APPROACHING AN ENTITY CRISIS: RECONCEIVING RESEARCH LIBRARIES IN A MULTI-INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Anne R. Kenney
Distinguished Seminar Series
OCLC Research September 23, 2009
The Power of Many

“The research library should be redefined as a multi-institutional entity.”
Some Bold Assertions

There is a collective wealth held *hostage* by redundant operations and collections in academic libraries.

Many of the things we compete over *don’t* make our institutions more competitive.

Our history of collaboration may ironically make it more difficult to do *radical* collaboration.

Our staff would rather do *more* work than give up doing some things.
Collective Wealth of ARL Members

2007 total expenditures: $3,914,758,950

- 31% in materials
- 43.6% in salaries/wages

Yearly increases substantial

10% savings =

$391M!
“Every state and every region in the country is stuck with some form of anachronistic and expensive local government structure that dates to horse-drawn wagons, family farms and small-town convenience”

Tom Brokaw
NYT op-ed, 4/20/2009
Reconsidering Collective Wealth

Stop measuring success by how much money is spent/dedicated to libraries

• as % of university budgets or ARL investment index

Measure instead success by operational efficiencies, institutional effectiveness, resource reallocation, consortial work, or addressing big challenges at the university

• eliminate backlog and multiple purchases of same title through vendor packages
• press for resource sharing in licensing
• ROI
• Reversing attrition rates, supporting x-disciplinary work
Competing ≠ Institutional Competitiveness

Success of Borrow Direct

Failure of Institutional Repositories

Wagon wheels rather than webs

Wanting to be a “model” for peers

Think locally, act globally
Shift Library Measures to Promote Collaboration

- Move from volume counts to title counts
- Measure degree of uniqueness
- Quantify collaboration and use in rankings
  - Collective purchasing, shared collections
  - Number of shared staff
  - Combined functions
“Even farmers don’t use silos anymore.”

Alice Pell
Vice Provost, International Initiatives
Cornell University
But We Already Collaborate

Valuing process over progress

Assessing collaborative approaches through a new lens

Connecting the dots
“I’d give it to you, but it’s mine.”

Michael Kenney Hickerson at age 4
Doing More with Less
A Preference for Perfection and Service

“The national library of the United States is giving away the birthright of American scholars in exchange for a mess of Internet pottage.”

Thomas Mann

“What is Going on at the Library of Congress”
Doing More with Less

Layering on experiments but maintaining all other functions

Less with less vs. focused efforts

“My team has created a very innovative solution, but we’re still looking for a problem to go with it.”
“We librarians are so willing to stretch ourselves thin trying to do more with less that eventually, the less really does become too little.”

Unattributed Librarian Comment on Blog
Areas Ripe for Collaboration

- Collective collections
- Backroom functions
- New domains
- The power of many
“A lack of inventiveness isn’t the problem. A lack of will may be.”

“In a Time of Crisis, Colleges Ought to Be Making History,” Chronicle of Higher Education
May 11, 2009
The major barrier to library collaboration is:

- Faculty: 23%
- Library staff: 37%
- University administration: 6%
- Law/policy makers: 14%
- Budgetary constraints: 20%

*Clicker Responses to Question at ARL Panel*
My library is most ready to accept a jointly funded and managed operation with other libraries around:

- Shared print collection: 54%
- Shared reference services: 4%
- Shared technical processing: 27%
- Shared staff experts: 15%

*Clicker Responses to Question at ARL Panel*
Collective Collections

Collections by the numbers

Begin with prospective co-ownership and then fold in retrospective

Revisit Janus Conference Principles, RLG Conspectus

“Is there any reason beyond local pride to maintain duplication?”
Tom Brokaw
My faculty and students would be willing to suspend purchase of print copies of materials available electronically and rely on inter-library loan or the collective purchase of print copies to be owned collectively by multiple institutions.

*Clicker Responses to Question at ARL Panel*
Collective Collection Challenges

Pre-nups for shared collections
Collective Collection Challenges

- Institutional identity, faculty acceptance
- Better overlap/analysis and use tools
- Zero sum budgeting, financial restrictions, accounting systems
- Delivery, legal issues
- Outreach/research support for faculty and students
Backroom Functions

- Shared technical processing, centers of effort
- Collective negotiation with vendors for content and metadata
- Connections with leading libraries in other countries
Backroom Functions Challenges

System of “credits” for work done on behalf of all

Standard definitions of good enough

Budgets/funding streams

Shared backend systems
I am willing to pay a recurring annual fee to another library for a service that benefits my constituents and the broader community.

Clicker Responses to Question at ARL Panel

- Strongly agree: 73%
- Agree: 24%
- Disagree: 2%
- Strongly disagree: 1%
New Domains

- Building local cyberinfrastructures
- Bridging Institutional Repositories
- Services layered on top
- Reimagining academic computing
- Difficulties in collaborating in new areas
Where rights are not an issue, my library would be willing to combine its institutional repository with those of other libraries so that scholars could search for pre-publication content by subject rather than just through one library's holdings.
The Power of Many

Exercising collective clout

• Providing cover to do what’s needed
• Abjuring NDAs with publishers and others
• Reexamining anti-trust issues in library negotiations
• Viewing Prospective Agreements as Collaborative Efforts

Collective action demands as much attention as institutional action
I would be willing to commit my institution to making public the content of publisher agreements, including pricing, special arrangements, and other privileges.
I am willing to commit my institution to forego one-on-one arrangements with commercial entities around digitization of special collections materials in favor of collective arrangements involving multiple research libraries.

Clicker Responses to Question at ARL Panel
Proposed partnership between Columbia and Cornell University Libraries

Deep integration of resources, collections, services, and expertise

New service entity (2CUL) supporting both libraries
2CUL Goals

- Increase productivity and responsiveness
- Reduce/eliminate duplication
- Enhance quality
- Promote innovation
- Address new, emerging needs
Initial Areas to Investigate

- Technical Services
- Global Resources/Area Studies
- Technology Infrastructure
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<th>Benchmarks</th>
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<tr>
<td>30% integration between two library systems</td>
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<td>15% reduction in current overall expenses</td>
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<td>Co-investment in critical under-supported areas</td>
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<td>Increased revenues</td>
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<td>Expanded strategic partnerships</td>
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<td>Shared measures for success and impact</td>
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<td>Resolved governance, co-ownership, budgetary, legal, and institutional issues</td>
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"Faced with the choice between change and proving there is no need to do so, most people get busy on the proof."

John Kenneth Galbraith