs (See Table 1 and ‘The Need for Hard Data’ below). In line with the priority given to the direct support of collections catering for newly-emerging research (see ‘Research Mapping’ below), a number of subject/country combinations have been identified in partner libraries as ‘buildup points’ to be targeted for further development. At the same time the ‘national’ status of particularly strong holdings at the British Library and a small number of other collections, and the need for their reinforcement, is recognised. For some subject/language combinations — generally those attracting the most widespread research interest — two or occasionally more libraries have been designated as recipients of transferred material to allow holdings in more than one location in the UK to be strengthened. The scheme also tries to ensure that holdings of scarce foreign-language resources are protected. Of seventeen Slavonic and East European national languages, only Russian, Polish and Czech are now collected by more than four partner libraries, and most by fewer.

CoFoR has been pragmatic in its approach to the concept of resource sharing, aiming to obtain the maximum possible savings and other benefits from CCM consistent with partner libraries’ willingness to collaborate. In pursuing this the Management Team has had to:

- explore in detail with each partner library what their funding, staff, space and internal priorities will allow them to commit to;
- make clear that the Agreement will play to libraries’ strengths and will actively foster the strengthening of resources in newly developing areas of REES research;
- show partners that we know a lot about their REES holdings and collecting, and about their own institutions’ REES research, and that we’re in sympathy with their efforts to support their local academics;
- emphasise the partnership’s role as an advocate in putting cases for special funding, and as a negotiator for consortial purchasing;
- demonstrate that this is being done within a national CCM scheme.

The Need for Hard Data
We have been convinced from the outset that properly-targeted collaborative collection management is impossible without a large corpus of reliable and up-to-date information about libraries’ holdings and collecting, and — at least as importantly — about the research activities that they are supporting. In designing the scheme of CCM responsibilities allocated to each partner, we have followed the principle of working with the grain of libraries’ existing policies and commitments, taking full account of the strong points in existing holdings, current policies on acquisition and retention, present levels of expenditure, and the character of the research being supported. Partners are not asked to increase the existing scale of their acquisitions, nor to extend their acquisition into subjects or areas not at present covered by their continued on page 22
collecting policies. The scheme makes use
of the following factual and quantitative data:

- The subject/country coverage of part-
nner libraries’ existing REES stock, in-
cluding special strengths, updated from
the COCOREES collection descriptions.
- The subject/country coverage of partners’
current collecting policies for REES,
updated from the COCOREES state-
ments, including specialisations and aca-
demic levels catered for.
- The volume of current and recent REES
acquisitions, including the number of cur-
rent REES serial titles.
- Duplication of REES serial titles and lo-
cation of holdings unique in the UK, as
established by CoFor’s serials deduplication
exercise (see below).
- Libraries’ expenditure on current and re-
cent REES acquisitions.
- Libraries’ policy on retention of stock.
- The profiles of academic research in
REES at each partner library’s home in-
stitution, derived from CoFor’s research
mapping exercise (see below).

Research Mapping

The scheme has unequivocally given first
priority to the strengthening of REES col-
clections directly supporting research in partner li-
braries’ home institutions, especially where spe-
cial strengths of potential national significance
are being developed under local academic ini-
tiatives. This approach is intended to gain
maximum credibility with researchers as well
as approval, support and input from our aca-
demic advisors in BASEES. It requires a de-
tailed awareness of universities’ current research
activity as well as of libraries’ holdings and col-
crating policies. The project has therefore in-
cluded a research mapping exercise to gather
information on REES research throughout the
UK, and to report on the value of the findings
and the effectiveness of the techniques used.

The exercise has had the enthusiastic sup-
port of BASEES, which arranged an emailed
questionnaire to their members (who include
most academic REES researchers in the UK).
This was supplemented by a thorough trawl
of university and department Websites as well as
of published reference works. The result is
thought to be the most comprehensive survey
of British research in REES ever produced, with
information from nearly 100 institutions on re-
search projects, departmental structures, staff-
ning and postgraduate programmes. Besides
proving to be a vital input to CoFor’s CCM
scheme, the survey’s findings have already helped
BASEES itself in applications for re-
search funding.

