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Weaving the fabric of library collaboration:
Reflections on recent OCLC Research findings

Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Ph.D
Executive Director, OCLC Research
The importance of library collaboration
Collaboration is important because …
Library collaboration and OCLC Research
Recent OCLC research on collaboration
OCLC Research findings on library collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Pros, cons and trade-offs: collaboration as a strategic choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who?</td>
<td>Finding and retaining collaborative partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td>Insight and lessons learned on making collaborations work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Library collaboration: Why?
Four Sourcing Strategies for Libraries

- **BUILD**
- **COLLABORATE**
- **OUTSOURCE**
- **REFER**

Degree of Local Engagement and Resources Required

INTERACT
- Peers
- Public agencies
- Nonprofit organizations
- Commercial enterprises

EVALUATE
RE-EVALUATE
Choosing a sourcing strategy

“The effectiveness of an operations strategy is determined by the degree of consistency among competitive priorities and corresponding decisions regarding operational structure and infrastructure.”

Mandar Dabhilkar, in “Trade-Offs in Make-Buy Decisions” (2011)

So:
Match means to ends
But … a sourcing strategy can’t reflect all priorities
Manage trade-offs
Example

**TABLE 1.1.** Process: A list of key sourcing considerations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Consider the flexibility and nimbleness a strategy allows as conditions evolve or change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed</td>
<td>Evaluate if the sourcing strategy permits quick deployment and immediately addresses user needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Discuss how much decision-making authority a local institution would have to cede to an external entity. What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Table 1.1: Process: A list of key sourcing considerations” by OCLC Research, from Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity (https://doi.org/10.25333/mt16-0c57), CC BY 4.0
Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives: Strategic Frames for Collaboration

• Groups with shared interests don’t always succeed
• How to coordinate collective efforts within a group

"Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives: Strategic Frames for Collaboration" by OCLC Research, from Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity (https://doi.org/10.25333/mt16-0c57), CC BY 4.0
Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives: Strategic Frames for Collaboration

• Conducting economic exchanges/transactions involves costs
• Understanding the “costs of collaboration”
Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives:

Strategic Frames for Collaboration

• How organizations cope with change

• Managing change from one sourcing strategy to another (collaboration)
Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives:

Strategic Frames for Collaboration

- Separation of ownership from control
- Managing decision-making within a collaboration

"Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives: Strategic Frames for Collaboration" by OCLC Research, from Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity (https://doi.org/10.25333/mt16-0c57), CC BY 4.0
Four Economic Concepts, Four Perspectives: Strategic Frames for Collaboration
### Example

**TABLE 5. PRINCIPAL-AGENT—Control**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key concepts</th>
<th>Prompts to action and considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation of ownership and control</td>
<td>Identify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Separation of executive authority from direct</td>
<td>• Where final decision-making authority resides (e.g.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membership control (i.e., an executive entity</td>
<td>majority vote among participating members or an executive director)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acting on their behalf)</td>
<td>• Stability of current arrangement: Is it expected to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transition to a new model in the future?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Table 5: Principal-Agent - Control” by OCLC Research, from Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity (https://doi.org/10.25333/mt16-0c57), CC BY 4.0
Takeaways

Collaboration should be a strategic decision

Identify priorities, pick best fit, manage trade-offs

Understand what drives effective collaboration

Question of HOW just as important as WHAT
Library collaboration: Who?
Art research collections: What’s inside?

The Proxy Art Research Collective Collection (Size and Holdings)

• 85 institutions
• 8.6m distinct publications
• 16.0m total holdings
Specialization creates valuable partnerships

### TABLE 5. Special material categories collected vs. shared by art research libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>No. of publications*</th>
<th>No. shared via ILL*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition catalogs</td>
<td>675,116</td>
<td>23,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auction catalogs</td>
<td>143,460</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist files</td>
<td>129,550</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artists books</td>
<td>25,465</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade catalogs</td>
<td>10,396</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogues raisonnés</td>
<td>8,968</td>
<td>871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prints</td>
<td>5,212</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo books</td>
<td>4,922</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zines</td>
<td>2,716</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from analysis of 655 field

*Table 5: Special material categories collected vs. shared by art libraries* by OCLC Research, from Sustaining Art Research Collections: Using Data to Explore Collaboration (https://doi.org/10.25333/v636-pe98l), CC BY 4.0
Libraries are increasingly working with other campus units

Job posting: Library Chief Data Strategist, University of Rhode Island, USA

This position will work with the Office of Institutional Research and DataSpark (Library-based data analytics unit) to identify avenues to increase faculty and researcher success. Working with internal (e.g. MakerspaceURI, Launch Lab, Think Lab, and the AI Lab) and external (e.g. the Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning; the Office of Community, Equity and Diversity; Division of Research and Economic Development; and IT) partners, the incumbent will plan and implement experimental and innovative activities to cultivate and expand synergistic relationships.
Libraries are increasingly working with other campus units

Several extra-library units named:

1. Office of Institutional Research
2. Office of Advancement of Teaching and Learning
3. Office of Community, Equity, and Diversity
4. Division of Research and Economic Development
5. Campus IT
Takeaways

Use data-driven analysis to identify collaborative opportunities

Identify partner strengths, priorities, synergies

Engage partners around efficiencies AND complementarities

Collaborations with partners WITHIN institutions are important

Be intentional about building cross-unit partnerships

Build skill set in identifying, getting to know partners
Library collaboration: How?
The art and science of collaboration

“Effective library collaboration is art as much as science. While concepts, frameworks, and theory are important for deepening our understanding of what makes collaborations successful and sustainable, we believe that sharing practical experiences of successful collaboration is also essential.”

From the Preface, Building Research Data Management Capacity: Case Studies in Strategic Library Collaboration (2023)
The realities of collaboration: RDM edition

- What is the collaboration’s “origin story”?
- Why was collaboration chosen as the strategy for acquiring capacity?
- How do the partners act collectively to achieve their goals?
- What are the costs of collaboration?
- How does the collaboration align with established stakeholders & workflows?
- How does decision-making take place?
- Lessons learned
The realities of collaboration: Art libraries edition

• What is the collaboration’s “origin story”?
• What does participation involve?
• How does governance take place?
• How does the collaboration sustain itself?
• Lessons learned

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Rice University
OCAD University and the Ontario Council of University Libraries
Worcester Art Museum and College of the Holy Cross
Takeaways

Clear articulation of tractable goals

Creative understanding of partnership value

Sustainability through trusted relationships

Asymmetries in contributions and benefits
Conclusion: The fabric of library collaboration
The fabric of collaboration …

Why?

Who?

How?
Coming attractions …

**Stewarding the Collective Collection:**
An analysis of retention data in the US and Canada
• Coverage by shared print retention commitments

**Stewarding the Collective Collection:**
US and Canadian Perspectives on Data and Workflow Tools for Shared Print
• Data and tools supporting shared print workflows
Collaboration in the Netherlands

Peer institution and consortial collaboration drives:

- Policy making
- License negotiation
- National portal development

oc.lc/oa-discovery-project
Because what is known must be shared.

Lynn Silipigni Connaway, Ph.D
Executive Director, OCLC Research
connawal@oclc.org

Brian Lavoie, Ph.D
Senior Research Scientist
lavoie@oclc.org