

## Research Notes

### Library Cooperation: A Serials Model Based on Philosophical Principles

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Library cooperation has been an often-stated goal in library annual reports, at conventions and workshops involving librarians, and particularly in recent library literature. Noted examples of success are evident across the country;<sup>1</sup> however, few library scholars, if any, have examined the philosophical principles of cooperation as the basis for a successful foundation for interinstitutional library cooperation.

Bowling Green State University (BG) and the University of Toledo (UT) libraries utilized an applied philosophy model in developing their cooperative protocols. A philosophy intern was employed by both institutions to facilitate the process. In the summer of 1981, the two library staffs discussed the possibility of beginning greater cooperation in the area of serials. The project was implemented during January of 1982, and shortly thereafter the intern was brought into the project to be the major partner in formulating, presenting, and evaluating a serials survey that was distributed to faculty members of the English, biology, and economics departments of Toledo and Bowling Green.

The experience gained by applying philosophical principles to library cooperation has been instructive and beneficial to the success of BG-UT cooperative ventures. Indeed, many of the principles are general

enough to be applied not only to other cooperative situations in a library setting, but to almost any cooperative venture.

#### PHILOSOPHICAL VIEWS CONCERNING COOPERATION

Examining philosophical perspectives of cooperation and coordination and how such philosophical principles and models can be applicable and transferrable to library cooperation is desirable in achieving success in a cooperative venture. Once library staffs are willing to cooperate with each other, and each library has the technology to support cooperation, the next logical step is to analyze and develop procedures and principles that will be effective in making cooperation an actuality.

To cooperate means to work together for a common objective or to unite in producing a desired effect. This definition implies that cooperation involves more than one agent, that the agents involved have coordinated their actions, and the agents have a shared goal. Further, a coordination of beliefs usually needs to have occurred in order for cooperation to occur.

For Donald Regan, coordination "suggests a primary focus on the parties' ultimate behavior,"<sup>2</sup> whereas we have stated cooperation means to work together toward a common goal. "Working to-

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gether" connotes behavior or actions that are harmonious. Thus, agents involved in a cooperative venture have successfully transformed individual action into collective action. Regan suggests that cooperation involves not only coordinated actions, but coordinated beliefs and attitudes as well. For him, coordinated actions are usually the result of coordinated beliefs and attitudes.

Actions can be seen as putting into practice certain beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, if we wish to modify actions we must modify the beliefs and attitudes responsible for such actions. If we desire to coordinate actions we must attempt to coordinate the beliefs and attitudes behind such actions.

When speaking of the objectives of cooperation, a distinction needs to be made between cooperation as an activity and the objectives or goals of cooperation. Cooperation is an activity that is a means to an end. Edna Ullmann-Margalit states, "The achievement of coordination is itself but a means to a further end, that of attaining a cooperative goal."<sup>3</sup> The activity and the objectives of the activity must be distinguished, for without making such a distinction, false inferences may result. Some may assume that to be cooperating is contingent upon reaching selected objectives, or that agents cannot be said to be cooperating until those objectives have been reached.

In addition to coordinating beliefs, attitudes, and actions, the selection of cooperative objectives and goals itself is crucial in determining (a) whether cooperation is to occur and (b) whether the cooperative goal will be reached. There are cases in which the act of cooperation is an end in itself. Yet such situations seem to be the exception rather than the norm. In many situations, cooperation can be a burdensome activity. Even in many situations where the act of cooperation brings enjoyment, it is usually the case that such enjoyment is engendered from the agents' expectations of obtaining the benefits derived from cooperating. Cooperation will occur if the cooperative objectives are worthwhile and will compensate for the sacrifices involved in cooperating.

Agents cannot always know a priori whether cooperative objectives can be definitely reached or not. Agents must rely on probabilities rather than certainties. If a desirable objective has a good probability of being obtained, then it is reasonable to pursue such an objective. Yet, selecting desirable and obtainable objectives does not guarantee that such objectives will be reached.

