Like a Snowball Gathering Speed: Development of ASERL's Print Journal Retention Program

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The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) has instituted a distributed print archive program to share the costs and effort of long-term retention of print journals. Beginning with a review of the history of the project, the authors address the voluntary nature of participation in the program, methodologies for identifying journals to be retained, as well as methodologies for tagging retained journals so that an accurate record of current decisions is maintained over the twenty-five year length of the commitment. Policies and procedures continue to evolve as participation increases and lessons are learned with each step.

KEYWORDS print repository, distributed print archive, print journal retention, ASERL, cooperative collection management, off-site storage

HISTORY

The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) was founded in April 1956 by the deans/directors of 32 research libraries in the Southeastern U.S. to provide a forum for sharing

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knowledge and best practices about emerging issues in the profession. Since that time, ASERL has been a leader in forging important partnerships and other activities to sustain research libraries. In the 1960s, ASERL was an important player in the establishment of faculty status for research librarians. In the 1970s, ASERL members founded SOLINET to serve the needs arising from the newly-created centralized cataloging services brokered by OCLC. In the 1990s, ASERL members helped create some of the first group purchasing/licensing activities, a hallmark of library cooperation. More recently, ASERL has created a wide variety of programs to meet member needs, including active professional development and networking activities, expanded resource sharing services, and cooperative collection management programming.

In September 2000, ASERL surveyed its members to determine the need for off-site storage. At the time, on average, ASERL members each had need to store 93,000 volumes immediately, and each expected to need room to store an average of 300,000 volumes by 2005. Discussions with non-ASERL colleagues concerning development of a regional, shared storage facility showed many other libraries needed additional storage space as well. However, at the time there were significant reservations from state-supported libraries concerning sending their materials out of state. Further, the idea of large-scale weeding and discarding met great resistance because of the potential impact on comparative statistics and rankings among libraries. It was during these discussions in 2001 that Paul Willis, then Dean of Libraries at University of Kentucky, suggested that a virtual storage concept might make more sense than building a shared regional facility. He believed that new technologies, linked catalogs, and improved delivery systems made such a system possible. ASERL provides a shared catalog and a delivery system for many of its member libraries, making this a possibility -- at least in theory.

In 2002, at an ARL/OCLC Institute workshop on library architecture, there was discussion that very few (if any) libraries will ever weed the items held in remote storage facilities – these items are a de facto "bank" of permanently stored materials. This led to many discussions about how a virtual storage collection could be created based on this premise, often championed by Paul Gherman, who was University Librarian at Vanderbilt University at the time. In 2003, the concept was also discussed and identified as an Action Item at the CRL conference on Preserving America's Print Resources (PAPR). That same year CLIR published *Developing Print Repositories: Models for Shared Preservation and Access,* a report on regional repositories as a cost effective solution for collections management. One goal was to "determine how, and to what degree, various consortia and university systems are using repositories to move beyond the immediate goal of providing cost-effective collection storage and delivery and to begin to cooperatively manage and preserve their research collections" (Reilly and DesRosiers 2003, 2). There has been international interest in this concept as well: In 2004 it was discussed at the IFLA-sponsored Second International Conference on Repository Libraries in Kuopio, Finland among attendees from 15 countries.

Much of this discussion focused on monographs, as there was concern at the time that the labor required to identify complete journal runs and page-level verification would be too onerous to undertake. In 2004 ASERL commissioned a study by OCLC to determine the level of overlap in monograph titles held at nine storage facilities owned by ASERL libraries. Of the 2.3 million volumes stored at these facilities, only 15 items were held at all nine sites. Given the premise that these collections would be permanent, the lack of widespread overlap in these collections

pointed to a rich source that could be used as a "bank" for use by ASERL libraries seeking to weed locally-held circulating collections.

In December 2004, Google Library/Book Search was announced and the notion of large-scale digitization of legacy print collections became much closer to reality. Additionally, the importance of volume counts in library rankings were evolving. Today, research libraries are more focused on special and unique materials rather than simple quantitative data. With the advent of Google Scholar and the emergence of e-readers and mobile computing in the latter part of the decade, library users began to expect electronic access to the overwhelming majority of materials.

