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Collaborative Librarianship: A Historical Sketch, an Appreciation and Thanks

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Abstract

Collaborative Librarianship moves to its next phase of development as new editors take the helm and the publishing platform moves from Open Journal Systems to the publishing suite of Digital Commons. The new home for management of the journal will be the University of Denver. Thus far, the journal has followed a path of development that has seen steady, impressive growth in readership and, while the geographical focus of the publication remains on the United States, participation of authors and readers has become world-wide. Following a historical sketch of the formation and early development of the journal, members of the team, past and present, are acknowledged and thanked.

Introduction

As *Collaborative Librarianship* moves to a new phase of service to the profession under the editorship of Jill Emery and Michael Levine-Clark, now is an optimal time to chronicle the development of the journal from its earliest days and record deep appreciation to all who have participated in the creation, management and operations of the journal since its inception.

Beginnings

Exploring the possibility of creating a scholarly journal emerged from an ad hoc conference in Denver, Colorado in June, 2005 that brought together librarians, academic leaders and government representatives to talk about the crisis in funding and other resource issues facing academic libraries in Colorado. This meeting, centered on "The Changing Face of Higher Education," was sponsored by a relatively new organization, the Colorado Academic Library Consortium (CALC), formed in 2002 following some initial meetings the previous year. While participants were aware of the strong tradition of collaboration among libraries in Colorado, it became clear how much libraries of the future will depend increasingly on their ability to engage and sustain collaboration in forging new and creative modes of partnerships.

Consortium Support

Following the June conference, the CALC Board met in October, 2005, to develop an "action agenda" for the organization with the top priority being to "change the concept of the academic library." First on the addenda, "Goal 1," was to "Promote academic library cooperation and partnerships" with three strategies: 1) host summits; 2) publish an academic online journal on this theme, and 3) foster closer understanding and cooperation among existing library organizations in the State. Over the coming year, George Jaramillo, Assistant Dean for Administrative Services at the Morgan Library, Colorado State University, and Ivan Gaetz, Dean of Libraries at Regis University, agreed to work on developing a detailed proposal for publishing an online journal.

A proposal was presented to the CALC membership at its annual meeting in April, 2006. In order to foster new thinking about academic libraries, a journal on "cooperative librarianship" should focus on all types of interlibrary cooperation and publish material that contributes to the analyses, understanding, critique and promotion of collaboration among all types of libraries and with non-library agencies. It was recommended that the publication would encompass not only scholarly material but also "best practices" related to library cooperation, reviews of publications and products supporting collaboration, and news items highlighting inter-library cooperation. It was suggested that the journal could



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also include, or link to, discussion groups or blogs on related themes, and embed podcasts that profile library collaboration in some way. The proposal provided a literature review of published material on library cooperation and on creating an online journal, and identified links to relevant existing online journals. While many articles dealt with library collaboration, as well as a few monographs on aspects of library service collaboration,¹ according to research by the journal development team, no journal existed, scholarly or professional, devoted specifically to library collaboration. This was surprising given how important collaboration has been for libraries, and its increasing significance for library resources and services.

In 2007, the only two journals published on the theme of library collaboration were the Taylor & Francis titles, *Resource Sharing & Information Networks (RSIN)* and the *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserves (JILLDDER)*. *RSIN*'s checkered publication history included a gap of three years between volume 18 in 2005 and volume 19 in 2008, and then finally its "incorporation" into *JILLDDER* in 2010. *JILLDDER* had a stronger publication record with annual volumes published consistently from 1990 through 2007 (and continues to the present). Each journal differs considerably from the CALC journal proposal. Both *RSIN* and *JILLDDER* focused on important but narrowly targeted library services, while the proposed journal envisioned a larger scope of issues that includes not only service-related collaboration but also how libraries work with other units of the organizations or communities they serve, programs of various kinds that deepen or extend the reach of libraries, personnel partnerships, exploration of the nature of library collaboration itself, best practices in library collaboration, and partnerships with non-library organizations. In the spirit of collaboration, the editor of *RSIN* was contacted with the offer to refer articles to her should the topic be more suited to that journal, and with a note that the CALC journal would be pleased to consider articles submitted to *RSIN* that were beyond its narrower scope.

While no formal needs assessment was done related to establishing a journal on library collaboration, the lack of published material on this broad topic, as well as professional opinion and anecdotal evidence regarding the importance of collaboration, pointed to the need for a journal of this nature. Other literature was consulted during the "proof of concept" phase of the project. This included several articles on scholarly publishing in an electronic environment and several online scholarly journal publications in librarianship and related fields.² Of the myriad project-related conversations throughout the library community in Colorado and beyond, there were no voices opposed to the idea, but only support, and much sage advice.

