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Curating Collective Collections--Open Sesame: Collection Development at the Network Level

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Curating Collective Collections — Open Sesame: Collection Development at the Network Level

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A few years ago, the editors of *Rethinking Collection Development and Management* gave me[1] and more recently the editor of *Shared Collections: Collaborative Stewardship* gave **John McDonald** and me[2] a chance to sound off on the future of shared U.S. library collections. In both essays, the future looks beyond the hierarchical, tribal, and territorial bases (yes, easy as pie) on which library general collections, dominated by the workflows and access practices of printed objects, have been designed and managed up until the last 20 years. These two pieces and many essays and presentations by others foresee a communal future in which libraries, by agreeing to play certain roles and work in regional and national partnerships, would manage collectively the aggregation and preservation of and access to the body of published or otherwise extant material, print or electronic, held in general, circulating collections.

In my 2014 essay, I rehearse the assumptions and practices that underlie the pre-"rethought," pre-collective understanding of the library print collection and proceed to review in particular the roster of projects that point the way to a collective, rethought future. In the 2016 essay, **John** and I synthesize the results of a number of projects, many of them discussed in the volume in which our essay appears, and go on to prescribe the means by which libraries will move to a shared collections future. In our recommendations, we make passing reference to the role that support for open access publishing might play in the local and collective concept of the collection:

> "Continued future support for open access (OA) publishing must be paired with parallel archiving efforts through **CLOCKSS**, **Portico**, and **HathiTrust**, and accomplished by shifting increasing percentages of the acquisitions budget to these efforts over several years. Whether through **Knowledge Unlatched**, **Open Humanities Library**, **OAPEN**, or **Open Access Network**, increasing OA (re)publishing will render many aspects of sharing collections moot and will shift libraries' roles to creating better discovery and use tools, preserving digital objects, and publishing enterprises as opposed to paying publishers for specific items."[3]

It is this theme I want to pursue here in the form of a question: what do the practices of collection development and management look like if a substantial majority of academic libraries' materials budgets for general, circulating collections has been allocated to support open access publishing, that is, forms of publishing which offer legal, barrier-free access to publications? If most published materials were available to anyone with an Internet connection, in other words, how would the roles, practices, and purposes of collection development shift? A variety of imperatives for open access to scholarly materials are cited by its proponents, not the least of which is the egalitarian or moral argument about maximizing the opportunities for education to the largest number of people, so it makes sense to think about library roles when the collection, that is, the body of published material, is open to everyone.

Items in local collections have always been open in limited ways — walk-in visitors, interlending and other means of resource sharing, and "black markets" with their person-to-person password transfers, photocopying and pdf-ing, or more recently Sci-Hub's sharing practices (don't you wish your IR received even a fraction of that much "participation?"). I am talking here, though, about an environment in which services developed for legally sharing electronically published material render the idea of sharing moot because everything is available to anyone with an Internet connection.

We see glimpses of this future adumbrated by such organizations as the **Open Access Network**[4] and the **Public Knowledge Project's Macarthur Foundation**-funded "Open Access Publishing Cooperative Study" as well as the establishment of mega- and single open-access journals and institutional repositories using various business models. We see this open future also in grant-funded projects that have sought to make open publishing feasible or to open the closed doors of retail purchase and subscription pricing on specific items or groups of items like **Knowledge Unlatched** or the **Mellon/NEH Humanities Open Book** program for out-of-print books, not to mention such projects as **University of California Press's Luminos**, a group of liberal arts colleges' **Lever Press**, or **Open Library of the Humanities**. Even the latest twist on the serials Big Deal by the **Association of Dutch Universities** (VSNU) and **Wiley** in May 2016, whereby those universities' scholars' publications in **Wiley** journals are open without payment of individual APCs, is a step toward this future.[5]

But, again, what does support for publishing instead of purchasing things from publishers look like to a campus library? Taking cues from **Peggy Johnson's** standard textbook *Fundamentals of Collection Development and Management*[6] and reworking text from my 2014 essay,[7] the "classic" collecting paradigm looks like this:

- the gathering, organization, and preservation of library materials is specific to the mission, curriculum, students, and teaching/learning practices and goals of a library's parent institution and the degrees it offers;

- this institutional situation informs a collection development policy or set of practices that determines the kinds, provenance, and formats of materials the library owns and places on a shelf or server, subscribes to, or otherwise gives access to;

- this same specific institutional situation determines the depth and breadth of collecting and access efforts, how the library makes replace/retain/store decisions, and the position it occupies in systems or other partnerships for materials provision;

- in turn, the body of material the library purchases or otherwise gives access to grounds staffing configurations, the many elements of user infrastructure (signage, circulation rules, communication lines, advisory and instruction services, space allocation), and services and systems for the discovery and use of materials as well as their interpretation and promotion;

- looking beyond the local campus, the publications and other materials the library purchases or otherwise gives access to are subject to and influence practices of knowledge creation and dissemination and the legal and commercial relationships involved in publishing or using published material;

- all of which close a circle back to the home institution as the library is funded and evaluated along all of these dimensions in terms of the ways in which it helps to fulfill the local mission.

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continually to find any real success. Reflecting on this now, it is apparent to me that this process really needs to be on loop to successfully avoid complacency too.

In Summary:

- Know your stakeholders — and areas of research or instruction interests
- Relationship building all around
- Take Stock / know your collection
- Survey the landscape; trials, trials and more trials
- Ask for help, do not be afraid of failure, learn from error

After the student or class has time to mull over everything I have presented, I ask if anyone still wants a copy of the collection development plan/policy. Most times, I get a resounding "no" in answer. I also receive a barrage of other questions like: specific resources to use, how to negotiate a trial, and best ways of building relationships or forming partnerships with faculty. But that is the stuff of future column entries.

Looking toward a predominantly open access future and for the sake of argument, then, let's say that your library is supporting open access publishing ventures with 70%-75% of your materials budget (which is about the percentage you now spend on serials) whether through memberships in publishing and preservation cooperatives, maintaining an IR, digitizing special collections and printed materials, etc. Let's also say you have largely discontinued paying APCs to for-profit publishers (who consume the lion's share of the 70-75%) because, for all the value, including prestige, that such publishers might add to your faculty's work, your faculty and you have come to the point at which you dislike the idea of the profit-"overhead" those publishers have in their business model. The other 25%-30% is going to developing special collections and paying for those journal subscriptions and materials that have not flipped to open access.

What changes in your general collection development program? Here are some suggestions:

1. Since the local library is now "all that's accessible" online, selection does not take place except to the extent that your library chooses to support one open access publishing program or another. Enough libraries make different choices that your campus readers can get almost everything they might want without a password. As is the case in those consortia with eBook purchasing programs, your library may be paying for material that is less appropriate to your readers than it might be to other readers if it spends the majority of its materials budget on supporting publishing and related preservation and access platforms, but you will also be getting all that you want for your readers and working with other libraries and organizations to make scholarly materials available to all.

2. As the library collection becomes the aggregation of almost everything that exists, the networking of the library changes your "collection" from a bunch of "things" to a bunch of metadata and access pathways.

3. The library's focus thus changes from things to be collected to the services or purposes that make them available to and usable by readers. The majority of your collecting effort goes into "collecting on the fly" as you enhance discovery mechanisms you now have or create new ones that help individual readers find and use what they need. You also further develop reader advisory and materials repurposing services geared to helping them make their way through the ocean of freeness and incorporate materials in their own work, which you have been at great pains to do all these years anyway since **Google** became the search and discovery engine of choice.

4. Your library pays a lot more attention, that is, money, to collective efforts to preserve digital publications.

5. Your library and others establish concerted efforts to secure materials printed internationally and to digitize them for more general access when possible.

