

2009

About ICOLC and the ICOLC Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses

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Recommended Citation

Bullington, Jeffrey (2009) "About ICOLC and the ICOLC Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses," *Collaborative Librarianship*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 4 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol1/iss4/7>

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About ICOLC and the ICOLC Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses

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Abstract

The International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) and its role in library consortial approaches to content acquisition is briefly explained. A copy of its most recent statement on the global economic crisis and the resulting implications for libraries' budgets is also provided.

About ICOLC

Starting as the Consortium of Consortia in 1997, ICOLC (International Coalition of Library Consortia) is an informal community of nearly 150 library consortia from around the world, and helps facilitate discussions among consortia on issues of common interest. Purchasing, licensing, or otherwise acquiring information content is a major activity that libraries undertake via consortia approaches. Therefore, ICOLC has over the years issued Statements of principle, perspective, or guidelines addressing various dimensions of content acquisition, archiving, and pricing. The most recent of these, from January 2009, addresses the current economic environment, its impact on libraries and their available resources, and was issued as a means of communicating to the publishing industry some of the dynamics, needs, and choices that libraries will have to address with regards to their content acquisitions over the next few years. This "Statement of the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses" is reproduced (with permission) in this issue of *Collaborative Librarianship* to share with readers the principles and ideas contained therein. The editors of *Collaborative Librarianship* fully support ICOLC's statement and feel that it adds valuable context to the summary of the Alliance Sustainability discussions in *From the Field*. Additional information on ICOLC can be found at the ICOLC page: <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/>.

ICOLC Statement

INTERNATIONAL COALITION OF LIBRARY CONSORTIA (ICOLC)

Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses

January 19, 2009

Written on behalf of the many library consortia across the world that participate in the ICOLC, this statement has two purposes. It is intended to help publishers and other content providers from whom we license electronic information resources (hereafter simply referred to as publishers) understand better how the current unique financial crisis affects the worldwide information community. Its second purpose is to suggest a range of approaches that we believe are in the mutual best interest of libraries and the providers of information services.

The ICOLC library consortia consider the current crisis of such significance that we cannot simply assume that libraries and publishers share a common perspective about the magnitude of the crisis and the best approaches to cope with it. ICOLC members have been exchanging perspectives about how the current economic recession will impact consortia and their libraries. We make the following forecasts about the impact of this crisis on libraries and library consortia.

1. We expect significant and widespread cuts in budget levels for libraries and consortia: reductions unlike the sporadic or

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regional episodes experienced from year to year, with real and permanent reductions to base budgets. It may not be uncommon for library and consortia budgets to decline by double digits year over year. We have yet to see the full effects, as many 2009 journal and database subscriptions have already been renewed. As of late 2008, many institutions have declared significant budgets cuts in all areas (content, staff, and operations) for 2009. Some consortia are experiencing significant economic impact in the current fiscal year; by calendar and fiscal 2010, the cuts will be in full force and widespread.

2. These cuts will be prolonged. The public and education sectors will likely lag in funding recovery. Once funding is withdrawn over multiple years, it will be years before budgets climb back toward pre-crisis levels.

3. Exchange rate fluctuations are complicating and in some cases amplifying the impact.

We encourage publishers to recognize these fundamentally different circumstances as we work together for the benefit of all parties. Library consortia are uniquely positioned to be the most effective and efficient means to preserve the customer base for publishers and create solutions that provide the greatest good for the greatest number. By working together, publishers and consortia can create the most effective pricing and renewal options and maintain the broadest base of subscribing libraries and services.

While we cannot be prescriptive where solutions are concerned, we suggest the following principles and techniques as likely to be the most effective approaches.

Principle 1: Flexible pricing that offers customers real options, including the ability to reduce expenditures without disproportionate loss of content, will be the most successful. In stable times, standardized pricing and terms may work relatively well. Today, purchasers will be under heavy pressure to reduce their outlays and need solutions that let them do so while continuing to offer as much content and service as possible. It is in the publisher's best interest that we avoid all-or-

nothing, take-it-or-leave-it decisions and options, whose lack of flexibility is likely to result in far greater damage than is absolutely necessary.

