

Borrow Direct Collection Cooperation

Thursday, September 24

11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

SML Lecture Hall

Present: 20 Yale University Library Selectors & 10 collections guests from other Borrow Direct member libraries.

Ann Okerson (Associate University Librarian for Collections and International Programs, Yale) greeted the participants and explained the purpose of the meeting (i.e. to explore how and to what extent Borrow Direct can be used for cooperative collection among its member institutions), introduced the two invited speakers, and laid out the agenda for the day.

I. **Martha Brogan's Overview.** The first speaker, **Martha Brogan** (Director of Collection Development & Management, [Penn Libraries](#)), delivered a PowerPoint presentation ("[Borrow Direct and the Collective Collection](#)" posted at the Confluence wiki), which provided relevant background information on Borrow Direct's achievements and a number of suggestions on its potential as a cooperative collection development tool.

Over the past eight years or so, Borrow Direct (BD) has been increasingly successful as a regional resource-sharing form of interlibrary loan. Today it is known as a service that is cost-effective, faster and cheaper than ILL, presents economies of scale, and results in a high degree of requestor satisfaction. Other similar collaborative projects show that trusted relationships and a common technology platform figure prominently as the key factors to success. In BD's case, member libraries share an excellent delivery system. Furthermore, membership in this service has proved to have a certain gravitas with vendors, who tend to take BD libraries seriously for potential business partnerships.

Figures extrapolated from the [ARL Statistics](#) for 2006-07 show that BD provides access to 50 million volumes, 500,000 monographs added annually, 40 million microforms, 125,000 videos and 715,000 audio files; while its seven member libraries serve a population of 95,000 undergraduate and 42,000 graduate students, and 9,000 faculty members.

Based on this strong service record, it would be interesting to compare BD with other big players in the field, i.e. consortia like the [California Digital Library](#) (CDL), serving the [University of California](#) system, and the [Committee on Institutional Cooperation](#) (CIC), which consists of 12 large universities located in the Midwest (plus Penn State). This comparison has never been made, but it would be worthwhile especially in this period of growing consortial and inter-consortial activity. A significant difference is that these other entities have dedicated staff and also permeate the entire institutional infrastructure, going beyond libraries to embrace IT directors, university press directors, provosts, etc.

The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) Library maintains a BD Data Repository to which all BD members have access. The reports they can generate are by Library of Congress call number but use the North American Title Count for quantitative data. The Penn Library has also set up a Confluence wiki where BD statistics, reports and minutes are regularly posted. These data are also available to selectors in other BD institutions.

Over the past year, a number of BD members (including Cornell, Penn, Princeton and Yale) have also been using OCLC's [WorldCat Collection Analysis Tool](#) (WCA) to analyze and compare their collections across the BD consortium. Martha pointed out that Penn documented the problems that arose in using

WCA and posted them on the wiki. It is only as useful as the data provided by each of our institutions. Since WCA-generated data reflect cataloged materials only, any large uncataloged collections remain invisible for all analytical purposes.

Book vendors are another source of data pertaining to the collections of BD member libraries (and their overlaps). YBP, for example (whose BD customers include Brown, Cornell, Penn and Yale and Princeton for Engineering only), provided some comparative quantitative data on purchases of YBP titles by BD institutions in the year 2008-9. YBP's online database, GOBI, allows users to see which titles are sent to, or held by, other BD institutions. This can be done by checking the GobiTween field, or by searching for "Consortial Titles." (Owning multiple copies is not necessarily a problem, and indeed can be an advantage, since BD traffic shows that a number of titles are requested either simultaneously or repeatedly.) However, the studies indicate considerable overlap, in particular of university press titles. Closer examination of this data could offer useful strategies for broadening our coverage while reducing redundancy across the system.

Cooperation strategies include

I. Inter-institutional mandates:

- Stanford and the UC-Berkeley ramped up their cooperation, which is now aimed at a 25% reduction of their budget without damaging their collections.
- The University of California system set up a quite elaborate form of cooperation, focused on area studies.
- The 2 CUL (Columbia and Cornell) are looking at a 30% integration-15% reduction between their library systems.

II. Informed observation:

- YBP, Harrassowitz. The hope is to get vendors beyond the idea that BD is more like a community resource than a book purchase club.
- OhioLINK claims success in resource reduction using this approach.