David Lewis states, "A cooperative goal will be reached if the nature of the situation is clear enough."<sup>4</sup> Lewis is saying that if the cooperative situation is correctly understood, then appropriate (i.e., desirable and obtainable) goals and objectives will usually be selected. Thus, in order for a cooperative objective to be reached, a coordination of beliefs and actions is not sufficient; rather, the coordinated beliefs, attitudes, and actions must be appropriate for the cooperative situation.

In summary, reaching a cooperative objective involves (1) coordination of beliefs, attitudes and actions; (2) a correct understanding of the cooperative situation; (3) selection of objectives that are desirable and obtainable; and (4) development and implementation of an appropriate method, procedure, or course of action that is instrumental toward reaching the selected cooperative objective. Meeting all of the above conditions leads to a high probability of successful cooperation.

Communication is an effective activity in coordinating beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Agents can communicate with each other about the cooperative situation and jointly select appropriate objectives and methods for obtaining such objectives. An effective cooperative procedure is one in which communication is both full and honest. By "full," we mean that communication between agents is operative throughout the cooperative enterprise. Honest communication engenders cooperation. When agents realize they are being honestly informed, they will tend to trust and acquire confidence in the others in the cooperative project.

The agents involved in a cooperative project must reach an agreement as to what form the cooperative project is to take and what objectives should be pur-

sued. Without such an agreement, cooperation will not occur. Whether all of the agents take part in formulating the procedures and objectives in a cooperative project, or just a few, the agents involved must agree to cooperate. If agents believe that a cooperative project is worthwhile then they will jointly attempt to coordinate their preferences, for "conflicting preferences are overwhelmed by our desire to concert our choices. Rational agents will realize that it is to their interest to cooperate for without such activity a cooperative goal will not be reached."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, coordinating preferences can often be accomplished through enhancement. By enhancement we mean the reshaping of the pre-cooperative situation in such a way that a more desirable outcome becomes possible. Defining what kind of cooperation is to occur can determine (a) if agents will cooperate and (b) the level of enthusiasm the agents will have toward the cooperative project. The way the cooperative project is presented can determine whether the potential cooperators will be willing to cooperate with each other.

In summary, it seems that engendering cooperation is a nearly impossible task given all the above requirements. Yet, we contend that an awareness of such principles or necessary conditions increases the likelihood of being successful in a cooperative project.

### BG-UT SERIALS PROJECT

During the summer of 1981, members of the library advisory committees from BG and UT met to discuss several areas of possible cooperation between the institutions. From this meeting the formulation of two objectives transpired: (1) to initiate a van service that would transport library materials and individuals between campuses, and (2) to concentrate on serials development.

In the fall of 1981, the van service was successfully implemented and continues today. In May of 1982, the library advisory committees met again to discuss the feasibility of joint sharing, acquisition, and cancellation of serials. The major reasons for concentrating on serials were the large

share of the acquisitions budget devoted to serials and that each library was able to hold only a relatively small number of serials titles available for purchase. Through cooperation both libraries could make available locally more titles to their clientele as well as to other citizens in the region. Also, library cooperation had been encouraged by the Ohio Board of Regents in their *Master Plan of Higher Education*, 1982.

Several conditions led to the success of cooperation between BG and UT. First, the staffs of both libraries were willing to cooperate. This favorable consensus is far from trivial when one considers the number of articles in the literature that discuss the difficulty of getting library staffs to cooperate with each other.

Second, the two libraries are in relatively close proximity with each other (twenty miles). Third, a van service had been developed as a way of transporting the serials between the two institutions in a timely manner. The van operates between each campus twice daily (Monday through Friday). Fourth, the OCLC system allows each institution to know what the other's holdings are.

