
Resource Sharing in the Electronic Era: Potentials and Paradoxes

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ABSTRACT

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT RESOURCE SHARING, a long time goal of libraries, is at last becoming a reality in many current and planned projects. Access to OPACs and the development of rapid delivery systems are changing the way information can be delivered. At the same time, traditional interlibrary loan remains a strategic service. The social, economic, and technological complexities of both the new mechanisms and the traditional roles of libraries provide both opportunities for cooperation and paradoxes for the continuation of selection, archiving, and preservation of paper collections.

Today's libraries face myriad challenges: social, economic, technical, organizational, and functional. One of the biggest challenges, however, is the rapid rate at which all of these factors are changing, their interdependence, and the effects that we see in our attempt to maintain, much less increase, information services. In 1986, the ALA Commission on Freedom and Equality of Access to Information wrote that: "Libraries of all types today find themselves caught between the anvil of growing citizen demand for increased access to a broader range of information resources in a wider variety of formats and the hammer of declining financial support" (ALA, 1984, p. 99). They were reflecting the then rapid rate of change, but not even that august body could have imagined the rapidity and variety of developments in today's information society.

Technology and its applications to information are evolving so rapidly that cutting edge installations of today are old hat tomorrow. The digitizing of information is providing a cleaner and more restorable form of data collection, retention, and manipulation. The competition to provide supporting services for handling this digitized information influences not only the research community, but also the commercial and public sectors of the economy. The lack of standards has hampered this to some extent, but with the development of the Z39.50 standard, gopher space, World Wide Web servers, and Mosaic, the rate of change in system access and availability has increased dramatically.

Gorman (1991) has written that: "Resources sharing has two bases: the effectiveness of technology and the need to cooperate." He continues: "I think that we are, like it or not, entering a Golden Age of Cooperation because (1) the technology to link libraries and to make the users of one library aware of the collections of others is available and getting better all the time, and (2) economics are forcing us to cooperate" (p. 7). These factors—technology and economics—impact library programs and practices more directly today than they have at any time in the past. These in turn produce a variety of paradoxes in the current art of library and information provision. (The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines paradox as a "statement contrary to received opinion; [a] seemingly absurd though perhaps really well-founded statement; self-contradictory; person, [or] thing, conflicting with preconceived notions of what is reasonable or possible.") They have indeed begun to force the issues of cooperation, collaboration, and a heightened need for resource sharing. The following discussion is general in nature, and there are always exceptions, but it is time to challenge certain assumptions about the way in which we provide information and the nature of the library environment.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines ownership as "to have or hold as property; to have power over." In this context, it is useful to consider several levels of ownership. The most convenient is, of course, the ownership that allows the patron to walk to a nearby shelf and take down the book or journal or videotape desired. The location of desired material that is owned at another branch of a library provides additional sources, but these are not immediately available. Another level is that of materials housed in remote storage. Most large universities are faced with this situation. Is it less convenient to wait for delivery from a branch library or from a storage facility that may be several miles or counties away? And the fourth level is the cooperative model, where access serves as surrogate ownership. The deciding factor in making a selection decision, aside from the cost and the availability of an item, is the opportunity costs to the patron. What does it cost the patron to wait for information for an hour, a week, or a month?

Webster's defines *access* as the "freedom or ability to obtain or make use of." Just as there are multiple levels of ownership, there are many levels of access, and these may influence the decision to own an item. First is the ability to identify desired materials. Do such resources—whether print, media, or electronic—actually exist? Next is the access level that provides knowledge of the item, that it is indeed available in a library or document depository in the required format. The third level is that of the ability to retrieve it. Can it be borrowed, purchased through document delivery systems, sent directly to the patron? And if the third is impossible, can the patron go to the item. For many scholars, the need to use original documents allows no other choice. The strategic issue in this situation is to *know* that something exists and where it is located.

As a profession, we began the deconstruction of ownership as the only option when interlibrary loan became an accepted and regular library activity. Upon the establishment of OCLC and other utilities, the issue of ownership versus access was no longer of major importance, except as a rather arcane construct around which we could structure library and information science class sessions. In fact, by the time the question became broadly recognized, the information environment in which we function had long superseded the question. And thus we have the primary paradox facing the profession: access is ownership. Access is analogous to paying rent on a short-term lease rather than paying a mortgage, while ownership is the mortgage and includes a condominium fee for the upkeep and continued housing of an item.

