Chapter 5
Collaborating to Explore Controlled Digital Lending as a Library Consortium

Michael Rodriguez
University of Connecticut, USA

Nathan Mealey
Wesleyan University, USA

Charlie Barlow
Boston Library Consortium, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020–2021, the Boston Library Consortium (BLC) explored the potential for controlled digital lending (CDL) across the library consortium. Over the course of a year, the BLC's CDL Working Group engaged with internal stakeholders and external partners to develop a strategic vision for consortial CDL that received strong support from the BLC's Board of Directors. The group arrived at this vision through intensive collaboration, working closely as a group and engaging with the BLC's various membership communities while concurrently engaging with vendors and external entities to cross-pollinate ideas and co-create strategies. The BLC's resultant vision for consortial CDL is also predicated on powerful intra-consortial and inter-consortial collaborations to create the technologies for making CDL possible. This chapter is a case study of how this vision emerged and demonstrates its applicability to other types of consortial collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

In fall 2020, the Boston Library Consortium's (BLC) Board of Directors convened a Working Group to develop a pathway for the consortium's members' libraries to implement controlled digital lending (CDL), a method by which libraries can digitally lend materials under controlled conditions. Specifically, the Board of Directors charged the Working Group with investigating the potential for a *consortial* imple-

mentation of CDL among interested BLC members' libraries. The BLC sought to answer the question of how consortia could scale CDL beyond intralibrary lending and course reserves. The Working Group spent 10 months of intensive efforts exploring the possibilities for CDL and developing a collaborative model to enable the BLC to pursue those possibilities. In August 2021, the Board of Directors resoundingly approved the Working Group's recommendations for consortial CDL. This outcome reflected the strength of the process with which the Working Group had engaged the BLC community as well as external partners.

This case study draws on the experiences of the Working Group's leaders to examine ways in which library consortia can collaborate to accomplish significant outcomes while maintaining inclusion and transparency throughout their work, and in a way that extends their impact to the broader library landscape. Through an exploration of how the Working Group engaged with the BLC community and a range of external partners, this case study demonstrates how to navigate consortial initiatives successfully and how to foster collaborations across multiple consortia. The Working Group overcame complexity and ambiguity to forge a path forward for consortial CDL. The sheer magnitude of the CDL undertaking and the decentralized and diverse nature of the BLC make this case study uniquely applicable to a wide range of libraries and consortia.

SETTING THE STAGE

Library Consortia

According to the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, a library consortium (plural: consortia) is

any local, statewide, regional, or interstate cooperative association of libraries that provides for the systematic and effective coordination of the resources of schools, public, academic, and special libraries and information centers, for improving services to the clientele of such libraries. (Universal Service Support, 1997)

The scale, structure, and scope of activities is wide-ranging. Consortium leaders are known to joke that, "if you know one library consortium, you know one library consortium," highlighting the variety inherent to this work. Consortia may operate internationally, nationally, regionally, statewide, or even within a single municipality. Some are informal collaborations, while others are well-established, independent, nonprofit organizations or state-sponsored institutions. A library consortium may consist of a single type of library or multiple types of libraries. Some consortia exist for a specific singular purpose, while others pursue multiple activities on behalf of their members. Most focus on one or more of the following activities (Arch & Gilman, 2017):

- Resource sharing activities, including interlibrary loan and delivery services.
- Systems and infrastructure activities, including integrated library systems, shared off-site storage, and digital repositories.
- Group purchasing activities, including cooperative purchasing of library materials and databases and licenses for electronic resources.
- Training and professional development activities to strengthen the expertise of library workers.

- Advocacy activities to influence commercial vendors and government entities on issues of significance to the library and information community.

Consortia and Controlled Digital Lending

CDL represents a unique opportunity for libraries—particularly for library consortia. CDL is a method that enables libraries to lend digitized materials from their physical collections under controlled conditions, similar to the loan rules that govern the loan of physical books. CDL improves collections access and research and learning outcomes, especially for patrons unable (or unlikely) to visit libraries in person. As little as 10% of academic books are available to academic libraries to buy as licensed e-books (Secker et al., 2018). This means that, without CDL, patrons cannot access most library books digitally.

Lawyers-cum-librarians David Hansen and Kyle Courtney (2018) presented a widely adopted legal framework for CDL in the *White Paper on Controlled Digital Lending of Library Books* and contributed to the *Position Statement on Controlled Digital Lending* (Bailey et al., 2018). More recently, a group of library professionals wrote a *Statement on Using Controlled Digital Lending as a Mechanism for Interlibrary Loan* (Barlow et al., 2021). These publications argue that, when libraries use CDL as a mechanism for lending, they are exercising their legal rights under fair use, the first-sale doctrine, and other copyright exceptions and limitations. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (2021) globalized this framework, arguing that "there is a strong socio-economic case for enabling CDL in libraries around the world, and that where a number of desirable and widely-recognised principles are respected, […] its legal basis will in turn support the wider public interest" (p. 5).

