Prologue To Library Cooperation

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THE IDEA THAT libraries should, in some way, find means to work cooperatively to provide people with access to books unavailable in nearby libraries is a deeply rooted concept in librarianship. A search for the origins of the concept leads one down intriguing trails, but the first exemplar is not likely to be found. Catalogs of manuscripts in more than one monastery library existed in the first half of the thirteenth century. The most notable, the *Registrum librorum Angliae*, located manuscripts in 138 English and Scottish monasteries. Gabriel Naudé's *Advice on Establishing a Library* (1627) included the admonition that carefully prepared catalogs might serve to "please a friend, when one cannot provide him the book he requires, by directing him to the place where he may find a copy."[1] Wormann cites examples of an exchange agreement among the universities of Lund, Åbo, and Greifswald as early as 1740, a projected union catalog of the libraries of Weimar and Jena under the influence of Goethe when he was minister for education and culture, Lessing's proposal for a coordinated acquisitions scheme for Wolfenbüttel and Göttingen, and the ambitious attempt to establish a Bibliographie générale based on the millions of books confiscated during the French Revolution and gathered in the *dépôts littéraires*.[2] An organization for the exchange of publications, the Akademischer Tauschverein, founded by the University of Marburg in 1817, included eighteen German and eight foreign members by 1823, sixty-eight members by 1885; it continued until World War I.

A more interesting but less successful venture was the Agence centrale universelle des Échanges internationaux of Alexandre Vattemare to exchange official government publications and duplicate publications owned by libraries all over the world. Although the organization did not extend beyond the life of this flamboyant

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actor-ventriloquist, his influence was considerable. He visited the United States on three occasions, and submitted a long communication on international exchange to the Librarians' Conference of 1853 with a list of libraries which he claimed as beneficiaries of his scheme.[3]

The Librarians' Conference also heard reports on the Smithsonian Institution's activities in bibliographical work. As early as 1846 its Committee on Organization had proposed that the institution "become a centre of literary and bibliographical reference for the entire country." To attain that goal the librarian was to procure catalogs of all the important works on bibliography so that he might be consulted by "the scholar, the student, the author, the historian, from every section of the Union, and . . . inform them whether any works they may desire to examine are to be found in the United States; and if so in what library; or if in Europe only, in what country of Europe they must be sought."[4]

Conflicts immediately arose over whether the institution should foster scientific research and publication—the role advocated by Joseph Henry, secretary of the institution—or become a national library as Charles C. Jewett urged. A Solomon's decision to divide the income equally between the two roles limited the development of a bibliographical center, but Jewett, undeterred, pressed on with his imaginative scheme to produce a catalog from stereotype plates with a single entry on each plate. The plates were to be interfiled to produce "a general catalog of all the books in the country, with reference to the libraries where each might be found."[5] Libraries were to submit copy for their books using cataloging rules prepared by Cutter. Individual library catalogs could be produced from the stereotype plates as well as the general national catalog. Jewett's plan failed because the Smithsonian's role as a scientific institution won out over that of a national library and because of the impermanence of the stereotype process adopted by Jewett. But it failed not because the idea was faulty, but because of inadequate technology, inadequate financial support, and the lack of an organization to support the project—elements that have caused most failures in cooperative projects.

Thus, well before the beginning of the twentieth century, the basic methods of library cooperation had been suggested and in some cases attempted with some success. Although the history of library cooperation in the United States has been recorded in many books and articles, it may be worthwhile to review some of the cooperative library activities of the past seventy-five years to see what common threads emerge.

The best summary is that prepared by David Weber and Frederick Lynden for the Conference on Interlibrary Communications and Information Networks held at Airlie House in 1970.[6] This article has drawn heavily on that paper as well as on G. Flint Purdy's "Interrelations Among Public, School, and Academic Libraries,"[7] presented at the University of Chicago Graduate Library School's Conference on Library Networks—Promise and Performance in 1968. John Rather's bibliographical essay on library cooperation[8] and Ralph Stenstrom's bibliography, *Cooperation Between Types of Libraries, 1940-1968*,[9] are helpful guides to the maze of articles, reports and books on the subject.

