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Collaborative collection development: current perspectives leading to future initiatives

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ABSTRACT

As academic libraries continue to face acquisition budget challenges, collaborative collection development (CCD) offers greater opportunities to fulfill the core role of library collecting and collection management, namely, to provide enhanced access to the widest variety of relevant resources in the most cost-responsible manner possible. Libraries have successfully implemented CCD projects of various types, and as a result, have achieved these needed cost savings. The authors conducted survey research to investigate current CCD activities and librarians' perceptions of its benefits, drawbacks, elements contributing to successful CCD programs, and possible obstacles to success. Library collections consist of a variety of material formats and librarians have applied CCD models to maintain needed access to these resources, shifting from ownership to access, all in support of building collective collections. The survey results found that, although challenges can exist, application of CCD activities have realized substantial benefits, financial and otherwise, for academic libraries overall.

Introduction

Collections are core to academic libraries' missions, and they have evolved as organizational missions have reflected changing institutions, patrons' needs, and service models. Academic libraries have shifted increasingly to electronic content and, in many cases, integrated patron-driven acquisition programs. At the same time, budget restrictions and funding model changes have further influenced the ways that academic libraries and librarians approach collection development, management, and strategies. Collections' access, costs, and space are long-standing concerns, though: The Farmington Plan sought to achieve collaborative collection development (hereafter CCD) nationwide in the mid-20th century. Although it did not last long-term, it offers a starting point for the CCD activities that continue today even as formats and needs have evolved.

In this article, the authors share their research on the current state of academic libraries' CCD. They began by using the extant literature on these practices to ground their research and designed survey research to understand academic librarians’ experiences with, perceptions of, and beliefs about CCD. The authors share the methods, relevant findings, and important takeaways about CCD in today's academic library. While this information can help librarians to understand the current state of these efforts, it can also illuminate useful ways forward and directions for future CCD efforts – especially as library budgets are reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic's wide-reaching economic impacts.

Literature review

The history of collaborative collection development

CCD in librarianship has a considerable history as a meaningful resource development practice. Its first widespread implementation was born out of necessity during the World War II-era, when major research libraries in the United States found access to monographs published in foreign countries severely restricted (Williams, 1961). The Farmington Plan was the result: a seminal cooperative collecting agreement among approximately sixty research libraries to divide collection responsibilities for specific subjects, geographical areas, and foreign languages (Wagner, 2002). The Farmington Plan was the result: a seminal cooperative collecting agreement among approximately sixty research libraries to divide collection responsibilities for specific subjects, geographical areas, and foreign languages (Wagner, 2002). The Farmington Plan had an extremely ambitious goal of major American research libraries cooperatively acquiring at least one copy of books published abroad that would be of value to American researchers (Johnson, 2004). The Farmington Plan ceased operating in 1972 for a variety of reasons but primarily due to the difficulties in financially supporting such substantial collection commitments balanced against more local needs for resources (Edelman, 1973; Gregory, 2019; Mirsky, Miller, & Lo, 1999). This was an early CCD lesson learned. This type of collaboration has to be a balance of meeting individual resource needs while recognizing the overall benefits gained.
from the development of shared collections (Jakubs, 2015; Reilly Jr., 2004).

In the 1980s, the Research Libraries Group developed the Conspectus, which sought to provide a collection assessment framework within which libraries could increase cooperative collection options by providing a “clearer understanding of collections, collecting efforts, and commitments” by partner libraries (Mosher, 1990, p. 327). Although the Conspectus initially offered great promise as a basic tool for CCD, its usefulness in assessing collections to act as a common framework for collaborative collecting diminished over time. It was laborious to complete and measurements of collecting levels in individual subjects and languages were seen as subjectively applied (Craig, 2010; Henige, 1987; White, 2008). The Conspectus is no longer widely used for collection assessment (Kohn, 2015) nor is it updated as a collection assessment tool (OCLC, 2016). Ultimately, the Conspectus’ creation and application did not translate into meaningful CCD activities (Strieb, 2016). Like the Farmington Plan, its usefulness had run its course.