While CDL is a potentially transformative practice, it existed largely as a concept at the outset of the BLC's project. Even though dozens of libraries and consortia had endorsed the conclusions of the white paper by mid-2020, no scalable technological solutions had been created to facilitate CDL, and few libraries had communicated publicly about local implementations for course reserves. Two publicized examples of implementations included the California Institute of Technology's Digital Borrowing System (known as DIBS) (Caltech Library, 2021) and the University of California Berkeley Electronic and Accessible Reserves System (known as UC BEARS) (Haugan, 2021). No library had implemented CDL as a mechanism for interlibrary loan (ILL)—the use case in which consortia can most effectively scale libraries' CDL efforts. ILL is a foundational library practice, long established in U.S. copyright law, in which libraries lend materials to one another to fulfill patron requests. Patron access to libraries' physical collections had been significantly disrupted starting in early 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced emergency closures of libraries across the United States. The pandemic's disruptions spurred an urgent need for greater access to collections in digital format. In this way, the pandemic brought CDL to the forefront and was instrumental in catalyzing the BLC's convening of its CDL Working Group.

The Boston Library Consortium

The BLC consists of 20 public and private higher education institutions ranging from major research universities such as Northeastern University, midsized regional universities such as the University of Massachusetts Boston, liberal arts colleges such as Wellesley College, and more specialized institutions such as the State Library of Massachusetts. Most members are located in the State of Massachusetts, but members are spread throughout the northeastern United States.

Like any consortium, the BLC is a cooperative association that coordinates resources and activities on behalf of its members, amplifying their capabilities and impact through collective action (Arch & Gilman, 2017). The "bedrock principle upon which consortia operate is that libraries can accomplish more together than alone" (Grogg & Rosen, 2020, p. 181). In contrast to many other library consortia, the BLC has no shared library management system or central technology office and negotiates comparatively few consortial license agreements for electronic resources.

In lieu of shared infrastructure or licenses, the BLC has traditionally focused on resource sharing and collective collections, and has relied on a range of interoperable technologies to support its mission of improving access and sharing knowledge and resources between members' libraries. The BLC hosts the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust, a shared print program with 82 participating libraries from Maine to Florida as of 2021, including most BLC members. Consortial CDL was a natural next step toward the BLC's resource sharing and collective collection of the future. It reflected the BLC's mission and purpose and built on its longstanding strength and expertise in resource sharing. Article II of its bylaws affirm, "It is the purpose of the Boston Library Consortium to share human and information resources so that the collective strengths support and advance the research and learning of the members' constituents" (Boston Library Consortium, 2014). The BLC's reliance on a wide range of technical infrastructures and vendors underscored the need to develop interoperable and scalable solutions, which could meet the needs of nearly all libraries and consortia whether using shared systems or not. In short, the BLC had a historic leadership opportunity to shape the form CDL would take as it evolved into a standard library practice.

The Working Group

The BLC's CDL Working Group formed because of a casual suggestion from coauthor Michael Rodriguez, a librarian at a BLC member institution at the time. In the summer of 2020, Rodriguez suggested in an email to Charlie Barlow, the BLC's new executive director, that the Board of Directors consider endorsing the CDL Position Statement. Barlow, in turn, brought the question to the Board, who, rather than simply endorsing the statement and moving on, wanted to understand the issues more clearly and ascertain whether opportunities existed to explore CDL more meaningfully.

The Working Group launched in October 2020 and included 14 library staff representing a diverse array of BLC members' libraries, in addition to the executive director, Charlie Barlow. Two member library staff, Nathan Mealey and Michael Rodriguez, volunteered to cochair the group. Mealey and Rodriguez respectively represented a private liberal arts institution (Wesleyan University) and a large public research university (the University of Connecticut) and different levels of library leadership (associate university librarian) and staff (collections strategist).

The Working Group's membership similarly reflected the BLC's institutional diversity. Members represented 11 of the BLC's 20 libraries, including all the library types represented in the consortium. Members ranged from library directors to middle managers to frontline staff. BLC's Board of Directors' members could nominate themselves and staff from their institutions to serve on the Working Group. Each institution could have a maximum of two representatives, ensuring that no institution or group of institutions could dominate the conversation. The Board and executive director also considered the skills and experiences that each prospective member could bring to the Working Group, leading to a broad cross-section of staff who had expertise in digitization, technology, resource sharing, collection development, copyright, and strategic planning. The group's inclusive makeup drew on the full breadth of the consortium's expertise.

While the initial intent was to assemble a group of no more than 10 members including at least two library deans, two associate university librarians, and two staff, the high-profile topic of CDL drew strong interest at all levels of the consortium. The Board and executive director balanced the high level of interest and desire for inclusive representation with optimal group size and selected 14 library staff representing 11 of the BLC's 20 libraries, including all the library types represented in the consortium. While the size of the group made collaboration more complicated, the high level of enthusiasm among members sustained momentum, while smaller subgroups were established and leveraged to advance specific aspects of the project.

From the outset, the Working Group sought to take advantage of the moment to move both the consortium and the library world forward together. To succeed, the Working Group first had to engage broadly across the consortium to understand and account for the potential impacts of CDL on members' libraries and staff. In parallel, the Working Group also had to engage widely across the vendor market, facilitating conversations and collaborations with the various vendors and developers on whose products libraries would rely when implementing CDL.

