Partnerships and Collaborations

Maine is a small state with a long history of scarce resources, of "making do," and of "helping your neighbor." The state's libraries are a prime example what can be achieved to maximize resources through partnerships and collaboration. As James M. Jackson Sanborn and David Nutty point out in their lead article, Maine libraries have "worked together historically and across library types in ways uncommon to other states." Their article discusses how collaborations have worked for Maine libraries for decades, though a combination of cultural and geographic factors, strategic leadership, and state policy decisions. They note that the collaborative efforts of Maine libraries have led to successes that "are truly remarkable and often unique in the U.S." The remaining articles in this section provide examples of successful collaborations of various types. David Richards discusses the Margaret Chase Smith Library in Skowhegan, which he terms "a unique collection fostered by a history of collaboration." Richards describes the vital role collaborations with multiple kinds of partners have played in helping the library fulfill its four functions: archives, museum, education, and public policy. Matthew Revitt presents details of a recent grant-funded project underway among Maine libraries to develop a shared strategy for managing, storing, and preserving their print collections at a time of decreasing resources and technological changes. The goals of the project also include expanding access to digital book collections and developing print-on-demand and e-book-on-demand services. Finally, Jan Coates presents a case study of how Island Readers and Writers collaborated with local libraries in the Mt. Desert Island area to encourage reading and community engagement through two "Big Read" events.

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Maine Libraries:

A History of Sharing and Collaboration

By James M. Jackson Sanborn and David J. Nutty

Collaboration among Maine libraries is extraordinary. In a profession in which cooperation and collaboration are commonplace and valued, libraries in Maine have worked together historically and across library types in ways uncommon to other states. Through a combination of cultural and geographic factors, policy decisions, and strategic leadership, these collaborations have worked for Maine libraries for decades. Further cooperation has been encouraged by the state's policy decisions as an acknowledgement that the libraries in the state need to share resources to provide better access to the citizens of Maine. This article will explore the history of this cooperation as well as current and potential future collaborations.

EARLY MAINE LIBRARY COLLABORATION

A 1961 report by then Harvard University Library Director Keyes D. Metcalf on *Cooperation Among Maine Libraries: A Report Prepared for the Larger Libraries of Maine* begins by noting that "An informal group representing the larger libraries of Maine has been meeting from time to time for a quarter of a century" (Metcalf 1961: 3). Further, a *Maine Library Bulletin* from 1917 outlines a 1915 plan to create a "Union List of Serials" from the journal collections at eight of the largest libraries in the state. The referenced libraries in the *Bulletin* were two state-supported institutions (University of Maine Orono, Maine State Library), two public libraries (Bangor Public Library, Portland Public Library), three private colleges (Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin), and the Bangor Theological Seminary (Maine State Library 1917). That would date statewide cooperation discussions to the 1910s, likely among the earliest of such statewide discussions in the country. This demonstrates a deep-rooted tradition among Maine libraries that continues to the present day.

The 1961 Metcalf report observes, "Since libraries in the State of Maine are as isolated from large collections in other parts of the country as any group of libraries…it is evident that researchers in the State are sorely handicapped, and it is not strange that the libraries have considered cooperation in order to increase local resources." He goes on to recommend four types of cooperation: "1) joint storage; 2) cooperation in various aspects of what is sometimes known as bibliographic control; 3) joint acquisition programs, and 4) inter-library use" (Metcalf 1961: 7). Librarians today will immediately recognize these as still relevant topics more than 50 years later.

Nearly a decade after Metcalf's report on cooperation, Maine Governor Kenneth Curtis appointed a taskforce to study library services. Among its recommendations were "coordinated planning at all levels, with each type of library and across library types" (Governor's Task Force 1971: 29). As a result of the report, a law was passed in 1973 authorizing the creation of the Maine Library Commission (MLC) and gave the MLC responsibility for designated Area Reference and Resource Centers (ARRCs), two major policy decisions to encourage cooperation.

The commission created three ARRC library districts. The Northeastern Maine Library District, served by the Bangor Public Library, includes seven counties covering 18,629 square miles and a population of about 409,000. The Central Maine Library District, served by the Maine State Library (MSL), includes seven counties covering 9,490 square miles with a population of more than 440,000. The Southern Maine Library District, served by the Portland Public Library, includes two counties covering 1,842 square miles and a population of about 479,000. Serving each of these districts is a district consultant who is housed at the ARRC library in each region and is funded by the Maine State Library. Each of these consultants has developed an advisory board drawn from the leadership of the public libraries in their region.