As the decade progressed, interest in how to deal with legacy print collections continued to increase. In collections journals, authors looked at *Approaches to the Storage of Low Use and Last Copy Research Materials* (O'Connor and Jilovsky 2008), and put forward suggestions on *Developing Criteria for the Withdrawal of Print Content Available Online* (Bracke and Martin 2005). O'Connor and Jilovsky outline ASERL's concept of a "virtual storage collection to… assist with the identification of last copies and the wider availability of low-use materials" (2008, 123), but the concept had yet to come to fruition.

The literature at the time also began to reflect joint storage projects. Paul Genoni (2007) describes the efforts in Australia to reach a national solution. With three regional repositories in place, the national repository concept struggled toward implementation. "There are many reasons to believe that Australia research libraries and communities would benefit substantially

from a national print repository. It will only be possible, however, with the right structure for leadership, coordination and advocacy" (Genoni 2007, 251). The title of O'Connor and Smith's 2008 article put Ohio's repository needs in perspective – *Ohio Regional Depositories: Moving from Warehousing Separate Collections to Servicing Shared Collections* (2008), and finally in 2009, DiBiase and Watson reported on the Orbis Cascade Alliance distributed print repository. "If a consortium could identify "archival" copies of journal runs that would be kept at member libraries (and eventually at a shared storage facility) in perpetuity, then many libraries could exercise discretion to safely withdraw duplicate print runs to make room for new materials" (22).

The Ithaka report, *What to Withdraw: Print Collections Management in the Wake of Digitization,* (Schonfeld and Housewright 2009) pointed to a new methodology that calculated real-world risks for reducing the number of duplicative print collections. ASERL members quickly realized the far-reaching potential of the Ithaka report and officially endorsed it at their Fall 2009 Membership Meeting. This was a move to emphasize ASERL's support for transitioning from a reliance on print to an environment of electronic delivery for most users, with the ability to access original print materials when needed. As these changes were occurring, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided funding for the WEST Project in 2009, launching a new model for sharing legacy print resources across a broad geographic area.

It was becoming clear that most library users increasingly expected electronic access to materials – both newly published, born-digital materials and digitized versions of older, printed materials. Many librarians were also becoming more comfortable with "Just In Time" models of collection management -- relying on shared access to rare materials just in time to meet a user's need --

rather than a "Just In Case" model that requires creating vast local collections just in case a user might someday want them.

In April 2009, ASERL members convened a special session in Williamsburg, Virginia to revisit the much-discussed notion of a shared virtual storage collection. It was at this meeting that the new emphasis on rare and unique items in library collections raised issues about relying on a few copies of a specific monograph – would the editions be the same? Might there be unique qualities such as marginalia that would make weeding monographs an unwise decision? These questions remain largely unanswered. Moreover, as library space pressures continue to mount, the opportunities for sharing bound journal collections were increasingly apparent: many journal back files are becoming available online, greatly reducing the need for print access. And in general, journals don't have the issues that can arise with monographs, such as varying imprints and editions that might make one copy more interesting or unique than others. Plus, there was significant space to be gained – for most longstanding journals, an agreement to retain a single journal title for use by others could free up considerable shelf space across the consortium, whereas an agreement to retain a monograph had much less potential for space savings. Thus, an important decision was made: ASERL would re-focus its shared virtual collection on retaining print journals rather than monographs.

