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JEP LOGO

CONSORTIA vs REFORM:

Creating Congruence

by MARGARET LANDESMAN and JOHANN VAN REENEN

The inability of research libraries to offer the collections their users desire has become more pronounced each year. In response, libraries have moved in two directions: the rapidly growing consortial movement and the movement to advocate and support reforms in scholarly communication. However, if libraries do not pay careful attention, these two directions may, at least partially, cancel one another out.

Consortia are regarded as an effective strategy to increase the buying power of individual libraries over the short term and as an opportunity to maximize opportunities for cooperative collection building and for resource sharing over the long term. They offer libraries the ability to give users the access they are coming to expect and demand to a much broader range of materials than any one library could possibly offer.

Reforms in the system of scholarly communication are seen as the most critical piece of the long-term solution to return the ownership and control of our research output to our research institutions or to publishers (whether for-profit or not-for-profit) who are willing to contribute valuable services for a reasonable rate of return.

Because these two trends are a response by the same group of

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people to the same problem, and because they have the same overall goal, there is a tendency to assume that they support, or at least do not actively interfere with, each other.

Is this true? Or is it the case that in enthusiastically (and perhaps without adequate reflection) embracing the consortial movement, we may unthinkingly move in directions less than optimally supportive of scholarly communication initiatives? Might scholarly communication initiatives, relying on an outdated picture of the library marketplace and the directions in which libraries are moving, fail to understand just how critical it is to attract consortia to purchase their products and to participate fully in their programs?

We believe there are reasons to worry that consortial development, if it occurs without specific and adamant attention to supporting reform in the system of scholarly publishing, may actively work against the success of these efforts. And likewise, scholarly publishing initiatives, if they fail to grasp the importance of consortia and to bring them into the mainstream of reform efforts, may jeopardize the success of their publishing initiatives and the scale of their long-term impact.

The growth of consortia

Consortia have become an important way of doing business and extending access to information for our patrons. By offering publishers the opportunity to sell to a very large number of users at once and to save on their marketing and administrative costs, consortia generally get products at a lower cost than individual libraries. Vendors and publishers have come to realize how advantageous consortial purchasing can be. They get access to new market sectors. They are able to expand the reach of titles that otherwise would have a small audience by bundling them with titles in higher demand, thus making the more specialized (and sometimes weaker) titles attractive to the consortium.

Libraries are taking the consortia to which they belong with a great deal more seriousness than was the case a few years back. And they belong to a great many more consortia than they used to. Reciprocal borrowing privileges, traditional inter-library loan arrangements, and the coordination of major microfilm purchases by committees convened casually a few times a year have given way to elaborate committee structures, full-time staff and Executive Directors, Web pages, policies, procedures, and the panoply of an organization to be taken seriously.

Not only do we now have consortia, we have consortia of consortia. The New York Consortium of Consortia, for example, is composed of fourteen member consortia, and it in turns belongs to larger groups such as the I.C.O.L.C. (International Coalition of Library Consortia). There are an expanding number of consortia at all levels, from local to

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international, and they are beginning to include other types of organizations as well as libraries, museums, hospitals, research groups, and historical societies. National-level consortia in many countries, such as the Joint Information Systems Committee ([JISC](#)) and the National Electronic Site Licensing Initiative ([NESLI](#)) in Great Britain, are increasingly important players.

Publishers, one might argue, are themselves forming consortia -- mergers and "strategic alliances" are at least as consortial as the library alliances. Some of the larger publishers, such as [Lexis-Nexis Academic Universe](#), [Beilstein](#), and [Oxford University Press](#), are selling not just to consortia, but to groups of layered consortia. They have made multi-consortial and even multi-national consortial deals. We have consortial conferences and new journals about consortia. Publishers have consortial advisory boards.

Characteristics of consortia

Consortia are complicated organizations. Most are struggling to invent themselves as they go along. While many larger consortia do have full-time staff (though never enough), a large number of consortia rely on volunteers -- librarians who are contributing to statewide or regional efforts (in addition to their day jobs at their home institutions). And for all consortia, communication and decision making are cumbersome and labor-intensive processes.