INTRACONSORTIAL COLLABORATION

The Context for Consortial Collaboration

From the outset, the Working Group was confronted with one of the greatest challenges facing teams and working groups operating in a consortial environment—namely, the very nature of consortia. Consortia's complexity complicates the path to success for even the simplest endeavors. Any team responsible for accomplishing something in a consortial context must contend with the range of constituencies and stakeholders, formal and informal structures, and cultural elements that make up the consortium and its ways of doing things. Navigating this complexity requires a deliberate and conscientious approach in which communication is as important as discipline-specific skills (Lee & Horton, 2015).

For a team working in this consortial context, the "consortium" exists on multiple levels:

- As a manifestation of specific organizations, institutions, or libraries, along with their leadership and staff.
- As a defined, functional structure within which members' libraries and representatives participate—including the consortium's central staff, standing teams and committees, and time-delimited collaborative groups.
- As a largely volunteer organization, bringing together people from multiple organizations to accomplish shared goals without exercising actual authority over those individuals or controlling the amount of time or effort they contribute.
- As a culture comprising a range of beliefs, assumptions, and ways of working together that have developed over time.

The extent to which each of these manifestations impacts a given project will vary. However, each will have some impact on a project, even if the range of stakeholders and operations affected by the outcomes of the project are limited.

For instance, consortia built on shared core technologies have a greater need to collaborate closely and balance the needs of individual libraries vs. the needs of the consortium as a whole. This produces more decision-making overhead but also more engagement and trust on the part of member libraries' staff (Ayre, 2015). Conversely, a consortium that does not share core technologies may have less need for such intense collaboration but may struggle to obtain the same degree of participation from members, who may feel they can safely invest less time in consortial efforts that minimally impact their home institutions.

Perhaps, the most consequential of these elements are a consortium's culture and the reliance on volunteerism. The latter is critical in the way that it impacts the consortium's ability to simply get things done. Relying on volunteer staff from the member libraries can lead to unevenness in the knowledge and experience that the consortium can draw on over time, as individuals come and go in their level of participation. In parallel, members' library staff's primary commitment is to their home institution, and, as such, they may be unable to reliably commit time to consortial work. As a result, members' library staff can quickly become key figures and valuable assets in the consortium, but can just as quickly stop contributing for any number of reasons. Therefore, the consortium's central staff play a critical role in maintaining continuity, providing consistent leadership, continually renewing the pool of members' library staff who engage in consortial work, and mentoring new member staff who assume leadership roles in the consortium.

As for the consortium's culture and the impact that it has on consortial accomplishments, this is an area where the impact can be more subtle, and yet just as profound. The unspoken beliefs and assumptions that make up culture, and the practices to which it leads, can quietly strengthen or undermine a consortium's efforts. Culture can manifest in how different bodies within the consortium collaborate and communicate, which, how many people volunteer to lead or be part of consortium groups, and how different constituents within the consortium relate to one another (or not, as the case may be). Knowing these factors and being familiar with the culture itself is critical to steering consortial projects (Horton & Pronevitz, 2015).

Seeing a consortial initiative through from conception to completion means navigating all these ways in which consortia manifest, recognizing the myriad shapes they can take and impacts they can have on a project, and crafting a roadmap of how the work will successfully move forward.

Mobilizing the Working Group

The BLC's CDL Working Group held its first meeting in November 2020. Over the ensuing months, the group developed an understanding of CDL and the potential that it held for the BLC, engaged with constituents throughout the consortium as well as with vendors and external partners working in parallel in the CDL space, and developed recommendations that ultimately received approval from the Board of Directors. The Working Group's process and engagement enabled the group to take advantage of the complexity of the consortial environment in which they operated. While the Working Group's process added several months to the timeline of the project, it also produced stronger recommendations and better outcomes because of the depth of the engagement.

The Working Group's path consisted of the following parallel tracks:

- Coalescing and structuring the efforts of the Working Group.
- Engagement with the BLC Board, standing committees, and communities of interest.
- Engagement with vendors and other consortia working in the CDL space.

● Development and delivery of the final recommendations.

Coalescing and Structuring the Working Group

For many members of the Working Group, CDL was a relatively unexplored topic at the outset of the group's work. With good reason—few libraries had meaningfully engaged with CDL yet in the summer of 2020, despite the publication of the groundbreaking CDL white paper two years earlier. No technologies existed to support CDL at scale, and the handful of CDL solutions that did exist were mostly home-grown, improvised, and not scalable to consortia, or were meant exclusively for temporary use during emergency closures of library buildings and services (e.g., the HathiTrust Digital Library's Emergency Temporary Access Service). Given members' limited experience with CDL, the Working Group early on set out to define the scope of CDL for the project and to build a structure for the Working Group's efforts based on this definition.

Sustained engagement in national forums and groups focusing on CDL was essential to building this shared understanding. The Working Group's cochairs and members regularly attended the CDL Implementers Forum, a monthly virtual forum featuring presentations and dialogues about CDL issues and successful implementations. The BLC's executive director joined the Consortial Approaches to CDL (a group of consortial leaders exploring CDL), the CDL Co-op (an umbrella group for CDL experts and implementers of all stripes), a vendor advisory group, and a National Information Standards Organization working group that (as of this writing) is developing recommended practices for CDL. Participation in these nationwide forums and communities of interest and practice helped the Working Group members learn the ins and outs of CDL, its consortial impact, and the technological and logistical challenges that it posed.