Collaborative collection development approaches and considerations

Other CCD initiatives emerged in more recent times. For instance, academic librarians sought frameworks for consistent, intentional collaboration around collection development activities related to regional and national cooperation on legacy print collections (Kieft & Payne, 2010; Kieft & Reilly, 2009). Some librarians advocated for using emerging technological developments to create systems and partnerships for increasing access to information, whether locally owned or not (Hazen, 2010). Various approaches to CCD have emerged from these past and current foundations. In practical terms, these CCD considerations often generate consortial purchasing relationships for cost-sharing or savings (Pan & Fong, 2010; Scigliano, 2002). These consortia often develop around similar demographics, location, academic standing, or collection needs (Booth & O’Brien, 2011; Davis, Jin, Neely, & Rykse, 2012; Neal, 2011; Walker, Schoonover, & Margjoni, 2010). Other CCD approaches transform collection selection and management approaches to impact multiple libraries. For example, a centralized selection process for multiple libraries can foster more intentional collaboration in identifying materials and planning for resource sharing (Barstow, Macaulay, & Tharp, 2016; Currie & Greene, 2017). In other instances, particular focus areas or disciplinary needs drive collaboration (Oxnam, 2009; Richards & Peters, 2016). These collection collaboration options demonstrate that librarians have an array of approaches to most effectively meet their organization’s specific collection needs, issues, or interests.

While CCD offers a range of opportunities for libraries, such initiatives are not without issues. Cost-sharing and equity among partners are important concerns, especially across diverse library or institution types (Hoffert, 2006; Leon & Kress, 2012). And collections’ respective uniqueness or overlap are central to CCD discussions (Garabedian & Kieft, 2016; Levine-Clark, Jobe, & Holliday, 2009). As with the strategies to promote CCD, then, librarians may experience consistent issues with varying applicability in certain contexts.

CCD still represents the future of academic library collection management in spite of potential challenges. Librarians may find that emerging digital capabilities and increased access to collection-based metrics can be more meaningfully leveraged to promote collaboration (Huwe, 2015; Macy, 2018). There is also a continued need for planning and assessing collaborative collection management (Demas & Miller, 2012; Jakubs, 2015; Tucker, 2009). And at the most philosophical level, librarians may need to reframe their perspectives of their resource collections to frame them as tools or services (Linden, Tudesco, & Dollar, 2018). This viewpoint situates library collections in today’s interconnected, user-centered, and relational resource environment.

While CCD as a concept has been well-established, it has been adopted in practice in myriad ways with varied success and staying power. Moreover, there are a range of configurations that such work can take (e.g. consortial purchases, coordinated purchasing efforts, joint patron-driven acquisitions) and associated issues that librarians may encounter. As budgetary needs, e-resource development, and library collection philosophies continue to evolve, it will be instructive to understand what librarians view as meaningful opportunities and potential challenges to CCD. Gauging expert or informed opinions from a range of academic libraries can inform ongoing policy and process developments to support more meaningful and lasting CCD initiatives.

Methods

The authors used an exploratory, deductive approach to their research and designed a survey instrument to gather quantitative information. While CCD is well-established, academic librarians’ perspectives, including their beliefs about challenges and opportunities for successful implementation of such initiatives, have not been collected at a large scale. A quantitative survey is a useful starting point to explore this collection development and management approach in broader ways. They obtained permission from their institutional review board in February 2020 to conduct this research. Researchers have used surveys to gather collections-related information in the extant literature (Oltmann, 2019; Sutton, Miles, & Konkkel, 2017). The authors designed their own instrument in Qualtrics to gather focused data on librarians’ experiences with, perceptions of, and concerns about CCD (see Appendix). Once respondents consented to participate in this survey, the instrument employed skip and display logic to ensure that respondents answered only relevant items.