OTHER REGIONAL MODELS

The ASERL Board of Directors charged the Shared Storage Study Group (SSSG) to examine the policies created by other research libraries and consortia and recommend a course of action for ASERL members to collaborate on sharing legacy print journal collections. Fortunately, the

Center for Research Libraries (CRL) has played a national leadership role in facilitating communication among regional consortia that are either actively running or currently considering shared print archives. SSSG investigated current status/best practices of the following models:

WEST

- Western Regional Storage Trust, run by California Digital Library
- Funded by three-year Mellon grant
- Phase One goal of 150,000 volumes from 8,000 journals
- 25 year commitment with review every 5 years
- Access through existing interlibrary loan channels

Orbis/Cascade

- Regional distributed print repository with Memorandum of Understanding
- JSTOR and American Chemical Society titles in print archive
- Group membership in WEST

United Kingdom Research Reserve

- Partnership between British Library and Higher Education
- At least 3 copies of low use journals maintained within UK
- Access through British Library Document Supply Service

FORMING A POLICY PROPOSAL

SSSG members were determined to create a proposal that would be as simple as possible and reduce barriers to participation. In any collaborative process, inevitable barriers arise that may challenge, slow down, or even kill a project, and this project was no exception. As SSSG members (a mix of deans/directors and collections/technical services librarians) deliberated, several issues arose.

Free Riders

Several institutions worried that some libraries would take advantage of collections held by others and weed their own lesser-used volumes but not offer any titles to the group. This was eventually resolved through acceptance of this as a possibility, but with a determination that it would not be allowed to stop progress.

Cost Allocation

Some wondered if those who were storing large amounts of material should be compensated by those who were storing less or otherwise benefiting from the retention commitments. It was decided that participating libraries were making retention decisions largely based on their own patron needs, so it was deemed fair that each library should be responsible for their own storage costs. In the end, participants agreed that the costs and complexities of any compensation model were greater than any likely returns.

Access

Consideration was given as to whether participants in the program should be given priority for access to collections held by other participants. It was decided that it would not be worth disrupting existing interlibrary loan/document delivery networks that are working well. This was the same conclusion reached by the WEST group.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The proposed agreement was less than two pages written in simple terms – a considerable achievement in a world of long-winded policies, licensing terms, and other agreements. The final agreement (Appendix A) was modified only slightly to incorporate changes that allowed

greater flexibility in how retained items could be stored under the agreement. A number of other decisions needed to be made to make the project a reality and tended to fall on the side of inclusion and flexibility in order to maximize participation. Governance was given over to a Steering Committee with representatives from each participating library. The duration of the Agreement (and thus the institutional commitment) was set for 25 years, similar to WEST, but providing an opt-out clause with 24 months' notice and an overall program review in 2020 and 2030. Verification was mandated at the volume level, rather than page level. Flexibility in housing arrangements was built in, with transparent risk factors identified for remote storage facilities, locked/secured stacks, and open stacks with corresponding access risk factors for non-circulating, building use only and circulating statuses. One of the most political decisions was whose signature was needed on the agreement. Some deans/directors felt comfortable signing the long term agreement. Other institutions had guidelines that required a chancellor's or president's signature. In the end, who signed the agreement was left to local discretion. The agreement was ratified by unanimous vote at ASERL's Spring 2011 Membership Meeting in Nashville, Tennessee.

TITLE INCLUSION STRATEGY

With the Agreement and a Steering Committee in place, the next step was for each library to nominate titles for inclusion. Many potential models were considered. Even though the Ithaka report (Schonfeld and Housewright 2009) specifically advised that additional local print copies of JSTOR titles were not needed, some libraries felt that it would be prudent to have a JSTOR archive in the Southeast. Others favored a publisher-based strategy for a systematic approach. Others felt that "low-hanging fruit" at each institution was as much as the group could hope for.

At this point, ASERL deans/directors were growing anxious and wanted to see significant progress. Because of the existence of other cooperative projects and the long-standing history of trust among ASERL members, the predominant feeling was that even with a certain amount of risk and ambiguity, the project needed to move forward. But who would be first? The logjam was broken when the members of the Triangle Research Library Network (TRLN, consisting of the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Duke University, North Carolina State University, and North Carolina Central University) committed all the journal titles from their own local Cooperative Print Retention program to the larger ASERL initiative. The number of committed titles grew rapidly from 300 to 1,000 to 2,000. Connections were also made between ASERL and the National Library of Medicine to coordinate with NLM's regional efforts to retain the top 250 core journal titles in the health sciences.