In addition, a handful of BLC institutions had already engaged in a limited form of CDL. From these members' experiences, the Working Group quickly grasped that the principal challenges libraries faced in implementing CDL centered around the lack of available technologies to support the practice, the legal uncertainties, and the significant workload involved in digitizing full books that limited scalability of the practice. In parallel, the libraries' experiences helped illustrate the different use cases that CDL could serve, and how these challenges and use cases related to the Working Group's charge. This last point was critical. As the group's charge was to examine the feasibility of a consortial implementation of CDL, the group needed to learn from the experiences of its members who had implemented versions of CDL at their individual libraries, in order to steer a path towards a CDL implementation that could serve all members' libraries. Identifying the similarities and distinctions between library-level and consortium-level approaches, and overcoming library-centric thinking, was essential to the group's early work.

To facilitate this shift to consortial thinking, the Working Group divided into three subgroups that focused on these three challenges identified during the group's initial work:

● Technology subgroup that explored existing technologies and resource sharing solutions and how to scale CDL from individual libraries to consortial implementations.
● Legal/copyright subgroup that researched and discussed copyright questions to ensure that CDL was based on sound legal principles and that legal risk was mitigated.
● Scalability subgroup that developed technical specifications and technological directions.

Given the scale of what the group needed to learn at this early stage, and the short timeframe they were working under (4-8 months), this subgroup structure enabled the Working Group to cover considerable ground quickly, and allowed for the group's members to dive deeply into specific aspects of the project that most aligned with their area(s) of expertise. Subgroups also enabled the Working Group to stay abreast of the rapid developments in the CDL landscape and factor these developments into its ongoing work, and to tap into broader consortial expertise, with the subgroups often meeting with stakeholders from within the BLC as well as with outside experts.

One last benefit of the subgroup structure is that it created an opportunity for all members of the Working Group to lend their voices to the ongoing work and final recommendations. Larger groups frequently struggle to create equitable opportunities for all their members to speak regularly and contribute to the team's work. Smaller subgroups, each of which included four or five people, empowered everyone to contribute in a meaningful way. The resulting high level of engagement within the Working Group not only strengthened the quality of the group's work, but also increased the group's coherence and collaborative spirit. The subgroups remained in place almost until the close of the project and provided immense value throughout.

In addition to these subgroups, a key ingredient in the Working Group's success was leadership. The informal triumvirate of the two cochairs and the BLC executive director formed a hub for the group's efforts and a nexus between the BLC and external organizations. With the leaders, balance was key. All three had experience in working across organizations (Mealey had spent years working within the Orbis Cascade Alliance, a West Coast consortium). The cochairs had a balanced skillset (one with expertise and interest in technology and the other in copyright) and partnered in writing reports, facilitating meetings, planning engagement, and serving as thought leaders (Machovec, 2019). Collaboration and frank communication among these leaders proved vital. The three leaders met via Zoom and messaged via Slack on a regular basis. They consulted and liaised with external partners while empowering team members to shape discussions and plans. For consortial teams tackling complex issues, it is essential to have a pair of collaborative and complementary leaders drawn from member libraries, along with strong collaboration and support from the consortium's central staff. Alongside the three core leaders, two members of the Board of Directors served on the Working Group as Board liaisons. Their role was essential, offering insights into the Board's concerns and aspirations, what the Board needed to help it make informed decisions, and the questions around scaling up CDL to the consortial level.

Engaging with the Boston Library Consortium Community

As the Working Group embarked on the CDL project, the sheer scale of community stakeholders within the BLC became clear. Of course, the Board of Directors was the most critical stakeholder group because of the complex and transformative nature of the CDL project, which required the perspectives of and buy-in from library leadership in order ultimately to receive Board approval and move forward. The Working Group had to consult regularly with the Board and with other key stakeholders who represented constituencies whose work gave them insights into CDL or whose roles meant they would be key to implementing recommendations once approved.

The result was a well-defined structure for the Working Group's engagement with the Board and impacted BLC membership communities. This structured engagement carried through the life of the project. The Working Group sought to leave no stone unturned in its information gathering efforts and to keep stakeholders engaged with and informed of the project throughout the work of crafting the

BLC's path forward for CDL. There was a parallel desire for the recommendations to meet with receptive audiences within the consortium. The Working Group sought to build stakeholder buy-in gradually and persistently, so that stakeholders would see themselves as part of the process to develop the recommendations and could recognize their voices and concerns reflected in the Working Group's final report and recommendations (Mealey et al., 2020).

The Working Group identified a slate of BLC communities of interest, communities of practice, and standing committees as stakeholders, cutting across nearly all functional areas of the BLC. In the BLC, the Board of Directors convenes committees and appoints members to oversee core operational and strategic areas of consortial activity. Communities of practice (COPs) are forums for collaboration and exchange around common areas of practice, with membership restricted to individuals with specific roles and responsibilities. Communities of interest (COIs) are forums for collaboration and exchange around common areas of practice and current issues, open to all interested individuals. BLC standing committees oversee core operational and strategic areas of consortial activity and help coordinate consortium-wide work in those areas. In addition to the Board of Directors and its five-member Executive Committee, the Working Group identified seven BLC stakeholder communities with which to engage around consortial CDL:

- Access Services COI.
- Archives & Special Collections COI.
- Associate University Librarians COP.
- Heads of Resource Management Committee.
- Heads of Resource Sharing Committee.
- Resource Sharing COI.
- Technology COI.