Survey items and data analysis

There were three sections of questions to answer, but all questions were optional and participants could elect to stop participating at any time (see Appendix). The first section asked whether respondents’ library or organization currently participated in CCD. If participants indicated that their organization had no current CCD initiatives, they were asked whether their library had previously participated in such programs. If so, those respondents only were asked to share why such initiatives had been discontinued. At this point, participants were asked to share whether they were collection development librarians (or a librarian with a similar title), a librarian with collection development responsibilities but whose work was not focused in this area, or an individual working at a consortium.

In the second section, the authors asked participants to indicate what kinds of CCD initiatives their library or organization currently participated in. Respondents were then asked to consider what they felt led to success in CCD initiatives, and conversely, what barriers existed that hindered success. The authors then asked participants to indicate their opinions about several CCD-related statements using Likert-style scales. As a conclusion to this group of questions, respondents could share their opinions on CCD’s greatest benefits and drawbacks. The survey concluded with a third section containing demographic questions about participants’ institution type, how long they had worked in collection development or what percentage of their work involved collections, and their organization’s acquisitions budget. The authors used the data collected from these questions in frequency analyses to generate descriptive information about participants’ responses.

Survey distribution and participants

Once the authors obtained regulatory approval, they sent their survey via email to twelve listservs. These listservs were intentionally selected to elicit responses from librarians engaged or interested in CCD. The survey was available for participants from February–April 2020 and 170 respondents (n = 170) elected to participate. Ten of those listservs were ALA-affiliated.
The remaining two listservs were based in the authors' state – mi-alanews, which is the Michigan Academic Library Association news listserv, and the Midwest Association of State Universities (MASU) Collection Development listserv.

Of these participants, the majority worked in collection development-focused roles (see Fig. 1). Sixty-four respondents were Collection Development librarians, or librarians with similar/related titles; 45 respondents were librarians with job titles not related to collection development. Eight individuals were employed by a library consortium or other consortial organization.

The authors asked respondents who were collection development librarians to indicate how long they had been in such a role (see Fig. 2). Of the participants who elected to respond to this question, twenty-three had been in a collections role for more than 10 years, while nine had been in such roles for 2–4 years. Eight respondents had been collection development librarians (or similar/related roles) for 8–10 years, five respondents had tenures of less than two years, and three respondents had 5–7 years of experience in this type of librarianship.

The authors also asked librarians who did not have job titles related to collection development to indicate what percentage of their work focused in this area (see Fig. 3). Of those individuals who responded, eleven dedicated less than 10% of their work to collection development, nine focused 10–20% of their work on collection development, and seven spent 20–30% of their time in this area. Two participants indicated that 40–50% of their work focused on collection development, and one participant indicated that more than 50% of their work centered in this area. No respondents indicated that 30–40% of their work responsibilities lay in collection development.

Findings

Participation in collaborative collection development

Participants indicated whether their institution or organization participated in CCD, either at present or in the past. As illustrated in Fig. 4, 73% (n = 123) of respondents' organizations or institutions currently participate in such programs, while 27% (n = 46) of respondents' organizations or institutions did not participate in these initiatives.

Individuals whose libraries or organizations engaged in CCD then had the option to select the types of initiatives in which they participated (see Fig. 5). These librarians (n = 95) indicated that their libraries engaged in:

- Purchasing electronic resources through consortia to provide price advantages (n = 94);
- CCD for electronic resources (n = 67);
- CCD for print resources (n = 60);
- Participating in agreements to keep last copy, or minimum number of copies, of print books (n = 57);
- Participating in agreements to collect at higher levels in specific areas (such as subjects or languages) balanced against other participating libraries collecting at higher levels in other areas (n = 26);
- Participating in agreements to coordinate serials cancellations (n = 13); and
- Other (n = 10) options not reflected in this list.

