

Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice: Evaluating Options for Acquiring Capacity

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Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice explores collaboration as a key sourcing strategy for academic libraries in acquiring needed capacity, but also contextualizes it as one sourcing approach among a range of options available to libraries.

The decision for academic libraries to collaborate can yield distinct benefits, but not without an often-significant investment of effort, attention, and resources. Library collaboration needs to be weighed against the pros and cons of alternative ways of acquiring capacity. In short, collaboration is a decision that needs to be approached strategically.

This report offers insights and resources that can help academic libraries in thinking about whether to choose the collaboration option and in selecting the most effective forms of collaboration to meet strategic goals.

The frameworks and tools offered in this report also can help with communicating sourcing decisions—especially those involving collaboration—to staff and other stakeholders. This in turn can improve transparency around sourcing decisions and, ultimately, strengthen buy-in from those impacted by the outcomes.

OCLC Research is one of the world's leading centers devoted exclusively to the challenges facing libraries in a rapidly changing information technology environment. OCLC Research works with the community to collaboratively identify problems and opportunities, prototype and test solutions, and share findings through publications, presentations, and professional interactions.

Making strategic sourcing decisions requires managing trade-offs

Libraries are facing a fast-paced, dynamic environment, including new technologies, changing user expectations, evolving research practices, and economic pressures that present both challenges and opportunities for acquiring capacities to support learning and research at their institutions.

Library Collaboration as a Strategic Choice defines four common sourcing options—build, collaborate, outsource, and refer—and describes considerations and trade-offs to weigh when making decisions.

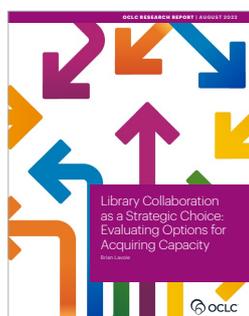
This report will especially be of interest to the following readers.

- **Senior academic library leadership** will benefit from tools and evidence to support strategic planning and evaluation of collaboration opportunities.
- **Library consortia/group leadership** will benefit from findings that provide insight into factors that help drive—or present obstacles to—successful collaborations.
- **Academic library staff responsible for managing collaborative relationships** will benefit from insights and tools to help manage their institution's participation in collaborative arrangements.

This report demonstrates that the question of how to acquire capacity—and in particular, whether to acquire it through collaboration—deserves as much attention as the question of what capacity to acquire. The frameworks and tools for evaluating sourcing options introduced in this report highlight the importance of the first question, and also help libraries to answer it.

KEY FINDINGS

- Insight and tools to support academic libraries in making intentional decisions about cross-institutional collaboration opportunities to acquire capacity
- Descriptions of common sourcing strategies available to libraries
- Considerations of key characteristics and trade-offs associated with these strategies
- Summaries of foundational concepts from economic topics that help deepen understanding of the collaboration option



Download the free report at oclc.org/strategic-collaboration-report.

Find information to support strategic decision-making when acquiring needed capacity and learn about economic considerations when choosing library collaboration as a sourcing option.



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