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Changing Library Operations--Orbis Cascade Alliance: Collection Development

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Cooperative Collections

Optimizing the expansion of mission relevant information resources is integral to the development and delivery of the services and programs of libraries. Collections are the content. Services and programs facilitate their use. Implicit in any discussion of content is its integral requirement of effective access. Optimizing the volume of content must be viewed in the context of the services that provide relevance and means of access. For example, a catalog serves relevance and access to the collection, as does re-shelving the collection and a program of instruction in the use of a catalog. The objective is effective access to the content. This article will survey the **Alliance's** efforts in optimizing access to shared content through its services and programs. The **Alliance** Shared Content Team is charged with providing "broad oversight and leadership in the sharing of library-selected content. As experts for the consortium, the team continually assesses, manages, and develops initiatives that broaden access by providing cost-effective sharing, licensing, and description of such content."

Consortia like the **Alliance** extend the services and programs of libraries to the network operational level. The benefits of shared access require commitment to collective administrative overhead. The initial focus for library sharing was physical books. Consortia shared local access to their book collections through the development and maintenance of union catalogs and the ongoing provision of local systems of distribution. The **Orbis** consortium initiated its union catalog in 1995 with 12 Oregon libraries and began a borrowing program in 1996. They initiated a courier system in 1998 to expedite access to their collective holdings for their combined patrons. The Washington based **Cascade** consortium initiated a union catalog in 1997 and migrated to INN-Reach, the **Innovative Interfaces** software for expediting interlibrary loan, which improved access to the collective holdings of the seven participating libraries.

In 2002 **Orbis** and **Cascade** joined to pool the then 26 collections of the **Orbis Cascade Alliance** using INN-Reach to share access to what was named Summit. Expansion of content through access currently includes nearly 9 million unduplicated titles of the shared 28 million volumes with delivery time within 24 to 48 hours for the 37 libraries serving over 275,000 students. Using my library as an example, **Western Oregon University's** collection increased around 4,500 percent with access to the **Alliance** joint collection. Annual growth rate for **WOU's** individual collection over that period of time was approximately one percent per annum. Individual ownership changed marginally through sharing while access improved dramatically even though there is a time delay compared to the immediacy of local access. The time delay, which was generally within two days, was a considerable improvement over regular interlibrary loan and encouraged usage. Last year's **Alliance** Summit usage was 37% of total **WOU** print book usage.

The coordinated services that provided access to the collection included the implementation of the union catalog, courier system, and INN-Reach software. All of these were needed to provide more effective access to the shared content primarily with respect to time but also load balancing between institutions. And all of these require administration at the network level.

The **Alliance** attempted to further optimize access by a suggested limit to duplicate copies. The effort was facilitated through the common utilization of Gobi, the **YBP** service that permits selectors to view consortium-wide title purchasing processes. The system was jointly adopted by all **Alliance** members in 2008. The effort was intended to decrease unnecessary duplication and has instead resulted most recently in a slight increase in the average number of copies purchased. An individual's need for immediacy often trumps the librarians' concerns for shared collection size. Librarians are forever adjudicating between immediate access and general comprehensiveness in their striving to optimize use of limited funds.

The **Alliance** infrastructure for optimizing access to content has most recently been enriched through the implementation of **Ex Libris** Alma and Primo. The single system for all 37 libraries provides the technical infrastructure for enriched user access to content through cooperative management of network level bibliographic data, discovery technology, data-driven collection development through usage and cost assessment, and vendor data and software coordination.

eBooks

In the realm of eBooks, optimizing access to content primarily involves maximizing the volume of content to increase the probability of a search term providing relevant content. Negotiating shared access to eBooks is often viewed as a type of interlibrary loan. Conceptualizing cooperative eBook purchasing as ILL maintains viability because it is how physical access has been shared. It is, however, an unwieldy construct that makes negotiation more complicated since the mechanisms for shared access have no physical dimension. The price for e-copy production and distribution is zero. eBooks do not need to be produced or transported. The costs are artificially imposed for eBooks primarily to allow competitive print distribution and perhaps to some extent to maintain a library hierarchy of access tied to purchased collections.

The imposed cost/value appears in acquisition/access models brokered by vendors between librarians and publishers. For instance, the imposition can be seen in the restrictions to access enforced by publishers via an embargo for front-list titles in a subscription database. It is, in a sense, subsidizing the sale of front-list titles. The imposition also shows up as the cost of concurrent accesses (multiple copies) to an eBook. Patrons must wait their turn as they would for a print copy. It is manifest in the provision of access to a collection through short-term loans and purchases of perpetuity after an agreed upon number of loans. The negotiated value of access and timeliness to eBooks is linked to the need to subsidize the general costs of publishing for e or p publication but also the cost of print production, warehousing, shipping, and handling.

eBook Consortia Collection Development

A more complex iteration of the 'imposed' framework for negotiating access to eBooks involves consortium access to a shared collection. As an example, **WOU** as a member of the **Orbis Cascade Alliance** is participating in the cooperative Demand-Driven Access/Acquisitions (DDA) through **YBP** and **EBL**. The intent is to provide access to a shared collection as one entity through our combined patron selections. We are working on the evolution of the details of the model. An overview from **WOU's** vantage point of the benefits of cooperative collection development of eBooks can be demonstrated through a look at **WOU's** return on investment for FY 2014. **WOU's** share of the annual cost was $7,547. Approximately 18,000 titles were available in the pool to **WOU's** faculty and students. Of those, 738 titles were purchased for their use. Costs per title availability and purchase were 42 cents and $10.23 respectively. Total usage for **WOU** for the year numbered 2,877 browses or short-term loans (STL) with a cost per use of $2.62. With respect to providing expanded, cost-effective access to content, this arrangement is far superior to access that could be provided in print.

