Against the Grain

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Curating Collective Collections-MI-SPI: License to Save

Bob Kieft
rhkrdgzin@gmail.com

Pamela A. Grudzien
Central Michigan University Libraries, grudz1pa@cmich.edu

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Curating Collective Collections — MI-SPI: License to Save

by **Pamela A. Grudzien** (Director of Acquisitions, Metadata & Resource Sharing Services, Central Michigan University Libraries) <grudz1pa@cmich.edu>

Column Editor: **Bob Kieft** (688 Holly Ave., Unit 4, St. Paul, MN 55104) <rhkrdgzin@gmail.com>

*Column Editor's Note: Readers of this column and participants in **CRL's** PAN Forum at **ALA** will be familiar with the shared monograph program among public universities in Michigan described here by guest author **Pamela Grudzien**. It's one of several state-based programs that has matured, but it is unusual in a couple of ways. First, and unlike many other shared monograph projects, it proceeded from the desire to responsibly reduce the size of a collective collection rather than the desire to secure titles that are scarce or unique. Second, it has entered a second generation of activity with the addition of members and consequent refinement of its retention criteria. Moreover, **MI-SPI** is in discussion with a neighboring project among academic libraries in Indiana about the possibilities for joint effort. In this way, **MI-SPI** is helping the shared print community to figure out how existing state and regional projects can knit together and move toward a national level of collection management. The **HathiTrust** and **EAST** monograph projects are approaching the question of the inter-state/regional collection from their angles, and the time is fast approaching when enough individual projects are sufficiently advanced that they can, once a national-level service is readily available for declaring and acting on retention commitments, see the outline of the larger structure needed. — **BK***

Over the past two decades as more and more scholarly resources became available online, academic libraries have shifted away from warehousing print materials for just-in-case use to accessing vast electronic collections that are available 24/7 to meet the needs and demands of students. To provide collaborative and innovative services, library spaces need to be used differently, too. Many libraries, in analyzing their collections, discovered lots of monographs never used and lots of monographs duplicated in many libraries. The mixture of changing space needs and sophisticated collection analysis data created an opportunity for Michigan's public university libraries to collaborate in a new way — a shared collection distributed throughout the partner libraries' physical buildings.

MI-SPI (pronounced My Spy) is the acronym for the **Michigan Shared Print Initiative**. Currently, this is a collaborative project to retain copies of circulating print monographs duplicated in the library collections of most state-supported universities in Michigan. To be specific, at least two copies among 11 institutions. Currently, the **MI-SPI** members are grappling with the realities of retention responsibilities, the concerns about validation of

actual holdings, and ideas about expanding the collaborative to incorporate other formats and possibly libraries in neighboring states. But, it didn't start out that way. In the beginning, it was all about weeding, i.e., deselection, i.e., downsizing some collections.

Let's set the stage: There are 15 state-supported public universities in Michigan, three in the Upper Peninsula, and the remaining 12 across the "Mitten." They range in size from about 2,100 students at **Lake Superior State** to over 50,000 at **Michigan State**. Most of the universities are also participants in the statewide catalog and resource-sharing system called MeLCat — Michigan electronic Library Catalog. The statewide delivery system RIDES makes stops at each institution every weekday. So there was a shared catalog and distribution system in place already to provide infrastructure to **MI-SPI**.

In 2010, several of the state-supported university libraries in Michigan were facing space demands requiring significant downsizing of their collections. While feeling this urgency to remove books, there was also a desire to somehow ensure access to the many titles that were held at sister institutions. Michigan libraries had recognized the advantages of working collaboratively. Communication began early in 2011 with the **Midwest Collaborative for Library Services' (MCLS)** executive director **Randy Dykhuis** to explore the possibilities of a joint monographic deselection and preservation project. In spring 2011, a pilot project was proposed to the **Council of Library Deans and Directors (COLD)**, representing the 15 public universities in the state. While many expressed interest, for a few the timing and budget constraints precluded participation in the pilot. By August 2011, seven partners agreed to move ahead. **MCLS** was asked to be facilitator and fiscal agent for the project and to contact **SCS** on behalf of the new group to engage their collection analysis services.