Gary Nichols, who was appointed state librarian in 1969 and served until 2009 (earning him the distinction of longest serving state librarian in the

country) recalls that it was the early leadership of the larger libraries group that spearheaded these collaborative efforts (Nichols personal communication). The fact that both public and private institutions and both academic and public libraries were the ones providing leadership is itself remarkable. To this day, most states segregate consortia by library types and Maine remains one of the few examples encompassing all libraries.

To some extent, libraries have been innovative and cooperative because the state is small in population and underresourced, which promotes working together.

FACTORS PROMOTING COOPERATION AMONGST LIBRARIES

A number of factors can be identified as contributing to library cooperation in Maine. To some extent, libraries have been innovative and cooperative because the state is small in population and underresourced, which promotes working together. The cultural roots of northern New England promote an attitude of "helping your neighbor" and sharing resources. The large geographic spread of Maine, with much of the state sparsely populated, promotes both independence and a simultaneous need to work together. Financial resources for libraries tend to be thin, which results in an inclination to want and need to cooperate.

Geography

There is a geographic-centric gathering of library resources. One can count on one hand the "major" collection resources in the state. Sharing resources because of scarcity is an important theme of Maine libraries. There has been little choice but to share, which creates incentives for cooperation rather than competition. To this end, various policy decisions have been undertaken to support and implement resource sharing.

While quite large in land mass, Maine is small in other ways. Few states can say that they can get all the "key players" together on a topic around one table. The scale of Maine is in its favor as there are fewer players and fewer "personalities." There is an opportunity to work with, get to know, and share with librarians who tend to be consistent in their policies and actions over time. Decisions on library direction and cooperation are in the hands of relatively few stakeholders, with minimal bureaucracy.

Collections

The first attempts at drawing together statewide resources was the creation of a "union catalog" of periodicals and serials in the early 1970s in the paper card catalog era. A major step in collection sharing arose in the early 1980s with the implementation of a union catalog on the then cutting edge technology of CD-ROM. As infrastructure improved and networks became established, the University of Maine System was an early adopter of integrated library system (ILS) software from Innovative Interfaces (III), which was introduced in 1988. Through a combination of planning and fate, III was the chosen vendor for other automation in the state, including the private colleges, Portland Public Library and others. Over the years, this commonality of III software allowed for a high degree of integrated borrowing across libraries in the state, including direct patron initiated borrowing, which was a major boost for library cooperation and sharing.

Library Leadership Culture

The long history of collaboration and notable successes along the way has created in each generation of library leadership an awareness of the special nature of collaboration within the state. This in turn creates a commitment, even a sense of duty, to building on this success. As a profession, librarians talk to each other. Unlike some academic pursuits where individual achievement is paramount, there seems to be a universal feeling that libraries work best when they work in partnership with other libraries. School and public libraries often work together, recognizing that their constituencies often overlap. Academic libraries

recognize that their success is, in part, dependent on the work accomplished with children and students by school and public libraries long before those individuals set foot on campus. This understanding of shared service and commitment to overlapping patrons has resulted in institutions that are generally not territorial but are egalitarian in attitude.

Maine State Legislature

The supportive role of the Maine State Legislature is another significant factor. Gary Nichols observes that when he would discuss his work with the Maine State Legislature, his colleagues from other states would marvel at the accessibility and sensibility of the state legislature. Nichols found that working with legislative leaders and various legislative committees offered a more personal relationship than other states seem to have (Nichols personal communication). Because there are a large number of small, independent libraries in Maine, the legislators are aware of the strong connection between these libraries and their communities. Legislators are accessible, which makes for an easy attitude of cooperation and airing of opinions around library issues.

Computers and Technology

As the advent of computers and automation systems brought major changes to libraries of all sizes and types, the challenge was how to assist Maine public libraries in adopting and increasing the use of computers and technologies that were new expenses. How would Maine libraries make this transition? The answer was through further collaborations: leadership by the Maine State Library, coordination at the state level, and cooperation among libraries. The breakthrough came in 1995 when the Public Utility Commission (PUC) had a large rate case with NYNEX (now Verizon). Through diligence in ensuring libraries had a seat at the table of these discussions, the Maine State Library was able to become an "intervener" on behalf of schools and libraries. In settling that case, the PUC ordered NYNEX to allocate up to $20 million over a five-year period to provide telecommunications equipment, rates, or service to Maine schools and libraries (Nichols 2005). The result was the Maine School and Library Network (MSLN), which offered assistance to public libraries with Internet connectivity, computers, and training. Welch (this issue) provides a more extended discussion of the history and outcomes of the MSLN.