For example, Utah's [Pioneer](#) is a coalition of three statewide groups: the Utah Academic Library Consortium (to which the Nevada Academic Library Consortium now also belongs); the public libraries, represented by the Utah State Library; and the K-12 community, represented both by the State Office of Education and the Utah Education Network. Pioneer buys the core databases most in demand at libraries in all three groups. Failure to involve, or at least inform, every library staff member in every library in every group causes major dissatisfaction. Yet communicating with everyone is not a simple thing. Keeping systems staff, catalogers, reference staff, instructional staff, collection-development staff, and the resource-sharing groups updated on exactly what titles are owned, how they function, how to report and fix problems, etc. is daunting.

Consortia purchase in fundamentally different ways than do individual libraries. Although individual libraries are beginning to prefer packages, they are still willing to handle individual journals and to mount titles that are not yet Web-based. They will even accede to and handle some publishers' requirements for limiting patron access to particular buildings or computers, or they will put into the system individual passwords for each user when they deem it necessary to get a particular title. Many consortia, on the other hand, have from the outset refused to deal with non Web-based resources and almost none will offer titles with complicated requirements for limiting user access to subsets of their patron group. It is impractical to get a diverse group of libraries to uniformly understand and implement variations in the treatment of parts of the collection, much less to explain

this to end users (who will in every case assume that any access restrictions reflect an inept technical staff at the library).

Consortia need simple, easy-to-purchase, and easy-to-mount Web-based publications. And consortia need publishers and vendors who can give them lots of help. Consortia want to refer staff at member libraries to readily available technical and reference help. They want title lists of the contents of each database and discussion lists through which librarians can keep current on the changes. They want help sheets that can be printed for patrons. They want support for distance-education students. Consortial offerings must meet the needs of varied libraries. Small libraries in rural areas may have no systems staff, not enough catalogers to add purchased titles to the local catalog, and a hard-pressed public-service librarian covering reference, instruction, and collection development. At the other end of the scale, large institutions are open late nights and Sundays and must offer instruction to labs full of students doing simultaneous searching without causing problems in the database.

For a consortium, the most relevant fact about a prospective purchase may well be whether the publisher offers a discount to consortia. The consortium starts with the view that some or all of its members will want to buy a product, regardless of costs, quality, or pricing history. If some consortium members are going to purchase a product, it is preferable for them to buy it as cheaply as possible. If the publisher or aggregator offers a discount to consortium members, the consortium has a role. If the publisher or aggregator does not, the consortium does not have a role. This is especially true for consortia with no central funding. Their funding depends on the savings the member libraries accrue due to consortial purchases: no savings, no consortium.

Consortia buy products that are suited to bulk purchases, those that have a variety of popular and desirable titles in the bundle. They let individual libraries buy boutique journals; they handle the journals that will appeal to the greatest number of libraries in the group. As a result, titles not handled by consortia are less visible and may come to be treated as marginal. Pressed for staff, individual libraries may fail to purchase the high-quality, low-cost titles from small publishers. They may be easy to afford, but they are labor intensive to add to the collection. At the very least, these titles will lack the opportunity of titles in larger bundles to expand their audience from the large libraries, which have traditionally purchased them, to a much wider audience.

New initiatives in scholarly communications

Scholarly publishing initiatives have in common that they tend to be aimed at individual libraries and are not well set up to handle consortia. Scholarly initiatives often are concerned with a small number of titles. They expect libraries to respond to requests to purchase individual journal titles. They are often at a loss as to how to price to a consortium.

Scholarly publishing initiatives (like scholarly societies and smaller publishers -- profit or non-profit) generally do not have sales people, in-house lawyers, or adequate support staff. No one calls on libraries on their behalf, though many do mailings and send e-mail -- much less effective forms of marketing. They very frequently take a long time -- often a very long time -- to return calls, to negotiate licenses, and to respond to problems. Since consortia are struggling with many of the same staffing problems as scholarly publishing initiatives, the combination of the two understaffed organizations is not an easy path to success.

In addition, many of the scholarly societies that are committed to new publishing initiatives are over-protective of their journals. They do not have the staff to analyze the market and develop pricing plans that will work for both the publisher and the libraries. They are tremendously fearful of losing print subscriptions, particularly when they have a substantial number of individual subscribers on each campus -- a fear that is not unrealistic. As a result, they tend to develop unrealistic pricing schemes and put impractical restrictions on the use of their titles, which makes libraries reluctant to buy their products.