Initially, interest in this analysis varied among the seven fully participating libraries. Some university libraries were interested in obtaining data analysis of their print monograph collections for weeding due to space constraints. Others were interested in overall analysis of usage of their print monograph collections. Some university libraries had urgent space concerns. There are other similar initiatives to **MI-SPI** happening across the U.S. now, but at the time **MI-SPI** was unique because **MI-SPI's** resource sharing was physically distributed across all participant facilities allowing the partners to create a collective collection while meeting their local space needs.

When the project began in 2012, the original full participants were **Central Michigan**, **East-**

ern Michi-gan**, **Grand Valley State**, **Michigan Tech**, **Saginaw Valley State**, **Wayne State**, and **Western Michigan**. The goal for the original seven participants was to have retention commitments on widely-held but little-used books so that libraries could maintain access through resource sharing to the same number of titles while eliminating significant duplication. Two partners had very urgent space demands requiring heavy deselection in the summer of 2012. Two partners had no space concerns at all and were able to take on more retention assignments in order to help others meet their goals. The collaboration worked well.

The start of **MI-SPI** involved circulating print monographs. In order to make reasonable, intelligent decisions about what to keep and what to weed, a large amount of relevant data needed to be collected and analyzed. Data included detailed holdings information, circulation statistics, publication dates, and comparative holdings among identified libraries and library groups. This all applies to the principle of a collective collection of circulating print monographs.

Data extracts were harvested for **SCS** through the end of 2011. While **SCS** worked with the data, the seven partners came to agreement on criteria for the collection analysis. We would look at:

- titles held by three or more in the group,
- title sets that had fewer than three circulations among title holdings since 1999,
- copies that had been acquired in or before 2005.

The group was comfortable, at this stage, looking at material that had been added to our collections more than five years previously, that was widely duplicated, and that showed little to no use for more than ten years.

In early 2012, collection data was ready for the group to discuss. The initial estimate of total overlap of holdings proved to be high. After normalizing the seven files of records, 535,000 commonly-held titles were available for deselection. Intense discussions about the allocations of retention assignments ensued. A horse-trading process involving reassignment by **SCS** of several thousand titles to two partners helped those who could not commit to all the initially assigned retention candidates for space reasons. Moreover, the group understood that when the partnership expanded beyond the pilot seven and the collective collection was refreshed, the retention responsibilities would

be rebalanced. Even at the start of **MI-SPI**, there was an implicit understanding that there would be a next iteration of the collaborative collection in the near future.

A small sub-committee drafted a memorandum of understanding, which is available for viewing at the MCLS Website *http://www.mcls.org/files/2214/0190/4499/MI-SPI_MOU.pdf*. With the addition of new members and accompanying data refresh completed in early 2016, the scope of **MI-SPI**, as defined in the MOU, is broadening. Four additional public university libraries became full participants in 2015/16, **Ferris State**, **Northern Michigan**, **Oakland**, and **University of Michigan-Dearborn** with the understanding that they would be committed to retain materials for the same period of time and under the stipulations of the existing MOU. These new partners needed to submit updated data sets for the group analysis, along with the original partners participating in the 2015 data refresh. Nine libraries participated in this updating process. **Eastern Michigan** and **Western Michigan** elected not to, an option written into the MOU for the original seven partners, but both institutions are still committed to their original title retention commitments. The refreshed collective collection contains 2,463,620 title holdings, and the rebalanced retention total is smaller than the original set at 433,313.

The refreshed shared collection follows the same retention criteria as the original pilot collection, with an added twist. The retention assignments for **Eastern Michigan** and **Western Michigan** must be added on as a separate criterion in GreenGlass to incorporate their titles. Current criteria for retention are:

- retain two copies among the nine currently participating libraries if both **Eastern Michigan** and **Western Michigan** do not already have a commitment to retain it, and the holdings among the nine libraries are more than two.
- retain just one copy among the nine currently participating libraries when either **Eastern Michigan** or **Western Michigan** already have a commitment to retain it, and the holdings among the nine libraries are more than two.
- retain all copies within the nine library group if the group holdings are fewer than three, U.S. holdings fewer than 50, and **Michigan State** and **University of Michigan** do not have one and **Eastern Michigan** and **Western Michigan** have no retention commitments for this item.