In the end, the ASERL agreement to retain legacy print journal collections allows participating libraries to select titles they wish to retain based on local needs and interests. As representatives from participating institutions began to discuss practical logistics for identifying, compiling and collating titles to be held for the distributed print archive, it became clear that internal methodologies for decision-making on title identification would be as distributed as the archive, and much discussion would be needed to come to agreement on logistics for compiling and collating the lists of titles.

Each ASERL member institution has their own unique set of circumstances driving their participation in the archive: the closing of a branch, the opportunity to move print volumes to a

new storage facility, a storage facility that is filling up too quickly, the need to replace stacks with user seating, etc. Since the needs are different, it follows that the decision-making processes will be different.

The most common factor in identifying titles for the archive is working with titles that are currently under review for another reason. Institutions wish to handle materials once, making decisions on a title's disposition and moving on to the next project. An institution will typically bring a set of titles under consideration, most often either those housed in a physical location that is being reconsidered, or those compiled electronically in a database, to collection development librarians or subject liaisons for decisions on whether individual titles should be kept or discarded; and if kept, whether they should be tagged for inclusion in the distributed print archive. Factors considered in deciding if a title should be included in the print archive include the completeness of a title run, the uniqueness of a title, inclusion of a title in an electronic journal package to which the library subscribes, and the advice of the relevant subject librarian as to continued usage of the title by the students and faculty of the institution. Complete or nearly complete title runs are favored for inclusion in the archive as they decrease the need for filling gaps in the run from other institutions' collections. Unique titles, or those journals not held by a large number of libraries, increase the diversity and depth of the archive, actually increasing their effectiveness through a wider distribution. Subject librarians also help identify titles that are core to the teaching or research needs of the students and faculty of the institution and are most likely to be used in print.

COLLECTION AND COLLATION OF TITLES

As participating institutions began to identify titles, the list of logistical questions grew. How will the titles be initially collected? How will the titles be collated? If spreadsheets are used for collection, are they sufficient for collation, or does a database need to be built? Is there an open source database that would serve for collation? What information needs to be included? Must everyone include the same information or can/should there be optional fields? Will participating institutions work directly in the collated title list, or will ASERL staff collate based on institutional spreadsheets? Can the work be as distributed as the archive? How will duplication be handled? Must titles identified be retained closed stacks or a storage facility? May volumes held in open stacks be included in the archive? The list of questions seemed daunting at times. While some answers are known, others are still evolving.

Through trial and error and a series of conference calls with the program's Steering Committee, procedures began to develop. A spreadsheet with requested (not yet required) fields was developed and institutions began to identify and nominate titles for inclusion in the archive. Populated spreadsheets are sent to ASERL and collated into the archive master title list, which currently exists as a spreadsheet. Open source software is being considered for compilation of a database, but no decision on particular software has been made at the writing of this article. With thousands of titles already listed and many more to come, the spreadsheet will become increasingly difficult to maintain and manipulate. As a result, participants have agreed that a database is the preferred long term method for storage of and access to the title list. Librarians and staff at participating institutions work to provide accurate information in a standard format to facilitate the work of ASERL staff in collating the titles.

The Steering Committee agreed that duplication of titles is acceptable within the archive. When identifying titles to be added to the distributed print archive, participants can review the title list to see if a title is already included. However, they may choose to include a title already listed without needing to justify their decision. Reasons for doing so may include a more complete run, the need to have a print copy close at hand, doubt as to whether the other institution will be able to maintain the title, or the level of security identified for the title at another institution. Decisions on inclusion are strictly up to the participating institution. This decision may come up for discussion again as the archive evolves, but since the archive is in a distributed model, duplication becomes much less of an issue than it would in a physical archive.

When identifying titles for retention in the distributed print archive, participating institutions must identify for each title whether the physical volumes are held in high density remote storage, locked/secured stacks or open stacks. Any of the three is permissible, but the location must be disclosed since the level of security of the materials will affect decisions made by other participating institutions. Inclusion of materials in open stacks is atypical for an archive, but this option allows institutions to participate who do not have access to a secure storage facility or closed stacks. Participants must also identify the current circulation status of the volumes to indicate levels of potential risk. Identified categories are Circulating, Non-Circulating, and Building Use Only.

