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To cite this article: Susan Stearns , Matthew Revitt & Kirsten Leonard (2020) Taking Shared Print to the Next Level: The Partnership for Shared Book Collections, Journal of Library Administration, 60:7, 812-820, DOI: [10.1080/01930826.2020.1803020](https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2020.1803020)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2020.1803020>



Published online: 01 Sep 2020.



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## LIBRARY NETWORKING AND CONSORTIA



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### COLUMN EDITOR'S NOTE

This column focuses on formal collaboration and networking among libraries through consortia. It offers in-depth examinations of issues facing modern library consortia including (but not limited to) e-resource licensing, ebooks, next generation integrated library systems, shared print programs, resource sharing, shared digital repositories, governance, planning, open educational resources, affordable learning and other relevant topics to library consortia. Contributions are accepted for this column and must be submitted to George Machovec ([george@coalliance.org](mailto:george@coalliance.org)). Contact the column editor for suggested topics, deadlines and formatting.

## Taking Shared Print to the Next Level: The Partnership for Shared Book Collections

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### ABSTRACT

This article introduces the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, a federation of monograph shared print programs. Collaboration of programs at the network level allows for:

- Reducing the cost of retaining the scholarly record through shared distribution of commitments;
- De-duplicating efforts;
- Developing and promoting evidence-based best practices;
- Increasing the effectiveness of communication with end-users and funders;
- Tackling large-scale projects and research that are out of reach for individual shared print programs.

This shared stewardship of collection is critical as local resources are depleted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and access to print for digitization increases.

### KEYWORDS

Shared print; shared collections; collective collections; monographs; collaboration; retention; library costs; Partnership for Shared Book Collections; print archiving; Rosemont Shared Print Alliance

## Introduction

This article introduces the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, whose mission is to “*Coordinate collaboration among shared print monograph initiatives and collections in North America to support cost-effective retention and access to shared print monograph collections*” (Partnership for Shared Book Collections, 2020a).

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Academic and research libraries have long collaborated to preserve and protect the print scholarly record and ensure it is accessible for research, scholarship, and learning while sharing costs. Examples of formal collaboration at the local and regional level, often including a shared storage facility, abound across North America from ReCAP and the Five Colleges Repository in the eastern United States to the University of California System in the west and the Keep@Downsview repository in Ontario, Canada. These off-site storage facilities allow their member libraries to provide access to (often infrequently used) books and journals for their users while preserving onsite library space for the variety of new services today's digital library offers. With the recent global pandemic, they can often provide digital access to content that is inaccessible in physical library collections which remain closed. Preserving print copies prepares for whatever next challenge libraries and their collections may face.

Over the last decade, the pressure on physical space in libraries has increased with libraries recognizing the need to collaborate more widely to ensure that scholarly content is available to their local stakeholders even as they must undertake ever broader programs of de-selection and weeding. The result has been the growth of large-scale shared print programs focused on preserving and protecting both scholarly monographs and print serials and journals. Unlike repositories such as those referenced above, these collective collections (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020) are typically de-centralized with participating libraries making long-term commitments to retain agreed upon books and journals in their local collections while ensuring access to them from their shared print partners through standard inter-library loan.

Programs such as the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust, the Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST), the Maine Shared Collections Cooperative, the HathiTrust Shared Print Program, and SCELIC are examples of large-scale shared print initiatives that have grown to protect and preserve some 40 million monographs and well over 100,000 journal titles in the past few years. While these are examples of how shared print often evolved at the regional level, the Partnership, as a federation of these regional programs, is taking monograph shared print to the national level.

Shared print programs give their member libraries flexibility in managing their collections at scale as part of a larger collection, thereby saving costs as well as expanding access. In addition, new groups of libraries are interesting in forming shared print programs to bring their unique titles under protection and benefit from shared print collaboration. And even established shared print programs seek ways to improve services, reduce risk of loss of the scholarly record, influence providers, and manage costs through collaboration. Such shared stewardship of collections is critical as local resources are depleted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While access to print collections has been limited for the past few months, with digital access becoming a necessity, much of this content is only available because of the digitization of print content that libraries have been protecting through their participation in shared print programs.