The second paradox is that ownership is not necessarily access. Consider the many large microform sets that libraries have acquired to provide primary source materials for their clients. How many of these are analyzed in the catalog, be it card based or automated? Particularly in an online environment, if the individual bibliographic record is not in the OPAC, the library might as well not own the set in which it resides. In the present computer-oriented information structure, the traditional printed citation and index apparatus is simply inadequate for information-hungry and impatient users.

This leads to the third paradox: cataloging is access, but cataloging priorities may not be, and often are not, established based on collection priorities. Cataloging priorities are primarily based on personnel availability and personnel classification requirements. Japanese may be a collection priority, but if you cannot hire a cataloger with the language skills, you may not be able to support this priority. In addition, materials for which there is copy are likely to receive cataloging whether or not they fit collection or service priorities. Again, this is often highly dependent on the staff resources available, and that is often an area where the collection manager has little

control. A library may be providing access to materials it owns, but its users may not care about records generated through the traditional cataloging backlog searching process.

Cataloging is access only when it happens. Minimal level cataloging of relatively rare or unusual items, in conjunction with collection level cataloging, provides less access to more information. Economics and organizational issues often govern our institutional priorities rather than the collection strengths and cooperative commitments established with such care and effort.

The fourth paradox is that acquisition and retention of a title is preservation. This is certainly not the traditional view of preservation, but if at least one library does not acquire, retain, and, preferably, catalog an item, it cannot become part of the shared resources of the library community. There is little reason to expect that *any* publisher, commercial or academic, will retain electronic information much longer than they retain paper copies. Again, it is a question of economics. Libraries and computer centers will continue to serve as the depositories of the intellectual and creative products of society. Our challenge will be to make these vast collections of materials accessible and available to those who need to use them.

The fifth paradox is that, while access assumes automation, automation does not necessarily mean access. There are many examples that support this contention. Interlibrary loan assumes that much of its transaction activity will be communicated via bibliographic utilities. If a library does not choose to participate, or if a utilities' requirements are such as to limit the library's participation, then automation may exist, but the data upon which the transaction should be based do not, and therefore access is limited at best. For example, many libraries add their data to OCLC via tape. However, due to the complexities of serial entry verification and the necessary de-duping activity that is required to maintain the database as a whole, serial holdings records may not (at present) be added via tape. They must be added online. Many major serial collections are therefore not yet reflected in a national bibliographic database.

The second issue in this scenario is that of retrospective conversion. Many libraries have not had the resources to carry out a retrospective conversion project, thus limiting the access to their collections. Automation may mean access if a library has carried out a project to support circulation on their local system. Brief records for every item in the circulating collection may exist in an OPAC yet may not be reflected in the utilities. However, with the access to catalogs through the Internet, access can be achieved when a library client is willing to invest the time to check many catalogs to locate one item.

A companion paradox is that acquisition is access if order and in-process records are included in the local OPAC as it is displayed on the Internet. In fact, with the inclusion of automated acquisitions systems in online catalogs, many of the concerns caused by the needs of the utilities and their huge databases can be bypassed by knowledgeable librarians and library patrons who are willing to invest the time and effort to access heretofore invisible materials.

The most disturbing result of this rapid high-tech environment in which many libraries are now living is the contrast between the "haves" and the "have nots." Flanders (1991) has noted that:

social, economic, and geographic barriers have combined to make it difficult for certain people to obtain information. Case in point: the telecommunications infrastructure in rural America is generally barely adequate for voice communications and cannot support touch-tone service, let alone the advanced data capacity required by NREN. (p. 574)

It is not only the technology that limits accessibility to information resources. We must be very conscious that there is no such thing as free information. Somebody somewhere pays for information. It may be the taxpayer, the patron, the sponsoring research agency, the businessperson, but it has to be supported economically. The issue libraries must face is who pays where? Does the library receive support from its governing body to provide information resources, in any format, to its patrons or does the library have to charge? Or does it consciously decide to charge based on the nature of the materials requested? For example, a university library might decide to charge for online searches of commercial databases but to provide free mediated searches of government produced CD-ROMS. Alternatively, a library might view the value-added nature of a CD-ROM as being an appropriate reason to institute charges, particularly when the library cannot acquire the title *and* the equipment any other way.

