Consortial Partnerships with Libraries and Vendors

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Partners should have frequent and productive communications but sometimes partnerships run into problems when one partner fails to regularly communicate or ignores issues until it becomes a list of grievances. In such situations, the partnership may be damaged and success unlikely. Holding a list of problems or issues until it builds to a level of frustration can ruin a partnership. Another communication failure is when complaints are directed at the wrong people. A partner might gripe or complain to a person who is unable to resolve the situation or a minor problem is reported to a high level administrator. When a situation is not being addressed, a partner should work it up the chain of command. **Stamison**, et al., suggest that an "escalation list" be provided to librarians so as problems become more complex, librarians will know who to contact in succession (2009, p.145). Addressing problems in relationships at the point of occurrence with specificity with the right people or appropriate protocol should help to keep issues to a minimum. Should that fail, working through the issue with the correct reporting method with the right people will hopefully result in resolution.

Anderson notes that for the most part, vendors are honorable people and "they should be treated as such until they give a good reason to do otherwise" as librarians maintain a professional demeanor (2005, p.324). At the core of any relationship, professionalism and courtesy should guide partners. In forming a partnership, librarians and vendors will be more successful if they establish protocols for working together and constantly attend to the communication. This foundation is essential for a positive working relationship to achieve mutual goals.

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Consortial Partnerships with Libraries and Vendors

by **George Machovec** (Executive Director, Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries) <george@coalliance.org>

Introduction

By definition, library consortia are partnerships between libraries to accomplish common goals such as reducing costs, sharing expertise, and enhancing services. Consortia then work with vendors, publishers and others on licensing and services to better meet the local library mission to various constituencies.

Since the advent of ejournals, eBooks, and other e-resources on the Web, library consortia have played an increasingly important role in aggregating group deals and acting as an agent on behalf of libraries. This has introduced another player in the complex world of licensing with both benefits and challenges. It's not unusual that when a library wants to license a new product that they have several players with which to contend including a consortia, an intermediate vendor such as **GOBI** or **OASIS**, and the publisher or vendor licensing the product. To complicate matters, many libraries belong to multiple consortia and if they happen to be offering the same product or service the library must determine which group to work through. These decisions could be driven by regional allegiances, which organization is offering the best pricing (including terms and conditions), and the need to view the bigger ecosystem to create the best benefit for the library community and end users.

Consortial Role in Licensing

Although some library consortia have been around for many decades, the modern consortial movement can be marked by the advent of the Web with the concomitant move of much library content from print to digital. In the mid-1990s, consortial leaders began to meet at the **American Library Association** and the informal community eventually coalesced to become the **International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)** which now includes hundreds of library consortia from around the world. One of the big reasons for the revival of the consortial movement was the financial opportunities that could be possible through centralized licensing, bringing together libraries and providers to create a greater volume of licensing, lowered costs, and efficiencies in operation.

Library consortia are primarily responsible for the development of the modern day "big deal" and the term was coined, or brought into the common vernacular, very early by **Tom Sanville** at **OhioLink**. Although there are many variants of this type of deal, it is characterized by libraries consolidating their journal subscriptions into a single contract with the publisher and then each library will get access to everything offered by that publisher or at least get access to the collective holdings of that group. It was successful for publishers because they could lock-in library expendi-

tures. Libraries were happy for increased content at the same price and publishers were protecting their revenue stream. Of course big deals bring a host of other problems which were recognized very early (Frazier, 2001; Gatten/ Sanville, 2004) but they have largely remained in place since backing out causes a huge drop in available content disproportionate to the savings. One of the effects of the big deal has been a huge drop in revenue for intermediate commercial serial vendors, as consortia cherry-picked some of the largest packages for their members.

In the scholarly monographic world, consortia have been aggressive in a variety of areas. Group purchases of eBook packages from major publishers have played a major role in reducing unit costs for monographs. Library consortia have also played a big role in demand driven acquisition (DDA) and evidence-based monographic purchasing. Many academic libraries are moving away from title-by-title purchasing, except for specialty purchasing and individual requests, and depend on these larger cooperatives for the largest portion of their monographic expenditures.