THE RECORD

Conversations continue on what additional information needs to be included in the record for each title, with enough decisions made to proceed. Each record includes: institution name,

OCLC symbol, title, print ISSN, OCLC number, contributions, gaps, total volumes, retention note, type of inventory (physical or bibliographic), circulation status, archival status, and risk level. A few other fields were included initially -- 'subject' and 'average cubic feet' -- but were later removed by the Steering Committee. A variety of small, but important decisions needed to be made for many of the included fields. For example, librarians are quite adept at remembering to leave off initial articles in journal titles, but not as likely to remember to do this for foreign language titles. The contributions are being left open-ended, since a closing date for the archive has not been chosen, but this may change in the future. Participating institutions will include a retention note in a 583 field in their home library catalogs to indicate their compliance in the record, but most institutions have chosen to postpone implementation until the metadata standard being developed by CRL and OCLC is available for their use.

To expedite the opportunity to fill the gaps in the future, the Steering Committee decided, after much discussion, to include an explicit listing of gaps for each title, rather than leaving them to be figured out from the contributions field. The University of Florida has begun to develop a disposition database to be used for filling gaps, building on a similar tool they developed to facilitate the disposition of federal documents (another collection management program offered by ASERL.) Questions remain as to whether volumes identified to fill gaps will remain at the home library or will be transferred to the library that is retaining the majority of the volumes for the title.

ASSESSMENT

The plan for assessing the utility and value of this project continues to evolve. ASERL is a small organization with limited staff resources, so a full-scale, statistically-valid evaluation is not realistic. Instead, ASERL expects to rely on anecdotal and simple survey information from members regarding the usefulness of the program. For example, at least one ASERL library is already considering withdrawing some locally-held print journal titles based on items that will be retained by another library under this agreement. ASERL will periodically track this type of information, and perform simple calculation using the number of volumes retained to estimate potential space savings for libraries.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

ASERL's 2010 - 2013 Strategic Plan focuses heavily on cooperative programming such as the Print Journal Retention Program. ASERL members enjoy a high level of trust that enables creative partnerships to be built, fostering new services even during this time of significant technological and financial change. The organization will continue to develop activities to help member libraries find their desired level of redundancy for goods and services. For example, the Print Journal Retention Program comports well with ASERL's Cooperative Federal Depository Program, which seeks to improve the corpus of federal documents held by libraries across the region. Similarly, many ASERL members are Land Grant institutions, and share a mission to support the development of agriculture within their states. These libraries are developing ways to collaborate on sharing print journals and government documents related to agriculture. ASERL members are also considering ways to share technology services -- many of which have a high level of redundancy across ASERL's membership -- and, on the other end of the spectrum, to examine options for sharing the costs and workload for infrequently-used services,

such as non-English cataloging. ASERL will also continue to seek new partners -- either through adding libraries as new members, or via strategic partnership agreements with other library consortia -- to help ensure that research libraries remain vital, important centers to support research, teaching and learning on their campuses and within the communities they serve.

APPENDIX A

ASERL'S COOPERATIVE JOURNAL RETENTION POLICY

ASERL Collaborative Journal Retention Program Agreement -- Approved April 2011

Introduction

ASERL libraries seek new options for sharing the costs and effort of long-term retention of print journals. The policies contained in this document have been reviewed and approved by the ASERL Board of Directors and all participating ASERL libraries. The following agreement provides assurance that the journals designated under this agreement will be retained and available for research purposes as long as the need reasonably exists, thereby allowing participating ASERL libraries to consider withdrawing duplicates of said items from their campus collections, and to rely with confidence on access to the retained copies.

1. Governance

1.1. The program will be governed by a Steering Committee consisting of one representative of each participating library and a liaison from the ASERL Board of Directors. Each participating library director will designate the Steering Committee member. The ASERL Executive Director shall be an ex officio member of the committee and shall be non-voting except to decide any tie votes.