Expanded, cost-effective access to eBook content would likely be improved dramatically if totally separated from the physical and conceptual constraints associated with print distribution. Facilitation of access through browsing, short-term loans, multi-institution access, and subscription are evolutionary steps toward distribution models that stretch toward ubiquitous access that increases use

and thereby decreases cost per use with a net gain for all involved. In a totally e-distribution environment, increased access exposure through search engines should increase use and thereby decrease cost per use. The current models for distribution are the typical expressions of technological innovation that first competes with and then replaces the less efficient technology. They must co-exist through a period of adjustment.

FY 2013-14 Cost/ Benefit Analysis of Alliance DDA for Western Oregon University

Cost/Benefit Analysis	
Cost to WOU - FY14	*$ 7,547.00*
Titles in Pool – 18,000	
Cost / Title Available	$0.42
Usage – Browse, Loan – 2,877	
Cost / Use	$2.62
Titles Purchased – 738	
Cost / Title	$10.23
Titles added annually – approx. 6,000	
Cost/ Title available	$1.26

FY 2013-14 Western Oregon University Alliance DDA Usage

	Owned Browse	Owned Loan	Unowned Browse	Unowned Loan	Total
WOU	740	558	1,039	540	2,877

Library operations occurring at the network level for the provision of cooperative DDA require an additional layer of complexity. For example, negotiation and management entail multi-institutional assessments of faculty and student need with respect to institutionally relevant content. This is generally facilitated by adjudicating available content through assessing institutional usage. Relevant systems for assessment need to be devised and data needs to be accumulated and analyzed for ongoing maintenance of cost effectiveness and equity. Efficiencies of catalog maintenance associated with managing a shared DDA collection are gained through the shared Ex Libris catalog but this as well comes with additional coordination complexity.

Journals

The consortia role in the provision of access to the online journals evinces as cooperative purchasing of access to databases like **EBSCO's** but there is also a preservation advantage to cooperation. The dramatic shift from print to online resources has spawned growing concern for its consequent encroached upon ownership, control, and preservation of content. The struggle is manifest in ongoing deliberations and negotiations among librarians, authors, publishers, vendors, lawyers, lawmakers, and organizations promoting a variety of preservation and access schemes for e-journals. This will eventually be sorted out through a mix of competition and cooperation on a global scale among all of the stakeholders. The individual library is no longer the primary agent and guarantor of the preservation of the written word as it transitions to electronic format. Preservation of physical archival copies is still their domain. In the persistence of their electronic offspring, libraries collectively have only a significant voice.

Shelf Space

Given the problem of diminishing shelf space, particularly for the larger institutions, cooperative preservation has been an issue in the **Alliance's** pursuit of cooperative collection development and management. The issue has been prominent in **Alliance** strategy discussions of a possible joint project to procure a cooperative storage facility. A practicable plan for a building never materialized, owing to a variety of factors including the logistics of financing, the retreating number of print books and journals being procured, the majority of smaller libraries for whom it was not critical and seemingly out of reach, and the possibilities latent in the alternative of cooperative preservation through shared facilities distribution.

In keeping with the primacy of the library's role in the preservation of physical archival copies of journal articles, the **Alliance** in its collection development and management undertakings created a cooperative distributed print repository for journals. The initial **Alliance** endeavor to create a distributed print repository was formally proposed in 2005. The Summit union catalog of the **Alliance** provided the core mechanism for shared collection development and with it the means for creating a distributed print repository for preservation and for the requisite potential expansion needed for shared collection development. A cooperative repository provides preservation assurance that permits withdrawal of duplicated resources, primarily journals but also monographs.

The **Alliance** had approved and mostly implemented the proposal for a distributed repository by 2008. The particulars of the shape of the collection included 241 journal titles of the combined **JSTOR** Arts and Sciences I and II database collections and the 33 titles of the American Chemical Society journals. The broad ownership among **Alliance** members of the bound back files along with subscriptions to their electronic counterparts provided the key selection criterion. The titles also provided long journal runs in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Nearly all **Alliance** members hold, and are responsible in perpetuity for, a portion of the titles. Two complete runs of each title are held; one copy circulates. The **Alliance** effort eventually merged into an agreement with the **Western Regional Storage Trust** (**WEST**).

Other Content

Books, eBooks, and journals are central content for library consortia operations; however, as with success in these areas, uniquely held collections, both print and online, have become more central to **Alliance** deliberations. Materials in print, online, archives, publications, exhibits, etc. will be increasingly considered for cooperative use. The **Alliance** has mapped out operational structures for cooperation across a fuller range of content managed by four administrative teams and five program area teams. The administrative teams include assessment, center of excellence, finance, and policy teams. The program area teams include collaborative workforce, content creation and dissemination, discovery and delivery, shared content, and systems teams. All content access is facilitated through library operations, which requires organizational structures for cooperative use at the network level. The **Alliance** is stretching the limits of consortia operations to facilitate more pervasive levels of cooperative content access. 🐙

Endnotes
1. Four of these papers are already available in the **IFLA Library**:
   http://library.ifla.org/1159/1/187-moulaison-en.pdf
   http://library.ifla.org/1151/1/187-hafner-en.pdf
   http://library.ifla.org/1152/1/187-khanipour-en.pdf
   http://library.ifla.org/1164/1/187-schmolling-en.pdf