Individuals whose organizations participated in other types of CCD not listed could explain those initiatives. All respondents' comments are included here, verbatim:

- "Collab. CD for Reference resources & large purchases; Collab. Subject Area budget development"
- "CRL is known to collect in certain areas which our members know and they take that into consideration in their own libraries."
- "While we don't have a formal agreement to keep last copies in our consortia, we do have a special listserv to alert member libraries if..."
Implementing collaborative collection development: successes and obstacles

The authors also asked participants to reflect on CCD and the characteristics they felt contributed to successful implementation, and they could indicate up to four options (see Fig. 6). Respondents (n = 85) cited collaboration with peer libraries (those of similar sizes, budgets, and missions) most commonly (n = 54), followed by collaboration within their states (n = 53), collaboration within a close regional area (n = 49), electronic format CCD (n = 46), enhanced access to resources (n = 44), and more effective budget allocations (n = 30). Individuals cited print format CCD (n = 23), national collaboration (n = 16), and other factors not listed (n = 4) less frequently.

Participants who indicated that other factors contributed to successful CCD implementation shared those factors as text comments, represented here in their entirety:

- “Collaboration on cancellation strategies. Cancelling as multiple institutions to leverage publishers into better pricing schemes.”
- “Shared print collections, either virtual or co-located”
- “Buy-in from all participants”

And one participant commented, “I couldn’t answer this, as it isn’t
clear whether you mean print or e. Different answers for those ...."

The authors also asked respondents to reflect on CCD characteristics that presented obstacles to successful implementation, and they could select up to four items (see Fig. 7). Participants (n = 80) indicated the individual differences in resource selection methods from institution to institution (n = 53) and limiting individual library autonomy in collection decisions (n = 51) were the most significant obstacles. Concerns related to changing curricula at participating libraries (n = 38), determining what are core resources in disciplines (n = 36), library administration support for CCD (n = 35), changing areas of research at participating libraries (n = 25), and collecting resources for interdisciplinary areas (n = 17) were considered as lesser obstacles. Twenty-two respondents selected other obstacles not listed and shared more detailed thoughts in their comments.

All participants' other stated obstacles to CCD are listed here verbatim:

• "Incentive to truly work together, institutions or institutional representatives perceiving themselves to be “better” in some way than other participants, determining a method of participation & payment that is fair in terms of each participant's context”
• "Selectors in some disciplines lack understanding of collaborative CD”
• "Vendor/publisher intransigence.”
• "Funding from year to year”
• "cost sharing with libraries that have unpredictable budgets”
• "Institutional resistance to collaborative CD”
• "how to determine “equity” in shared budget allocations”
• "The logics of administrating it”
• "consortia comprised of multiple types of institutions who all have different missions”
• "Fiscal constraints”
• "Price”
• "Preservation implications of cutting down the number of copies..."
held; de-emphasis of the importance of the physical copy for long-term preservation, and for study of books as historic artifacts

- “Differing needs of libraries based on very different sizes, missions, budget”
- “Institutional Administration Support for Collaborative CD”
- “There is a lot of needed overlap - or perceived (sic) needed overlap (the reality is that we think we have to have some things that we could rely on others for - relizable (sic) and speedy ILL is key.”
- “differences in library systems–Alma/Innovative”
- “budgeting”
- “local buy in (library and campus)”
- “Time/resources to coordinate collaborative work”
- “Licensing restrictions for electronic resources”
- “Differences in mission, expectations and resources provided by the home institutions.”
- “Arbitrary data-driven de-acquisition of print collections.”

Benefits and drawbacks to collaborative collection development

The authors asked participants to consider both the greatest benefits and drawbacks to CCD. Respondents (n = 83) could choose up to three benefits (see Fig. 8), and they selected the cost savings benefit (n = 58) at the highest rates. They then indicated that increased breadth and depth from access to shared collections (n = 50), lessening the burden of price negotiations to individual libraries (n = 39), lessening the burden of licensing negotiations to individual libraries (n = 38), eliminating unnecessary duplication among libraries (n = 35), and opportunities for alternative library space usage (n = 21) as benefits in decreasing numerical order. Three respondents selected other benefits not listed, and they expounded on those benefits in comments. One individual indicated that “[p]roviding access to scarce or low use items which otherwise might not be available anywhere in US,” while another asserted that “[t]he biggest benefit is increased access to needed information by members’ users. No one library can collect all things of interest to their user populations.” The third respondent re-emphasized that “COST SAVINGS is my primary reason for collaborative collection development” (their emphasis).