Every library consortium is different in terms of funding, governance and functional areas. This translates into many variations on how deals are developed and funded. The consortial role in e-resource licensing has been successful due to the many benefits that are offered to member libraries. Examples include:

- Lowered costs through volume licensing
- Lower inflation rates for individual contracts due to strong negotiations on behalf of a group
- A single point of contact for the vendor for billing
- A single license for the group which mitigates many local variations
- Many consortia act as extensions of a local library's collection development and acquisitions department; thus allowing a local library to do more with smaller staff.
- Deep expertise in contract negotiation for better pricing as well as more standard terms and conditions
- Greater attention from a publisher or vendor which can extend to smaller libraries
- Some consortia act as a repository for funds to cross fiscal years for a local library
- Developing specialized partnerships with vendors and publishers for special projects in ways that an individual library cannot

Recent Trends in Consortial Roles

Over the last few years, consortia have continued in their primary missions but have begun to operate in new initiatives driven by changes in the marketplace and technology. Technology has opened the door for collaborative efforts in ways that were much more difficult to achieve in the past.

Many consortia now talk about "deep collaboration" with new opportunities provided by multi-tenant cloud-based library management systems (i.e., integrated library systems). For example, the **Orbis Cascade Alliance** has identified several broad areas of collaboration which include (*https://www.orbiscascade.org/center-excellence/*):

- "Improve and develop consortial functionality in Alma and Primo
- Define and document best practices for consortia in such areas as collection development, collaborative services, resource sharing, and user experience
- Develop and document implementation best practices for consortia"

Shared print programs for monographs and serials have become major initiatives in many groups around the country. These programs allow libraries to make better decisions about what to weed and put in storage while ensuring access to the scholarly record and providing continued access to legacy materials for their patrons. These initiatives are often partnerships between the member libraries, publishers/vendors, and software providers (e.g., **OCLC's** GreenGlass for Groups and **Colorado Alliance of Research Library's** Gold Rush). The goal is to reduce the footprint of historical print collections in centrally-located campus libraries while not losing access to the historical collection. Through smart reductions in collection size in collaboration with partner libraries and vendors, libraries can re-purpose space and not lose access to key resources. Many publishers and vendors offer digital backfiles of monographs for subscription or purchase which can be leveraged in this process.

Shared digital repositories are being established by many libraries and consortia to store the unique digital assets available on campuses. When operating an open source digital repository such as Dspace or Fedora, some efficiencies can be found when working together. But as with any open source initiative, significant staff effort needs to support the service at both the central and local level. One must remember that hosting a self-funded centralized digital repository typically requires direct funding from participating libraries which must come from an operating or materials budget. In contrast, locally operating a repository can use in-house staff which may appear to reduce costs albeit they are embedded in library or IT staffing. A few consortia have operated shared repository platforms and then shut them down returning

Author Bio

Since 2012 **George** has been the Executive Director at the **Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries** (*https://www.coalliance.org/*). Before that he was the Interim Executive Director, Associate Director and Technical Coordinator at the **Alliance** where he has worked since 1993. Some specific areas in which **George** has been involved during his time at the **Alliance** include the deployment of the *Prospector* regional union catalog, the launching of a shared print program for the consortium, a consortial e-resource licensing program and the development of a software suite called **Gold Rush** which provides a shared print analytics tool (among other modules). Previously he was head of systems at **Arizona State University (ASU) Libraries** from 1987-1993 and before that was a reference librarian and head of the Solar Energy Collection at **ASU**. **George** is the managing editor for *The Charleston Advisor* (*http://charlestonco.com*), a peer reviewed journal which provides in-depth reviews of products and services for libraries as well as monitoring trends in the library and information marketplace. He is also the consortia column editor for the *Journal of Library Administration*.

the software and content to member libraries for local operation or migrating to a commercial solution (Dean, 2016).