A puzzle in the development of electronic information is that librarians may, by their selection decisions, cause an economic chill in certain areas of traditional publishing by acquiring products only in machine-readable form. Paradoxically, the availability of relatively inexpensive "publication" through listservs or electronic journals could also make more works available than could ever be produced by decreasing publication cost dramatically.

To take the possibility of "chilling" publishing a little further, a major concern of collection managers is that, through the use of standard bibliographic sources, automated collection analysis mechanisms, and comparative collection evaluations, we are cloning our collections.

If libraries are not very careful, they will continue to lose the variety and health of the national collection in the desire to "keep up with" peer libraries. It is clear that every library has to have a certain "core" of materials to support ongoing programs, reference needs, and specific areas of research, and that these primary collections may be relatively constant across institutions of a particular size and type. However, the nation's intellectual heritage is represented not only by these primary collections, but also, and in some cases, most importantly, in the more individual and perhaps fringe areas that seldom overlap but provide sources of great importance for present and future scholarship. And let us not forget that all scholarly work does not take place in the academic setting.

As libraries concern themselves with the retention of unique materials, they must also face the changing nature of communication and its affect on what Atkinson (1990) has called the "mutability of the historical record." Librarians are all aware of the "recalled" published works in both monographs and serials. The electronic work is even more volatile. When and how does an electronic work become fixed for retention in the library's "published" collection? How might it be changed and who can change it? Where does the historical and edited record reside? Again, there is no reason to assume that the producers of information, in any format, can be expected to be a permanent source of that information.

Another peculiarity of electronic publishing is the set of requirements that publishers are placing on titles; restrictions that would seldom, if ever, have been placed on printed materials. It is normal for a publisher to try to limit the access to an electronic product to the students, staff, and faculty of a college or university. This is a nearly unenforceable rule for tax-supported and depository libraries. Clearly, publishers must protect their profits in order to satisfy stockholders and continue publishing, but librarians and publishers must begin to work together to establish workable and realistic means to achieve this end.

Copyright is a paradox in itself. Fair use is continually reinterpreted through legal decisions, and the electronic environment only makes the situation more complex. Copyright statements now exclude any transfer of material to another format, including specific mention of any electronic medium. The role of fair use has not yet been clarified in this new environment and again forces librarians to evaluate the role of licensing, leasing, and copyright limitations impinging on the electronic scholarly record. Resources used to support distance education, a rapidly growing sector in continuing and adult education, will undoubtedly provide opportunities to test this in the near future. As Sabosik (1991) has stated, the changing technologies of

electronic transmission of information "are reducing the physical boundaries to information and are changing the role of the publisher and the library intermediaries in the chain of scholarly communication" (p. 60). These changes are not limited solely to the scholarly publication scene. As networking has become more common and less expensive, and as the information highway becomes a primary means of access to electronic information, the library and the publisher, not to mention the vendor, will take on new roles that are not yet defined and whose legal ramifications are as yet unknown and can only be anticipated in a most general way.

The excitement of providing greater resources and broader and more effective access to information in our local libraries and in libraries across the country (and with the Internet, the world) is tempered by the organizational cost borne by the library. Users are looking for vast arrays of information and then looking for ways to filter it in order to minimize information overload. The paradoxes in the library environment influence our ability to manage the local library as well as the ability to participate in effective resource sharing. Libraries need to establish methods of delivering information that are more effective for the individual library user and that take full advantage of the broader information environment. However, interlibrary loan is about to collapse under the incredible increases in demands and the lack of resources available to support that function. Thus the traditional process of ILL activity, on which resource sharing activities have been based, is ceasing to function effectively just as libraries become more dependent on its use.

The governing institutions of libraries have unrealistic expectations of resource sharing, particularly as they reduce financial support for library functions. Libraries will have to reevaluate their priorities and consider the implications of relying on ownership or access or the mix that is appropriate for a specific institution. This may well require the movement of cost centers, staff reallocation, rearrangement of space, and the hiring of personnel with a wider variety of skills or more specialized skills.