By working together shared print programs can achieve efficiencies of scale including:

- Reduce the cost of retaining the scholarly record through shared distribution of commitments;
- De-duplicate efforts;
- Develop and promote evidence-based best practices;

- Increase the effectiveness of communication with end-users and funders, as well tackle large scale projects and research issues that are out of reach for individual shared print programs.

## Background

The Partnership grew out of meetings to address the question of how to develop and sustain an infrastructure that would capitalize on opportunities for collaboration and cooperation across the growing number of shared print initiatives. With financial support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, in April of 2018 the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST) hosted a summit with representatives from over 25 shared print programs in North America as well as leaders in preservation and scholarly communications including OCLC and the Library of Congress. Over a two-day period, the group was invited to envision a robust future for shared print with a focus on scholarly monographs, to commit to join community-based action in support of preserving and protecting the print scholarly record, and ensuring its availability for students, scholars, and researchers.

The summit resulted in identifying a set of key priorities for shared print's future as well as the formation of a set of Working Groups to focus on these priorities. Among the priorities was the establishment of a formal enterprise focused on coordinating and directing the efforts of shared print. It was generally agreed that a federated organizational structure would work most effectively and that such an organization should focus on best practices and standards, identify research (particularly in the area of risk) needed for shared print, develop compelling narratives for the stakeholder audiences, and encourage the development of an open data infrastructure in support of shared print.

In December of 2018, a second summit was convened to review the recommendations of the Working Groups. Through discussion, the participants reached agreement on:

- Preliminary statements of mission, vision and principle for a new federation called The Partnership for Shared Book Collections (Partnership for Shared Book Collections, 2020a)
- Reconfiguration of the original Working Groups into the following with a formal Steering Committee to provide oversight:
  - Governance and Membership
  - Services and Business Model
  - Outreach and Engagement
  - Risk Research
  - Best Practices
  - Open Retention Data.
- Working closely with the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance, a collaboration of serials and journals print programs.
- Determining to use 2019 as a "transition year" that would allow the Partnership to formalize its governance and membership models as well as develop a suite of initial service offerings.

During this transition year, further meetings were held to solicit feedback from the shared print community and other stakeholders. The feedback received included:

- The core nature of the Partnership should be identified – collaboration and collective action or data repository service?
- Cost is a critical factor for shared print programs that should be balanced with the need to have dedicated staff to advance the collaboration and support accountability.
- The types of membership in the organization were also discussed, including the importance of engaging with organizations that are not shared print programs such as the Library of Congress, national libraries, and other organizations.

Additional feedback indicated a desire for the Partnership to be a federated organization, with lightweight, efficient and nimble governance that would not pose a barrier to either participation or progress. But also that the level of governance should be sufficiently robust to indicate the seriousness of the endeavor and ensure sufficient member representation. While developing the final governance structure the Partnership Steering Committee was fully aware of an article by Roger Schonfeld (Schonfeld, 2019) that included a discussion of the challenges of creating new organizational structures. A Governance and Membership Working Group, consisting of consortial leaders, collections and shared print experts, and library leaders was appointed to develop a governance structure and membership agreement. Having representation from across various consortia on this Working Group definitely helped ensure buy-in when it was time for their programs to formally join the Partnership.

Throughout its evolution, the Partnership has greatly benefited from the expertise of outside entities including: OCLC, the California Digital Library, Center for Research Libraries, Ithaka S+R, and Library of Congress and will continue to do so in the future, even if those organizations are not members of the Partnership. The Partnership has intentionally not made membership in the Partnership a requirement for individuals to participate in working groups in order to ensure participation by those with specific expertise.

### **The formal launch of the partnership**

The formal launch of the Partnership for Shared Book Collections organization and website (Partnership for Shared Book Collections, 2020a) was done at ALA midwinter in January 2020 with an announcement of the founding members:

- Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries
- ConnectNY
- Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST)
- MCLS/MI-SPI
- Maine Shared Collections Cooperative (MSCC)
- Private Academic Library Network of Indiana (PALNI)
- SCEL Shared Print Program
- Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)

## Partnership business model

The Partnership is fully member funded through an annual \$3,000 membership fee that member programs pay (not individual participating libraries). Members pledge to join the Partnership for an initial term of three years to provide stability. As the Partnership meets its goals the need for a formal organization will continue to be evaluated.