Use statistics are a key feature for libraries to determine the value of e-resources they are licensing. Although this can be accomplished through SUSHI harvesting in most ERMS solutions, many centrally licensed products will have use data gathered by the consortia. Typically this will include local library data in addition to a central compilation for all libraries. A commercial solution called **Redlink** (*https://redlink.com/*) is a new and very powerful solution that works at the library and consortial level. Open source solutions are currently being developed through a grant to the **PALCI** consortium in a project called CC-PLUS (*http://www.palci.org/cc-plus-news*).

The **OA2020** initiative (*https://oa2020.org/*), is another movement embraced by many consortia. "**OA2020** is a global initiative to propel open access forward by fostering and inciting the transformation of today's scholarly journals from the current subscription (paywall) system to new open access publishing models that enable unrestricted use and re-use of scholarly outputs and assure transparency and sustainability of publishing costs" (*https://oa2020.org/be-informed/*). The movement is being spearheaded by the **Max Planck Digital Library** in Germany and consortia will play a key role in trying to flip major publishers over to open access publishing. The movement has been well received in many European countries and growing consideration is being given by libraries and consortia in North America.

How are Partnerships Different with Consortia?

As libraries collaborate through a consortium, a number of opportunities and challenges emerge. A library must weigh the benefits and drawbacks to determine their level of participation and whether the partnership makes sense. External financial support for programs and initiatives are more likely to be funded in collaborative settings due to the greater impact of working together with the added benefit of meeting the needs of many different libraries making a solution more generalized.

Everything takes longer while working in a group. This is driven by many factors but includes the need to come to consensus making sure all constituent needs are met or at least understood. Consortial activities also recognize an interdependence whether it be to lower costs, do activities that would otherwise not be possible alone, or develop a framework for sharing expertise among partners.

Trust is a huge factor in working together. This trust needs to exist between partner libraries, the consortium office, and vendors.

The need to have a "can do" attitude and the willingness to try something new or out of your comfort zone are also helpful characteristics on collaborative ventures. Almost any program, service, or license has some libraries that benefit more than others. Being willing to be a team player will create success and in some future initiative there will be different libraries with greater benefit.

Another challenge in working together is determining whether a license, program or service is "all-in" or "opt-in." All-in programs require everyone in the group to participate in a license or initiative. This type of universal participation can be driven by mandate (whether a board or higher funding agency) or because a particular resource or service is so compelling that all want to voluntarily participate. Some programmatic areas define a consortium and are the primary reason for being. For example, if a consortium operates a shared integrated library system and/or union catalog, if that is their primary initiative, if you are not in that service you are not in the consortium. Opt-in programs and licenses are more common in groups where funding comes from the members. Every library has different needs so participating in a license, program or service is only done when there is a benefit.

Pajama Party: Using Technology for Remote Partner Collaboration

by **Rick Branham** (Vice President Academic Library Initiatives, SirsiDynix) <rick.branham@sirsidynix.com>

When I got started in this industry a few decades ago (I often joke that it was in a child labor camp, but alas, it was my first job as a college freshman doing retrospective conversion or "recon"), online collaboration tools were just emerging: email, the web, and fax machines were considered new and cutting-edge technologies. And like any new technology, the early iterations were clunky. I remember firing up my email and getting a cup of coffee while I waited for the program to open.

As I moved up the ladder from a lowly data entry technician (transcribing library cards into MARC) to a project manager, my responsibilities required a significant amount of interaction with customers. For large projects, such as the recon of the **Yale Beinecke** rare book collection, multi-day onsite meetings were imperative. The scope of work included taxing specifications such as detailed instructions for handling hand-written provenance notes on the backs of library cards. These notes involved abbreviations and shorthand that were often specific to particular curators — different curators would use different abbreviations for the same thing. Once the project began, I would communicate several times per week with my project liaison at the library, often by faxing photocopies of card images with notes in question circled and annotated. We would have regular calls to discuss the faxes, and the whole process would sometimes take several days or weeks for resolution.