Several difficulties present themselves at the outset. The literature of library cooperation is very large and most of the articles are uncritical. Although most of the cooperative enterprises of libraries are announced and described in some detail in library periodicals, there are few evaluative reports that give a clear account of the success of a venture and the factors leading to success or failure. Unsuccessful ones, in fact, simply seem to fade away. Costs of a cooperative effort are particularly hard to ascertain, in part because many expenses are absorbed by the participating libraries, and in part because standard reporting procedures have generally not yet been developed. Finally, the definitions of library cooperative projects are far from clear, and consequently no generally accepted taxonomy exists. In this article the following aspects of cooperative activities will be discussed: interlibrary lending, bibliographical access, specialization agreements, cooperative processing, and organization for cooperation. These broad divisions are neither discrete nor comprehensive, but they are intended to illustrate the road we have been traveling and some of the impediments along the way.

INTERLIBRARY LENDING

Sharing resources by lending books from one library to another is probably the oldest, and certainly the easiest, method since a single loan requires only a borrower, a willing lender, and a means of transmission. In an 1876 article, Samuel Green proposed that libraries enter into agreements to make the practice more commonly accepted.[10] The *Library Journal* published nineteen articles and communications on interlibrary loan from 1900 to 1915, and the first interlibrary lending code was drawn up in 1917 by the ALA Committee on Coordination of College Libraries. Revised codes were adopted in

1940, 1952 and 1968, and an interlibrary loan procedure manual was published in 1970.

The use of photoduplication in place of lending the original publication was suggested in the 1917 code, but the equipment needed was expensive and cumbersome and few libraries had photographic laboratories. The National Library of Medicine began its photoduplication service in 1939 and made it a part of its interlibrary loan service in 1956.

Teletype was pressed into library service in 1949 in the public libraries of Racine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The ten original members of the Midwest Interlibrary Center (now the Center for Research Libraries) installed teletypewriters in 1951 to speed communication with the center and among the members. The current TELEX/TWX directory lists more than 630 installations in libraries. The intriguing possibility of using facsimile transmission for fast delivery of copies of printed pages was demonstrated at the Library of Congress in 1948 and was used in certain Atomic Energy Commission laboratories in 1950. Experiments were sponsored by the Council on Library Resources in the 1950s to test the practicality of several existing systems, and the New York State Library attempted an interlibrary loan service by facsimile for six months in 1967. None of these experiments were successful because of the high costs and uncertain quality of reproductions.

The volume of loans has increased to an estimated 6 to 7 million requests per year, and the burden inevitably falls on the larger libraries. Costs have risen to an estimated $6.39 per transaction.[11] As early as 1899, E.C. Richardson called for a central, national lending library with branches in New Orleans, San Francisco, Chicago and New York.[12] The Library of Congress began circularizing in 1936 for requested titles not included in the national union catalog, and regional union catalogs attempted to locate items in libraries within the area.

A study conducted by Rolland Stevens and submitted by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science recommended the development of a federally funded network of "regional bibliographical centers, resource centers and back-up centers centrally planned, but with a decentralized service program."[13] Another ARL study, by Robert Hayes, is considering a system for interlibrary communication which would provide for records of interlibrary loan transactions through a computer network.

Although interlibrary loans have traditionally been reserved for scholars and scientists (and the research of graduate students), some states have used Library Services and Construction Act funds to support loan service for borrowers who would otherwise be ineligible. In New York state and Illinois, for example, direct support is given by the state library to cover the costs of interlibrary loan service through a network of public, academic and other libraries for loans of material to borrowers who are not engaged in formal research. The number of loans will unquestionably increase with the adoption of less stringent lending rules. The proposed federally funded network and the use of the communications technology now available seems to be the solution for more adequate interlibrary loan service.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ACCESS