2. Duration of Agreement, Discontinuance of Participation

2.1. This agreement shall be in effect through December 31, 2035, upon which time this agreement may be renewed as desired by participating libraries. This agreement will be reviewed in 2020 and 2030 to ensure it continues to provide value to participants.

2.2. Any modification, amendments or other changes to this agreement must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the Steering Committee and a review of the ASERL Board.

2.3. A participating library may opt to discontinue their participation in this agreement at any time without penalty, but must provide written notice to the Steering Committee a minimum of 24 months prior to withdrawing from the agreement.

3. Selection and Identification of Retained Materials

3.1. This agreement is designed primarily for storing low use print journals.

3.2. Materials will be selected for retention based on the completeness of the journal set and their quality/condition.

3.3. Participating libraries shall note the retention status of designated items within their local catalogs and/or other collection management systems, as deemed appropriate by the Steering Committee.

3.4. ASERL shall maintain a free and publicly accessible list describing the journals retained under this agreement, as deemed appropriate by the Steering Committee.

3.5. The participating library shall maintain all of the designated journals in their original, artifactual form whenever possible. If necessary because of damage to or loss of the original of any of the materials, a hard copy facsimile may be used to fill in gaps.

4. Retention Facilities

4.1. Items that are to be retained under this agreement will be housed in one of the following types of facilities:

High Density Remote Storage Facility	Locked / Secured Stacks	Open Stacks
An environmentally controlled, secured facility that is not open for public browsing	On-site access that is not open for public browsing	Open for public browsing

 5.   Ownership and Maintenance of Retained Materials

5.1. The ownership of materials designated for retention under this agreement shall remain the property of the library that originally purchased the item(s). The library that agrees to retain a set of journals will verify the degree of completeness of the set to the volume level.

5.2. Upon agreeing to retain a set of journals, the retaining library will visually inspect each volume to ensure its serviceable condition. Serviceable condition will be defined as physically usable. Materials infested by mold or otherwise in a state of obvious deterioration will not be accepted for retention.

5.3. Should a participating library be unwilling or unable to retain a set of journals that were designated as part of this agreement, that library must provide 12 months written notice to ASERL and offer to transfer ownership of said journals to another ASERL library for retention under this agreement.

6.   Operational Costs

6.1. All costs and workload for staffing and maintaining the facilities and retained materials will be borne by the library that undertakes the agreement.

7.   Duplicate Materials

7.1. Any ASERL library may at its discretion retain duplicates of items retained under this agreement by other members of ASERL. No ASERL library will be required to discard any materials.

8.   Circulation

8.1. Access to the contents of retained journals will be through electronic or paper duplication, or on-site access to specified items at the contributing library's discretion.

8.2. The current circulation status of contributed titles must be accurately reported to indicate levels of risk. Levels of potential risk are defined in the table below:

	High Density Remote Storage Facility	Locked / Secured Stacks	Open Stacks
Non-Circulating	Lowest Risk	Low Risk	Moderate Risk
Building Use Only	Low Risk	Low - Moderate Risk	Moderate - High Risk
Circulating	Moderate Risk	Moderate - High Risk	Highest Risk

9.   Lost or Damaged Materials

9.1. In the event of loss, damage or deterioration, the participating library shall use reasonable efforts to promptly obtain replacement copies of any of the retained items. Original artifactual copies are always preferred, but facsimiles are acceptable when necessary.

APPENDIX B

ASERL LIBRARIES PARTICIPATING IN THE COLLABORATIVE JOURNAL

RETENTION PROGRAM AGREEMENT (AS OF JANUARY 2012)

Auburn University

Clemson University

Duke University

East Carolina University

Georgia Institute of Technology

Louisiana State University

Mississippi State University

Tulane University

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

University of Alabama

University of Florida

University of Kentucky

University of Louisville

University of Memphis

University of Mississippi

University of Tennessee

University of Virginia

Vanderbilt University

Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Tech

Wake Forest University

College of William & Mary

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