The Collaborative Shift Has Happened!

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What a difference five years can make. Collabo-
rative Librarianship launched in January 2009 and we are about to start our fifth volume. We have built a strong literature base with over 135 arti-
cles, reviews, columns, and editorials examining many aspects of collaboration in libraries. Look-
ning over the last five years of journal content, it is clear that our profession’s view of collaboration has been evolving.

When this journal started, our profession was open to developing new forms of collaboration. As Adrian Alexander has said, “the history of library cooperation is as long as the history of professional librarianship in America…”1 Looking over the past five years, some truly remark-
able collaborative projects have become estab-
lished, including:

- large scale digitization efforts like Hathi Trust or the soon to be release Digital Public Library of America, (See v1, n4 Conner and v4, n2 Prilop for articles on digitization)
- creation of statewide e-book sharing collec-
tions in states like Wisconsin and Kansas, (See v3, n4 Heather L. Wicht)
- or the widespread adoption of open source, consortia-based, union catalogs using Koha or Evergreen (See v1, n2 Dykhuis)

In fact, Marshall Breeding in Library Journal’s 2011 Automated Marketplace article predicts, “greater participation in larger-scale shared automation systems of consortia or statewide systems” in the coming years.

What is driving all these new collaborations? We are recognizing and accepting the new reali-
ties of library life in the 21st century. First we saw that students and other researchers weren’t using library catalogs and websites as the “go to” place to find information. According to OCLC’s groundbreaking “Perceptions of Libraries 2010,”2 information consumers choose Google two-thirds of the time as their top choice for starting a search, a startling growth of 84% in five years. Second, the Great Recession changed our belief that we could maintain the financial models that worked in the past. (See v1, n4 Bullington’s “Tough Economic Times Call for More Library Cooperation”), or look at the number of consortia that have closed, merged, or transformed in the past five years. Third, like expanding ripples in a pond, our frustrations with lack of true interoperability among a host of software platforms we used reached a wider and deeper boiling point. (See v4, n3 Ayre’s “Holding Your Vendor’s Feet to the Fire”).

SHIFT HAPPENED

Our profession has become willing to look at much more profound and fundamentally ground-breaking collaborations. We are now demanding our vendors provide us with the collaborative functionality we need to succeed. The shift can be seen in the development of Kuali Ole and their choice of “intentional col-
laboration” as a “strategic” decision. From their web site, “Kuali OLE … features a governance model in which the entire library community can collaborate to own the resulting intellectual property.”3 This shift can also be seen in the 2012 announcement4 discussing Orbis Cascade’s decision to move 37 libraries to a union-catalog, cloud-based next generation library service platform (see the John Helmer interview in this is-

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Endnotes


3 http://kuali.org/ole