Many emerging scholarly publishing initiatives are experimental, and we are beginning to see a few that ask libraries and consortia to invest funds up front in development work. (BioOne in the United States and BioLine in Canada are the first and most prominent examples.) Libraries are not accustomed to this roll and are struggling to find ways to invest such funds, especially in cases where the legal status of such a payment is unclear. For a consortium to invest upfront in such a venture is an unlikely scenario.

The causes of discongruity

There is an basic discongruity between consortia and new scholarly publishing initiatives, one that we believe is structural and inherent in the nature of the players. Consortia and large publishers or aggregators work easily and well together; they have a natural affinity. Scholarly publishing initiatives and small non-profit publishers find that they work most easily with individual libraries, librarians, and faculty members.

"It is advantageous to show legislatures that every title available at larger schools is available at the small ones"

Libraries (and their consortia) and publishers find tremendous advantages to aggregation. The same technological and economic forces are driving both. Both are having trouble building and maintaining the technology infrastructure necessary to deliver electronic products to campuses and are finding that it requires very substantial ongoing investment in

networks, hardware, software, and particularly, in highly skilled staff. Through consortia, publishers at a one stroke can sell all their publications to a whole set of customers -- one license agreement, one bill. Consortia at one stroke can buy the output of a publisher. This

is efficient for both.

This natural congruence between the consortia and the aggregators makes it tempting for consortia to concentrate on purchasing packages containing large numbers of titles or single (but very large) reference resources. Consortia expect that individual libraries will purchase the lower-priced unbundled titles from small publishers on their own.

Many emerging scholarly initiatives, because they focus on a single electronic journal, are not bundled. They are created by small- or medium-sized publishers experimenting in electronic waters who are unlikely to have the resources to deal with consortia. Scholarly initiatives typically do not benefit from economy of scale. They are attempts to find an alternative to the model of publishing that has seen rising costs, buyouts and takeovers, and megolithic international publishing houses. They are attempts to use new technology to find another route to the dissemination of academic knowledge.

Scholarly publishing initiatives attract libraries that are also interested in experimenting. The goal of these libraries is not just to provide information to users, it is to explore new financial, technical, and organizational approaches. The decision to buy a title from a new scholarly publishing initiative is as much guided by the hope of finding a new alternative as it is by bottom-line considerations. Yet libraries are not willing at this point to invest large amounts in these experiments, so small purchases are more likely to appeal to them. Thus there is a natural congruence between small experiments, small purchases, and individual libraries. New scholarly initiatives expect that large publishers will provide the standard, established titles.

We believe that these two major directions -- toward consortia and towards the reform of scholarly communications -- do not always move in tandem. Sometimes we face decisions that will move us towards one goal, while slowing movement towards or damaging the other. Avoiding discongruence between the two directions is imperative.

The effects of discongruity

We posit five major effects of this discongruity:

1. Costs will shift to a different segment of the market

If consortia negotiate outstanding discounts for member libraries, does this help all libraries? Given that publishers, like other businesses, must place great emphasis on maintaining an even or rising flow of income, might it merely shift publishers' expectations to a different set of customers? Might the dollar savings achieved by bargaining on the part of one set of customers end up as part of the base pricing (either print or electronic) for another set of customers?

Smaller consortia and individual libraries cannot qualify for the appealing

discounts offered larger groups. Their per-use cost is likely to be higher.

Publishers often provide free electronic access to journals to which the library subscribes. However, if print prices rise markedly, those paper subscriptions must be subsidizing the "free" electronic packages, and those libraries that want print only are helping to pay for the electronic versions they don't need. A case in point: One of our organizations made a study of all Wiley titles. The average price in 1997 was \$735. In 2000, it was \$1,296, a 76% increase. A study of all Academic Press titles showed an average price in 1999 of \$777; in 2000 it was \$979 (up 25.94%). Both publishers offer "free" electronic access to libraries that buy the print version. Prices may have been stabilized for customers of Academic's IDEAL (the online package); they were not stable for other libraries. One day these publishers will need to replace their income from print with income from online sales. While they could argue that large numbers of new subscribers will distribute the burden more widely, it is not self-evident that publishers who failed to exercise restraint with regard to print subscription prices will behave differently in the electronic world.