The Working Group met with each of these membership communities during the first months of the project, and again later in the spring as the recommendations began to take shape. The initial meetings were oriented towards gathering information and endeavoring to understand the principal questions and concerns that library workers had about CDL and its impact on them and their libraries. The discussions were unstructured and largely consisted of a back-and-forth conversation where the Working Group members shared what they had learned thus far, and listened to attendees.

In contrast, at the second meetings with these same communities, the Working Group was aiming to gather feedback on an early draft of its white paper. After sharing the draft with each community in advance of the meeting, Working Group members gave a brief presentation on it, followed by question and answer. This feedback was invaluable in surfacing points that needed clarification or elaboration, and it helped to shape the final version of the white paper.

Later, after the final recommendations had been published, the Working Group met for a third time with five membership communities that the Board of Directors had tasked with supporting implementation of the recommendations. At these meetings, the cochairs walked attendees through the recommendations and answered questions. In addition, the Working Group hosted two open forums, which all BLC community members were encouraged to attend.

In parallel, the cochairs of the Working Group met regularly with the BLC Board of Directors and with the Board's Executive Committee throughout the project. Meetings with the Executive Committee occurred with increasing frequency in the latter stages of the project as the Working Group's recom-

mendations were taking shape and as the Working Group's leadership began to envision postproject stages for the BLC's CDL efforts. Meetings with the Board and Executive Committee typically were a combination of seeking feedback on specific topics or steps in the project and simply reporting out and keeping the BLC's leaders apprised of the work to date.

Perhaps one of the most effective engagements with the members of the Board was a pair of meetings held late in the project, to give Board members an opportunity to discuss the Working Group's preliminary recommendations. Each Board member was given the chance to invite up to two members of their senior staff, so that the discussion would be both with members of the Working Group as well as with members of their own leadership teams. These discussions were a vital opportunity for Board members to engage with the Working Group's recommendations, discuss them, and ask questions, prior to their being finalized and sent to the Board for a vote. These "Board Plus Two" meetings ensured that Board members had received the opportunity to engage with the topic and air concerns in advance of the actual vote, effectively paving the way for a constructive discussion and vote of support at the Board meeting a few weeks later.

This sustained engagement with the Board and the communities proved critical to the success of the project. It ensured that the Working Group maintained open lines of communication with the many library staff at member institutions who would be impacted by CDL, and that the staff in turn had opportunities to engage with the Working Group and contribute their expertise and experience to the project. Engagement helped to consolidate buy-in for the Working Group's recommendations and prepare the ground for future CDL work that would draw on many of these communities. Finally, it strengthened the recommendations that the Board ultimately approved, by reflecting and responding to the needs and concerns of members' libraries.

Engaging with Vendors and External Partners

A principal challenge quickly identified by the Working Group was the sheer lack of technologies available for conducting CDL. At the time the Working Group had formed (and still as of this writing, nearly two years later), no consortium had implemented CDL, principally because no technology existed to support doing so. The few CDL implementations that had taken place at the time were undertaken solely by individual libraries for their own patrons, using technology solutions that mixed and matched components in a way that would not feasibly scale to a consortial setting. None of the vendors active in the library technology space had yet begun to develop solutions to support CDL at any scale. Because of the absence of viable consortial CDL solutions, a core element of the Working Group's path forward was to engage with technology vendors and other potential partners to assess how to implement CDL at the consortial level and pursue development of interoperable solutions that could work for all BLC members.

In truth, there were few vendors with which to engage at the time. Only three vendors (i.e., OCLC, Ex Libris, and Project ReShare) were providing solutions on which U.S. academic libraries widely relied. Only two of them (Ex Libris and Project ReShare) were actively considering a CDL-related development effort. The third (OCLC) had maintained a distance between itself and CDL, and the BLC gained little traction there. However, both Project ReShare and Ex Libris were happy to discuss potential paths forward for CDL. The Working Group believed it was essential to engage with both potential partners, as they represented very different strategic visions and ways to accommodate CDL within their existing product portfolios and development efforts.

Their visions and the shape of their conversations with the Working Group reflected to some extent the very different natures of their organizations: Ex Libris as a commercial vendor selling proprietary software to libraries vs. Project ReShare as a community of libraries, consortia, developers, and vendors working together to develop an open source resource sharing solution for libraries. Discussions with Ex Libris made clear its focus on meeting the needs of customers of its existing and emerging products, while discussions with Project ReShare revealed ReShare's interest in building a CDL solution that would meet the needs of libraries across the board, not just the current ReShare community members' libraries. Regardless of the pros or cons of either of these visions, for the Working Group it was essential to work closely with both partners to understand how the solutions toward which they were working might align with goals of the BLC, and to factor this understanding into the Working Group's ultimate recommendations.