The publication of union lists of the holdings of several libraries, descriptions of the resources of libraries, and the maintenance of union catalogs in card form have been the most common means of providing a convenient bibliographical record. Twenty-five union lists were published between 1864 and 1899. The bibliography appended to the first edition of the *Union List of Serials* (1927) lists 179 examples, and the one in the 1931 supplement added 68 more. The 1943 edition included 387 in the bibliography by Daniel C. Haskell and Karl Brown. The earliest regional list appeared in 1876, and the earliest national list seems to be Henry C. Bolton's *Catalogue of Scientific and Technical Periodicals*, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1885.[14] The first edition of the *Union List of Serials* located 75,000 titles in 225 libraries; the most recent edition (1956) extends the coverage to 157,000 titles in 956 libraries. Similar cooperative efforts in the 1930s brought forth union lists of serial publications of foreign governments (1932), American newspapers (1937), international congresses and conferences (1938) and, more recently, microfilms and manuscripts. The *Union List of Serials* will not be revised, but is being supplemented by *New Serials Titles.*

A card catalog of books in the public libraries of California collected by the state library in 1909 was the earliest union catalog in the United States; the next one was produced as part of the consolidation of libraries of the Oregon state colleges and universities in 1932. During the 1930s, regional union catalogs flourished, aided by Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers and foundation funds. Seventeen of these catalogs were described in Downs's *Union Catalogs in the United*

States;[15] only four were completed with local funds. The Bibliographical Center in Denver, the Philadelphia Union Catalog, and the Pacific Northwest Bibliographical Center developed services beyond the usual location and referral functions, but all have had serious financial problems in meeting increasing costs of operation. Many smaller union catalogs organized to serve special groups of libraries or to bring together cards on a specific subject were compiled during the same period. No survey of them has been made since 1942, but few new ones have been announced and the current usefulness of many of the older ones is dubious. An expanded series of regional union catalogs, based on Howard Odum's definition of a region, which was proposed in Downs's *Union Catalogs . . .*, failed to materialize.

The National Union Catalog was started at the Library of Congress in 1901 and contributions were sought from major libraries, but it was not until 1909 that the cards were arranged into a single alphabetical catalog. A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1927 supported expansion of the catalog; however, it was the 1968 publication in book form of the *National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints* with the cooperation of 500 libraries that made this important source available to the libraries that could afford it.

Descriptions of resources of libraries in the United States began in 1892 with W.C. Lane and C.K. Bolton's *Notes on Special Collections in American Libraries.* Under the sponsorship of the ALA Board on Resources of American Libraries, systematic coverage of libraries in the southern states, the New York City libraries, and the libraries of the Pacific Northwest appeared in the 1930s and early 1940s.[16] The Special Libraries Association four-volume survey (1941-47) added an important group of highly specialized descriptions.[17] None of these surveys has been revised and an annual series of "Notable Materials Added to American Libraries" expired after three years.[18] Resources of Texas and Illinois libraries have been described in recent publications,[19] but the era of the multistate survey of library resources seems to be over. Descriptions of individual libraries, of collections on a common subject, and similar surveys continue; Downs's *American Library Resources* lists over 11,000 survey articles, bibliographies and catalogs.[20] We have not yet succeeded in harnessing these traditional tools to the technology that is available today, and the increasing costs of conventional compilations are making them obsolete.

SPECIALIZATION AGREEMENTS

Agreements for specialization in collection development among

libraries were drawn up for the New York Public Library and the Columbia University Library, and for the Chicago Public Library, Newberry Library and John Crerar Library in 1896. In each instance certain subjects were allotted to a library; others would avoid extensive purchases in those subjects. E.C. Richardson urged similar cooperation by specialization among larger groups of libraries in 1899 and again in 1912,[21] but the idea won few converts. In 1916 the American Library Institute proposed a similar plan of cooperation by specialization which would enable research libraries in each of seven regions to accept certain specialties, thus ensuring the availability of a reference copy and a circulating copy of all important books.[22] Again in 1929 the Joint Committee on Materials of Research of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies called the attention to the need for "cooperation among libraries so that copies of all important materials may be preserved and conveniently distributed and unnecessary duplication may be avoided."[23] The ALA Committee on Bibliography proposed plans for cooperative selection, purchase, cataloging and warehousing of books in a 1930 report. With financial assistance from the General Education Board, the University of North Carolina and Duke University embarked on a cooperative plan to develop a strong bibliographical collection, to exchange catalog cards, and to purchase books and journals which would not be duplicated by the libraries. The program was linked with joint research and curricular planning between the two universities. The two libraries joined with the Tulane University Library in 1941 in an agreement for purchasing Latin American materials, each library being assigned responsibility for certain countries. Funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation.