Fifth, the project involved not only library personnel at both universities, but faculty members from selected academic departments. Three departments were selected to participate in the experimental project: English, biology, and economics. The rationale behind selecting these departments was that the English department would represent the humanities and a doctoral-degree-granting department, biology would represent the natural sciences as well as a doctoral department, and economics would represent the social sciences and a master-degree-granting department.

Sixth, the serials were evaluated interinstitutionally rather than intrainstitutionally. Joint lists of the serials held at both institutions were compiled. For example, a joint list was formulated for all of the "English department related" serials held at both universities. The faculty members in both university English departments were given the opportunity to evaluate the serials located on their cam-

pus, and the serials held on the other campus as well.

### PROCEDURES FOR SERIAL COOPERATION

Recognizing that an effective method or procedure for a cooperative project will be one that is both informative and instructive, the following procedure was implemented for the serials project. The selected faculty members from the English, biology, and economics departments were given the opportunity to cooperate by evaluating the serials pertaining to their fields of study. The project began with the English department, the rationale being that the procedure would run more effectively if just one department was surveyed at a time. Also, lessons could be learned from the successes and failures with the English department and implemented with the other departments. Additionally, if the English project was successful, this success would then serve as a testimony to the other departments that such a cooperative serials project was worthwhile.

Each serial was to be evaluated according to the following scale of recommendations:

- A = the faculty member wanted the serial to remain on the campus at all times;
- B = the serial may be transferrable (i.e., tradable) on the condition that it be available within a twenty-four hour period;
- C = the serial may be transferrable on the condition that it be available through interlibrary loan (i.e., longer than a twenty-four hour period);
- D = the faculty member believed that the serial had little or no research value;\* and
- E = the faculty member had little or no basis for evaluating the serial (i.e., abstaining from evaluating the serial).

The faculty response sheets were com-

puted and tabulated, and a sample title printout looked as follows:

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Serial Number</i>	A	B	C	D	E
BG	117	13	13	9	0	59
UT	117	8	8	8	0	66

Numerous "well-founded" inferences could then be derived from the data. For serial 117, many of the faculty members from the English department at Bowling Green refrained from evaluating the serial (59 percent in the E category), while 13 percent felt that the serial should be located on the campus at all times. Many of the English faculty at Toledo felt that they had no basis for evaluating the serial (66 percent), while 8 percent felt that the serial should be on their campus at all times. Though it appeared that the serial was not used by most of the English faculty, this was not to say that the serial had little or no value. Eight percent at one institution and 13 percent at the other believed the serial to be nontradable. Compare this serial evaluation to a serial numbered 125:

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Serial Number</i>	A	B	C	D	E
BG	125	0	9	0	4	81
UT	125	0	0	8	0	83

For serial 125, there appears to be no interest in holding the serial on either of the campuses at all times (i.e., A = 0 at both institutions). At Bowling Green, only 9 percent felt that if the serial were shared, it should be made available within twenty-four hours. Eighty-one percent refrained from evaluating the serial, meaning that the faculty members either never heard of the serial or never used the serial, or perhaps used the serial only a few times. Regardless, the serial was not highly valued for the English faculty at Bowling Green. The results were similar for the English faculty at Toledo.

General inferences can be drawn from such results. The serials with no percentages of responses under the A column meant that the serials were possible candi-

\*The D response category has subsequently been omitted from the survey because of low responses based on the assumption that faculty members chose not to say a title had no research value, but instead chose to refrain from evaluating the serial (E category).

dates for sharing. If the total printout revealed that high percentages appeared under the A column, then the success of the cooperative project would probably be in jeopardy, for it would seem to indicate that faculty members were unwilling to cooperate by way of sharing serials. Fortunately this was not the case.

The rationale for adding the B and C columns was that if there appeared to be no interest in holding a particular serial on either of the campuses at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$ ), the question arose of how the serial was to be shared. How a serial was to be shared depended upon the B (twenty four-hour period) and C (interlibrary loan) responses given by the faculty members. For example, if 0 percent chose A and 0 percent chose the B category, then this would seem to indicate that the responding faculty members felt that the serial could be shared and be made available through interlibrary loan.