Martha closed her presentation with three broad questions:

- Do we need a more formalized approach to our agreements?
- How can we foster closer communication and productive networking among our subject specialists?
- Are there other research libraries which we would recommend as BD partners? Are there other research libraries which we would recommend as BD partners?

Ann Okerson pointed out that documenting cooperative agreements may prove to be an interesting challenge. When Yale's Engineering Librarian asked her about a certain 1991 RLG agreement, Ann sent an e-mail request to other Chief Collection Development Officers, but nobody replied or remembered what had been agreed to in 1991.

Andy Shimp (Engineering Librarian, Yale) asked Martha whether the BD libraries are planning to address the issue of certain collections being currently excluded from BD. (One of them is the Arts Library collection at Yale, which is non-circulating.) This frustrates users and increases the volume of requests for certain type of materials from certain institutions. Martha replied that it is up to individual libraries to look at their collections and make them available or not, but that new BD software will offer greater flexibility in loan dates, making it more attractive to a wider array of collection types.

David Stern (Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources, Brown) wondered whether BD monitors ever looked for “big anomalies” in borrowing patterns. Martha stressed the need for us to review the data for these patterns. It is also possible for Penn to generate regular or customized reports. David noted that, for institutions belonging to more than one consortium (Brown, for example, is also part of Boston Library Consortium), data may change depending on the consortium that is considered.

Martha reported that Penn’s new provost recently met with the Library administration, and when she asked him about cooperation among Ivy Plus institutions, he mentioned a recent speech by his counterpart at Michigan, to the effect that we are leading towards one giant digital library and one giant print library. David Magier (Associate University Librarian for Collection Development, Princeton) stressed the importance of “doing a lot of homework” before submitting a series of talking points to provosts. BD libraries need to build on their good track record, figuring out what they can learn from relevant data and how these can show reductions of costs, etc. Only then they can approach university administrators with reasonable hope of success.

John Tofanelli (Librarian for English Literature & Language, Columbia) asked whether BD has any gate-keeping process to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of new membership. Martha pointed out that, in considering new members, one must keep in mind that public and private academic institutions operate in very different legal environments. There are also universities, such as Cornell, that are both a private and a land-grant institution. She encouraged those present to think about institutions/libraries that could make a worthwhile contribution to the collective collection in terms of adding subject breadth or depth.

II. David Stern’s Investigations of Vendor Sharing Plans. The second invited speaker, **David Stern** (Associate University Librarian for Scholarly Resources, Brown), reported on a one-day workshop on e-books he led at the Brown Library. One of the takeaways was that most of the Borrow Direct libraries use Gobi (YBP), which integrates e-books from numerous publishers. These are usually added to the database within a couple of months of their print equivalents. Gobi allows users to send notifications to faculty members, who in turn can access new title notifications through their e-mails, make their choices and send them back to appropriate selectors. This system works for graduate and post-graduate studies, as well as for specific and well-defined subject areas, while orders still need to be placed for materials pertaining to undergraduate studies and interdisciplinary areas.

One of the problems with YBP as a possible cooperative e-books purchasing scenario is that some content providers (e.g., Springer) still don’t allow libraries to buy individual e-book titles. Another is the limited number of pages that content delivery platforms typically allow users to print (ca. 10). To illustrate this point, David mentioned the case of a Brown faculty member who requested the electronic version of a textbook, while also requiring students to print specific chapters, annotate them, and bring them to class. A different problem was presented by faculty members in Brown’s Computer Science department who, considering the Library too slow in acquiring e-books, suggested they would buy them for the Library, which in turn would pay the Department back.

David noted the potential consequences of a member library’s decision to switch to e-books, which may result in their becoming unavailable to BD users. For example, Cornell (which uses Coutts’ MyiLibrary platform) is rapidly switching from print to electronic and asking faculty to help with the selection of titles. This means their e-book titles won’t be available through Borrow Direct.

On the other hand, YBP has partnered with ebrary (whose titles are not available through MyiLibrary). This means that Gobi users (including faculty members) can access the ebrary catalog, look inside individual e-books (which are fully searchable), and request those of interest. Brown’s library catalog (Josiah) is integrated with federated searching which includes Internet Archive, ebrary and Borrow Direct.