I think back to these early days of my career, and I can't image how I would cope with today's job demands without the high-tech tools that are now available for project collaboration. I'm sure every generation thinks the same thing: my ancestors likely marveled in

the 1850s at the amazing telegraph technology and how messages could zip around the world — no longer requiring the weeks or months for delivery of letters via horse and/or boat.

I'm confident that technology will improve our current tools — perhaps teleportation, holographs, internet-enabled "smart contacts" will make our current technology seem primitive. But I do believe we live in an age where participants in a project can be truly unbound by physical location and even language boundaries to cooperate effectively on a desired outcome.

I want to discuss three types of collaboration applications: conferencing, document collaboration, and prototyping. I will draw on my own experiences in each area, but I have also done my homework, and I'll point you to some good resources for evaluating tools that may work best for you.

Let's start with conferencing. While video conferencing is all the rage in many industries, I don't believe it's necessary or even desirable for every discussion. I think it's helpful in the early stages of a partnership — although an onsite meeting is usually the best option if at all possible. But once trust and rapport is established, video calls are nice if the meeting is simply a discussion. But if you're viewing slides or a demo, a video call only takes of valuable screen space, in my opinion. Besides, one of the wonderful benefits of remote conferencing is that you can do it in your pajamas and you don't have to comb your hair.

My company (**SirsiDynix**[1]) has used many conferencing tools over the years: Adobe Connect,[2] WebEx,[3] join.me,[4] GoToMeeting,[5] and Skype[6] are just a few. Currently, WebEx and GoToMeeting are our preferred apps. All of them offer the now-standard features: tele- and

video-conferencing, screen sharing, and participant chat. But of the ones I've used, only Adobe Connect doesn't offer desirable features such as calendar integration and video recording. WebEx is the app most of us use for everyday conferencing and demos, while GoToMeeting is our choice for webinars and web events with a larger audience. GoToMeeting is full-featured, but seems to be a bit more complex for simple sessions with a few participants. That's why our marketing team has webinar hosts that control the software, while the participants do what they're told: "click this button to unmute your mic and this button to share your screen."

WebEx, on the other hand, is quite accessible. It is easy to schedule a meeting in advance or to start an impromptu meeting, generating a link that can be emailed to participants. It's also easy for participants to join — not so for other apps I've used, which required desktop downloads and confusing configuration options in order to join. Adobe Connect — when we used it a few years ago — was such a program. In many instances, participants simply could not get the software to work, so I had to use a shared WebEx account (we held onto an account as a security blanket, even after Adobe Connect was mandated).

WebEx also has easy-to-use features that allow you to pass "control" to any participant for screen sharing. A host can also give other participants "mouse control" if you want to allow a user to try something "hands-on." Session recording is simple: a link to the recording is generated and emailed to the host after the session ends.

Join.me, in my opinion, is an effective and very easy-to-use conferencing app. However, at the time my company used the app, there were no telephone audio options included — it required voice-over IP (VOIP). This was a bit of a deal-breaker for us, as many of our presentations and project meetings include multiple staff gathered around a star phone or some other speakerphone. Join.me has a free option that is quite full-featured and easy to use if you don't have another conferencing account. I use it now and then for personal video conferences with friends and family.

Take a look at the Aug 2017 review from *PC Magazine* for their ranking of conferencing applications.[7] The article's editors named ClickMeeting with the Editor's Choice award, but I have no experience with this application. It's worth checking out their review, which includes a good overview of the functionality and several screenshots.[8]

Document collaboration applications are not nearly as interactive or as compelling as conferencing, but it is invaluable for effective project collaboration. Emailing documents

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Conclusion

Virtually all academic libraries belong to one or more consortia which have become a fundamental part of the library ecosystem. Before launching a new project or licensing a new product or service, most libraries should pause to consider whether collaboration through the consortium would make sense or add value. Adding the consortium between the library and vendor does add a layer of complexity, but these partnerships

can sometimes be the most productive for all parties.

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