Team Formation

The co-developer of the journal proposal, George Jaramillo, retired unexpectedly in October 2006. This caused the project to languish for about a year as possibilities for a journal were re-thought and a new approach was considered. In October, 2007 a "Call for Participation" was issued to libraries and library consortia throughout Colorado. Nine senior librarians and library leaders expressed interest and attended the first organizational meeting held at Regis University on December 19, 2007.³ Discussion centered on the need and feasibility of starting a journal on library cooperation, the elements of the project to be developed, including a team of peer reviewers, an editorial or advisory board, technical aspects such as securing a URL, domain name and software platform, and scope of the journal—solely peer review, non-peer review, or some combination thereof—and development of a business plan. This meeting proved to be the most significant step in actually bringing the journal to reality. The target date for the inaugural issue was late January, 2009, at the American Library Association (ALA) mid-winter conference to be held in Denver.

Over the ensuing months, meetings were held every six to eight weeks, and the number of participants expanded as the project took clearer form.⁴ At the General Meeting of CALC in May 2008, Gaetz presented an update on the journal proposal. A great deal of thought and discussion was given to a name for the new publication. At



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this meeting, Liz Bishoff, representing the University of Colorado at Boulder, suggested that “collaboration” be used rather than “cooperation” in reference to the journal since this was emerging as the better, more descriptive term. During a journal team meeting later in May, Michael Levine-Clark, a senior librarian at the University of Denver, suggested the title for the journal be simply *Collaborative Librarianship*;⁵ everyone heartily agreed. The mission statement of the journal was also crafted, “*Collaborative Librarianship* publishes scholarly and professional writing on the nature, methodology, promotion, practice and concerns of why and how libraries, librarians and library consortia work together and work with partners beyond the library community to advance the creation, collection and dissemination of information.”

Other important steps in journal development ensued based on recommendations of various working groups. The “Technology Group” confirmed the viability of using Open Journal Systems as the platform and they moved to secure a domain name. The “Content Group” recommended the journal meet the requirements of the SPARC Europe Seal and thus use Creative Commons licensing that reflects the ethos of the Budapest Open Access Initiative. It was agreed that content of the journal would include sections for scholarly peer review articles and for non-peer reviewed articles that reflect best practices, provide reports, and present interviews. Taking the lead from the *Charleston Advisor* (CA), a member of the team, George Machovec, who also was a member of the editorial team of CA, suggested the non-peer reviewed section be called “From the Field.” The “Marketing Group” recommended the establishment of an “Advisory Board” that would lend credibility to the new publication and help promote the journal.⁶

A business plan developed in November 2008 outlined expenses anticipated for the initial years of publication, 2008 through 2010. Costs associated with the start-up were very modest, approximately \$2,000, that covered ISSN and domain name registrations, creation of a logo, promotional material and office expenses, and expenses of the ALA “launch” celebration. Various libraries and organizations in the area pro-

vided project grants that more than met expenses. These included the Colorado Academic Library Consortium, the Colorado Library Consortium, the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, University of Denver, Regis University, University of Colorado at Boulder, and Colorado State University. While monetary costs were small, the most significant expenses, however, were the hidden costs of time and expertise of the editorial/management team that, in effect, were in-kind donations of the various home institutions. George Machovec, representing the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, offered to host the OJS software on one of its servers.

Launch

The journal launch took place Saturday, January 24, at the ALA Mid-Winter Conference held at the Denver Convention Center. Many members of the editorial team were able to attend as well as some members of the Advisory Board. Volume 1, number 1 was a publication modest in content, to say the least. It consisted of one scholarly “introductory” article, two “From the Field” articles, an interview with Advisory Board member, Camila Alire, who also was ALA President at the time of the launch, a report on an interlibrary loan conference, and one review. The ensuing year saw publication of three additional issues. By May of 2010, with Volume 1 complete and the first issue of Volume 2 released, the “views” count was over 16,000, and the “views” for the News section (a blog linked to the journal’s web page) topped 10,000.



Figure 1. Ivan cutting the cake at the launch reception.

Collaboration Through and Through

Creation of *Collaborative Librarianship* would not have occurred without a team that understood collaboration and was committed to its principles. That is to say, the journal team had to “practice what it preached.” This meant endorsing and implementing what Valerie Horton, Co-General Editor of *CL*, identifies as “deep collaboration.” She explains, “deep collaboration is two or more people or organizations contributing substantial levels of personal or organizational commitment, including shared authority, joint responsibility, and robust resources allocation, to achieve a common or mutually-beneficial goal.”⁷ This is expressed in various ways.

First, a wide scope of collaboration occurs with the Advisory Board assembled to provide expertise and advice. These library leaders from the United States and other parts of the world offer their advice and moral support for the journal. Collaboration with the Advisory Board most recently found expression in the development of a succession plan for the journal and a strategy for sustainability.