Member fees are being used to fund a part-time Program Coordinator who will oversee the work of the Partnership. Knowing that the size and resources of shared print programs vary greatly, the Partnership decided the fairest and simplest option was to implement a flat fee, which it is hoped is a sufficiently low barrier for participation that membership will be affordable for most shared print programs, recognizing that all programs will derive different but largely equal benefits from the Partnership. Member programs also provide valuable in-kind support through their participation on Partnership committees and components of the Partnership infrastructure (e.g. financial management, website hosting, and providing meeting software).

## Partnership governance

The governance structure is documented in the Member Agreement and Governance Structure (Partnership for Shared Book Collections, 2020c):

- The Partnership is a federation of monograph shared print programs in North America, where members participate in governance and operations, with no single institution predominating.
- Individual libraries would participate in the Partnership through their membership in shared print programs.
- A dedicated Program Coordinator position will manage the daily operations of the Partnership.
- An initial three-year commitment for members to allow time for the services to develop, set clear funding commitments and timelines, and allow enough time for the services to be assessed for continued utility and value to the membership.
- Overall governance of the Partnership is the responsibility of the Partnership's elected Executive Committee, consisting of those with leadership roles at Partnership member programs and library directors and deans. Alongside the Executive Committee is the Operations Committee, consisting of individuals with more hands on shared print operational expertise. There are a number of working groups as well, responsible for working on the various services of the Partnership.

## Partnership services

Below are some initial proposed services of the Partnership. These services are intended to support existing and emerging shared print programs, including those programs with extensive resources and those without:

- Analyze costs and determine necessary funding for shared print programs.

- Develop best practices in areas related to shared print (as described below).
- Develop a Marketing/Communication toolkit that institutions can use with their community of users, funders, administrators, faculty, students, and others, to more easily communicate the need and benefits of shared print.
- Develop and maintain a directory of shared print programs and characteristics, including contact information and key policies of the programs.
- Investigate activities that best scale at the network-level of shared print work, such as conducting research about shared print issues (e.g. optimal numbers of copies).
- Develop and maintain a directory of experts/advisors who may be called upon to offer consultation to support both existing and emerging programs on an as needed basis.
- Develop a toolkit to support startup of new shared print programs for collections and in geographic locations that are not yet served.
- Develop principles for access to content across shared print programs that have shared agreement across members.

### Partnership best practices

Shared print is still a relatively new field of practice, with programs growing organically across different regions of North America. And while the Center for Research Libraries' Print Archive Network (PAN) forum has done an excellent job of allowing programs to share lessons learned there was a definitive need for a comprehensive set of best practices to ensure greater levels of standardization across the field. Nowhere is the benefit of working at scale better illustrated than the work of the Partnership Best Practices Working Group, which has tapped into the collective expertise of the shared print community and other collections and preservation experts to tackle the challenge of developing best practices. The Working Group should be commended for making a significant contribution to the shared print community (Weltin et al., 2020).

Among the existing print practices are:

- Collection Scope of Shared Collections,
- Digital Surrogates, Disclosure of Items in Local Systems, Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs),
- Replacing, Withdrawing, or Transferring Committed Volumes Lost or Damaged Beyond Usability,
- Resource Sharing,
- Retention Period and Survivability,
- Storage Environment

The work of the Best Practices Working Group has evolved as new challenges for shared print programs are identified, with further best practices planned for:

1. Transferring Commitments
2. Preservation

3. Programmatic Review Process
4. Discovery and Disclosure of Items
5. Metadata and Records Sharing
6. Statistics and Analytics
7. Inventory Processes and Practices
8. Access for Users
9. Centralized Collections
10. Withdrawal from program

The Working Group is also working with OCLC on improvements to the Detailed Metadata Guidelines for Shared Print (OCLC, 2020).

Another notable achievement of the Working Group is the development, in collaboration with the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance, of a comprehensive Shared Print Glossary. This Glossary is a useful resource for anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of shared print (Partnership for Shared Book Collections, 2020b).