The **MI-SPI** partners are currently discussing these additional issues:

- Disclosing retention assignments in WorldCat.
- Creating a floating shared collection shifting ownership to the partner library that has requested use of another partner's retentions title. Rather than returning the item, it would simply go on the borrowing library's shelf and the retention assignment would shift to that library.
- Clarifying the existing ambiguity for retention of multiple editions. Policies for handling new editions are inconsistent among the partners and this could create retention discrepancies in the future.

Much discussion has and will continue to take place among the group of participants about further development of the Green Glass for Groups (G3) interface. G3 could possibly act as the collective, centralized, cloud resource from which to obtain information about different editions, missing items, weeded items, and physical condition notes at the partner sites. Hopefully, the G3 interface may become more interactive. The opportunity to communicate within the group about reassigning retention commitments, for example, when an item is lost or when replacement costs are excessive, is viewed as an important element in the future of shared collection management.

A lingering question the partners are grappling with is whether the retention books are really on our shelves. And if so, are they in usable condition? The validation project **EAST** has undertaken is of significant interest to the **MI-SPI** partners. The sample inventory model East is using could be applied to the **MI-SPI** collection. It could supply the answer to the lingering question.

In 2013, academic libraries in Indiana received a grant to undertake a shared print project. That project has moved forward under the auspices of the **Academic Libraries of Indiana (ALI)**. In July 2016, **MI-SPI** representatives met with representatives of **ALI** to brainstorm about future collaboration between the two groups. There is substantial overlap in the goals of the two projects, and both projects used **SCS** to analyze their data and produce retention lists. As the conversation progressed and we learned more about each organization's projects and plans, it became apparent that staffing was a significant difference between the projects. **MI-SPI** operates with a volunteer steering committee and minimal staff time from **MCLS**. **ALI** has staff time dedicated to their initiatives. We agreed to consider our next steps and have a second meeting planned for January 2017.

There are many innovations and challenges ahead for **MI-SPI**. The original, 2012 MOU had two distinct goals — 1) to create and maintain a distributed, shared collection of identified print monographs, to ensure that circulating copies are retained within the group, readily accessible to group participants and other Michigan libraries; 2) to responsibly reduce the size of local print collections by reducing duplication of low-circulating titles among participating libraries so that library space may be freed up for other uses. As of 2016, other goals are being considered — to explore opportunities for collaborative collection development between and among the participants, to expand the collective collection to include other formats such as bound periodicals and microforms, and to pursue possible partnerships with library groups in surrounding states. The group is enthusiastic and motivated about expanding the collective collection and collaborating with other groups to share responsibilities for more resources. The future of the shared collection movement is exciting.

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history researchers, business suppliers, job seekers, freelance writers and illustrators, media researchers, students, etc.

The meeting's detailed and passionate discussion was in general surprising and very informative to the **Gale** team!

New Publishing Strategy Implemented

Gale heeded the advice. The publishing plan was substantially changed to focus on the addition of newspapers and related geographic information sources as a top priority, while more gradually expanding general periodicals listings. **Gale** published its first full edition under the title *Gale Directory of Publications (GDOP)* and included many hundreds of additional newspaper listings as advised, a growth process that would continue cumulatively in subsequent editions.

In following years, additional market feedback including specific customer requests resulted in the further expansion of *GDOP* to include TV and radio stations listed in the same familiar geographic arrangement. While this was not specifically envisioned at the time of the kickoff advisory board meeting, the expansion aligned with the publication's defined mission to focus on local news, information, and advertising sources, rather than attempt to cover the universe of periodical sources.

Today, the 2016 (152nd) edition of *Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media* provides a curated compilation of some 60,000 media listings, and is published in multiple print and electronic formats.

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*John Schmittroth is a business development consultant serving reference content publishers and providers. He previously worked for **Gale** as director of the directories division among other positions.*