Certainly it can benefit smaller libraries when publishers offer all their titles to a consortium. Small libraries gain access to a much larger journal collection than they had in print. These titles are not always those that the smaller libraries would put at the top of their wish list because many (especially two-year schools) do not offer classes in specialized fields and do not expect a faculty interest. However, as user expectations escalate, the demand will grow, and the growth of distance education will accelerate that demand. It is also advantageous to show legislatures and other funding bodies that every title available at larger schools is available at the small ones. It is much less appealing to try to sell the notion that the big schools need more titles.

But, if what really happens is merely shifting the costs from one segment of the library market to another, we are not seeing a true net gain for libraries, and libraries will not have realized their near-universal aspiration to improve access to information for all users, but especially for those most poorly served in the print world.

2. **The percentage of the budget that goes to a few large publishers will increase**
Most larger journal and periodical-index/full-text packages are from for-profit publishers. Many of these publishers offer large bundles at affordable prices. Those who offer large numbers of general-interest titles help create the core of most consortial offerings. A few publishers, however, offer packages of titles that are very expensive in print and that, not surprisingly, remain costly in electronic format. These publishers also may prohibit the cancellation of any significant number of print titles as a condition of purchasing the package. Every year the

Association of Research Libraries, EBSCO Information Services, (a publisher and subscription service), and similar organizations calculate the average journal price paid by an academic library. In 1999 ARL's average figure was \$451. EBSCO's figure was \$430.78 in 2000. If a publisher's average journal price is two or three times this figure, it is reasonable to infer that that publisher's offerings may be unreasonably expensive.

With each purchase, a portion of the library's budget is sectioned off, leaving an increasingly smaller portion for other purchases. Bruce Neville, head of science collection development at the University of New Mexico, analyzed an Elsevier offer to the Alliance for Innovation in Science and Technology Information, a library consortium, to get electronic-only access with a slightly different pricing structure. He looked at the savings at the Centennial Science and Engineering Library if it were to cancel all print Elsevier subscriptions and go to electronic-only access (private communication):

	1999	2001
Total Elsevier expenditures:	\$394,346	\$472,829
Minus 10% discount for electronic only:	-39,434	-47,282
Plus 7.5% "content fee":	+29,576	+35,462
Plus "Incremental fees":	+47,091	+47,091
Total savings:	\$431,579	\$508,100

Centennial in 1999 spent 35% of its budget for Elsevier titles. Canceling all print and accepting an offer from Elsevier's ScienceDirect to get electronic-only access would have brought that closer to 45% in 1999. ScienceDirect would require over 50% of the budget in 2001.

Can any institution risk dedicating such a large percentage of its budget to one publisher, especially if that percentage grows larger every year? What will happen as other such agreements are reached with publishers? Tying up an alarmingly

large percentage of the collections budget with a few providers may result in a situation where a budget cut means the loss of a major part of the electronic collection.

3. **Funds that could be used to support library-friendly publishers will be endangered**

We know that we must be prepared to continue periodic cancellations. Given the economic factors affecting higher education, expecting budgets to rise is unrealistic. What will we cancel?

If a library has tied up much of its budget in a few packages of higher-priced titles, it will have to cancel many lower-priced titles. This penalizes publishers who have done what we asked by providing library-friendly publishing at prices we can afford. Marriott Library at the University of Utah spends 23% of its serials budget for 5.5% of its titles from Elsevier, typical for a research library. Commitment to several such packages, unless acquisitions-budget increases are substantially higher than expected, would leave a shrinking percentage of the budget and a shrinking number of dollars to spend for a much larger number of other titles.

4. **The emphasis will be on percentage increase rather than dollar costs**

Librarians have rightly been concerned about surcharges added as print subscriptions are switched to print/electronic bundles. This charge is generally expressed as a percentage of the print price rather than as a dollar figure. This has resulted in a misplaced emphasis on percentage increase with a corresponding lack of examination of total costs. Some think that the surcharge is the problem. We think the problem is the price. Journals that were problems in print remain problems in electronic format. It is our belief that the problem with information costs lies not in the format of the information, but in the ownership of that information.