Respondents (n = 70) could select up to two items as the greatest drawbacks they perceived to CCD (see Fig. 9). Participants most frequently selected the complexity of managing CCD activity (n = 65), Individuals also referenced vendor resistance (n = 37), decreasing autonomy in resource selection (n = 31), local ownership as more

Fig. 8. Participants’ responses to the question, “What do you see as the greatest benefits of collaborative CD? Select up to three items.”
important \( (n = 12) \), and other drawbacks not listed \( (n = 9) \). Librarians who selected the “other” option shared their perceived drawbacks, all of which are represented here:

- “Resistance from participants to thinking big & finding ways to truly work together over the long term as equals”
- “Administration desire for patron driven local collection”
- “funding: knowing you can participate for the foreseeable future”
- “Setting up stress between participating institutions”
- “Politically unpopular with a lot of selectors”
- “Cost burdens”
- “Increased movement and handling of fragile items resulting in damage”
- “Time needed to establish and manage.”
- “Sustainability of CCD programs, through changes in leadership at the Library and the University.”

Participants’ beliefs about collaborative collection development

Finally, the authors asked participants to indicate their opinions about five CCD-focused statements (see Table 1). The first statement, which asserted that trust among CCD participants is one of the most important elements for success, was one that most respondents agreed with: 32 strongly agreed, 39 agreed, and twelve selected “somewhat agree.” One respondent strongly disagreed with this statement. In terms of whether “Other librarians at my library understand the value of collaborative CD,” participants’ opinions were more mixed. Fifteen individuals strongly agreed, 28 agreed, and 23 somewhat agreed, twelve neither agreed nor disagreed, three somewhat disagreed, three disagreed, and one individual strongly disagreed. Thirteen participants strongly agreed that other librarians at their libraries were supportive of their CCD activities, while 31 agreed, 23 somewhat agreed, 13 neither agreed nor disagreed, four somewhat disagreed, and one respondent strongly disagreed.

Participants largely disagreed with the statement that other librarians at their institutions were resistant to CCD. Ten respondents strongly disagreed, 27 disagreed, and 15 somewhat disagreed. However, twelve respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, 14 somewhat agreed, and five individuals agreed. Finally, the authors asked participants whether they felt the benefits of CCD outweigh its potential drawbacks. Here, too, respondents largely agreed with this statement: 24 strongly agreed, 29 agreed, and 22 somewhat agreed. Eight people neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement, one somewhat disagreed, and one strongly disagreed. The significance of these numerical results are highlighted in the Discussion section.

Discussion

The authors identified several salient takeaways from participants’ responses. First, respondents’ demographics indicated that they were knowledgeable about collection development-related matters and could therefore speak with authority about CCD. Moreover, their views of CCD aligned with the existing literature related to previous CCD-type initiatives, even as those programs have evolved. Participants’ opinions about successful factors, obstacles to, opportunities in, and challenges for CCD both reinforce some core collection development-related ideas and provide new avenues for additional exploration.

A knowledgeable and experienced respondent pool

First, it is relevant to consider whether the participants had the expertise to speak about CCD-related matters. Two survey questions, reviewed in tandem, revealed the majority of those responding had relevant work experience in collection development. The majority of respondents - 54% - indicated they were Collection Development Librarians or held a similar/related title, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Of these respondents, close to half had been in such a role for more than 10 years. When individuals who had been Collection Development Librarians or in a similarly-titled role for 8–10 years or 5–7 years are included, 71% of participants had 5 years or more of experience in collection development-focused positions. This information illustrates that a sizable majority of respondents had the requisite experience to understand CCD concepts and activities, and it contextualizes their subsequent responses.