In an electronic environment that increasingly relies on resource sharing, new elements are central to the provision of library services, collection decisions, and staffing needs. Libraries have participated in formal interlibrary lending arrangements since the beginning of the century. "The library community has been struggling with how best to promote the acquisition, control and mobility of materials among libraries....This tri-partite framework for resource sharing has been developed in an attempt to enable people at every level of society to find the information they are seeking" (Dougherty & Hughes, 1990, p. 1). The recent developments in computer networks,

bibliographic utilities, and digitized transmission of images has enhanced the capability of interlibrary lending programs. However, the rapidly increasing load on these traditional mechanisms with their labor-intensive checking and verification and the increasing demands for materials not available at the local library have stretched the capability of the library community to the breaking point. The availability of electronic bibliographic databases has exacerbated an already troublesome situation. The costs of interlibrary lending and borrowing, as a library function, are now so high that it has become a serious drain on local services and personnel and, in many cases, libraries have been forced to decrease other library services in support of resource sharing services or to institute higher charges for borrowing of their materials.

Many examples of resource sharing, emphasizing particularly the movement of materials and, in some cases, people, have shown the importance of such agreements. The University of California system, with a shared catalog, Melvyl; a shared large purchase program; and shared regional storage facilities is one of the largest and most successful. The addition of bibliographic databases and commercial electronic journal archives to the university system also represents many of the programmatic directions taken by other more recent consortial arrangements.

One of the largest multitype library networks is ILLINET, linking public, academic, and some special libraries in a system that allows patrons to directly request specific monographic titles to be delivered to their home library from any other participating library in the system. One of the most interesting results of this program is the net borrower status of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As expected, the university is also one of the major lenders, but the large amount of borrowing done by its students and faculty is clearly indicative of the need for multiple copies of specific titles, the usefulness of the most unexpected collections, and the verification that all libraries may contribute to the scholarly process no matter what their collections hold.

The more recent development of OhioLINK is another example of the growing state and regional developments of shared networks. OhioLINK includes all the state-supported universities, municipal colleges and technical institutions, the State Library of Ohio, and a growing number of private colleges. It provides for patron-initiated circulation of monographs, and serial article delivery is presently being tested. Early circulation statistics reflect the circulation pattern of Illinois: the largest lender is also the largest borrower. More than twenty-five licensed databases were available through the network at the end of 1994. The system is also designed to provide collection

management information not only by title and classification, but by types of users. Such information may provide some of the earliest analysis of use of materials by patrons in a decentralized system.

There are many other examples of state or regional networks that have been in place for many years or are in planning or implementation phases. It seems likely that such developments will increase and overlap leading to a variety of complications in commitments to various consortia and to local users who benefit from the shared environment, but who may also find it frustrating when materials they desire are in use elsewhere in the state or region.

As libraries are expanding their resource-sharing activities in response to academic needs, the role and nature of higher education is changing as the character of the national population shifts; as technology brings new requirements and opportunities to the educational, commercial, and social sectors of society; and as budgetary forces require "doing more with less." Rapid and efficient access to information has become an economic imperative, and technology is the driving force. Changes in the expectations of higher education, both within and outside of academia, are forcing rapid developments in both the content and form of the educational setting. Hayes (1986) has noted that a major development in the campus is that: "It's going to become a major communications center. That's where the real revolution is occurring—communications and information" (p. 71).

Increasing costs of information, rapid increases in publishing of interest to academia, and stagnating budgets of institutions of higher education have made it glaringly obvious that no library can provide all the resources required by its users (Graves & Wulff, 1990, p. 53). In 1979, *Scholarly Communication: The Report of the National Inquiry* reported,

it is clear that research libraries can no longer function as autonomous entities, each striving for self-sufficiency. That goal, never realistic even in the years of rapidly expanding budgets, will slip further out of reach as each year passes. New forms of resource sharing, the development of national collections accessible to all research libraries, and the linking of libraries through computerized bibliographic networks into a national system are essential steps that must be taken if libraries are to meet their responsibilities to provide all users with reliable access to the research literature. (p. 151)

Performance expectations have increased at all levels of higher education: faculty are expected to publish, students are regularly expected to write papers or complete projects that rely on the scholarly record, and the purchasing power of library budgets has been drastically curtailed. The research library is not the only victim in this development. Libraries serving liberal arts and community colleges and technical institutions are caught in the same spirals of rising

expectations and decreasing resources. These conditions have forced an increased reliance on resource sharing through interlibrary loan, direct borrowing arrangements for faculty and students, and other delivery mechanisms. Interlibrary loan and resource sharing are no longer adjunct sources of information but have become integral components of primary library services.