An unplanned benefit of these vendor discussions was to galvanize the Working Group's focus on advocacy as fundamental to its work. Coming away from meetings with Ex Libris, ReShare, and other players in the CDL space, it became clear to the Working Group that libraries needed to take a proactive role in shaping the way that CDL would be implemented within the larger resource sharing environment. Considering the BLC having taken on a leadership role in the CDL space through the Working Group, and the BLC's commitment to a consortial solution for CDL, the Working Group members were uniquely positioned to take on that advocacy role. Thus, while vendor discussions were initially oriented towards the immediate technology needs of the BLC, over time these discussions, and the Working Group's engagement with external partners in general, increasingly focused on advocacy for solutions predicated on interoperability standards that would broaden the choices that libraries have available to them when pursuing CDL.

Developing and Delivering Final Recommendations

In spring 2021, the Working Group began to formulate the recommendations that its members would take to the Board in August. What ensued was a lengthy process of distilling all that the Working Group members had learned over the previous several months, through engagements with BLC members' library staff, BLC communities, and outside consortia and vendors, into a report that offered a clear and achievable path for the BLC to implement consortial CDL as a mechanism for interlibrary loan. In addition, the report had to address the concerns raised by BLC stakeholders, acknowledge ongoing areas of uncertainty, and recommend concrete yet flexible next steps.

With so many elements to be folded into the recommendations to the Board, the Working Group's process of developing recommendations was necessarily deliberate and iterative. Over the course of two or three months and numerous meetings, the Working Group identified the many potential paths forward, debated the pros and cons and feasibility of each, and gradually winnowed them into the paths that landed in a first draft of the final report, and after a round of external feedback and revision, into the final report that was presented to the Board. The Board not only resoundingly approved a consortial implementation of CDL in accordance with the Working Group's recommendations, but also approved twice as much funding as the group had proposed to support implementation. The Board surpassed the ask of the Working Group.

There are two elements that particularly reflected the emphasis on consortial collaboration that was presented in the final report. The first was the Working Group's own processes. The 15 members of the Working Group represented more than half of BLC members' libraries. When it came to finalizing the

recommendations, each member had to consider their answers to these questions: "Are these recommendations that you and your library can support? Even should your library be unable to participate in CDL immediately, are these strategic directions for the consortium that your library can support?" A positive response to these questions was key to ensure that the group had reached internal consensus and that its final recommendations represented a path forward that the majority of BLC libraries felt they could support. A second key element was the sharing of an early draft of the recommendations with the Board and BLC community members. Stakeholder input affirmed the directions that the recommendations were taking, and provided a chance to refine them further before presentation to the Board.

In addition to group buy-in and community feedback, the final recommendations' emphasis on consortial CDL is reflected in the many ways that the report sought to leverage the scale of the BLC as a consortium. Many of the recommendations were specifically tied to scale, both as an asset and as a solution for CDL-related challenges that needed to be addressed as part of the proposed implementation. For instance, the recommendation to pursue a shared repository of digital surrogates (scans of print items) aimed to take advantage of the collective effort of BLC libraries to scan items requested via CDL, by storing those scans in a shared repository for other BLC libraries to use in the future, eliminating the need for books to be scanned more than once. Similarly, the recommendation to engage in advocacy and establish partnerships with other consortia was aimed at exercising the BLC's collective influence as a consortium in negotiating with vendors and service providers, versus the lesser influence that individual libraries wield.

Lastly and critically, the final report aimed to lay the groundwork for the next phase of the BLC's pursuit of CDL. At the time that the report was submitted to the Board, it was still not possible for a consortium or individual library to implement CDL as a mechanism for ILL because of the dearth of technologies to support this use case. Therefore, the recommendations articulated a path forward for the collaborative development of the technology, workflows, and policies that would enable the BLC to implement CDL for ILL in the coming years. The report thus explicitly reflected the Working Group's vision of itself as the first phase of the BLC's CDL initiative and sought to ensure a smooth handoff to the successor team, a steering committee charged with implementing consortial CDL. As it turned out, of the original 15 members of the Working Group, seven volunteered to be part of the 13-member CDL Steering Committee. This overlap is a testament to the way the Working Group successfully worked together and developed consensus and a shared sense of investment in the BLC's CDL initiative.

INTERCONSORTIAL COLLABORATIONS

Libraries consort when scale is advantageous. Library consortia do so for the same reasons—to scale influence, to scale advocacy, and to scale impact and investment—and experience many of the same challenges faced by libraries seeking to collaborate with each other.

The International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) is perhaps the best known example of interconsortial collaboration. Established in 1996, ICOLC is an informal, self-organized group comprising staff from two hundred library consortia in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa. The member consortia serve all types and all sizes of libraries. ICOLC has a legacy of informality borne of a desire to limit time spent on operational matters and instead focus on timely issues. In 2015, ICOLC established an elected Coordinating Committee to guide operations. ICOLC maintains a confidential listserv to discuss matters of common interest as wide ranging as vendor pricing practices,

diversity, and CDL. Twice a year, ICOLC holds meetings to keep members informed about emerging issues. Occasionally, ICOLC issues statements about topics affecting libraries and consortia of libraries.

Consortia regularly collaborate on joint projects to reap the benefits of scale. Prominent recent examples include the Cloud-Based Consortial Platform for Library Usage Statistics (CC-PLUS), Hyku for Consortia, and Project ReShare. CC-PLUS is an open source toolset for usage statistics management designed to support libraries and consortia in data-driven decisions and effective stewardship of electronic resources. The platform is supported by an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant awarded to eight consortia in the US, France, and Canada. Hyku for Consortia is an affordable, open source, and collaborative institutional repository built on Hyku, the multitenant repository platform system. Hyku for Consortia was also funded by the IMLS and is led by two library consortia. Project ReShare is a group of libraries, consortia, vendors, and other interested parties that are building a new open source resource sharing solution.