The project is still grappling with the meth-
ological problem of how the significance of
current research can be evaluated and expressed
in ways that will give it a suitable ‘weighting’ in
decisions on collaborative library support. The
point here is that support should be channelled
to larger-scale, longer-term REES research

commitments rather than to, say, an isolated
doctoral thesis topic.

Serials Deduplication

This exercise is running as a distinct sub-
project, supported by the British Library
and managed by Ron Hogg at BL Boston Spa.
Its initial assignment was to examine mechanisms
for identifying duplicates from the REES se-
rial locations listing compiled by the earlier
RSPLP COCOREES project. The master file at present
(March 2004) holds 53,349 records (61% of
them for BL holdings), representing c. 35,000
titles in 52 libraries. About 1,250 records (c.
24%) were found to duplicate other records, and
work is now concentrating on the library-by-
library listing of duplicated titles as the basis
for detailed deduplication proposals. The first
stage in this, just completed, has been to iden-
tify holdings of REES serial titles unique in the
UK so that the Partnership Agreement can
ensure their protection.

Consortial Acquisition

The partnership of twenty leading REES
collections constitutes something close to the
entire UK market for important research re-
sources in the field, such as major document
series in microform and specialised online ser-
vices. The project is serving as a platform for
approaches to publishers over possible
consortial acquisitions. The National Desiderata
List compiled by the COCOREES project (see
excerpt in Table 2 above) has been updated and
used as the basis for a shortlist of high-priority
products for exploratory negotiation.

Costs and Benefits

The costs of the central management of the Part-
nership Agreement will be borne by
CURLe until the end of the CoFor project, and
it will be part of the exit strategy, supported by
CURLe, to seek funding for these purposes af-
after that date. The project provides no additional
funding for partner libraries’ acquisitions. Each
partner library is expected to meet the costs aris-
ing from its own commitments to the scheme
as an integral part of responsible collection man-
agement, and will retain in its own budget any
savings made by the operation of the scheme.
However, the partnership offers the opportunity,
and a large body of data, to identify libraries’
needs for special funding in REES, and a plat-
form from which to present cases and support
applications to fundholders.

An essential component of CURLe-CoFor
is the development of procedures to monitor the
effects of the Partnership Agreement after its
implementation in terms of costs, savings and
other benefits, deliverable in a form applicable
to other CCM schemes. The Agreement com-
mits partner libraries and the scheme manage-
ment to providing the necessary data in a stan-
dard format, covering:

- Costs: startup planning and implementa-
tion; administration, monitoring and re-
view over life of scheme; planning, cre-
ation and maintenance of supporting
databases; costs of transferring material
under the scheme.
- Benefits: savings from purchases no
longer made; reduction in cost of pur-
chases achieved by consortial negotiation;
reduction in overheads due to giving up
subscription and/or retention responsibil-
ities; protection against loss of unique re-
search material from the UK; new pur-
chases made possible by savings achieved;
access to new resources gained through
consortial negotiation; improved aware-
ness of location and nature of research
resources.

Life Beyond CoFor

In planning CoFor’s transition from a 21-
month project to a ten-year partnership from
September 2004, the maintenance of the
project’s databases after CoFor itself comes to
an end will be the vital factor in securing a rob-
st foundation for the partnership, and will rely
crucially on establishing and exploiting reliable
data flows from partner libraries and academic
sources. For the Partnership Agreement to
remain viable, partners’ commitments will have
had to be adapted to new directions of research
and the appearance of new resources by a process
of regular review founded on updated informa-
tion on holdings, collecting and REES research.

As I noted above, CURLe is proposing to
lead from the front in supporting and regulat-
ing longer-term collaborative collection initia-
tives for the UK’s research resources in a wide
range of subjects. It is currently (March 2004)

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Table 2. Excerpt from National Desiderata List

Recommended LSE, NLS, SSEES.

