Chapter 8
The Evolution of Collaborative Collection Development within a Library Consortium: Data Analysis Applied in a Cultural Context

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ABSTRACT
This chapter details a collection analysis project carried out within the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) consortium in 2013-2015. This project included an analysis of 12 member libraries’ main stacks monographs – a total of just under six million volumes – and demonstrates the importance of relying on established cultural support as well as the challenges of cultural change involved in library collaboration. The project stands out from other similar collection analyses conducted by groups of libraries in its central focus on using the analysis to inform prospective, collaborative collection development.

INTRODUCTION
Collaborative collection development and management are integral to the work of many library partnerships and consortia. As noted in a 2012 ARL Issue Brief, twenty-first-century collection management requires this increased collaboration among institutions in order to ensure broad access for users: “A multi-institutional approach is the only one that now makes sense” (p. 1). Making finite resources at

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individual libraries go further through partnership has been explored and tested in many ways, including shared approval plans, shared print repositories, and interrelated print and digital collections. Ideally, these collaborations save three key resources – time, money, and space – and allow for the creation of rich and diverse shared and local collections.

In order to be effective, collaborative collection development requires collaborative data analysis. This analysis is key to individual libraries’ and consortia’s abilities to make informed decisions about collections and to save precious resources and staff time. Through a project with Sustainable Collection Services (SCS) that began in 2013, the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), the consortium of 72 nonprofit, academic libraries in Virginia, analyzed the primary circulating holdings of 12 of its member libraries, a total of almost six million records. This project compared the participating libraries’ holdings with each other, the consortium as a whole, the state, and the United States, as well as with HathiTrust, the Internet Archive, and selected peer library groups. A number of collection initiatives emerged from this analysis, including collaborative retention commitments for monographs, a voluntary threshold for new monographic purchases, and a shared purchase of eBooks.

What cannot be underestimated are the cultural implications of collaborations such as this. The dynamic between the desire for institutional independence and the benefits of partnership can play out in interesting ways in shared collection activity, and the pros and cons of participation can vary widely from institution to institution, especially in a consortium as large as VIVA. To heighten the cultural challenge, the VIVA project was structured around exploratory investigation, rather than defined parameters. Rather than starting with a specific desired outcome, the consortium was interested in using the resulting analysis to create a data-driven roadmap for collection development collaborations among VIVA institutions.

This open approach to analysis and the resulting initiatives were largely possible because of the established culture of trust among the VIVA libraries. The project and initiatives required participants to be able to articulate, beyond the more straightforward benefits of potential resource savings, the widely varying institution-specific benefits to this collaboration. This chapter will detail the origins, development, and future directions of the VIVA collection analysis project as well as the broader implications that collaborative collections projects have for the future of academic libraries in general.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

There are varied approaches to consortial or collaborative collection analysis, often divided by format type, such as serial vs. monograph or print vs. electronic. Comparative analysis for groups of libraries and consortia often relies on OCLC WorldCat holdings for comparisons, or groups may opt to use local shared systems for their studies.

A common goal of consortial or collaborative collection analysis is to better understand how affiliated libraries’ collections might operate together as a whole. The State University of New York (SUNY) system, for example, used the OCLC/AMIGOS Collection Analysis CD to compare the monographic holdings for four members of the SUNY system so that they might have a fuller picture of the collections and their shared strengths (Dole & Chang, 1997). This type of study provides opportunities for identifying relative subject, format, or publication date coverage among the participants, as well as to identify gaps in coverage or areas of overlapping strength that might be useful in developing collaborative collection projects.