

2015

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Recommended Citation

Pronevitz, Greg (2015) "Consortial Ebook Platforms: An Update and Good News," *Collaborative Librarianship*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol7/iss1/8>

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Consortial Ebook Platforms: An Update and Good News

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I welcome you to *Collaborative Librarianship's* new column: "Consortial Conversations." I am your co-columnist, Greg Pronevitz. I am the Executive Director of the [Massachusetts Library System](http://masslibsystem.org) (MLS), a state-funded multitype collaborative with about 1,600 member libraries in all corners of the Commonwealth, with a staff of 25 FTE, and a governing board comprising 15 member library representatives. Valerie Horton, Director of Minitex, and I will alternate as your columnist in every other issue of *Collaborative Librarianship*.

Before I dive into the ebook platform topic for this issue, I would like to explain why we chose the title, "Consortial Conversations." We decided to write this column based on discussions and information gathered from our colleagues in the field. We encourage your input, participation, and feedback and we'd love to hear from you about your reaction to these columns and/or your thoughts on themes for future columns. I have a couple of ideas for future columns in mind and welcome your suggestions on two topics: 1) The state of the art in sustainability for consortial digital libraries, and 2) The benefits of participating in and/or managing a small consortium vs. a large consortium. You can reach Greg at 508-357-2121 x303 or greg@masslibsystem.org and Valerie at mail-to:vhorton@umn.edu.

Homegrown Ebook Platforms

On to the homegrown ebook platforms! Today's column is based on information gathered at library conference meetings, telephone calls, the writings of library leaders, a brief survey conducted in August 2014, and Massachusetts' aspirations to launch a statewide collaborative

ebook platform called "Commonwealth eBook Collections."

Many consortial librarians are discussing and working on shared ebook platforms. We've been thinking about it seriously in Massachusetts since May 2012 when Jamie LaRue spoke at a conference in Worcester called "Resource Sharing Unbound." He lit up the room with excitement and inspired a widespread call to action for a shared statewide ebook platform embracing the themes of the Douglas County Libraries' own platform—ownership, fair prices, and user-friendliness. Jo Budler, Kansas State Librarian, inspired us when Kansas invoked a transferability clause to move content from one ebook aggregator to another platform. Since that time much has occurred in this arena in Massachusetts and elsewhere.

I recently wrote a letter of support for an IMLS grant to fund the Library E-Content Access Project (LEAP). This project is centered at the New York Public Library (NYPL) and includes strong collaboration with the Digital Public Library of America and several other large ebook platform projects. It is a follow up to NYPL's Library Simplified (<http://www.librarysimplified.org/>) project. The grant proposal calls for close collaboration to develop extensive community outreach and consensus building with librarians, publishers, and other e-content providers around important activities, including:

- expanding the technology to multiple platforms;
- building a public domain content library;



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- enhancing technology for social networking and accessibility;
- exploring interest in a shared, nonprofit, national ebook exchange or marketplace.

This work will incorporate guidance from the Radium Foundation (<http://readium.org/>). This foundation develops technology to accelerate adoption of the EPUB3 and Open Web Platform by the global digital publishing industry, including allowing access to the visually handicapped.

LEAP screams for further exploration and your support! Consolidating library investment for developing ebook technology and platforms makes sense. We can build on the innovations developed by early adopters in Colorado, California, and at Amigos. It is my hope that this column will raise awareness about this project to increase participation and support. LEAP could be a game changer for libraries and I believe it has the potential to benefit 21st century libraries as much as, or more than, OCLC's shared cataloging advances did in the 20th century.

Once it became clear that a statewide effort to provide ebooks in Massachusetts was a viable direction, I had discussions with others looking at a national approach including Michael Porter (President of Library Renewal) and blogger David Rothman (LibraryCity blogger <http://librarycity.org/>). Both saw the economies-of-scale inherent in a national effort. David Rothman recently repeated his call for a library-centric ebook ecosystem in a posting on the privacy issues surrounding Adobe software and ebooks (<http://www.librarycity.org/adobes-laxness-with-e-book-data-shows-the-need-for-a-library-controlled-ecosystem-for-library-e-books/>).

I was inspired to get more involved in a national solution when I attended ALA's program, Library Leadership in a Digital Age, in 2013. John Palfry, a co-founder of DPLA, currently Headmaster at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, spoke about DPLA's need to develop sustainable funding and mentioned that one avenue under exploration was developing an ebook platform for libraries. I am pleased to see that DPLA recently announced generous funding from the Sloan Foundation to start an in-depth discussion about ebooks and their future, and what DPLA and its partners can do to help push things forward (<http://dp.la/info/2015/02/23/lets-talk-about-ebooks/>). I am excited about the opportunity to join this conversation at DPLAfest 2015 in Indianapolis where it appears on the agenda (<http://dplafest2015.sched.org/>) at multiple sessions.