Principle 2: It is in the best interest of both publishers and consortia to seek creative solutions that allow licenses to remain as intact as possible, without major content or access reductions. Content, once discontinued, will be very difficult to reinstate at a later date. While there may be practical limits to this principle, publishers, authors, scholars, and libraries will be best served by those solutions that retain as much access to as much content as possible.

With these two principles in mind, we suggest the following approaches:

1. *Purchasers will trade features for price; that is, we can do without costly new interfaces and features.* This is not a time for new products. Marketing efforts for new products will have only limited effects, if any at all. Libraries will have few if any resources to invest in new titles or more content elements. Publishers who work with the scholarly communities to understand what content is critically needed will be the most successful.

2. *Putting price first will help all parties, because budget pressures will drive decisions in a way never seen before. Real price reductions will be welcomed and can help to sustain relationships through the hard times.* Even increases at inflation levels will not be supportable by many groups and libraries. Other approaches and options must be considered and made available. Some options may be uniquely created to take advantage of local situations. Therefore:

3. *Tailoring content to need and pricing accordingly can be very helpful.* For example, customized approaches that look to usage patterns as the basis for an adjustment may be equitable for all parties. In the case of tiered pricing schedules, applying this flexibly to core content packages in combination with more affordable pricing for single titles may create another affordable option. Multiple, creative options are needed so that library

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consortia can work with their members to fashion the optimal purchase level.

4. *Multi-year contracts will be possible only with clear opt-out and/or reduction clauses.* As difficult as these clauses can be, the only alternative for many institutions will be year-to-year (or even shorter term) licenses. These increase the administrative overheads for all parties and may encourage further reductions. Additionally, opt-out clauses must as well recognize the need for a flexible set of reduction techniques that avoid penalizing customers in either the long or short term.

5. *While annual payments currently are the most prevalent payment schedule for group licenses, options will be needed for semi-annual or quarterly payment schedules, in combination with more flexible opt-out/reduction clauses and renewal cycles.* Libraries and consortia may have very little warning of changes in their budgets. Payment options are a necessary precaution in light of rapidly changing financial circumstances and expectations.

* * *

In combination, we suggest these approaches as a way to advance the conversations among libraries, consortia and publishers, who all hope to preserve existing relationships, provide as much information to users, and generate as much business as budgets will allow. We believe our recommendations provide a solid foundation for the information community, including the publishers of scholarly information, to go forward together in these difficult times.

The current situation may in the long term serve as a catalyst that challenges publishers, scholars and libraries to create a system that will more efficiently produce and disseminate the growing output of global scholarship.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THIS STATEMENT, PLEASE CONTACT:

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Adopters of This Statement

This statement is adopted in principle by member representatives of consortia of the "International Coalition of Library Consortia" (ICOLC) that are listed below.

As of January 20, 2009 (this statement with updates to this list will be posted periodically to

<http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia>.

CAUL (Council of Australian University Librarians)	Australia
Electronic Resources Australia	Australia
UNILINC Limited	Australia
Austrian Academic Consortium (Kooperation E-Medien Oesterreich)	Austria

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Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de la communauté française de Belgique - Belgium	Belgium
Flemish Research Libraries Council (VOWB)	Belgium
Bibliocentre	Canada
BC Electronic Library Network	Canada
Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)	Canada
Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec (Conference of Rectors and Principals of Universities of Quebec) - CREPUQ	Canada
Council of Atlantic University Libraries	Canada
Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL)	Canada
Health Science Information Consortium of Toronto	Canada
OCUL (Ontario Council of University Libraries)	Canada
Saskatchewan Multitype Database Licensing Program	Canada
Denmark's Electronic Research Library, DEFF	Denmark
FinELib	Finland
COUPERIN (Consortium universitaire des publications numériques)	France
HEAL-Link (HELLENIC ACADEMIC LIBRARIES Link)	Greece
JULAC (Joint Universities Librarians Advisory Committee)	Hong Kong
Iceland Consortium	Iceland
MALMAD - Israel Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services	Israel
Conference of the Italian Rectors - Electronic Resources Working Group	Italy
Coordinamento Interuniversitario Basi dati & Editoria in Rete (CIBER)	Italy
INFER - Italian Forum on Electronic Resources	Italy
Lebanese Academic Library Consortium (LALC)	Lebanon
Lithuanian Research Library Consortium	Lithuania
eIFL.net	Multi-national
Consortium of Dutch University Libraries and the National Library (UKB)	Netherlands
ABM-utvikling (The Norwegian Archive, Library and Museum Authority)	Norway
Norwegian Health Library Consortium, The	Norway
PFSL (Poznan Foundation of Scientific Libraries)	Poland
Fundação para a Computação Científica Nacional (FCCN)	Portugal
NEICON	Russia
Centralna tehniška knjižnica Univerze v Ljubljani (The Central Technological Library at the University of Ljubljana)	Slovenia
COSEC (Consortium of Slovenian Electronic Collections)	Slovenia
CBUC-Consorci de Biblioteques Universitàries de Catalunya / Consortium of Academic Libraries of Catalonia	Spain
BIBSAM	Sweden
Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries	Switzerland
CONCERT - CONSORTIUM ON CORE ELECTRONIC RESOURCES IN TAIWAN	Taiwan
ANKOS (Anatolian University Library Consortium)	Turkey