The economic consequences of continuing to do business as usual are dire at best. Greatly increased costs of journals and monographs in all disciplines, proliferation of electronic formats that faculty and students demand, and disintegrating historical collections all contribute to the need to develop new methods and models of providing information. VonWalde and Schiller (1993) have suggested that: "In the networked environment, access will become the primary function of the library. We will need to spend more money to support access and delivery of information" (p. 32). White (1994) has noted that, as opportunities for access to previously unknown resources become available, demands for those resources will increase, and that costs will, solely on this basis, undoubtedly increase (p. 8). Combining such demands for new resources with the price escalation of traditional formats, and the linking of pricing between paper and electronic formats of the same title, libraries are clearly caught in an untenable situation both budgetarily and functionally. Libraries do not control costs, they simply respond to pricing and availability of resources produced by scholarly researchers and academic and commercial publishers (White, 1994, p. 7). The interactions of these external bodies govern the library's ability to respond to local needs as well as consortial agreements. Although recent years have seen an increase in the dialogue among scholars, librarians, and publishers, the economic reward system of academia and the profit motive of publishers still control the information pipeline.

The economic pressures of materials costs and the decreasing resources available for staff and other support now threaten a basic tenet of American library service. As Battin (1990) has cautioned: "The financial pressures arising from a steadily expanding commercialization of the scholarly publishing process, swollen by the expanding production of knowledge and a proliferation of new storage and dissemination technologies, pose a persistent and disquieting threat to the distinctive *sine qua non* of the university—the commitment to broad and equitable access to information regardless of the ability to pay" (p. 2). In addition, the increasing costs of the lending and borrowing process itself has caused many institutions to increase their lending charges, thereby limiting access to the "shared scholarly record" and imposing more costs on the "have not" institutions and their constituencies. Miller (1992) has described the "warm fuzzy feel-

ing" of helping others and questioned how much it is worth when the "have' library" has to "divert significant resources from local service to serving others" (p. 11). It seems clear that only those resource-sharing agreements from which all parties gain can be maintained in the future. In such arrangements, the independent scholar may become even more isolated as institutional bonds focus not only on the sharing of resources but their licensed acquisition and provision as well.

Complicating the situation is the role of technology. The costs of rapidly changing technology and the implications of network access to a variety of resources both enriches and costs the library and its university. While technology costs, per se, have dropped significantly, reliance on access implies the need for greater numbers of both staff and public workstations with increased capacities for both the access and manipulation of information. Technology and access to resources of many kinds implicitly governs the priorities of many libraries.

Technology, as Miller (1992) has noted, is an enabling factor but should not be the determining component in the identification and sharing of information resources. In fact, it often governs the process to the exclusion of other concerns (p. 14). Local networks and protocols, regional access to the network backbone, and institutional policies and priorities may govern not only the library's capabilities, but the local scholar's capability to access specific resources. The delivery of information via fax or other electronic means is also limited by local technological capabilities. Standards exist and continue to be developed, but the variation in local network infrastructure continues to be a limiting factor in providing broadbased access to, and delivery of, information.

Among the most interesting resource-sharing programs that technology has assisted are those that share subject expertise and sites for the collection and dispersal of information. The CRL project to digitize Brazilian documents and the Ohio State University Libraries East Asian Libraries Cooperative World Wide Web Text Server project, begun with a variety of funding assistance at Ohio State, are excellent examples of the sharing of information, technology, and subject expertise.