BL subscribes, Oxford subscribes to Central RN and Duma pubs only. Birmingham subscribes to Central RN only.

Strong support from BASEES survey

8. The Cold War and the Central Committee. [from RGANI]. Series 1 The International Department 1953-1957, 126 reels (£13,352); Series 2 The General Department, 118 reels (£12,478); Series 3 Congresses of the CPSU 1955-1986, 196 reels / 701 fiche (£23,609); Series 4 Plenums of the CC CPSU, 181 reels / 659 fiche (£21,839). Thomson Gale.

Recommended Birmingham, Glasgow, LSE, SSEES.

BL holds Series 1 and 2

http://www.against-the-grain.com>
Appendix: CURL-CoFoR Partner Libraries

Partners in the earlier RSLP COCOREES project are marked with an asterisk.

- Birmingham University Library*
- Bodleian Library, University of Oxford*
- Bradford University Library
- Bristol University Library
- British Library*
- Brotherton Library, University of Leeds*
- Cambridge University Library*
- Durham University Library
- Edinburgh University Library
- Essex University Library*
- Glasgow University Library*
- Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)*
- John Rylands University Library of Manchester
- National Library of Scotland*
- Nottingham University Library*
- The Polish Library, London*
- Royal Institute of International Affairs
- School of Slavonic & East European Studies Library (University College London)*
- Scott Polar Research Institute Library, University of Cambridge
- Taylor Institution Library, University of Oxford

Associated Institutions
- Russian and Eurasian Studies Centre, St Antony’s College, Oxford
- Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies, London

References
Accessible on the project website at http://www.cocorees.ac.uk


The text of the Agreement and the accompanying scheme of commitments will be placed on the project Website as soon as finalised.

The Shared Bibliographer: TRLN Builds Cooperative South Asia Collection

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Summary
The Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN) consortium appointed a shared bibliographer for South Asia collections in Fall 2001. The appointment was the result of a faculty/library partnership in which the libraries received a portion of a U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant to the Triangle South Asia Consortium. Monies from the grant provide partial support for the shared bibliographer and for collection purchases and processing. The libraries in the consortium lie within a 35-mile radius of each other in central North Carolina, so the bibliographer has a real presence and impact on the campuses served as well as the opportunity to build a single, shared collection for faculty teaching and research across the four campuses.

The Participants
TRLN is a collaborative organization of the libraries of Duke University, North Carolina Central University (NCCU), North Carolina State University (NCSU), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC). The consortium offices are based on the UNC campus. For most of the consortium’s history, the cooperative programs have consisted of coordinated collection development and resource sharing. (www.trln.org). Cooperation dates back to the 1930s and current selected areas of cooperative print collections include agreements for Africa, East Asia, Russia & Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

The North Carolina Center for South Asian Studies is an arm of the Triangle South Asia Consortium (TSAC). The consortium is an educational cooperative of the same four universities that TRLN serves. Dues for the operation of the Center are paid by the member universities. TSAC’s history dates to 1987 and its primary participants are the 32 core and 21 allied faculty whose research and teaching areas are related to South Asia. (http://www.nccsu.edu/tsac/index.html)

Getting the Ball Rolling
Faculty from the NC Center for South Asian Studies met with the University Librarians in 1998 to discuss their grant application for a Title VI Undergraduate National Resource Center and also an accompanying

FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) request. The faculty wanted to propose a new model for building South Asian collections in the Triangle and to build support for the new model into their grant. The grant, if awarded, would provide monies over three years directly to the libraries. The faculty envisioned a unified, consortial collection development policy for South Asia and a shared South Asia bibliographer.

The proposal to the University Librarians also delineated how collections might be built to maximize the complementarity of collections in vernacular materials that support teaching and research at the four universities. Each university would build a basic collection for beginning and intermediate language instruction and the more specialized vernacular collecting would be distributed to each university in a division by language. Duke would collect Bengali continued on page 26