An experimental Division of Library Cooperation established in the Library of Congress in 1941 for one year, and funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, produced a thoughtful report which called for "an intense specialization in designated fields by all of the major research institutions of the country,"[24] but the beginning of World War II prevented any action on the report.[25] A national conference on library specialization was called in 1941 by the ALA Board on Resources of American Libraries, and a similar regional conference of librarians of the Pacific Northwest met in Seattle two years later. Neither conference had any significant results.

COOPERATIVE PROCESSING

The need to supply information for gearing the nation to the

demands of World War II supplied the impetus for the first attempt at a national cooperative acquisitions program. The Cooperative Acquisitions Project was established in 1945 by the ARL, the ALA, and the Library of Congress (LC) to secure copies of books and journals that could not be obtained through the usual book-trade channels during the war years. By 1948 some 820,000 book and periodical volumes were acquired by LC agents in Europe and distributed among the cooperating libraries.[26] In acquiring these publications the libraries also acquired the knowledge that a large cooperative acquisition program could be carried on, and the U.S. government made a commitment to support such activities.

The project led to the organization of the Farmington Plan in 1948, when foreign book trade reopened after World War II. The plan has been reported fully and needs no additional description other than that some sixty libraries voluntarily accepted the responsibility for acquiring all important current publications published in most of the countries of the world. Allocations were made in 804 segments of the Library of Congress classification according to the subject specialization of each library, and each library agreed to submit cards for all books acquired to the national union catalog as quickly as practicable.[27] A Latin American Cooperative Acquisitions Program with some forty participating libraries existed from 1963 to 1973. Decreasing library budgets were a factor in causing the program to close.

The Farmington Plan was discontinued in 1972 partly because of the success of two federally financed plans. Public Law 480, which made surplus agricultural products available to underdeveloped countries for payment in their own currency, was turned to the advantage of research libraries in 1961 when legislation was passed to enable the Library of Congress to acquire the publications of these countries for cooperating libraries, using the countries' unspent accounts.

Title II-C of the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided federal funds to be used to develop a centralized acquisitions program at the Library of Congress for cooperating research libraries. This plan, which soon acquired the acronym NPAC (National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging) has enlisted more than eighty libraries, acquired library materials from approximately thirty countries, and provided catalog cards for them.

After Jewett's ill-fated plan for preparing stereotype blocks for the cards produced by the Smithsonian Institution Library and titles to be reported by other libraries, no successful service appeared until the

Library of Congress began to distribute printed cards in 1901. Dewey spoke on the wastefulness of each library cataloging the same books at the 1876 ALA conference. The *Library Journal* started a cataloging service in 1879 but the enterprise failed within a year. Distribution of printed cards by the Library Bureau and the ALA was discussed as early as 1886, started in 1897, and transferred to the Library of Congress in 1901. None of these enterprises was truly cooperative, of course, but in 1901 cooperative cataloging began when the Library of Congress received copy for printed cards from other libraries, first from the library of the Department of Agriculture, later from the larger libraries.[28] A Cooperative Cataloging Division was established by the Library of Congress in 1932.

The Library Services Act encouraged the development of processing centers to speed both the ordering and cataloging of books made available from public funds. By 1959, twenty-one states had established one or more processing centers and the number has continued to grow; more than sixty centers were noted in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Processing Center Feasibility Study in 1967.[29] The services vary from reproducing catalog cards from LC proof slips to the entire process of assistance in selection, ordering, accounting, payment, production of card sets for filing, and preparing and mounting the labels and book pockets. These centers serve primarily public and school libraries.

