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Data to Decisions: Shared Print Retention in Maine

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Shared print initiatives are gaining visibility across the country. While the majority of programs up to this point, such as the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) and the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), have focused on journals, a growing number of these cooperative ventures are exploring regional retention of both monographs and journals. The Maine Shared Collection Strategy is one such initiative.

Why Maine?

Some may question why such a venture would be appropriate for Maine—a state without an ARL library and with only one doctoral-granting institution. But this is precisely why Maine is ideal for such a project. Maine's libraries have developed a strong culture of cooperation and resource sharing with a single network infrastructure, Maine InfoNet, supporting all types of libraries and with over 1.25 million items shared around the state. This level of trust and cooperation brought together the eight largest libraries in the state to discuss how they collectively could maintain a legacy print collection within Maine. A second benefit, but not the primary driver behind this proposal, would be the ability to address collections space issues. The result was an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant to create a shared print collection strategy. Specifically, the grant called for the creation of a collection analysis system, inclusion of large digital collections (HathiTrust and Internet Archive) in making retention decisions, development of a strategy to make these decisions at scale, and integration of a print-on-demand component. The resulting project is called the Maine Shared Collections Strategy (MSCS), and the partners are Bangor Public Library, Bates College, Bowdoin College, Colby College, Maine State Library, Portland Public Library, University of Maine, University of Southern Maine, and the statewide collaborative Maine InfoNet. (A ninth discrete collection from the now-defunct Bangor Theological Seminary was added to the collection analysis, although Colby College now owns these titles.) The inclusion of the Bangor and Portland public libraries as well as the Maine State Library is one of the unique components of MSCS, as no other cooperative print project has included both academic and public institutions.

Project Governance and Management

The MSCS Project Team is responsible for coordinating the activities of the various working committees. Coordinated by Matthew Revitt, Program Manager, the Project Team includes the three principle investigators of the grant (Deborah Rollins, University of Maine; Clem Guthro, Colby College; and Barbara McDade, Bangor Public Library); the Technology Director, James Jackson-Sanborn (Maine InfoNet); and the contracted Systems Librarian, Sara Amato, who has been critical in providing data and implementing many of the committees' decisions within the various library systems. Two committees, Collection Development and Technical Services, are charged with making decisions to operationalize goals proposed in the grant. These include what data elements will be used to identify materials to Commit to Retain (CTR), how those elements will be weighted, and how these decisions will be documented and conveyed both locally and nationally. A memorandum of understanding (MOU), agreed upon by the Director's Council, is in place to document the ongoing commitment to this project. Signatories agree to retain designated titles for 15 years, with both the MOU and these commitments reviewed every 5 years. An Executive Committee will provide governance postgrant, and a Collections and Operations Committee will review retention decisions, holdings disclosures, and access to and delivery of retained content.

A component of this project that will be implemented after the grant period is opening up participation in this project to a wider group of

libraries. Members could join as collection holders (those willing to commit to retain titles), collection builders (those willing to ingest and retain holdings from others), or as supporting members who would be able to make retention and deaccession decisions based upon the commitments of other libraries.

Data, Data Everywhere!

The key to the success of the MSCS grant was the ability to gather and analyze a vast amount of data. The information needed as a basis for analysis included:

- number of partner library holdings per unique title;

- unique or rarely held titles among participants, in both the state and WorldCat;

- location of copies (e.g., open stacks, special collections);

- circulation status of copies;

- frequency of circulation and the last circulation date;

- relative subject strengths;

- title representation in HathiTrust or the Internet Archive.

The needed data reside in each participant's ILS—five different catalogs among the eight partners (Bangor Public Library, Maine State Library, University of Maine, and University of Southern Maine share a catalog). OCLC, HathiTrust, and Internet Archive would also be analyzed to provide comparative data. To gather this information, first an OCLC reclamation was conducted to clean up and standardize participants' holdings and OCLC numbers. This facilitated title matching across libraries. OCLC was also contracted to export circulation data elements (both local item information and bibliographic data) for analysis. MSCS also subscribed to OCLC's Collections Analysis tool to facilitate collection analysis, but it failed to meet the needs of the project. Eventually, Sustainable Collection Services (SCS) were contracted to extract local data and compare it among

participants and with external systems. The overarching results were:

- 2,958,905 unfiltered bibliographic records;

- 2,920,014 filtered titles (removing records that did not have OCLC numbers, etc.);

- 1,754,598 unique titles.

Using all of these data, monographic titles were split into two groups, Not Widely Held, meaning a title is held in only one or two MSCS libraries, and Widely Held, with more than three libraries holding a title.

These two groups were further filtered, removing any title published after 2003, as they may not have had the opportunity to circulate and were likely to be retained independently from this project. Then a series of "local interest" rules were developed to ensure content of local and regional value were retained. The local rules applied to MSCS holdings are:

- "Maine" appears in the title, author, series, or subject fields;

- Book is published in Maine;

- The author or artist is from Maine;

- Title is classed in Maine local history;

- Subject of a work is about:

    o A college or university in the state (e.g., Bowdoin);

    o A Maine-centric industry (e.g., paper industry, lobster fishing);

    o Marine or coastal studies;

    o Native Maine peoples;

    o Maine places or populations;

    o Specified religious groups (e.g., Free Will Baptists).

Any circulation of a title, whether traditional, internal use, or reserve use, was identified. Titles held in special collections were also tagged, as were specific editions held in nine or fewer libraries in the United States.

