Shared Print on the Move: Collocating Collections

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Shared Print on the Move: Collocating Collections

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Abstract

As university libraries devote increasing portions of staff time and budget dollars to electronic resources, many are looking for cost- and labor-efficient ways of storing and ensuring access to legacy print collections. Shared print repositories have emerged as one possible solution, but setting up a shared storage system is never easy. Issues of selection, preservation, access and use, and interoperability must be resolved, but first comes one pivotal question: Where are we going to put all these books?

Collocating shared print storage is one answer. Rather than securing holdings in place, The Committee on Institutional Cooperation's Shared Print Repository selects volumes for preservation from multiple universities, relocating materials as necessary to create a comprehensive print collection. Collocating the collection means more secure conditions can be maintained and better user services supported by holding some bodies of print content in common thus relieving each individual school of the obligation to commit the necessary resources to manage these resources on its own. Nonetheless, physically transferring items, but not ownership, to other locations creates specific challenges. This paper will explore the opportunities and issues associated with collocating shared print storage using the CIC Shared Print Repository as an example.

After a century spent building resource collections and decades spent fostering trusted partnerships for lending and borrowing and digitizing and sharing, America's libraries are in the enviable position of being able to offer users pretty much anything they want. But for libraries, there is one small problem: boundless collections must exist in bounded physical space.

For the libraries of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), those two historic efforts—building collections and fostering sharing networks—mean access to a combined collection of some 111 million volumes. Of course, each of the fifteen institutions involved holds only a portion of that total, but retaining a hundred years' worth of titles can push the limits of space and labor capacity available, nonetheless. As library floor space becomes an ever more valuable commodity, libraries are looking for ways to get seldom-used, big-footprint contents out of coveted public floor spaces. And, of course, as readers turn more frequently to electronic sources, libraries are also looking to minimize the cost and labor involved in caring for legacy print volumes that sit untouched on stacks shelves. As the saying goes, you cannot have everything; where would you put it? But while we recognize that we cannot keep everything, it is also in our nature and our professional training to be protective of current and future access to print resources. We want to let go without letting go. Shared print agreements, by committing to retain some copies, but not all copies, make that possible.

Shared Print Storage: An Overview

There are a number of reasons library consortia undertake shared print storage programs: to relieve overcrowded stacks, to repurpose library space, to save costs on collection maintenance, to fulfil a commitment to building a unified preservation collection. Every library has its own motives. Similarly, every group that has undertaken such a project seems to create a slightly different variation of the concept. Three of the more common arrangements are retain-in-place agreements, preservation-oriented agreements, and collocated (or relocated) collections.

Retain-in-place agreements may be the most common functional premise for sharing print resources. Under this type of agreement, participants agree to keep and maintain selected resources, but items remain under the physical

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and intellectual care of the originating library. In other words, you promise to keep your copy of the *Journal of Kittens* and let me borrow it, and I will get rid of mine but promise you that I will keep the *Journal of Puppies* and let you use it. It is a cost-effective and relatively easy to launch system as it does not require much physical handling of materials.

A second theoretical model for shared print hinges on preservation. These agreements may take the form of "last copy" archives, wherein libraries safeguard volumes to ensure that at least one copy of print items remains in the possession of the collective. A more extensive version of preservation-based sharing, followed by the WEST consortium, evaluates collection content based on rarity, condition, and other factors, and also assesses the preservation quality of available storage spaces. Most items can be retained in place, but others are sent to reside in a more amenable preservation home.

A third model is the collocated collection. Under this agreement, items are physically moved together—collocated—to create a shared collection. This is the option adopted by the libraries of the CIC. Relocating items requires deep collaboration, as one institution may be hosting or assuming control of another institution's property—not to mention the organizational integration of multiple libraries' holdings records. It also requires initial investment in shipping, handling, and processing to analyze collections, coordinate supply, consolidate items, and render them findable and usable.

So why, given the initial time and expense involved, would anyone choose this option?

For the libraries of the CIC, collocating shared print offered lasting rewards in exchange for their investment. First, pooling resources benefits more libraries. Choosing to share storage responsibilities lightens the load on individual schools to retain everything they can. Libraries with unused storage capacity, or room to grow it, can provide space; libraries with limited space can supply volumes, and hence ease their crowding. Libraries with exceptional cataloging or conservation could supply expertise. All libraries benefit from having a designated copy retained, providing ongoing print availability, and some reassurance for making collections retention decisions.

Second, collocating print to a selected site ensures preservation-quality environments for print collections. Although all libraries care deeply about preserving their items, the fact remains that hundred-year-old buildings can only be modified so much, and not all institutions have the space or the dollars to invest in custom-built preservation environments. Agreeing to move items enables us to take advantage of already-existing modern facilities.

Third, we believe there is an intangible benefit in this type of arrangement. Working together to create a unified collection, we hope, expands our longstanding partnerships of trust and fosters long-term involvement in the project. Agreeing to put your belongings in someone else's hands—or to hold someone else's belongings in yours—requires communication, mutual respect, and intentionality.