Growing e-book popularity, however, leaves some questions unanswered, especially in regard to user satisfaction. For example, we don't know if faculty members order e-books and then request a printed copy of the same work via Borrow Direct. In other words, we still cannot answer the question whether e-books represent a full replacement or simply a supplement of print.

One of the suggestions that came out of the workshop at Brown was that possibility of creating a consortial e-book buying plan, and David mentioned that an emerging field like nanotechnology could provide a valid testing ground, since it can be effectively divided into subfields (e.g. Biotechnology, Engineering, etc.) to be assigned to individual BD members for collecting purposes.

At the same time, David acknowledged that in most cases there is no way of equally sharing a subject area. We may operate as if all BD member institutions were at the same level of research interests and specialization, but the reality is that each one is different, and subject strength and specialization may define the scenario for possible partnerships – and related cooperative collection development agreements – among BD members. For example, as far as Latin American studies are concerned, Brown may be interested in partnering with two or three BD libraries, rather than all of them.

Furthermore, he wondered whether the concept of core collection still exists in the e-book world, especially for the purpose of consortial purchases. A consortial plan focused on e-books raises some unprecedented issues that would need to be addressed, one of them being the print-on-demand option – i.e. who pays for and gets the printed copy?

David further noted that e-book pricing models have changed since the beginning of the year, and, as it turns out, publishers are more interested in making money out of byproducts, while the way we are thinking of consortial pricing models is not based on historical purchase power anymore. Today, when we approach a publisher to buy e-books as a consortium, the first thing we are asked is the number of libraries involved – and this, as mentioned above, can vary depending on the subject area.

Ann Okerson then asked a number of Yale subject librarians and curators to report on the progress made in their respective areas in regard to BD cooperative collection agreements or partnerships.

III. Individual Selector Reports.

For Film Studies, **Tobin Nellhaus** (Yale's Librarian for Drama, Film & Theater Studies) reported that, at a meeting held six years ago at Columbia, subject librarians agreed to divide their field for the purpose of cooperative collection development. Since then, however, there has been little further communication, though it appears some libraries are continuing with the earlier arrangement. Several libraries, including Penn, noted that they continue to collect in their assigned area. (The delineation of world areas is noted in Martha's PPT.)

For Korean Studies, **Ellen Hammond** (Curator, East Asia Library, Yale) reported that the seven members of the East Coast Consortium met last spring and recognized that cooperative collection development is already occurring naturally among them. This subgroup presents a three-tier structure, with Columbia at the top (most intensive collecting program), Cornell and Princeton occupying the second level, and Harvard, NYPL, Penn and Yale the third. Because of its strength in Korean Studies, Columbia thinks nationally and doesn't necessarily see participation in regional efforts as particularly rewarding. Cornell and Princeton (2nd Tier), instead, occupy a difficult position, since their logical partnerships are not reflected in the consortium membership. Ellen pointed out that, as a member of the 3rd Tier, discussions within this group have helped her a lot, especially when the need arose to implement cuts to Yale's collections budgets. However, she lamented the absence of Public Service librarians from this group's discussions, adding that Public Services and Collection Development should go hand in hand, and if they don't it is a problem.

David Stern mentioned that Brown had just received a big donation that doubled their Korean collection. In a case like this, he wondered, would it make sense to ask the donor: Can we talk to our peers and see where your donation would make more sense? Is this happening? Cesar Rodriguez (Curator, Latin American Collection, Yale) replied that it has happened before, and Martha Brogan confirmed that, indeed, selectors and curators think along these lines all the time.

Suzanne Lovejoy (Acting Director of the Music Library, Yale) reported that music librarians have been discussing Borrow Direct agreement regularly at their annual meetings. Yale's Music Library is the only one, among Ivy institutions, to support a local conservatory, thus the need to maintain a link with a local vendor. Compact discs (mostly Princeton's) have been circulating through BD for some time. Dartmouth added their own CDs, although they circulate only for three weeks, while Yale doesn't currently circulate theirs through BD. Ned Quist (Brown's Music Librarian) emphasized the importance of circulating CDs; this format is starting to die. Martha noted that the Confluence wiki contains a chronology of BD cooperation in Music.