Second, on the practical level, the editorial team represents the strongest expression of collaboration through shared authority, joint responsibility, and robust resources allocation. Early in the development of the journal, in-person meetings were held quarterly to discuss article content and other aspects of journal management, such as promotion, marketing and recruitment of team members as well as authors. This was always done through building consensus. In this way, the team collectively took responsibility for the establishing, developing and ensuring the success of the journal. And everyone shared generously in giving their time and expertise in the various operations of the journal they believed themselves to be best suited. To some degree, the depth of collaboration and the synergy that is needed and experienced in these face-to-face meetings has been somewhat diminished as the journal team over the past seven years became more geographically dispersed and thus not able to meet in person other than at large conferences such as those of the American Library Association. Should it have been possible,

it would have served the interests of collaboration, especially the deep collaboration that is needed, to continue regular meetings in person.

Third, the journal’s sponsoring institutions represent deep collaboration both in terms of financial support and in allocation of personnel resources. While requirements for financial support are rather modest given the relatively small costs of publishing solely online, when additional funds have been needed, especially in the initial phases of establishing the journal, these partner libraries and organizations were always very supportive in donating funds. They also permitted and encouraged their employees, librarians and non-librarian staff, to become involved in the journal. The number of worker hours donated over the years, although not formally tracked, is significant, and really has made the journal the success it is today.

Collaboration does not just happen when a good or great idea emerges. It takes a great deal of understanding and intentionality to foster this type of collaboration. Communication, respect, appreciation, and seven full years of publication, four issues per year, resulted in 249 published articles (many of them fully peer-reviewed), columns, reviews, and opinion pieces, and news items. Well over 500,000 “views” have been generated, and with each new issue, the journal generates about 25,000 new views. These include, remarkably, steady increases to the view counts of every article published to date. If *Collaborative Librarianship* were a purchased print publication, it undoubtedly would be in the “best seller” category.

The Future

Following a discussion at the 2014 ALA Annual Conference in Las Vegas of the need to develop a plan for the future of the journal, it was decided to take the route of “succession planning.” Advisory Board members, Todd Carpenter and Stephen Abram, agreed to join Ivan Gaetz in exploring various options for the future that would include changing or expanding the editorial team, probing new initiatives in marketing, and generating greater numbers of quality article submissions. In the spring of 2015, a call was issued through various online avenues to those



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who may be interested in stepping into new roles with the journal. This generated some response, but in conversations with senior members of the library leadership team at the University of Denver (DU), including Library Dean, Nancy Allen, and Associate Library Dean, Michael Levine-Clark, it became clear that the University of Denver could become the institutional home of *Collaborative Librarianship*. This would enable outreach to new contacts that could lead to reconstituting the editorial team and adopting a new publishing platform. At the 2015 ALA Annual Conference in San Francisco, Gaetz presented this plan to the editorial team assembled; it was passed unanimously. To confirm this decision, other members of the editorial team and the Advisory Board unable to attend this meeting were invited to offer perspectives and opinion over the summer. With no dissenting voices and no substantial changes to the plan, it was adopted.

The plan is to make the official transfer of management and operations of *Collaborative Librarianship* to the University of Denver on January 1, 2016. The new Co-General Editors will be Michael Levine-Clark, now Acting Dean of the Libraries at DU (following the retirement of Nancy Allen in September, 2015), and Jill Emery, Collection Development Librarian at Portland State University.

Under new leadership, the first issue of *Collaborative Librarianship*, Volume 8 (2016) will appear using the publishing platform of Digital Commons. Given the extensive professional networks of both Michael and Jill, it is expected that many other librarians will join this rather remarkable project of library collaboration. All persons interested in joining in this exciting avenue of open access, scholarly publication are encouraged to contact the general editors to discuss opportunities.

Note of Appreciation and Thanks

This historical sketch leads naturally to expressions of appreciation and thanks to those many librarians and staff who were involved in the beginnings of *Collaborative Librarianship* and to those who have worked in various roles, giving

freely of their time and talents, over various periods of time, that brought the many issues of the journal to publication on a regular basis.

These include members of our **editorial and management team**, past and present: George Jaramillo, Joe Kraus, Chris Sugnet, George Machovec, Jessica Colati, Pam Blome, Steve Fisher, Barbara Losoff, Valerie Horton, Michael Levine-Clark, Janet Lee, Jeff Bullington, Cory Tucker, Greg Robl, Chris Brown, Brenda Bailey-Hainer, Sue Visser, Lisa Priebe, Lauren Cantwell, Brandy Lachocki, Steve Bosch, Christina Carter, Greg Pronevitz, Jo Hunter, Jim Duncan, Anne Abate, Samantha Hines, Abigail Goben, Anna Propp, Carrie Moran, Lori Ayre, Mitchell Davis, Nicole Engard.