Technology also imposes limits on how resources may be accessed and delivered based on the format in which the information is provided, the hardware platform on which the resource is located, and the way in which the receiving workstation may acquire and display the information. Gopher has been the dominant mechanism used for the past few years, but it is being replaced by World Wide Web servers and Mosaic, which provide a graphic capability not previously available to many users. Mosaic, however, requires a workstation of considerable power to efficiently access and process the information

acquired. Display capabilities, transmission rates, image resolution, and the ability of the local network to move the data efficiently are important in providing print equivalent clarity. Libraries, with commercial information providers, must be very aware of the need to provide useful and effective methods of access and delivery that can be available to the broadest array of users. Ideally, libraries should also cooperatively seek to develop expert systems that take on some of the qualities of the reference interview in aiding users to navigate not only the electronic resources available to them but also those tools that remain in traditional print or media format.

The administrators of many institutions have begun to view resource sharing as a means by which to provide access to information and save money on library expenses. While this may have some limited validity, it is imperative that administrators of both the university and the library understand the implications and costs of resource sharing. It is not free and it does not absolve the local institution from supporting its own programs from an appropriately developed collection. It does provide additional resources that could not normally be acquired, but it also requires that each participant give something to the consortia in terms of materials and expertise.

Traditional interlibrary loan has specific activities that, in an effort to save patron and library time, have become heavily labor intensive. Each step may involve countless iterations as circumstances and conditions change. However, with the proliferation of publishing, the limitations of local budgets, and the need for rapid delivery to meet user expectations, it is time to develop new methods using the new technology available and the movement of much of the current responsibility of ILL to the patron and to other segments of the library.

In order to make resource sharing work, it is necessary to create an environment that maximizes access to local collections to enhance local use and to provide efficient indexing for those remote users who identify needed resources via Internet catalogs. Such an environment provides full retrospective cataloging of print and media collections and brings the established indexing methods of libraries to the resources available through electronic gateways, servers, and commercial sources. It provides better communication within the library and between the library and both the local and the remote user.

In order to take advantage of the efficiencies of automation, it is important that institutions that have traditionally shared programs, research initiatives, and other activities expand those traditions to encompass cooperative or shared networks. These networks, based on common needs and specific protocols and agreements, should allow for unmediated borrowing by authorized users. This would allow the primary needs of the user to be subsumed under the circulation func-

tion of the participating libraries rather than through the labor-intensive interlibrary loan process. It places the burden of identification and selection in the hands of the user. By sharing a common borrower database or by allowing interlibrary access to such databases, much of the verification and location labor involved in the ILL process can be decreased.

The current Virtual Electronic Library project of the Committee for Institutional Cooperation libraries seeks to begin this process across the thirteen member institutions using a Z39.50 common interface that will act like the local interface for the user, but it will cross multiple catalog platforms. While unmediated borrowing is not yet part of the program, it is certainly one of the advantages that could develop out of this project. In addition, the member libraries have long-standing resource sharing agreements that are now being enhanced through specific cooperative collection development programs.

Electronic resources have a variety of complexities that far outstrip those of traditional printed materials. Servers are springing out of the woodwork in libraries far and wide. While they allow for specifically tailored resource development and direction, they also have a multiplicity of delivery problems. The first and most important is the nature of the electronic text. A printed work is fixed and, even though later printings may change, it is comparatively easy to identify the variant editions. In the electronic world, the changes made to a text can be essentially endless and untraceable. There are no established standards for noting modifications made to a text, and such changes are not limited to authorized editors, authors, or others who are usually responsible for the content of a work. Anyone who wishes to collect and mount texts on a server can do so, and the text can be infinitely varied. The role of the library in the fixing of electronic texts and the retention of their variations is only beginning to be considered in the new electronic world. This may be the single most important issue facing libraries in the acquisition, retention, and preservation of the scholarly record in all its variations and variable formats.

The contribution of commercial providers of information, particularly faxed or scanned images of journal articles with subsequent delivery to the scholar's workstation, is already having a major impact on both services and collections. As more materials become digitized and, in many cases, available only in electronic form, the nature of the historical data available for long-term access and use may be radically altered. It is imperative that libraries begin to address their role in future information retention and preservation. The massive cancellation projects carried out by libraries as journal prices have spiraled out of control during the past decade have led to reliance on

these commercial providers and have enabled libraries to make decisions based on use intensity rather than on the nature of the use of specific journal titles. The danger in relying on commercial providers, however, comes over time. To what extent can libraries and their users rely on the provision of images or digitized forms of information, and to what extent will these "backfiles" be maintained? Can we depend on them for twenty or thirty or more years of access? The same issue is true in CD-ROM bibliographic databases. To what extent can we be format dependent when the access to the information may shift radically every few years? Many of these sources are available only for lease, and the library thus retains no backfiles when the title is cancelled. This is a strategic limitation in providing access to the historical record.