The benefit in such a serials survey is that the value of a serial can be ascertained through the responses of the teaching faculty members evaluating the serials. Frequency of use is one indicator of the value of a serial, but by itself it seems to be insufficient as a criterion of judgment. A low frequency of usage does not guarantee that a particular serial is not in demand. Librarians asking teaching faculty members to help evaluate serials is an effective method for ascertaining the value of a serial.

#### PROPOSALS BASED UPON THE COMPUTER ANALYSIS

After the results of the serial survey were evaluated, further categories were formulated in order to classify and propose a future status for each of the serials. The categories were as follows: first, there was a "wrong institution" category. These were serials that were held at one university in which the faculty members of the English department at that university expressed no desire to have that serial located on their campus at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$  at the institution holding the serial). In addition, the faculty members of the English department at the other university where the serial was not held, ex-

pressed interest in having the serial located on their campus at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$ ). Fifteen of the English serial titles fell under this "wrong institution" category.

The second category concerned serials in which there was no interest in holding the serial on either of the campuses at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$  at both institutions). Nine English serials fell under this classification.

The third category concerned serials that were held at both universities, but only one university expressed a desire to have the serial held on their campus at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$  at one institution, and  $A > 0$  at the other institution). Nine of the English serials fell under this third category.

The first proposal, based upon the survey results, was as follows: Serials for which a change of status was considered were the serials in which A was not greater than zero at either institution ( $A = 0$ ). In other words, if any faculty member desired to have the serial located on his/her campus at all times, then that serial was not considered shareable. When a serial did not receive any A evaluations, and it fell under a B or C classification, then that serial was considered negotiable and a change of status was proposed. How the serial was to be traded depended upon the B and C responses.

The proposal stated that if any faculty member chose B, and none chose A, then the physical availability of the serial within a twenty-four hour period was proposed. If no faculty member chose B as well as A, then it was proposed that the serial be available through interlibrary loan. If a particular serial was held at one institution and the faculty members of the English department at that institution expressed no desire to have the serial located on their campus at all times (i.e.,  $A = 0$ ), and if the other institution, not holding the serial, expressed the desire to have the serial located on their campus ( $A > 0$ ), the proposal was then for the transfer of the serial (both back issues and subscriptions) to the institution that expressed the desire to hold the serial. If such a transfer occurred, then the serial could be available at the institution that transferred the serial

within a twenty-four-hour period or through interlibrary loan, depending upon the B and C responses.

The English serials considered for cancellation were the ones in which (1)  $A = 0$  at both institutions, and (2)  $B = 0$  at both institutions. Such a serial, if cancelled, could then be made available to both institutions through interlibrary loan from a third institution. If one faculty member chose B at only one institution (i.e.,  $B > 0$ ), then the proposal was to keep the serial on the campus expressing a need and then to make the serial available to the other institution through interlibrary loan.

Implementation of the above proposals would redirect library funds, which could result in actualizing the goal of making more serials available to library users. It should be noted that the above proposals were suggestions, not decrees. Whether such proposals would be accepted depended upon the consent of the faculty members involved in the project, as well as the librarians involved in the serials project.

The attractive features of the BG-UT serials project were as follows: First, the survey contained clear directions on how to evaluate the serials. What the A to E categories meant was clearly and explicitly stated in the directions. Also, the E category gave the faculty members the option of refraining from evaluating a serial if they felt unqualified to do so.

Second, the consequences of actions were clearly defined. The agents involved in the project knew what making certain evaluations entailed. For example, in filling out the serial survey, if a faculty member chose B for a serial, that meant that the faculty member wished to have the serial shared and be made available within twenty-four hours. If that faculty member would be dissatisfied with such a status, then that faculty member could select a different classification for that serial. Third, the agents not only knew the consequences of evaluating serials, but they had a great deal of control over the consequences of their actions. In addition to evaluating serials, the faculty members were given the opportunity to evaluate the proposals that were based upon the

survey responses. The faculty members were, in fact, encouraged to offer suggestions, criticisms, and general feedback about the proposals and the project as a whole. Modifications were made upon such suggestions and because of this the project was flexible; such open communication and flexibility engenders trust and cooperation.