Our **Advisory Board**, past and present, includes: Stephen Abram, Camila Alire, Shimelis Assefa, Brenda Bailer-Hainer, Christine Brandau, Deirdre Brennan, Todd Carpenter, Timothy Cherubini, Lourdes David, George Jaramillo, Barbara Jeffus, Jésus Lau, David Stewart.

Sponsoring organizations include: University of Denver, Regis University, Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, Colorado Library Consortium, University of Colorado at Boulder, Denver Public Library, University of Wyoming, Colorado School of Mines, University of Colorado Health Sciences, Colorado College.

Much appreciation goes to each person and organization for making the journal the success it is and for contributing in significant ways to the profession of librarianship.



Figure 2. Slideshow display at the 2009 ALA Midwinter Conference.



Endnotes

¹ Material published on library collaboration prior to 2007 (when the concept of the journal was being developed) include: Burgett, J., Hear, J. and Phillips, L. L. (2004), *Collaborative Collection Development. A Practical Guide for Your Library* (Chicago: ALA); Raspa D. and Ward, D. eds., (2000) *The Collaborative Imperative: Librarians and Faculty Working Together in the Information Universe* (Chicago: ACLR); Farber, D. "Faculty-librarian cooperation: A personal retrospective," *Reference Services Review* 27: 229-234; Petrowski, M. J., Baird D. and Leach, K., (2000) "Building a successful collaboration: Colgate University's Collaboration for Enhanced Learning," *College & Research Library News* 61: 1003-1005; Scott, W. (2000), "Engelond: A model for faculty-library collaboration in the information age," *Information Technology and Libraries* 19/1:34-41; Yang J. and Frank, D. (1999) "Working effectively with scholars: A key to academic library success," *Georgia Library Quarterly* 36/2: 25-29; Chu, T. F. (1995), "Collaboration in a loosely coupled system: Librarian-faculty relations in collection development," *Library & Information Science Research* 17: 135-150; Murray, J. W., et al. (1997), Faculty and librarians collaboration: The road to information literacy for graduate students," *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 8:107-121; Winner, M. C. (1998), "Librarians as partners in the classroom: An increasing imperative," *Reference Services Review* 26/1: 25-29; Bunker, G. and Zick, G. (1999), "Collaboration as a key to digital library development: High performance image management at the University of Washington," *D-Lib Magazine* 5/4:1-15. Of course, there are many other accounts of successful library partnerships with other community (civic, academic, no-profit, for-profit) organizations. The point to be made: while there is a good number of research studies, case studies, and reports on library collaborations, in 2008, according to the investigations of the journal development team, there was no journal, scholarly or professional, that was devoted to this theme. It was surprising to discover this, given the importance collaboration of library development and services, and the increasing importance it was acquiring.

² Literature consulted includes *The Journal of Electronic Publishing*, in particular articles by Arms W. A., "Quality control in scholarly publishing on the web," Kling, R., Spector L. and McKim, G., "Locally controlled scholarly publishing via the Internet: The guild model"; Brown, G. and Irby, B. I., "Initiating and editing and online professional refereed journal," and Ferris, S. P., "Writing electronically: The effects of computers on traditional writing," all in Volume 8(1) (2002): (http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jep/3336451.0008.1?*rgn=main;view=fulltext); *Issues in Science & Technology Librarianship*: <http://www.istl.org/about.html>; *Resource Sharing & Information Networks* <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/wrsi20/current>; *Journal of Documentation*, <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journal/jd>; *Vectors: Journal of Culture and Technology in a Dynamic Vernacular*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vectors:_Journal_of_Culture_and_Technology_in_a_Dynamic_Vernacular; *BioOne* <http://www.bioone.org/>.

³ Participants at the inaugural meeting were: Joe Kraus, University of Denver, Chris Sugnet, Colorado State University, George Machovec, Colorado Alliance, Jessica Colati, Colorado Alliance, Pam Blome, Colorado School of Mines, Steve Fisher, University of Denver, Barb Losoff, University of Colorado (Boulder), Valerie Horton, Colorado Library Consortium, and Ivan Gaetz, Regis University.

⁴ Additional early participants in the project included Janet Lee, Regis University, Chris Brown, University of Denver, and Michael Levine-Clark, University of Denver, Jeff Bullington, Colorado State University, Cory Tucker, University of Nevada, Las Vegas and Greg Robl, University of Colorado (Boulder).

⁵ Information from meetings of CALC and of the journal team comes from files of the Co-General Editor of *Collaborative Librarianship*, Ivan Gaetz.



⁶ The Technology Group consisted George Machovec, Joe Kraus and Chris Brown; the Content Group, Barb Losoff, Chris Sugnet and Janet Lee, and the Marketing Group, Valerie Horton, Pam Blome, Steve Fisher and Ivan Gaetz.

⁷ Valerie Horton, "Going All-in for 'Deep Collaboration'," *Collaborative Librarianship*, Vol 5, no. 2 (2013): 66