After the settlement period ended, the legislature created the Maine Telecommunication Education and Access Fund (MTEAF). Through this program, all telecommunications carriers in the state contribute to a shared fund. These two policy events were enormously important to schools and libraries. The program was strengthened further in 2002 when state law was amended to add "content," opening the door to statewide contracts for databases and full-text delivery as an eligible service. The PUC's public policy support of Maine libraries has been critical for citizen access to technology and resources.

FORMAL AND INFORMAL LIBRARY COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

As a result of the factors discussed earlier in this article and through both conscientious planning and happenstance, a large number of library partnerships have grown to manage and promote collaboration across all sectors of libraries in Maine. Some of these partnerships are focused on specific projects and technologies; others bring libraries that share common goals or characteristics together for the shared good.

Maine Library Commission (MLC)

The Maine Library Commission is an important and unique public policy body. The MLC, a 17-member board appointed by the governor, is broadly representative of the state's library community. The commission establishes the policies and operations of the state library, gives advice and makes recommendations on the expenditure of state and federal funds, and establishes guidelines for statewide library programs. The mission of the MLC is to "advance and promote library services and collection resources for all of Maine" (Maine Library Commission 2010: 6). To promote this inherently collaborative mission, the Maine Library Commission acts principally through its guidance of the Maine State Library and has set a number of goals, including advocating for all libraries within the state and for improving library services available through the state.

In 2010 the commission was granted rule-making authority by the Maine State Legislature. This allows the commission to create definitions and standards that libraries must adhere to in order to receive support from the state library. The request for rule-making authority was a direct result of the understanding that in order to build a cooperative network, you have to have a policy-making body to represent it.

With the sharing and leveraging of resources, there is the need to make sure all stakeholders have a "voice" at the table. Commission member seats are designed to represent various types of libraries and users across the state, including seats allocated to public, academic, school, and institutional libraries, along with seats reserved for libraries from the various regions in the state and seats representing special needs/disadvantaged users of libraries. Maine is among the only states that have a governor-appointed commission to represent all areas and users of libraries on a statewide basis.

Larger Libraries

As noted before, the early emergence of the larger libraries as leaders with the unique mix of various library "types" and the public/private mix is a direct statement for working together. The larger libraries group is an *ad hoc* association of those libraries in the state that are the largest in terms of collections, staff, and capacity to support library activities beyond the confines of their own organizations. Current participants in the larger libraries group comprise the two largest libraries from the University of Maine System, Fogler Library at the University of Maine and the University of Southern Maine libraries (USM); the Maine State Library; the two largest public libraries in the state, Bangor Public Library and Portland Public Library; the University of New England Library; and the libraries from Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin colleges. Individually, each of these libraries has the resources to act as an island unto itself, but leadership from each institution has made the conscious decision that working together not only benefits the individual institutions and the partnership, but also libraries across the state that do not have the resources available to these larger libraries. Rather than interpret their charge narrowly, the University of Maine and the USM libraries see a mandate to serve the citizens of the state beyond their organizational walls.

The leadership of the Maine State Library in the development of the collaborative nature of libraries across the state has been discussed earlier, but cannot be overstated. The role that Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin (CBB) have played has also been vitally important. These top-ranked, private liberal arts colleges have a history and philosophy of community service that not all of their national peer institutions share. CBB take a proactive role to the state and the community, and share their resources in ways that other private liberal arts colleges may not. In Maine, the libraries of the CBB group have been and are library leaders, not insular, but rather open and supportive of all types of libraries in the state. The private colleges acknowledge that all gain when resources and expertise are shared and supported. Finally, the two large public libraries that participate as part of the larger libraries group act in many ways to support libraries and residents of the state far beyond their municipal boundaries.

District Liaison Committee (DLC)

Arising as a direct result of the establishment of the district consultants that serve the three Maine library districts, a joint tri-district meeting was held in 2008. These meetings in turn led to the formation of a joint, *ad hoc* committee known as the District Liaison Committee (DLC) (District Liaison Committee 2012). The DLC brings together the three district consultants, two members of each district's advisory boards, and the state librarian. This committee has worked to coordinate the activities of libraries in each of the three districts. They have also completed a series of interviews that resulted in a set of recommendations presented to the Maine Library Commission. Among other items these recommendations outlined a suggested definition of "Maine public library" and encouraged the establishment of a rule requiring public libraries to submit an annual report to the commission as a prerequisite for receiving services from the state library. Moving forward, the DLC has set goals to facilitate the establishment of a statewide integrated library system; to encourage existing library entities to work together more efficiently; to review the ARRC model; and to support the development of a Maine Library

Leadership Institute charged with developing the next generation of library leaders in Maine (District Liaison Committee 2012).