The fourth attractive feature of the procedure was that responding to the serials survey (i.e., cooperating) involved a minimal amount of sacrifice. Completing the survey took at most twenty minutes. This time period was minimal in comparison to, fifth, the benefits that could be derived from responding to the survey. For example, if by evaluating a serial, a faculty member gained access to a desired serial that previously was not available, then cooperating would have proven worthwhile. If a faculty member gained greater access to two or more serials, cooperation was that much more beneficial.

Sixth, the position of the agents in the cooperative project was attractive. The agents began and remained on an equal status with one another. Favoritism or an imbalance of power was absent, for each survey response carried equal weight and the faculty members remained anonymous. Thus, it was not a situation in which some agents acted out of a position of strength and others out of weakness. Also, it was not a situation of conflict between agents.

In addition to equality among agents, there was a relative equality of library institutions. Serial holdings at each library were fairly equivalent. Thus, like the cooperating agents, it was not a situation in which one library was acting from a position of strength and the other from a position of weakness. Both library institutions had something to offer the other and this was another factor that made serial cooperation attractive to all parties.

Another feature about the procedure was that it worked toward getting non-cooperating agents to cooperate. For example, suppose a faculty member initially refused to cooperate by not responding to the serial survey. Then, a proposal was presented in which a serial that the non-

cooperating agent wished to remain at his home institution was to be cancelled or shared. It would then be in the best interest of that agent to respond, and in this case, object, to such a proposal. In doing so, the noncooperating agent has begun cooperating. This, in addition to the procedure implemented being attractive, such a procedure engenders and continues cooperation.

### SUMMARY

The general goal of the cooperative project at BG and UT was to achieve an increased number of available serials to users at both campuses. This outcome was perceived as desirable by all of the agents involved in the project. Yet, the task consisted of formulating and initiating a procedure that would prove instrumental in achieving an increased number of available serials. This was where the philosophical principles of cooperation came into play. The procedure that was implemented for the serials project was based upon the philosophical principles of cooperation. The procedure was informative, instructive, attractive, fair, engendered cooperation, and proved instrumental in obtaining the cooperative goal.

As discussed, cooperation involves the coordination of beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Those responsible for initiating the cooperative project were cognizant of the philosophical principles discussed. Thus, the procedure was informative and appropriate for the cooperative situation, which worked toward coordinating beliefs. Also, the procedure was fair to the

agents involved, and the benefits from cooperating far outweighed the sacrifices involved in cooperating. Thus, the cooperators were enthusiastic about the project, which worked toward coordinating their attitudes. Finally, the procedure was easily understood and the agents knew what specifically was required of them in the cooperative project. Thus, actions were coordinated and appropriate.

As mentioned, cooperation involves more than coordinating beliefs, attitudes, and actions. The selected cooperative objectives must not only be desirable but obtainable. In short, such selected objectives must be appropriate. The general goal of an increased number of available serials was a goal that was both desirable and obtainable. Specifically, how many more serials would be available was dependent upon the judgment of the participating faculty members and the library staffs. Thus, the goal of cooperation was general enough to gain acceptance and the procedure implemented to obtain the goal proved effective.

The philosophical principles of cooperation discussed can be applied to cooperative ventures other than serials. Library cooperation could extend to a joint approval plan for the purchase of books and other library materials. In addition, libraries could exchange staff.

Library cooperation is a rational response to better serve library user needs and to foster sharing of serials. The model or procedure discussed will, it is hoped, be instructive for other library staffs desiring to initiate a cooperative program.

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### REFERENCES

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