The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed new interconsortial collaborations to address emergent needs and opportunities associated with remote teaching and learning. In the fall of 2020, eight U.S.-based library consortia, including the BLC, launched the Professional Development Alliance of Library Consortia as a mechanism to share and exchange professional development content to the collective benefit of library staff at each consortium's respective member institutions. In this pilot initiative, each participating consortium made several of its own professional development activities available to library staff across all Alliance members. This interconsortial collaboration scaled the professional development offerings and amplified the visibility of the work undertaken by library staff. Professional staff from participating consortia met regularly to assess the initiative and identify mechanisms to minimize the administrative burden of scale.

Consortia often collaborate to scale core functions such as resource sharing and collections development, particularly when consortia are geographically proximate. For example, the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries and the Washington Research Library Consortium have maintained a reciprocal no-fee interlibrary loan agreement to expand resource sharing in the southeastern United States since 2013 (Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, 2017). Several initiatives, forums, and collaborations have emerged across the library and information community to investigate CDL opportunities in recent years, including several with a consortial focus.

In 2017, representatives from several library consortia began meeting to discuss the future of resource sharing systems following OCLC's launch of Tipasa, a cloud-based ILL management system, and acquisition of Relais International, then-owner of the Relais D2D (Discovery to Delivery) solution for consortial borrowing. Eventually branded as Consortial Approaches to Resource Sharing (CARS), the group experienced steady growth and interest from consortia across the United States in the years that followed. During its lifetime, CARS offered numerous webinars and workshops on resource sharing technologies, collaborated with technology providers, and influenced the commercial market for vended solutions. CARS prioritized two emergent areas of focus in late 2020: 1) Continued dialogue on the feasibility of CDL from a consortial perspective; (2) cross-consortial no-fee reciprocal borrowing agreements.

In late 2020, the Consortial Approaches to CDL group emerged to tackle the CDL area of focus. Membership in the group is limited to U.S.-based library consortia and their member libraries, with up to two representatives per consortium. The group's statement of purpose acknowledges the group's distinctive positionality alongside complementary library-level efforts and highlights the key role that consortia play in resource sharing infrastructure (Barlow, 2020).

Recognizing an opportunity for closer coordination among the plethora of forums and initiatives exploring CDL, participants from the CDL Information & Recommendation Cooperative, Consortial Approaches to CDL, CDL Implementers, and Library Futures formed the CDL Co-Op to facilitate information flow and advance issues of common interest. In consultation with these disparate groups and the broader library and information community, the CDL Co-Op wrote the *Statement on Using Controlled Digital Lending as a Mechanism for Interlibrary Loan* (Barlow et al., 2021). This statement sought to increase awareness of CDL in the context of resource sharing, affirm libraries' right to use CDL, and improve services provided by the library resource sharing community by ensuring that libraries and consortia are operating with a shared set of principles and assumptions around CDL. Forty-plus libraries, consortia, and allied organizations have endorsed the statement since its publication in October 2021.

Project ReShare is one of the most important interconsortial collaborations that have emerged around resource sharing and CDL. Project ReShare is a group of libraries, consortia, information organizations, and developers with both commercial and noncommercial interests who came together to design an open source and highly-scalable resource sharing platform that supports discovery, fulfillment, and delivery workflows, with a focus on user-centered design. Project ReShare is distinctive for its model of mutual investment in open collaboration, in contrast to the approaches and priorities of those providing commercially vended solutions. The BLC is the latest consortium to join the ReShare community, making an initial contribution of $100,000 to accelerate the development of CDL functionality in the ReShare client. In its governance and the ways it sets development priorities, as well as its commitment to an open and standards-based solution, Project ReShare exemplifies the values and value of interconsortial collaboration.

CONCLUSION

A recent essay on the future of library consortia affirms that "intra- and interconsortial alliance is crucial" to a "relevant future." Continuously demonstrating "transparency of mission, process, and intent" and "discovering different ways to cooperate and collaborate" are vital components in that future (Grogg & Rosen, 2020, p. 186). The BLC's CDL Working Group reflected these best practices through its emphasis on engagement across and outside of the consortium, extensive two-way communication and transparency with the consortium's membership communities, and design of an inclusive process to build toward a set of final recommendations that reflected the shared interests of the consortium. Through inclusion and engagement activities across the board, the Working Group's process enabled the consortium's diverse voices and interests to be a critical part of the process and of the final report, as they were woven into the recommendations created by the Working Group.

Ultimately, consortial collaborations take many forms and pursue many different objectives, and there is no one model that will lead to their success. Each consortial initiative is unique, and will require a distinct set of participants, considerations, and approaches, to accomplish its goal(s). Notwithstanding these caveats, the elements that Grogg and Rosen described and that resided at the core of the Working Group's process—communication, transparency, and inclusion—are universal to the success of interconsortial and intraconsortial collaborations. Any team or initiative that places these principles at the center of its work will stand a significantly greater chance of success in both the short term and the long term.