Maine Library Association (MLA)

The Maine Library Association (MLA) is perhaps the oldest library partnership in the state, having been established in 1891 with the expressed intent of promoting library interest in the state. A member organization, the current goals of the MLA revolve around supporting the professional growth of librarians and library staff individually and taking part in lobbying and legislative advocacy on issues affecting libraries. The most visible activity performed by the MLA is coordination of a statewide conference that brings together librarians for professional development as well as formal and informal networking that can help foster partnerships and mutually beneficial working relationships between libraries across the state.

Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL)

As implied by the name, the Maine Association of School Libraries (MASL) is focused primarily on promoting the value of school librarians and strong library programs within schools. MASL helps school libraries share resources to provide professional development opportunities for school librarians and library staff. They also maintain an outreach and advocacy presence devoted to raising the profile, perceived value, and support for effecting school library programs in all schools of the state.

HSLIC: Maine Health Science Libraries & Information Consortium

The purpose of HSLIC is to coordinate cooperative and collaborative efforts among health science libraries in Maine. According to the "Purpose of HSLIC" page on their web site, its current goals are to "promote health science libraries and librarianship, share knowledge and experiences in library operations and resources," provide continuing education, and promote resource sharing (http://nahsl.libguides.com). HSLIC has also worked as a purchasing consortium jointly negotiating licensing and subscription fees for databases and journals on behalf of its member libraries.

MARVEL! Service

The MARVEL! service developed as a direct result of the legislative action mandating that the aforementioned MTEAF support the delivery of content to the citizens of the state. Although not an organization, MARVEL! is a prime example of many libraries working together to provide access to resources that individual libraries would find difficult or impossible to provide on their own. The MARVEL! service provides every resident of Maine access to more than 70 databases comprising millions of full-text articles and citation and abstract information from newspapers, magazines and journals covering all topics. If licensed individually, the value of the resources provided in these databases would be more than $700,000 per public library (http://libraries.maine.edu/mainedatabases/about.htm). Along with funds coming directly from the MTEAF, MARVEL! also receives direct funding from the Maine State Legislature, from the Colby, Bates, and Bowdoin libraries, along with funding from the collections budgets of the University of Maine library and the Maine State Library. Technical support for the service is provided by Maine InfoNet, a consortium of libraries that will be discussed later in this article. Through working together, Maine libraries and government provide critical library resources to all citizens of Maine.

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URSUS Libraries

The libraries that make up the URSUS consortia consist of the seven universities of the University of Maine System, the Maine State Library, Bangor Public Library and the Maine Law and Legislative library. This group came together in the mid-1980s with the

goal of sharing a library catalog. Through a successful competitive process, a shared system was purchased from III, one of the first such systems furnished by that company.

The URSUS libraries have intentionally worked to create a partnership based on more than the sharing of a catalog system. Over the years, URSUS has jointly subscribed to databases at considerable savings over individual subscriptions. URSUS libraries have also thought of the strength of their combined collections referring to them as "Eleven Collections—One Library." Funding for the URSUS catalog system comes from the University of Maine System, with auxiliary services supporting the partnership, such as database subscription, resource delivery, and catalog enhancements, coming directly from the pooling of funds from the member libraries. URSUS provides three and a half FTE positions to Maine InfoNet, and in return receives technical support and management for the URSUS catalog system, the shared and individually subscribed database system, and support for digital projects. The URSUS directors meet 10 times per year to plan, set policy and set consortia goals. URSUS also has several standing committees of library staff that promote cooperation and conversations around areas of service.

Maine InfoNet provides efficient, cost-effective services and systems far beyond the means of the individual libraries it serves.

Minerva

As the result of a 1996 state bond package, a number of projects and partnerships were established with the goal of improving the technical infrastructure of Maine libraries. A direct result of this activity was the creation of the Minerva shared catalog system. The system was also developed using software provided by III. Although started simply as a type of purchasing club with library collaboration as a secondary goal, Minerva now comprises 56 member libraries spanning public, academic, hospital, and school institutions.