It is perfectly appropriate to expect a low surcharge on a bundle of titles averaging \$1,000 apiece. It is not appropriate to expect a low surcharge from a smaller publisher with lower-priced titles. Publishers of lower-priced titles have to buy servers and hire technical staff and meet all the other requirements of going online, just as do publishers of higher-priced ones. Publishers pay these costs in absolute dollars, not in percentage increases over the costs of print publication. Small publishers will of course need a higher percentage mark-up than a large publisher. But why should we care, assuming that the result is a lower-priced title that costs and will continue to cost fewer dollars?

The bottom line is that a very expensive title at zero increase is not necessarily a bargain. And a very inexpensive title that doubles or triples in price may well

remain a bargain. We understand this very clearly when we are spending our own dollars on personal purchases, but it becomes obscured when dealing with the thousands of transactions we handle in library acquisitions. To make an analogy to personal experience, imagine saying to a spouse: "We just can't afford to go to the movies. Tickets have doubled in price. Let's go to the opera instead; it's only up 10%."

5. **Visibility will drive usage**

We know that what is on line will be used whether or not it was used before and regardless of its quality. This is a phenomenon that alarms librarians, though there is nothing new about it. Users have always taken the path of least resistance. Once that meant grabbing three or four monographs off the shelf the night before a paper was due. Now it means finding whatever is available in full-text electronically from home. At the moment, this usage favors full-text journal articles. As monographs come online and we see the beginning of by-the-page sale of information, this may shift again.

By selling packages to libraries, vendors ensure the visibility of their electronic journals and limit the visibility of other titles. This will lead to those packaged journals becoming even more desirable as publishing outlets to the detriment of other journals -- and their publishers. In addition, bundling protects weaker titles. They are no longer vulnerable to cancellation, so titles that under normal circumstances would have died a natural death may now continue indefinitely.

A model for consortia

Scholarly initiatives get no attention from consortia because they are focused on experimenting with the model, not doing a big business (at least not at first). Not just consortia, but individual libraries find it more work for less result to deal with the new initiatives' products and consequently -- though we say we need and want them -- we don't support them. MIT Press is an example of this: Libraries asked for inexpensive online-only journals and the press founded six such journals some years ago. Yet they have had and continue to have a very difficult time attracting subscriptions.

"Consortia can support amending promotion and tenure guidelines to favor fewer high-quality publications over longer lists of lesser articles"

publisher whose prices libraries can't afford. Though it contradicts our belief that many

To solve this problem, non-profit (or responsible profit-making) organizations acting as agents for a number of small societies should bundle many journals, relieving societies from dealing with distribution. That would enable societies to publish electronically without building an expensive technological infrastructure. It would enable them to share in the sales force of the larger group, and it would protect them from being purchased by a

bundles are dangerous, in these cases, we believe consortia should encourage these enterprises to aggregate further.

Project MUSE has done just that, providing highly affordable access to a growing number of high-quality journals. MUSE first offered an online collection of forty Johns Hopkins University Press titles in 1997 and the bundle will grow to 167 titles from twenty-four university and scholarly society publishers by in 2001. A MUSE title on average costs a library \$43.11.

With very inexpensive high-quality titles such as these, bundling probably is a good idea. When the titles are reliably high quality and cost only a few dollars apiece, the total cost of selecting and purchasing part of the package would likely be higher in staff time than the cost of purchasing the whole bundle.

Ultimately, the most important question for libraries that want to support both consortia and new initiatives is: What is NOT in our current electronic bundles that our users should be able to access? Most of the titles on that list, we believe, are owned by scholarly societies or by reasonably priced for-profit publishers. Libraries have a stake in identifying them and assisting them to develop viable plans for online access.

Creating new journal titles

New fields and sub-fields of knowledge emerge constantly, and practitioners want new journals. Libraries need to stay abreast of new fields of knowledge and alert faculty members to take action in their scholarly associations. We do not want to discourage these groups from founding new journals; there will and must always be new journals and it is in the interest of the scholars and the library to have new journals founded by library-friendly publishers. Commercial publishers who price aggressively will, of course, found new journals in new fields wherever they see a business opportunity. They will naturally try to dominate new fields. This is a standard business approach, and these publishers are well capitalized and in a good position to do it.

Creating congruity

There are ways to adjust consortial strategies to support changing the landscape of scholarly publishing, not just the short-term acquisition of more and more electronic content. And there are ways in which scholarly publishing initiatives could make themselves more attractive to consortial groups.