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TUBITAK ULAKBIM EKUAL	Turkey
JISC Collections	United Kingdom
Reference Task Group (RTG) of the Co-South Consortium	United Kingdom
ALI (Academic Libraries of Indiana)	USA
ALICE (Adventist Library Information Cooperative)	USA
Amigos Library Services	USA
Arizona Universities Library Consortium (AULC)	USA
Boston Library Consortium, Inc.	USA
Califa Library Group	USA
California Digital Library (CDL)	USA
California State University - Systemwide Electronic Information Resources	USA
CARLI (Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois)	USA
Carolina Consortium, The	USA
City University of New York	USA
College Center for Library Automation	USA
Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries	USA
Colorado Library Consortium (CLiC)	USA
Community College Library Consortium (CCLC)	USA
Cooperating Libraries in Consortium (CLIC)	USA
Federation of Kentucky Academic Libraries (FoKAL)	USA
Florida Center for Library Automation	USA
GALILEO	USA
Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA)	USA
INFOhio - The Information Network for Ohio Schools	USA
LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network	USA
Maine InfoNet	USA
Maryland Digital Library	USA
Michigan Library Consortium	USA
MINITEX Library Information Network	USA
Missouri Library Network Corporation (MLNC)	USA
MOBIUS Consortium (Missouri)	USA
NC LIVE	USA
NELINET	USA
NELLCO	USA
NERL (NorthEast Research Libraries Consortium)	USA
Network of Alabama Academic Libraries	USA
Nevada Academic Library Consortium (NCAL)	USA
New York State Higher Education Initiative	USA
New York Three Rs Association	USA
Nylink	USA
OhioLINK (Ohio Library and Information Network)	USA
OHIONET	USA

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OPLIN (Ohio Public Library Information Network)	USA
Orbis Cascade Alliance	USA
PALINET	USA
PASCAL (Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries)	USA
Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortium, Inc. (PALCI)	USA
SAALCK (State Assisted Academic Library Council of Kentucky)	USA
SCELC, the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium	USA
SOLINET	USA
Tenn-Share	USA
TexShare	USA
Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN)	USA
University of Missouri Library System	USA
University of Texas System Digital Library	USA
Virtual Academic Library Environment of New Jersey (VALE)	USA
VIVA (The Virtual Library of Virginia)	USA
Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC)	USA
Washington State Cooperative Library Project	USA
WiLS (Wisconsin Library Services)	USA

About the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC)

The International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) has been in existence since 1996. The Coalition is an international, informal group currently comprising approximately 200 library consortia in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Asia, and Africa. The member consortia serve all types and sizes of libraries. ICOLC facilitates discussion among consortia on issues of common interest, and conducts one meeting per year in North America and one meeting per year in Europe. The organization is dedicated to keeping its members informed about electronic information resources, pricing practices of electronic publishers and vendors, and other issues of importance to consortium directors and governing boards. The Coalition also meets with the information provider community

to discuss product offerings and issues of mutual concern.

More information about ICOLC can be found at <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia> or contact Tom Sanville, Executive Director, OhioLINK, Suite 300, 2455 North Star Road, Columbus, OH 43221, Phone: 614-728-3600, ext. 322; tom@ohiolink.edu

ICOLC, "Statement on the Global Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Consortial Licenses", January 19, 2009. <http://www.library.yale.edu/consortia/icolc-econcrisis-0109.htm> (Viewed August 2009)