Review of Public Libraries, Archives and Museums: Trends in Collaboration and Cooperation

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This report from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions is a useful overview of the recent trends in collaboration between public libraries, archives, and museums. International examples include projects from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom as well as Russia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Italy, Spain, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. The study identifies three trends in collaboration: collaborative programming, partnerships to create digital resources, and joint use or integrated facilities. The report is structured according to these trends with several case studies for each. In most of the groupings, the examples are drawn primarily from Canada and the United States. However, seven of the nine electronic resource sharing case studies (on the national level) are from countries other than the U.S. and Canada. These cases reveal an interesting diversity of approaches that range from the German BAMportal, meant to provide a unifying portal to digital resources, to the National Library of Australia's PictureAustralia that serves as a national repository for digital images.

The report includes a guide to collaboration comprised of selected examples, criteria for selection of these examples, guides to best practices, benefits and risks of collaboration, and suggestions for risk management. This guide also offers a detailed five-stage plan for a successful collaboration from start to finish. Further, it also includes additional, special considerations for collaborative electronic resources that focus on the planning and design stages.

Unfortunately, no attention is given to the maintenance and preservation of these digital resources once they are created. While it is not the focus of this report, some consideration to preservation of and continued access to these collaborative projects merits attention, as constant technological change demands it.[1] Aside from this lapse in the digital best practices guide, the report offers several illustrative examples from a wide range of libraries, archives, and museums around the world. It provides a valuable international perspective on collaborative projects and may serve as a useful starting point or as a point of comparison for projects already underway.

References

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[1] Interested readers may turn to two publications:

Marcum and Friedlander's "Keepers of the Crumbling Culture What Digital Preservation Can Learn from Library History," *D-Lib Magazine* Vol. 9, No. 5 (May 2003) for a general introduction of the importance of digital preservation and a perspective grounded in library history. http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may03/friedlander/05friedlander.html

Jeremy York's "This Library Never Forgets: Preservation Cooperation, and the Making of HathiTrust Digital Library," *Archiving 2009 Final Program and Proceedings* (May 2009) for a case study of an academic collaboration in digital resources and preservation. http://www.imaging.org/IST/store/epub.cfm?abstrid=42870