### **Support for research**

From the first two Summits in 2018, participants considered support for research an important focus of the Partnership. A Risk Working Group, convened by Ian Bogus from ReCAP, has worked to calculate and model risks to print retention. In addition to studying aspects of bibliographic accuracy, which had been reported by many to be a concern, the Working Group engaged with Dr. Candace Yano of the University of California, Berkeley, to develop a model to inform shared print practices. The model looks to answer the question, “How do number of copies in different initial conditions and in varying storage environments affect the likely availability of copies over time?”. With a focus on investigating usability of retained materials, the model is based on known ageing properties of paper as well as varying environmental conditions of storage.

Members of the Partnership have also been involved in working with the Library of Congress on a grant funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation entitled “Assessing the Physical Condition of the National Collection”. By comparing physical, chemical and optical characteristics of a representative sample of identical books across five research libraries in different regions of the US, the study looks to provide decision-making tools to assist in determining how many copies of print materials should be kept in the national collection (National Book Collection, 2020).

Over the coming months, the Partnership anticipates developing a research agenda for the future, engaging with external expertise to guide this agenda and potentially seeking outside support for sponsoring further research to inform shared print.

### **Continued outreach and engagement**

No topic has been of more interest to the programs involved in the Partnership than that of outreach and engagement, acknowledging that individual libraries as well as shared print programs need to develop and promote compelling narratives in support

of shared print for a variety of stakeholder audiences. The initial Outreach and Engagement Working Group began by creating a matrix focused on these different stakeholders by identifying ways in which shared print impacts them and by identifying the messaging they find most compelling. The Working Group published a Wikipedia article (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020) on shared print and has begun to further identify communications strategies for shared print programs that will be expanded on in the future by the development of a shared print marketing and communications toolkit.

Much of the recent work on outreach and engagement of the Partnership has been done in collaboration with the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance, culminating in creation of a short video in June of 2020 (Krebeck, 2020) focused on the value of shared print, even as libraries face the challenges of the global pandemic. Continued focus on the ways in which shared print programs save costs locally while expanding access to collections nationally (including via digitization efforts) provides further evidence of the value libraries gain by participating in shared print.

### **Furthering the development of the shared print infrastructure**

One of the challenges all shared print programs face is the lack of a well-developed and open infrastructure supporting shared print. While recent developments by OCLC (in conjunction with the Center for Research Libraries) have made it possible for libraries to register shared print commitments in both WorldCat® and the PAPR database, the decision support tools for collection analysis remain expensive and can be out of reach for smaller or developing programs as well as financially impractical on an ongoing basis even for larger programs. Recent expansion of the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries' Gold Rush software in support of the comparison of library collections offers monograph shared print programs options, but serials and journals decision support continues to be challenging and has limited the growth and expansion of shared print. In addition, collection analysis is often seen as a off-one project and not yet integrated as a part of ongoing collection management by libraries.

In January of 2020, the Center for Research Libraries, the California Digital Library, and HathiTrust announced a joint initiative focused on building on the last decade of collaboration across shared print and advancing shared print's transition to a new phase of integration and interoperability (Weltin et al., 2020). This work is to be embedded in the community and intends to engage with the community throughout its development. With the support of the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance and the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, this initiative recognizes the growing importance of embedding shared print within the life cycle of library collections as part of a future focused on sustainable collection development and management.

### **Next steps**

Having grown from the original eight founding members to a total of fourteen participating shared print programs in the U.S. and Canada, the Partnership is well positioned to allow individual libraries to realize efficiencies by managing down local collections and reallocating investment in print locally while ensuring long-term preservation and

access. The organization is agile and efficient. The ad-hoc Steering Committee is excited to be replaced by an elected Executive Committee that will then select a part-time Program Coordinator to work with the appointed Operations Committee to continue the work of the Partnership. The original Working Groups are transitioning as well, with work continuing on the development of best practices, expansion of outreach and engagement initiatives, and development of a more formal research agenda focused not only identifying and minimizing risk to the print scholarly record but also on exploring more deeply the costs and value of shared print. Even in this digital age, print resources continue to be valued and used in teaching and scholarship. And, as we plan for the next global crisis, a robust and shared management of print collections will best ensure we can meet the challenges that lie ahead.

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