Believing these benefits to be likely is one thing, but implementing a program that provides them is quite another. The CIC is lucky to have started from a solid foundation of long-standing cooperation and is limited to a fairly small group of fairly similar libraries. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation is a consortium of 15 large research universities, primarily in the midwest but ranging over 12 states, from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln in the west to Rutgers University and the University of Maryland on the East Coast. The Committee was established by the presidents of the Big Ten Conference members in 1958 as the athletic league's academic counterpart and has worked ever since to coordinate collaborative academic activities among member schools. This long legacy of collaborative work also extended to the universities' libraries.

These libraries share a number of concerns, from user services to collections development to the near-universal concern of the best use of facility space. These schools—most of them large, state-supported, land-grant research institutions—have

big, old collections. Many of them also have big, old library buildings, populated by bright, young, electronics-wielding students. Realizing the limits of the space available, several of our libraries began looking for efficient methods for handling legacy print collections. The library directors chose shared print as an area of interest, and began looking at possible agreement arrangements.

Because this group consists of quite large, relatively similar libraries, there is a significant amount of duplication among library holdings. Facilities available at the institutions vary widely; however, some urban campuses have little room for expansion, some rely on off-campus storage, others have constructed modular, high-density storage units with planned room for additional storage as needed. Assessing the needs of all member libraries, the library directors concluded that a collocated arrangement best met the group's needs and desired outcomes. So back to the question at hand: How does collocating actually work to benefit the members of the CIC Shared Print Repository (CIC SPR)?

With the basic idea of the project in place, the library directors and the CIC's Center for Library Initiatives outlined a project scope and architecture, beginning with the governance structure. Directors of participating member libraries comprise the Executive Committee. They, in turn, appointed a Steering Committee, designed to include at least one director from a host site, the heads of established working groups, and an executive staff member from the CIC. Working groups were then selected for Collections, Technical Services, and Public and Access Services to examine area-specific issues and develop policies and procedures. These groups, which are explained more thoroughly below, were thought to be critical to launching the project; if other areas of interest emerge as the SPR progresses, the working groups may be restructured.

At the outset, all consortium members were invited to participate; of the 13 schools in the CIC at that time, 10 signed on to the project. Indiana University agreed to become the first site host. All participating members contribute funding for the project, which helps Indiana recoup costs spent on hosting and processing. At the same time, libraries with space limitations are able to contribute volumes to the shared collection, or else may decide to withdraw items based on shared print retention, relieving shelf crowding while ensuring the possibility of print access.

Understanding users' potential concerns around resources being secured offsite, the library directors felt it would be important that the collection be available for use. The titles in the SPR are not rare, and similar projects around the country have committed to retaining copies, limiting concerns over print extinction should circulation lead to loss. All members are able to borrow items retained in the collection, though in almost all cases, fulfillment will be provided through scanned digital copies.

These basic parameters, summed up in just a few sentences, were the result of extensive consideration. How many copies should we collect? What should we collect? Where will it go? How does this affect our other lending networks? How will holdings be displayed? Who will fix up all these records to indicate where an item came from, and where it is now, and that it can circulate, but needs to follow the circulation policies of the SPR instead of the holding library? Coordinating serials in one library is an arduous task; figuring out how to unify 12 libraries' holdings while maintaining functionality for both the physical holder and the intellectual owner created questions beyond the expertise of any one person, no matter how talented. Resolving these tangled issues became the responsibility of the working groups.

The Working Groups

The Steering Committee initially created three working groups that were charged with distinct areas of responsibility.

The first is the Collections Working Group. This group was charged with determining what content will be collected and housed in the repository. This group discussed several possibilities to start, but ultimately decided to select content that was widely held in both print

and electronic form for the first selections. Journal titles from the publishers Elsevier, Wiley, and Springer were selected as there was wide duplication across the CIC of these titles and reducing this overlap would allow for the possibility of large-scale space savings at each institution. As many schools have this content electronically as well, the print copy would serve as a low-use backup but still allow schools to retain access if necessary. The Collections Working Group is identifying the next set of content to be collected. They have conducted surveys and are discussing options. While this project has started with journal runs, the scope of the repository is not limited to just serials and may include monographs in the future.

The Technical Services Working Group was charged with recommending procedures and specifications for the sharing of the records for the content selected. Serials records are notoriously difficult to standardize, even within a single cataloging department; combining records for up to a dozen libraries required decisions be made to determine whose standards to use and how much each library would need to adjust their local records to meet the needs of the shared project. This group made several recommendations, including a proposed methodology for bibliographic/item-level holdings file format and transmission requirements, participation in the OCLC Print Archive Initiative, and formatting of CIC SPR 583 "action notes" in OCLC local holdings records. This working group also outlined the specifications for the MARC record format needed to exchange information about the items being sent to the repository. Their complete final report is available online (http://www.cic.net/docs/default-source/library/2011-11-02-cic-spr-working-group-on-technical-services-final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=2).