Several other forums for discussion of consortial ebook platforms have been launched. Our friends at Reaching Across Illinois Libraries (RAILS) led the formation of the American Library Association, ASCLA (Association of Specialized and Collaborative Library Agencies) Consortial eBook Interest Group (<http://www.ala.org/ascla/asclaourassoc/asclainterest/list#groups>), where we meet regularly to share information in our consortial ebook world. Updates on the DPLA and NYPL projects will be discussed in June at ALA in San Francisco. For several years now, a group of interested consortia have joined forces to promote ebook collaboration between libraries and publishers at the Book Expo America event. A multiconsortial approach to library advocacy with ebook publishers has been part of the annual Power of Libraries (<http://www.booklistreader.com/2014/05/28/libraries/the-power-of-libraries-booth-at-book-expo/>) exhibit at the Book Expo America conference in New York City. A leader in consortial ebook implementation, Heather Teysko, Direc-



tor of Innovation and Development, at Califa, hosts a blog, “Library eBook Projects” (<http://libraryebookprojects.blogspot.com/>), to share information in the field.

I have had the pleasure of meeting many leaders who are working on more local and statewide homegrown solutions and on other consortial solutions at library conferences over the past couple of years and would like to share some brief information about these projects.

Homegrown Solutions

Back in Colorado where the homegrown ebook concept began at Douglas County Library (DCL), a new statewide approach, called “e-voke Colorado” (<http://www.evokecolorado.info/>) is in development. This new infrastructure is designed to break through library ebook restrictions and provide enhanced and expanded ebook access to users of more than 90 libraries that participate in two shared integrated library systems: AspenCat and Marmot, as well as DCL. A commercial provider, Odilo, is also involved as a vendor with this project.

A number of consortia and libraries are following a path similar to Douglas County Library. Califa launched a DCL-model platform as the first statewide ebook platform created by libraries for libraries called the “enki Project” (<http://califa.org/enkiproject/>). Now enki provides access to thousands of titles from some 200 publishers to more than 80 California libraries with hundreds of branches as well as to libraries throughout the state of Kansas.

Amigos Library Services, a multistate, multitype consortia in the Southwest, recently launched the Amigos “eShelf Service” (<http://www.amigos.org/eshelf>) to provide ebook options to members, including hosting and circulation; negotiations with publishers; and support for local and independent authors.

This platform is not hosting a shared collection; rather libraries may purchase local copies for their patrons’ use. The pilot test for users is imminent.

Queens Library is developing apps to enhance access to digital content at one of the busiest libraries in the country. They have announced the opportunity to allow other libraries to use these apps (<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/11/technology/as-app-gains-traction-queens-library-considers-vending-to-other-libraries/#>).

Homegrown-like Platforms

NC Live (<http://www.nclive.org/browse/ebooks>), a multitype consortia, has launched a new project called “Home Grown eBooks” to provide fiction and non-fiction titles from North Carolina publishers (see article in this issue by Jill Morris, “Home Grown eBooks”). This project uses a commercial platform hosted under a contract with BiblioLabs.

The projects noted here are on the leading edge of ebook platform development. They incorporate elements of commercial technology combined with homegrown software/systems. All are designed to enhance the user experience and create efficiencies to benefit libraries and consortia. These local development experiences will provide invaluable input to the ebook future for consortial participants and managers as we move forward. I believe that by joining forces, working and investing together, we can take the best from what our innovators have already done and combine it with future development to design and build technology and processes that will allow libraries to build closer relationships with content providers and to most effectively deliver the content patrons want.



Web Resources: Homegrown Consortial Ebook Projects

enki Project (Califa) <http://califa.org/enkiproject/>

e-voke Colorado <http://www.evokecolorado.info/>

Kansas State Library (Jo Budler, State Librarian)

<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/01/people/joanne-jo-budler-2013-librarian-of-the-year/>

Library Simplified (New York Public Library) <http://www.librarysimplified.org/>

Queens Library

Apps <http://connect.queenslibrary.org/>

Vending Apps <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/11/technology/as-app-gains-traction-queens-library-considers-vending-to-other-libraries/#>

Consortial Ebook Projects (without homegrown platforms excluding OverDrive)

Arizona <https://library-journal.biblioboard.com/?partnerId=dbca0917-b261-44aa-af46-e9610c14d6b3>

Connecticut <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/06/digital-content/state-ebook-library-coming-to-connecticut/>

Massachusetts: Board of Library Commissioners (state library agency) – eBooks for Everyone with links to shared platforms and Boston Public Library eCard

<http://libraries.state.ma.us/pages/eBooks/>

Commonwealth eBook Collections <http://guides.masslibsystem.org/ebooks?hs=a>

NC Live <http://www.nclive.org/browse/ebooks>

Reaching Across Illinois Libraries (RAILS) – eRead Illinois <https://ereadillinois.com/>

Other Resources

ALA, ASCLA, Consortial eBook Interest Group

<http://www.ala.org/ascla/asclaourassoc/asclainterest/list#groups>

Amigos eShelf Service <http://www.amigos.org/eself>

Digital Public Library of America (DPLA) <http://dp.la>

Library Renewal <http://libraryrenewal.org>

LibraryCity (David Rothman's blog) <http://librarycity.org/>

Readers First <http://readersfirst.org/>

Radium Foundation <http://readium.org/>