- Consortia can seek out low-pricing publishers, whether non-profit or for profit -- even if these publishers produce few titles, forcing more work for less return. They can seek out publishers whose titles are actively desired by member libraries rather than responding to sales calls. They can identify good consortial/library partnerships.

- Consortia can help members present a consistent public stance on scholarly publishing issues and provide publicity for emerging initiatives. They can refer faculty to Create Change and to ARL's forthcoming *Declaring Independence* handbook for faculty editors.
- Consortia can involve faculty in supporting cancellations that target specific publishers who price aggressively. They can demonstrate to faculty that canceling titles from these publishers and reinvesting in titles which are also better long-term investments is a win-win strategy. They can refer them to the major studies of journal pricing such as *Journal Cost Per Use Statistics* from the University of Wisconsin, Madison Libraries; *Measuring the Cost Effectiveness of Journals: The Wisconsin Experience* from the ARL; *Journal Price Study: Core Agricultural and Biological Journals* from Cornell, University; and *Journal Price Survey* from the American Mathematical Society.
- Consortia can, through their member libraries, provide local education to faculty regarding the crisis and the opportunities for innovation in electronic scholarly communication. They can mail the "Create Change" brochure to faculty. They can involve selectors in routing to faculty materials about what is happening in individual disciplines. They can talk to faculty advisory boards, university senates, and university administration.
- Consortia can support the creation of dynamic inventories -- such as the one on the "Create Change" site -- that show which faculty from member institutions are editors, sit on editorial boards, or are reviewers.
- Consortia can support the creation of databases of publications by faculty, staff, and students at each university or member organization, such as the initiative currently in process at North Carolina State University.
- Consortia can develop courses and/or publications for graduate students at their member institutions with titles like "Your options and rights as a future scholarly publications producer."
- Consortia can encourage faculty to involve themselves with finding solutions or doing research in the opportunities the Internet offers to re-invent the scholarly publishing process. One of the most important of these evolving solutions is the Open Archives Initiative. The Santa Fe Convention for the OAI is a blueprint for interoperability of e-print archives.
- Consortia can encourage all faculty to speak and write on these issues within their associations. (See *Preserving Our Scholarship for future Generations: some Tips for Authors and Editors of Communication (Rhetoric, Journals) Scholarship* by Tim Stephen, CIOS President at <http://www.cios.org/> under "Will Your Scholarship be Forgotten When you Retire?")
- Consortia can support amending promotion and tenure guidelines to favor fewer

high-quality publications over longer lists of lesser articles and to ensure that publishing in reasonably priced publications and electronic-only journals is not penalized. The most effective way to do this may be to promote the Tempe Principles.

- Consortia can encourage faculty and librarians to seek grants in informatics and electronic publishing and to create publishing courses in English or communication departments.
- Consortia can support national initiatives striving to break the mold, such as David Shulenburger's "NEAR" initiative at the University of Kansas, the international SPARC initiative, and the Open Archives initiative mentioned above.
- Consortia can alert SPARC and similar organizations about the rise of new fields of inquiry and the potential for new titles. They can consult with faculty editors and refer them to SPARC for assistance with journals they edit. They can identify faculty editors of SPARC and other reasonably priced journals and publicize their contributions to the campus.

Consortia should also work towards consortial memberships in SPARC and similar initiatives. In e-mail to the Consortia List (consort@ohiolink.edu), Bernie Sloan of the University of Illinois Office of Planning & Budgeting (1999) shared the dilemma of ILCSO (Illinois Libraries Computer Systems Organization) about supporting SPARC:

While the Committee is very supportive of what the SPARC program is trying to accomplish, they had significant concerns regarding consortial pricing. We did an estimate, based just on the ten largest ILCSO libraries (not including those three ILCSO libraries that already participate in SPARC: UIUC, UIC, SIU Carbondale). For just those ten libraries in question (we have 45 members), using the 1999 fee schedule, the annual cost would be \$56,000.

Sloan said the committee suggests creating a "consortial affiliate" category, where the consortium itself joins SPARC to indicate its support of the initiative (perhaps at a reduced rate), and interested libraries then have the option to join separately from the consortium.

Are new types of consortia possible?