The final group, the Public and Access Services Working Group, was charged to develop the resource sharing policies for the shared print repository and also to outline the issues for consideration on access and discovery of the material. The resource sharing policy (http://www.cic.net/docs/default-source/library/cic-spr-journal-lending-policy-oct2013.pdf?sfvrsn=2) allows anyone in the world to request a copy of an article, but only CIC members may borrow a physical volume. There are also provisions for lost or damaged items as well as the collection of statistics. The working group also outlined many issues for each institution to consider on how their patrons will discover the material in the shared print repository. Questions of whether to display records in a local OPAC were examined in depth. Instead of recommending a single course of action, this group outlined the pros and cons of several options to allow each institution to choose the course that best meets their needs.

The Logistics

The workflows and procedures for the shared print repository were worked out over the course of several months through discussions in the working groups and also with a small implementation team that included staff from the CIC, Indiana University, and The Ohio State University.

The first step in the process was identifying eligible materials. This task was not as straightforward as one might think. While the CIC SPR project began with Elsevier, Springer, and Wiley titles, determining what titles were published by these companies was not that simple. Lists of titles were obtained from the publishers, but these lists were not necessarily complete. Journals change titles and publishers, with some frequency, so gathering a comprehensive list was the first priority. Ultimately, identifying every single title was deemed not necessary as long as a large pool of titles were identified to begin the project. Once a list of desired titles was identified, Indiana University (IU) compared their holdings to the list and identified all of the titles that were held already in their off-site storage facility. IU then began the process of adding appropriate information to the records and switching the OCLC holding symbol to IULSP for the shared print repository.

Records for Elsevier titles were gathered from three other CIC institutions, and a "waterfall" report was created. This report identified the

school with the most Elsevier titles not held by IU, then went on to a second school to identify titles not held by the first two schools, and so forth. The Ohio State University (OSU) was selected as the first contributor, and a list of Elsevier titles not owned by IU was sent to them for selection. A proof-of-concept test was conducted with a small group of five titles totaling 86 volumes. This process identified several issues that needed further clarification and resolution before a larger shipment was sent. Proper record formatting, shipping and packing issues, and tracking receipt of the volumes were some of the topics that needed further discussion. OSU also needed to test their processes for pulling and verifying materials from three separate shelving locations. Once this testing was complete, a large shipment of more than 11,000 volumes was sent to IU. The accompanying MARC records were also received, and the volumes were processed and ingested into the high-density, off-site storage facility. The records for these items were updated and sent to OCLC under the corresponding IULSP holding symbol.

The idea of pulling books off the shelf here and putting them on a shelf there sounds simple, but spelling out procedures opened entire canneries of worms. Although IU assumed physical control of the volumes ingested into the repository, each school retained ownership over any volumes it supplied. IU's custodial role requires that volumes conform to process standards used in their system; staff pulling items from IU's high-density storage shelves cannot rely on barcodes linked to OSU's ILS, for example. At the same time, because ownership rights are not transferred, it is important that we are able to track the provenance and origination of volumes, so simply overriding OSU's barcodes and markings is also unfeasible. Some schools use a single master record even after ISSNs or titles change, others created new records for each iteration; how would we cross-link those? How deep must we validate content, and who will do that? The answers, now spelled out in our policy documents, indicate the complexity of collocation. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that resolving these questions now will lead to a lasting and workable partnership for the future.

Looking Ahead

To date, the CIC SPR has only received one shipment from a secondary institution outside the host site's own holdings. The next supplier, the University of Michigan, is currently pulling titles not owned by either of the first two. Simultaneously, OSU is now pulling volumes that fill in gaps of IU's holding so that the journal runs can be completed. Now that the workflows have been determined and most of the major issues resolved, completing the Elsevier, Wiley, and Springer collections will proceed with both new holdings as well as filling in missing volumes from all of the participating schools. A secured titles list has been made available to all of the CIC schools, so they now also need to determine if they want to withdraw any of their print holdings of these titles to repurpose that space for other needs.

Looking ahead, the next steps in this project will be to determine the next set of content for collection as well as the location that this content will be housed. IU has agreed to be the first site to host the repository, but it is not intended to be the only site. Once the agreed upon 250,000 volumes are collected, a new site will host the next set of content.

Conclusion

No storage solution answers everybody's problems, and collocating shared print storage is undoubtedly not the best solution for all library networks. A consortium that combines the holdings of a range of library types and sizes will undoubtedly face different issues. Closer to home for the CIC, this setup is well suited for journals, but the expansion to other types of print content may require reassessment and a whole new spate of procedural and logistical questions and answers. When that day comes, new working groups will form and begin those discussions. In the meantime, CIC libraries will keep building their shared collection, knowing that—for the next 25 years, at least—they are gaining security in print access and flexibility in collections management.