As awareness grew that technological cohabitation within a single software service was more involved than simply sharing a system, the Minerva consortium developed a leadership and organizational structure. This now includes a general users council, a member-derived executive board, and numerous standards committees focused on aspects of cataloging, circulation, membership, and statistics. This structure was formally recognized in 2007 through a memorandum of understanding between the Maine State Library, Maine InfoNet, and the Minerva executive board. Over the course of its existence, Minerva has achieved a level of collaboration that is far beyond many similar shared systems, an achievement notable for its spanning of multiple types of libraries.

The key component of this collaboration has been acceptance of a principle of open lending which requires that all members share materials with patrons of the other member libraries as if they were patrons of their own library. With few exceptions, all material that circulates to a library's own patrons is allowed to circulate at the direct request of another library's patrons. Over the years, Minerva has also grown to include contracts for auxiliary services not directly related to the system software but imperative for smooth function of the partnership. While the direct costs of the system and of the auxiliary services are paid for jointly by all library members through annual dues, the technical support and management of the catalog system is maintained by the staff of Maine InfoNet without direct funding from Minerva to Maine InfoNet.

Balsam Libraries

A dozen libraries primarily in the western and central region of the state have banded together to implement a shared catalog system using the open-source software known as Evergreen. This group has formed the Balsam libraries and has worked together to offer a cost-effective solution for library automation. The need for this shared system arose in part due to the inability of the software and organizational structure of existing shared automation systems, such as Minerva, to continue to grow effectively and to offer services at a cost accessible to many of the smaller libraries in the

state. The Balsam libraries currently share a system but do not currently share library books through request and delivery in the manner of Minerva.

Maine Shared Collections Strategy

The Maine Shared Collections Strategy (MSCS) brings together eight of Maine's largest libraries, plus Maine InfoNet, in an effort to create a strategy for the shared management of print collections in the state. Under this three-year project, funded in part by a national grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), libraries will collaborate to make decisions about the storage, retention, and preservation of print materials (both books and journals) and to look for ways to integrate digital editions into a statewide catalog. This will help alleviate space concerns while ensuring that users continue to have equal or greater access to the information. Policies and procedures that result from this grant will provide a model for a statewide collection strategy as libraries adapt to new collection priorities. The MSCS is discussed in more detail by Revitt (this issue).

Maine InfoNet

Maine InfoNet is a prime example of a multifaceted, multitype library consortium. First established in 1996 and formalized in 2006, Maine InfoNet acts in a variety of ways to support library partnerships and collaboration across the state. Maine InfoNet functions first as a technology and automation management and support organization, and as an umbrella organization charged with oversight of several statewide projects. Maine InfoNet is also a consortium of consortia supporting the activities of other groups such as Minerva and URSUS. Staffing for Maine InfoNet is provided through a partnership between the Maine State Library and the University of Maine System. Through its governing board of directors, which draws from libraries of all types from across the state, Maine InfoNet is a true collaborative of academic, public, school, and special libraries.

In its technology management role, Maine InfoNet administers MaineCat, the state's union catalog and resource sharing system. MaineCat brings together the resources from the 10 URSUS libraries, the 56 participants in the Minerva catalog, the catalogs of the CBB libraries, the Portland Public Library, the Maine College of Art Library, the Maine Maritime Academy, the University of New England, and a loose federation of 22 other libraries from across the state known as SOLAR. This system provides direct access to nearly five million unique titles representing nearly eight million items.

As mentioned earlier, Maine InfoNet also provides direct technical support for the URSUS libraries, the Minerva system, and for the SOLAR libraries' participation in MaineCat. Finally, Maine InfoNet is responsible for technical management and supporting access to the MARVEL! statewide electronic resources and databases. Maine InfoNet also manages the Maine Download Library, which is a member organization of more than 200 libraries from across the state that have pooled resources to share a system for providing electronically downloadable audiobooks and e-books directly to library patrons. The Download Library provides this service to libraries on a sliding scale basis at a cost that is significantly less than an individual library could provide for similar access. Maine InfoNet provides efficient, cost-effective services and systems far beyond the means of the individual libraries it serves. It has allowed many Maine libraries to stay current with technology and resources through collaborative funding and administrative structures.

THE FUTURE OF LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP

Given the plethora of official and ad hoc library partnerships and the several factors that have helped develop the strong sense of collaboration between libraries in the state, three key factors will determine the success of these partnerships: communication, coordination, and centralized funding.