6. Your library may still buy print materials, but your physical collection doesn't grow by much, if at all, and you enter partnerships for the collective housing, distribution, and digitizization of a majority of the print materials you now house on campus or in your own storage facility. You largely replace the local infrastructure needed for maintaining and accessing print by enabling user-initiated requests for physical or digitized copy from large fulfillment service centers operated by these partnerships.

7. Your library joins with others to press efforts for finding foster homes for orphan works, stepping up initiatives to investigate the copyright status of out-of-print publications in order to free the orphans for greater use and to establish copyright regimes favorable to opening more scholarship.

8. Since your readers are better served by having unimpeded access to everything than they are by your paying for a selection from that body of material, your mission becomes more centered on the overall and global enterprises of education and knowledge creation and dissemination.

About a decade ago **Lorcan Demspey** popularized the concept of "collective collection"[8] and more recently described what he calls the

"facilitated collection,"[9] which derives from it. It's not far from the many ways in which library materials can be collectively assembled and managed, not far from the means for facilitating access to them in any format, to a world in which publication is open to begin with and (almost?) everything published is collectively made available and cooperatively preserved. As the facilitated concept of collection suggests, the word "collection" is less useful these days as a description of something on campus, except in the case when it is modified by "special," then it is as the body of material any given library can provide its readers by any means possible. Open access publications pose their special issues of bibliographic control, discovery, and preservation, but in many ways they are the ultimate in access facilitation, as long as people are willing and able to use digital formats and have an Internet connection. They lend themselves to several models of publishing and review, to experimentation with new formats, and to collective preservation efforts, as **HathiTrust** has amply demonstrated. Open access publications thus facilitate libraries' access to a new vision of collective enterprise in support of publishing efforts that make scholarship available to everyone rather than to local constituents through payment for individual items. Achieving this global, inclusive, and egalitarian goal will mean working away from and eventually overcoming the funding regimes, traditional relationships, and entrenched local interests that shaped print collections and the libraries that housed them, but the gains for all levels of education are great enough to make the effort worth our while. 🌲

Endnotes

1. "Beyond My People and Thy People, or The Shared Print Collections Imperative," **Becky Albitz**, **Christine Avery**, and **Diane Zabel**, eds; *Libraries Unlimited*, 2014.

2. "Risk, Value, Responsibility, and the Collective Collection," with **John McDonald**; **Dawn Haley**, ed; *ALA Editions*, 2016.

3. **McDonald** and **Kieft**, "Risk, Value, Responsibility, and the Collective Collection," 195.

4. Disclosure: I am Chair of the Board of K|N Consultants/Open Access Network (*http://openaccessnetwork.org/*), and some of the thinking in this article has emerged from developing the OAN.

5. *http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/PressRelease/pressRelease-Id-123242.html*

6. 3rd ed., *ALA Editions*, 2014.

7. **Kieft**, "Beyond My People and Thy People, or The Shared Print Collections Imperative," 299.

8. See this compilation of documents *http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2013/2013-09r.html* and **Dempsey's** blog *http://orweblog.oclc.org/* posts from 2006.

9. *http://orweblog.oclc.org/towards-the-facilitated-collection*

meaning we have to make a good faith effort in replacing them, whether they are old, or have circulated, or not. We also have titles that are marked as cultural heritage, meaning we also have to make every effort to replace the title with an exact copy, since we are committing to retain that title indefinitely. Often the subject specialists decide to replace a lost book with a new edition, but with our books marked for retention or cultural heritage, we have to try to replace the exact copy. These new examples of lost books have made the process a bit more complicated, with more spreadsheets, but luckily not many titles that are falling into these categories so far.

One other way that we replace books that fall outside this process is when a patron pays the fine for the lost book. A special yellow form with title information is routed directly from circulation to an acquisitions staff member for automatic replacement. This is a separate workflow from what is described above because the patron has acknowledged the loss of the book and has paid for it. Therefore, we will replace the title.

It's been a satisfying experience to clean up the backlog of lost books over the years. Dealing with the lost books in a timely manner has both cleaned up our catalog as well as focusing the budget money on replacing those items that are truly used. 🌲