As budgets become tighter still, libraries are again debating the issue of who bears the cost of access to information. Clearly, the local collection remains available at no cost to its users. But access to externally maintained resources becomes another matter. Does the library, and the institution, look to the efficiencies of electronic delivery as a means to increase productivity of students and faculty or as a way to support a cost recovery program? Does it use access fees to provide even more library services and materials or as a way to mitigate costs? And how does the scholarly process address the issue of equal access to information for all, no matter the income or economic resources of the user? To some extent, the academic library can limit its "free" access to its primary users; however, depository-, state-, or other government-supported libraries may not be able to limit access in such ways. If pricing becomes governed solely by time or frequency of use, then equal access may no longer be a viable approach to information. It is surely an issue of great importance in the democratic tradition of American librarianship.

Should all these developments in the provision of information directly to the user come to pass, then what happens to interlibrary loan? ILL needs to be able to concentrate on locating those resources that cannot be identified in any reasonable way through electronic networks; to acquiring those special and important items that may make or break a dissertation; and those items that lead to significant developments in scholarly insights. ILL is still an important function and will remain so as long as the object itself is required for scholarly study. It may become obsolete in a generation, as predicted by Ra (1990), but as long as printed works remain necessary to scholarly or personal study, then ILL will have a role in library services (p. 149). It would be nice to allow it to return to the function for which it was designed and get ILL out of the long-distance circulation business.

In order for this to happen, resource-sharing agreements must be developed in both broad and specific contexts and be accepted and supported by all those who participate in, or whose collections are affected by, them. Institutions and their libraries must see each other as partners and not as competitors. It is particularly difficult when institutions have similar or related programs and see themselves as competing for the same faculty, students, and grants, but such programs are not always the same, and cooperative efforts can begin to expand the resources available within the consortium for such programs.

For effective resource sharing, not just opportunistic title by title borrowing, the participants in such a cooperative program must be able to rely on each other for the stated aims of the program, have regular and effective communication methods, and have the support of the library administration and teaching faculty in each subject area. The institution and the library must maintain the primary collection for their local needs no matter what riches are available to them through resource sharing. The one flaw in all resource sharing assumptions by administrators is the expectation that they will save money. They won't. If there is no collection, you cannot share it. And the aim of resource sharing is to enhance the wealth of the national collection and thereby support and expand the scholarly record for local users.

Technology has become an impetus to the cooperative process and certainly provides new and enhanced means of sharing information resources. The collection may be in a variety of formats and in fact may become almost entirely electronic. However, the collection is still the heart of the matter, and if there is no collection there is nothing to share. And while all these technological marvels are taking place, libraries will still be checking out best sellers and arcane tomes. We will still be giving directions to the drinking fountain and locating the latest information on epigraphical squeezes. Our responsibilities have not disappeared, and they have not decreased. Rather, the need to own and to access information requires selectors to consider the ever-narrowing boundary between immediate local ownership and needs that can be filled by remote "ownership."

As means of access improve and broaden, library users will care less about where an item was obtained and more about the speed of delivery, whether from a remote storage facility or a library in the next state. Osborne(1990) has postulated "an evolving kind of collection management wherein the fundamental considerations are global accessibility, rather than local ownership, and the generic book, rather than the paper codex; wherein scholarly communication, rather than librarianship, is our business, and the distinctions between information and knowledge have a new importance" (p. 30).

As many library administrators have noted, libraries are what we can measure. In the new world of information communities and methodologies, it is imperative that we find new and creative ways to define and measure our "collections," for they no longer live in our local buildings or on our local computers. Our new collections live across the state, the nation, and the world. The challenge is to develop organizational models that allow us to bring these far-flung collections to our users and to provide mechanisms that enhance their abilities to find the information resources they need, whether it is satellite weather data, a study of Cistercian monasteries, or the latest mystery by Sara Paretsky.

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