After Further Review

After all of these filters were applied the Not Widely Held titles were broken into two subgroups to form Step One of the analysis. Any holdings that had circulated, were identified to be of local interest, held in special collections, or were rarely held outside of the state were identified and earmarked for retention. After reviewing sample retention title lists, however, some issues became apparent. Outdated textbooks, test preparation titles, and computer manuals appeared on some lists. Often, this type of material becomes outdated or is superseded by a more recent edition. Participants agreed that retaining outdated or incorrect information for the next 15 years was not desirable. The public libraries also noticed a large number of trade paperbacks that may have circulated heavily when first acquired but have since seen no activity. Retaining such titles would require commitment of valuable shelf space in libraries where it is in short supply. The most efficient way to address these titles, the collections group proposed, was to apply another filter based upon publisher, as evaluating any library's Committed to Retain (CTR) list title by title was not possible. This approach created challenges for the systems librarian because publisher names as found in the MARC 245 field are uncontrolled, but she was successful in filtering the vast majority of this type of content. Once this extra filter was complete, item records for the CTR titles were updated in local catalogs to include a publicly visible message showing that the title is part of the Maine Shared Collection project. After all of this work, it is still possible that titles a library has committed to retain are, in fact, in poor condition or not even on the shelf since a title-by-title condition or status inventory was not mandated or feasible for the partners due to the project's scale. If a holding library's CTR title is found to be missing, MSCS has put a process in place to address this, which will be discussed later.

The second subgroup of Step One consisted of those titles that met all of the retention requirements, except that they had not circulated. These were labelled as "needs further examination," or NFE. Because one of the concerns participating directors raised was being required to retain material that was of no interest to anyone just on principle, collection development committee members eventually agreed not to commit to retain the holdings with no checkouts.

The final numbers for titles considered in Step One were:

- 1,076,188 titles to CTR
- 392,382 titles NFE (not committed to retain)

On to Step Two

As of this presentation, MSCS has just begun to examine those titles that are classified as Widely Held, meaning that three or more project participants have holdings (at least one copy) of a given title (unique OCLC number). As MSCS moves forward in analyzing the widely held titles, questions we are considering include whether there is a minimum or maximum number of holdings per unique title that should be CTR, should we apply the same filters as used in Step One, and how do we allocate retention responsibilities equitably.

Serials—A Completely Different Animal

Serials have proven to be a bit more difficult to corral, despite being a smaller group. MSCS, in considering serials as part of this project, has no interest in duplicating existing efforts, including electronic preservation in Portico, JSTOR, and major publisher and aggregator journal archive sites. Serials holdings matching titles in such collections were removed from consideration for retention commitments. Local interest serials, those not widely held in OCLC, and titles located in special collections were then extracted from the remaining list of serials. MSCS relied on our systems librarian to manipulate title lists for this phase of the project, as SCS does not work with serials holdings. The format code "s" was used to generate these lists, but, because the participating libraries differ in their application of "s" and "b" (book) format codes to holdings, the results were title lists that included both book series as well as journals. Another way the serials process is

different than the monograph process is in the vastly reduced size of the title lists. For example, the largest list for retention commitment review was for University of Maine with 1,977 serials after filtering. These manageable lists allowed collection development librarians to review at the serial title level to determine if retention was practicable or desirable. Bates College's serials retention commitment went from 315 titles to 254 after review with the removal of single volumes or very brief runs of serials, Maine government documents (which were excluded from this project), microforms, and serials with pre-established retention schedules, for example. Participants are still reviewing serials lists with final commitments due to be made in early December.

Broadcasting Our Decisions Far and Wide

One of the goals of the MSCS project is to broadcast our retention decisions to the broader library community. By doing so, we are serving the greater good—other librarians are aware of our commitments and can make their own retention/disposition decisions with these in mind. MSCS is using our OCLC shared print symbols to convey decisions nationally and internationally. Within the state, the retention decision appears in the shared statewide discovery system, MaineCat. And in each of the five independent catalogs, the MARC 583 field is used to convey our intent to retain a title to our local user communities. In some cases this note displays prominently in our public catalogs, resulting in questions from our users, including whether or not the book can be checked out. As the project moves forward, some modification of this public display note may occur to make it less obvious or confusing to our clientele.

But I Want It in Print

One factor considered when filtering monographs for retention commitments was whether the title is available in HathiTrust (both in copyright and public domain) or in the Internet Archive. For those titles rarely held in the state but not retained because they had not circulated, 6% are available in HathiTrust as public domain content and another 6% in Internet Archive. These titles

are candidates for MSCS's print-on-demand (POD) service, as are other public domain titles not available from a participating library. A decision was made to load HathiTrust public domain records into the statewide MaineCat catalog where users will be able to request a POD title. The request is routed to the University of Maine where the physical copy is created and delivered to the user. During the initial phase of this project, printing costs will be absorbed by the grant, although this will have to be reconsidered in the future, particularly if POD becomes a popular service.

Moving Forward

What are the responsibilities of the libraries participating in this grant moving forward? The two most common questions received are what if a CTR title is missing and what if it is damaged?

If a title is missing, the holding library has the responsibility to:

- Replace the title if it can be acquired at a reasonable cost;
- Request the transfer of this title from another (participating or nonparticipating) library;
- Ask the Collections and Operations Committee to remove the retention commitment.

If a title is damaged but the content is still available, the holding library can:

- Attempt to replace;
- Place the item in a phase box and reshelve;
- Request the transfer of the title from another library;
- Request that the retention commitment be removed.

The grant-funded phase of the MSCS is drawing to a close, and we still have more work to do prior to its conclusion. A number of lessons can be learned from this experience. Not surprisingly, things will not always go as planned—flexibility is critical

when undertaking such a project. Similarly, perfection is not possible. Being overly concerned about every detail will result in not accomplishing the broad goals. A dedicated project manager is a must when working across a variety of libraries, no matter how willing they are to cooperate with one another. Public libraries are different than academic libraries, but throughout this project it is evident that all MSCS libraries share the same goal—to preserve Maine's print heritage.