Academic libraries have been slower to move into cooperative processing. The Carnegie Corporation established centralized ordering for the college and junior college libraries which received its grants for purchasing books for undergraduate students in 1931-38, but libraries continued to order the books purchased from their own funds.[30] The state college and university libraries of Colorado instituted a center after discussion and studies extending over twenty years and a detailed feasibility study in 1969. The Colorado Academic Libraries Book Processing Center provides full processing and accounting for nine state-supported institutions.[31]

In 1971 the academic libraries of Ohio formed the Ohio College Library Center (OCLC)—a computerized bibliographical data base with terminals in cooperating libraries—to provide cataloging data. The growth of OCLC and the development of new programs has been described in so many articles that it will suffice to say that it now serves more than 500 libraries in thirty-five states, and that its cataloging and bibliographical searching services will be supplemented by serials and

acquisitions systems. The technical means to develop regional processing centers seem to be clearly established; what remains to be solved are the organizational and financial problems.

ORGANIZATION FOR COOPERATION

That a national organization with regional subunits was necessary for library cooperation was recognized early by library leaders. Charles H. Gould, Librarian of McGill University, made "Coordination, or Method in Library Cooperation" the theme of the 1909 ALA Conference and called for "a single comprehensive organization in which each member shall have its own definite part to play, yet will also stand in distinct and mutually helpful relations to all the other members, acknowledging, each one, that it owes a duty to the whole body, although preserving complete freedom as to its own individual management and interests."[32] In the same year William Coolidge Lane, speaking at the dedication of the Oberlin College Library, proposed a central bureau of information and loan collections for college libraries, but Gould's address encompassed all types of libraries. The search for Gould's idea has been long and tortuous.

Public libraries had already taken an initial step by organizing county library service in Ohio and Maryland in 1900. A survey by the ALA Committee on Library Extension found that enabling legislation for county library service had been passed in thirty-one states by 1926.[33] County library service in the southern states was aided by WPA projects in the 1930s. Regional library systems, organized to provide services which individual libraries could not provide, came more slowly, but the Nelson Associates study of public library systems in the United States noted 491 systems which served 44 percent of the U.S. population and provided referral of requests, centralized purchasing, centralized processing, common borrowing privileges, and bookmobile service.[34]

Academic libraries entered into a series of cooperative organizations as part of institutional consolidations in the 1930s. The Claremont Colleges Libraries (1931), the Fisk University Library (1931), Atlanta University (1936), Dillard University Library (1935), and the Joint University Libraries, Nashville (1938) are examples of varying degrees of consolidation of independent colleges and universities; the Oregon State System of Higher Education provided for centralized administration of seven state-supported institutions.[35] The North Texas Regional Libraries (1943) included both state-supported and independent universities in the Denton-Dallas-Fort Worth area. Less formal organizations include the Cooperating Libraries of Upper New

York (University of Buffalo, Colgate University, Grosvenor Library, Hamilton College, Syracuse University, Cornell University, and Union College) which was active from 1931 to 1939, and the Colorado College and Head Librarians Conference (1941) which preceded the Colorado Academic Libraries Book Processing Center described above.

The Midwest Interlibrary Center, started as a cooperative storage center with a limited acquisitions program for ten large university libraries, soon enlarged its collecting program to include serials, state publications, and many other types of publications not commonly held by its member libraries. In 1965 the name was changed to the Center for Research Libraries; the membership now includes seventy-two members and fifty-eight associate members and thus has become one of the major cooperative library organizations in the United States. Other consortia have developed so rapidly that a 1970 study funded by the U.S. Office of Education determined that at least 125 organizations were active and that 96 of them had been established between 1966 and 1970.

This highly selective tour through the cooperative library projects of the past seventy-five years suggests several common elements:

1. The basic ideas of cooperation are not new and indeed had been proposed many times before they were accepted.
2. Cooperating libraries must be convinced that the potential gain is worth the risk of some loss of individual achievement.
3. Financial assistance beyond the contributions of the individual libraries is essential.
4. A carefully tested technology must be available.
5. A strong organizational structure is necessary to ensure permanence to the cooperative efforts.

American library cooperation has gone through a long period of testing, and significant projects have been accomplished. The possibilities for merging these accomplishments into a network that will serve all users of libraries seem very bright, indeed.

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