Below we describe some cases where we see a movement of consortia to be innovation clubs as well as buyers' clubs.

- The Alliance for Innovation in Science and Technology Information, originally established as the Library Services Alliance of New Mexico, seeks strategic partnerships outside the state that will enable it to provide services irrespective of

time, national boundaries, and organizational constraints. The membership now includes non-profit organizations involved in science and technology teaching, research, and development, nationally and internationally. The Alliance provides access to science and technology information, including citation databases and full text journals at Los Alamos National Laboratory and offers a sophisticated, locally developed search engine and a system to notify users when citations of interest are loaded.

The Alliance wants to go beyond the "buyers club" mode and become a leader in producing new models of scholarly communication. The mission statement clearly favors intervention and new types of scholarly communication.

Some of the Alliance's strategic goals and actions are to create collaborative tool sets, such as a data-visualization project to explain the rise and fall of scientific-research fields based on citation analysis from the alliances' digital journal collection; to create a system to recognize users' patterns of research and retrieval and make appropriate recommendations; to promote the use of collaborative tools to support new models of scholarly communication; to encourage research such as that done at Los Alamos National Laboratory and the University of Ghent on making databases aware of data in other repositories; and to adopt the technology for the next generation of e-print products. In addition, the Alliance is supporting efforts to update the Los Alamos Physics pre-print database."

- Another example of a consortium reaching beyond collective buying is BYTES, the Mellon Foundation funded project by eight members of NERL (Northeast Research Libraries consortium). BYTES, Books You Teach Every Semester, is examining information about reserve collections in history and literature in the English language at eight of the eighteen NERL participating university libraries and attempting to answer underlying questions about how best to digitize critical resources for teaching these subjects.
- Bioline International is an initiative supported by the University of Toronto and is another example of how consortia will have opportunities to support truly innovative projects. BioLine is a non-profit organization that mounts online versions of bioscience journals and is increasingly expanding to include peer-reviewed but less-well-known journals from developing countries.
- The BioOne initiative is another excellent example of consortia thinking beyond collective purchasing. The American Institute of Biological Sciences, the Allen Press, SPARC, the University of Kansas and the Big Twelve Plus Library Consortium will together create an online system for access to the journals of the AIBS member societies plus other journals from societies around the world. The Utah Academic Library Consortium was the first group to join BioOne as a consortial sponsoring member.

We hope many more such initiatives emerge from consortia.

Conclusion

Ideally consortia should continue to work at the short-term goal (obtaining as much content as possible at the best price) while contributing substantially to the support of emerging initiatives in affordable scholarly communication. And, also ideally, scholarly publishing initiatives should broaden their base of support beyond their individual library constituents and respond to the growing role that consortia play.

As consortia become a major force in information delivery, they must take on a wider public-interest agenda. They need to focus on their obligation to further the common aspirations of libraries and librarianship to provide equitable and affordable information to all. They need to become real players in the creation and growth of wholly new systems for the creation and dissemination of scholarly communication. To ensure long-term changes in the affordability and availability of scholarly information, consortia need to be more than just buyers' clubs. They need to become partners in inventing new ways of information creation and discovery.

Scholarly publishing initiatives likewise need to broaden their focus. Research libraries and their allies usually start them, and their support is largely found in individual research libraries. They are part of a library community that is growing closer as resource sharing blurs the distinctions among collections and distance education challenges the idea of an individual library's patrons. Many other libraries -- medical libraries, law libraries, public libraries, K-12 libraries -- are becoming partners of research libraries and will need to become a part of the movement to reform scholarly communications. The logical interconnection between all these libraries and the emerging scholarly publishing is consortia. Scholarly publishing initiatives must find a way to bring consortia into their membership and into their governance structures.

How will we know that we are moving towards congruency? When we see new scholarly initiatives on the programs of conferences for consortia; when we see risky investments of a percentage of consortial budgets in new initiatives; when we see consortia pooling manpower to develop alternative models of publishing or to make accessible the scholarly output of their member organizations.

* * *

Notes

1. Mary Case. Views of the current marketplace for scholarly journals. ARL October 1998, #200: 1-2

2. Ann Okerson. "Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Makes Award to NERL's BYTES project." From an electronic press release, February 14, 2000. <http://www.library.yale.edu/~license/ListArchives/0102/msg00037.html>
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