Regarding Latin American collections, **Cesar Rodriguez** explained that currently Yale is collaborating only with Harvard. The two curators chose to focus on Mexico and Chile, since both collections are strong in historical materials as well as contemporary authors from these countries. In the case of Mexico, after looking at their approval plans, speaking with their vendors, and consulting with their faculty members and library administration, Cesar and his Harvard counterpart decided to leave alone core materials and collect cooperatively in non-core areas. For this purpose, they divided the country in two, with Yale focusing on the northern half of the country and Harvard on the southern half. In the case of Chile, which has a much more centralized publishing industry (concentrated in Santiago and Valparaiso), they approached the country by subject rather than geographically: Yale collects History and Political Science, etc.; Harvard Environmental Sciences, Philosophy, etc. The cooperation started in late 2004, as a result of conversations held at IFLA in Buenos Aires. It took almost a year to get the vendors on board, and in the course of time staff members from the two institutions visited each other's collections. Overall, the amount of consultation and communication renders the effort labor-intensive, but so far it has been working well. However, it is currently difficult to imagine how it would work with more than two countries.

Barbara List (Director of Collection Development, Columbia) asked Cesar how Yale's faculty and students play into this Yale-Harvard agreement. Is it working? Cesar replied that it is, although Harvard is not a BD member, and its users have to use ILL for borrowing purposes. He added that ideal regional partnerships depend a lot on the subject areas that are considered.

Tatjana Lorković (Curator, Slavic and East European Collection, Yale) reported that Columbia, Harvard, and Yale decided to apply for a Title VI grant that would allow them to experiment with collecting cooperatively. If successful, this effort will represent a new initiative within the larger East Coast Consortium of Slavic Library Collections.

Finally, **Todd Gilman** (Librarian for Literature in English, Yale) explained that Yale is reducing the number of vendors used in his subject area. Once selectors ascertain that they can get all small-press titles through YBP, they can divide these presses alphabetically between several BD libraries.

These specific reports drew a number of comments and reactions. David Stern said that BD members should not be allowed to pursue collection strategies that would prevent them from contributing to the BD service (e.g. Cornell buying e-books only). He also suggested we use nanotechnology as a template for a collective collection experiment (not to be limited to e-books).

Jill Parchuck (Director, Social Science Library, Yale) stressed the importance of capitalizing of BD data farm and YBP reports.

It was agreed that Borrow Direct could be the best consortial model in one subject area, while in others the best approach to cooperative collection could be at the national level. Paul Stuehrenberg (Divinity Librarian, Yale) confirmed that his library does not have logical BD partners.

The lunch break provided an opportunity for the participants to break down in groups of 5-7 per table, further discuss the issues and topics, and formulate a number of questions and suggestions for next steps.

IV. **Reprise.** Ann Okerson reconvened the group as a whole, and everyone shared questions and comments, which included the following:

- Where do the conversations about collaboration start? Top down?
- Do we have a list or a chart that shows what materials/collections are blocked (for borrowing purposes)? If not, let us create one.
- Is cooperative collection development easier for special collections and professional schools than for core/undergraduate-oriented collections? If so, why? And what are the implications for BD?
- Will budget cuts force some/all collections to curtail collecting in fringier materials to an extent that could undermine collection development?
- To what extent can collection development agreements override local needs? If I focus on country A and B, what does it say to a professor that focuses on a different country or countries?
- How should we deal with changing priorities/landscape (especially in regard to e-books)?
- How do patron-generated requests fit into consortial agreements?
- How do we deal with the layers of complexity added by interdisciplinary studies?
- What if one only collects core materials in a given area?
- How to deal with pre-existing understandings with non-BD partners?
- How to build collaborative relation steps that will survive staff changes, memory loss, money and other skills?
- What about shifting academic priorities (e.g., South Asia @ Yale)?

Suggestions for next steps included:

- Include government documents and microfilms in BD.
- Do we need specific subject selector meetings?
- Identify possible areas for collaboration (American and European local history).
- Groups need to set up regular schedule of meetings (virtual or in person), or use meeting technology more effectively (webinars, wikis, etc.).
- Institutions need to set up a framework and support for collaborative work (which may require funding).
- Think about sharing a position that supports a 2-year BD Collections Collaborative effort.