The CDL Working Group's success is reflected in both the resoundingly positive reception of their recommendations by the BLC's Board of Directors and in the enthusiasm of Working Group members

to continue to take part in the consortium's CDL work, volunteering to take part in the subsequent CDL Steering Committee. Inclusive collaborations are vital to the long-term future of the BLC and the consortium's near-term leadership in the CDL space. The BLC's CDL venture is a unique case study on how to pursue similar collaborative ventures in other consortial contexts.

REFERENCES

Arch, X., & Gilman, I. (2017). Innovating for impact: The next evolution of library consortia. *Collaborative Librarianship, 9*(4), 250–258. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol9/iss4/4/

Association of Southeastern Research Libraries. (2017). *AERL-WRLC resource sharing*. http://www.aserl.org/programs/aserl-wrlc-ill/

Ayre, L. B. (2015). The holy grail of library automation: The shared library system. *Collaborative Librarianship, 7*(1), 42–43. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol7/iss1/9

Bailey, L., Courtney, K. K., Hansen, D., Minow, M., Schultz, J., & Wu, M. (2018). *Position statement on controlled digital lending*. https://controlleddigitallending.org/statement

Barlow, C. (2020). *Consortial approaches to controlled digital lending* [Presentation]. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hIH-kCeVMNfplutconrIXNqvJZDQfGQ-/view

Barlow, C., Courtney, K. K., Cramer, T., Hansen, D., Hurst-Wahl, J., Morris, J., & O'Gara, G. (2021). *Statement on using controlled digital lending as a mechanism for interlibrary loan*. CDL Co-op. https://controlleddigitallending.org/illstatement

Boston Library Consortium. (2014). *Bylaws*. https://web.archive.org/web/20211011023832/https://blc.org/bylaws

Caltech Library. (2021). *Caltech library digital borrowing system*. https://caltechlibrary.github.io/dibs/

Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust. (2021). *About us*. https://eastlibraries.org/about-us

Grogg, J., & Rosen, H. (2020). Consortia: An evolving landscape. *Collaborative Librarianship, 12*(2), 181–186, https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol12/iss2/7

Hansen, D. R., & Courtney, K. K. (2018). *A white paper on controlled digital lending of library books* [white paper]. https://controlleddigitallending.org/whitepaper

Haugan, T. (2021, August 19). *The UC Berkeley Library is leveling the playing field, one textbook at a time. Here's how*. https://news.lib.berkeley.edu/e-reserves

Horton, V., & Pronevitz, G. (2015). *Library consortia: Models for collaboration and sustainability*. ALA Editions, an imprint of the American Library Association.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. (2021). *IFLA statement on controlled digital lending*. https://repository.ifla.org/handle/123456789/1835

Lee, M., & Horton, V. (2015). Communication in library consortia. *Collaborative Librarianship, 7*(1), 5–12. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol7/iss1/3/

Machovec, G. (2019). What library collaboration means to me: Perspectives from an academic consortium director. *Collaborative Librarianship, 11*(3), 140–143. https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol11/iss3/2/

Mealey, N., Rodriguez, M., Barlow, C., Bohrer, K., Carlstrom, J., Kelehan, M., Kennedy, K., Kowal, K., McNeil, E., Paris, M., Quilter, L., Smith, S., Walton, J., White, A., & Yott, P. (2020). *Consortial CDL: Implementing controlled digital lending as a mechanism for interlibrary loan* [public report]. Boston Library Consortium. https://blc.org/news/120355

Secker, J., Gadd, E., & Morrison, C. (2018). *Understanding the value of the CLA Licence to UK higher education* [white paper]. Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL). https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/CNAC%20Research%20Project%20Report%20FINAL%20with%20logos.pdf

Universal Service Support for Schools and Libraries. 47 CFR § 54.500 (1997). https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-54#p-54.500

ADDITIONAL READING

Dempsey, L. (2018, February 28). *The powers of library consortia 1: How consortia scale capacity, learning, innovation, and influence*. https://www.lorcandempsey.net/orweblog/the-powers-of-library-consortia-1-how-consortia-scale-capacity-learning-innovation-and-influence/

Dempsey, L. (2018, March 6). *The powers of library consortia 2: Soft power and purposeful mobilization: Scaling learning and innovation*. https://www.lorcandempsey.net/orweblog/the-powers-of-library-consortia-2-soft-power-and-purposeful-mobilization-scaling-learning-and-innovation/

Dempsey, L. (2018, March 22). *The powers of library consortia 3: Scaling influence and capacity for impact and efficiency*. https://www.lorcandempsey.net/orweblog/the-powers-of-library-consortia-3-scaling-influence-and-capacity-for-impact-and-efficiency/

Dempsey, L. (2018, June 20). *The powers of library consortia 4: Scoping, sourcing, and scaling*. https://www.lorcandempsey.net/orweblog/the-powers-of-library-consortia-2-soft-power-and-purposeful-mobilization-scaling-learning-and-innovation/

Dempsey, L., & Malpas, C. (2020, December 4). *College, consortium, collaboration, collective collection* [presentation]. Boston Library Consortium Board meeting. https://www.lorcandempsey.net/college-consortium-collaboration-collective-collection/