

A Shared Approach to Managing Legacy Print Collections in Maine

By Matthew Revitt

Maine libraries are searching for innovative ways to deal with the many challenges they are facing today, such as lack of space and budget cuts, which have affected their ability to store legacy print collections. Growing evidence shows that many print materials were never checked out after being purchased. In addition, large-scale print digitalization projects are making many low-use titles available online. Maine's robust interlibrary loan system means that patrons have fast and easy access to materials stored in another Maine library. This allows libraries to discard material they can get from other reliable sources. However, the discarding process needs to be coordinated in a way to ensure that copies of the material are still accessible in Maine.

In 2010, nine Maine library partners submitted a grant application to the national Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to create the Maine Shared Collections Strategy (MSCS): Portland Public Library, Bangor Public Library, the Maine State Library, University of Maine, University of Southern Maine, Colby College, Bates College, Bowdoin College, and the initiative Maine InfoNet. IMLS approved the grant and released \$821,065 to fund MSCS. The partners also contribute matching cost

sharing funds. The grant is administered through the University of Maine and is overseen by a project team that represents the respective library constituencies.¹

The goals of the MSCS are (1) to develop a strategy for a statewide, multitype library program for managing, storing, and preserving print collections among public and private institutions to achieve greater efficiencies and extend the power of every dollar invested in collections and library facilities; (2) to expand access to existing digital book collections by developing print-on-demand (POD) and e-book-on-demand (EOD) services to support long-term management of a shared print collection and the integration of digital resources with print collections; (3) to formalize organizational agreements, establish a budget, and develop policies essential to the management of shared print and digital collections.

To meet these goals, we will analyze the libraries' print collections to identify title overlap, unique titles, and institutional subject strengths. Using library circulation statistics, we will analyze the usage of items in the collections. Based on factors such as subject strengths, storage space, online availability, and usage statistics, we will agree which material libraries will commit to retain and preserve. Partners will implement EOD and POD services via library catalogs and membership in digital cooperatives such as the HathiTrust. We will ensure that the MSCS extends beyond both the grant period and the original partners. With this in mind, we will define a sustainable business model that includes a financial model, governance structure, and a memorandum of understanding for sharing the responsibility of long-term stewardship of print collections. Finally, the partners will promote the findings of MSCS through presentations at conferences, the MSCS web site, and Twitter.

Although there are a growing number of shared print projects, MSCS differs from these projects in several ways. First, there is emphasis on retention and preservation of materials, particularly items uniquely held and especially those concerning Maine. Most similar projects focus on removal and weeding. A result of MSCS decisions will be that other libraries can weed their collections safe in the knowledge that the material will be preserved within Maine and remain accessible to their patrons. Second, there is a unique history of

trust between Maine libraries developed over decades of successful collaboration (see Sanborn and Nutty, this issue). Third, the MSCS has a primary focus on print monographs, since most projects thus far have concentrated on journals. Fourth, although most similar projects concentrate solely on academic library collections, the MSCS includes public libraries. Finally, the MSCS includes examination and consideration of “digital surrogates” for specific items to ensure better access for patrons and make space savings. 🐟

ENDNOTES

1. The MSCS Project Team consists of project principal investigators: Deborah Rollins, head of collection services, University of Maine; Clement Guthro, director of Colby College Libraries; Barbara McDade, director of Bangor Public Library; Technology Director James Jackson Sanborn, executive director of Maine InfoNet, and Matthew Revitt, program manager. For more information please see the MSCS web site <http://maineinfonet.net/mscs/>

REFERENCES

- Sanborn, James M. Jackson and David Nutty. 2013. “Maine Libraries: A History of Sharing and Collaboration.” *Maine Policy Review* 22(1): 52–61.



Matthew Revitt was appointed program manager of Maine Shared Collections Strategy in 2012. He previously worked as an independent records and information management consultant in Maine. Revitt sits on the American

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