



What is Shared Print?

Long before the pandemic shifted much of how we conduct our lives to online venues, libraries were leading an online migration of content, tools, and services. Libraries carefully study the needs of their communities to ensure that people have easy access to the material they need, when they need it. And while not everything will ever be available online, more and more content is being made available via e-books and other digital subscriptions.

Still, libraries remain the keepers of knowledge stored in printed books and journals. As more content moves online, libraries are carefully weighing their options for their longstanding print collections. How many print copies are needed? Which libraries will guarantee to keep specific print materials, to allow others to decide about keeping their local copies? How do we ensure no one throws away the last copy of a book or journal by mistake?

The answer to these questions is in the growing world of Shared Print programs, also known as [collective collections](#). Shared Print programs are collaborations among libraries to distribute the responsibility for maintaining collections, allowing partner libraries to reserve valuable space for materials that aren't available electronically, or for print items that are in high demand. By working together, libraries can collect and maintain curated sets of print books and journals which are broadly useful and make them collectively available to readers.

The benefits of Shared Print have implications beyond just local library operations. Shared Print can help identify and protect books that are hard to find. This helps to ensure diverse, underrepresented, and otherwise rare books are available now and in the future. Shared Print programs also have an environmental impact: By working together to build new, combined collections – which are oftentimes stored in very dense, highly-efficient buildings -- libraries can reduce their environmental footprint while still ensuring the community has access to a broad and diverse array of content.

Shared Print: collective collections combine the resources of libraries, creating more content for users to explore!