As new issues arise, it is the default position of libraries in Maine that it is best to tackle them together. A prime example of this is the Maine Download Library. E-books and downloadable audiobooks are relatively new services that libraries individually are ill-equipped to handle. The technology, legal considerations, and business models are in an early, constantly evolving state, and it is difficult to predict what form this technology will take in the future and what role the library will be able to play. The Maine Download

Library grew out of a realization that by working together, libraries across the state could gain access to this technology without having to tap deeply into collections budgets and without having to dedicate enormous amounts of staff time to a stand-alone system. Although the combined investment is large, the investment of any of the 200 plus libraries that are currently members is on the order of an annual subscription, rather than a capital outlay. As similar problems face libraries in the future, the opportunity for combined participation is sure to continue to be the first course of action, rather than a fallback position.

With so many groups, it is often hard to know which might take leadership on issues of overlapping concern, such as library automation, or might manage a shared project, such as consortially licensing resources of interest to only a group of libraries. Simply keeping track of the various organizations, partnerships, and consortia active at any given time in the state can prove difficult. Maine libraries have a problem that many states and other organizations would be envious of: a wealth of partnerships, consortial activities, and communal good will.

Increased communication between the various groups that exist is of prime importance. Even in a state as sparsely populated and tightly-knit as Maine, it is easy to see how efforts could be duplicated without knowing what areas or issues other library groups are actively planning to address. Efforts toward increasing this communication are ongoing and have a good chance of success. Organizations such as the Maine Library Commission and the Maine InfoNet board of directors have considerable overlap in their membership, and updates from various organizations are routinely provided at meetings across the state. As an example, Maine InfoNet routinely provide updates to organizations such as HSLIC and has been invited to speak at events organized by the district consultants and the Maine Association of School Libraries.

Where increased communication merely takes conscientiousness and effort, coordination is a different matter. There is often an inherent conflict between coordination and local control. While some areas such as advocacy and professional development do not suffer from a lack of coordination since redundant activities serve as reinforcement, other areas such as library automation and statewide catalog systems do suffer from redundant expenditures, duplication of effort, and a lack of focus if overlapping activities are provided through multiple organizations. Furthermore, there are political and structural impediments to increased coordination. Although school libraries are represented by many of the organizations described above, policy and rule-making authority for school libraries resides with the Department of Education rather than the Maine State Library. Academic libraries are not centrally managed and function consortially only through the goodwill and efforts of their institutional leaders. Although public libraries fall under the watch of the Maine State Library, there is no statutory authority that would allow the state library to require participation in collaborative activity as each public library is governed by its own municipality, nonprofit board or other independent entity.

An example of an area where more coordination is warranted is in the provision of library automation services. Currently libraries can develop their catalog systems independently or with one of a number of partners such as Minerva, through grant-funded activity with the district consultants, or with *ad hoc* groups coming together to share a system. If policy were enacted that allowed central coordination of these activities, libraries could be offered a continuum of service that would support libraries of different sizes and resources in the manner most appropriate to their needs. For example small, nonautomated libraries in need of a basic catalog system would be directed to the consultants for support, while larger automated libraries could be absorbed into new or existing shared systems that are part of the larger MaineCat umbrella.

One factor explaining the need for greater coordination in certain areas is the lack of centralized funding for expansion of consortial activities. Although the path might be clear for establishing a coordinated effort, without centralized funding these efforts often fall short. Centralized funding can be established many ways. The Maine Download Library was established by requiring participating libraries to pay an annual membership. For the creation of MaineCat, state bond funds were used. Although consortial activity can effectively stretch the funds of participating libraries, it does not directly create its own new funds. Avenues

for tapping into funds beyond individual library support include application for grant funds, requests for bond funding, and requests for ongoing legislative funding. The first two of these avenues are the most appropriate ways to start projects and partnerships that will become self-sustaining. The latter option is most desirable when costs of managing and growing a partnership on an ongoing basis are beyond the means of simply pooling funds for operating expenses.

Maine libraries have clearly demonstrated a desire and willingness to work together. It is their first instinct, informed by history, policy and necessity. The outcomes of collaboration clearly demonstrate that the results are far greater than "going it alone." These efforts have led to successes that are truly remarkable and often unique in the U.S. To maintain these traditions, it will require wise policy decisions and continued strong leadership, combined with additional communication, coordination, and careful management of fiscal resources. Maine can be proud of its libraries and their spirit of collaboration and partnerships, which work to the great benefit of all Mainers.

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