Participants’ institutional participation in CCD are also useful to consider in more depth. For the purposes of this survey, the authors defined CCD as encompassing both the selection and acquisition of resources and the management of acquired resources. Therefore, it was not surprising that a large majority of respondents - 73% - stated that their institutions participated in CCD, compared to only 27% who stated they did not participate in this activity, as illustrated in Fig. 4. Although this definition is broad, respondents’ experiences with such initiatives lend credence to their beliefs about the factors that support, or hinder, successful CCD projects.

One area that the authors did not ask respondents to indicate was whether they had decision-making authority for CCD agreements or policies. While the participants were knowledgeable about and experienced in CCD, then, they may not have had institutional or...
organizational roles that allowed them to direct such initiatives to address collection and budgetary needs. Additional research that considers this nuance may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CCD decision-making happens, and who is engaged in making such decisions.

Consistent collaborative collection development initiatives

In terms of the types of CCD initiatives that participants' institutions engaged in, most respondents indicated that they purchased electronic resources through consortia to provide price advantages (see Fig. 5). This data reaffirms the known cost benefits that libraries receive from consortia-based purchasing of e-resources. Consortia traditionally have the ability to negotiate the most advantageous prices due to the economies of scale in purchasing for large numbers of member libraries (Turner, 2014), and this purchasing approach has a long history of providing academic libraries with substantial cost savings (Bostick, 2001). In particular, CCD for electronic resources has been a core, coordinated acquisitions activity for some time (Haar, 2004) with no signs of abatement. Participants' responses to this survey reinforce the continued importance of consortial purchasing arrangements for cost savings for this format of resources.

Such consortial memberships are known entities. They provide more familiar activities with fewer complications when compared to other types of CCD relationships. As such, fewer respondents indicated that they participated in initiatives that involved coordinating serials cancellations or collecting at higher levels in specific areas (such as subjects or languages) balanced against other participating libraries collecting at higher levels in other areas. These types of initiatives require a much higher level of effort and coordination, and this complexity may directly relate to institutions' or librarians' hesitancy to engage in such work. In the same vein, respondents selected the complexity associated with managing CCD activity to be the greatest drawback to success, as illustrated in Fig. 9. That individuals recognize the inherent difficulty in such dynamics may inform whether they establish such partnerships. Moreover, participating in agreements to collect at higher levels in specific areas (such as subjects or languages) balanced against other participating libraries collecting at higher levels in other areas hearkens back to the Farmington Plan. An initiative this wide-ranging and complex can be difficult to implement.

Participants' other responses to this question highlight other emerging CCD areas. For instance, about half of respondents indicated that they participated in agreements to keep the last copy, or minimum number of copies, of print books. These types of CCD efforts involve extensive planning and managing, but such shared print retention programs have consistently grown through time (Kieft & Payne, 2012). Participants' selection of this response reinforces other scholars' assertion that this particular type of collaborative collection initiative shows no sign of a diminishment in growth in both American academic libraries and across the globe (Maddox Abbott, 2019). As these types of programs continue to proliferate, this specific type of CCD will firmly remain an important part of CCD's future directions.

In addition to the authors' predefined options, several respondents provided additional information that can help contextualize CCD practices more broadly. Three individuals indicated they had informal agreements to either keep, or inform other partners about, a “last copy”, and these arrangements reinforce the relevance of shared print relationships between institutions. Another respondent's note about conducting collaborative web archiving suggests that CCD may be pushing into new arenas in new ways. One comment, which addressed the critical nature of resource sharing at their institution as part of CCD efforts, highlighted the core role that resource sharing plays in CCD (Baich & Michaels, 2017). Overall, participants' responses highlighted a shift to access, rather than ownership of, library materials. This reflects a prominent direction in academic library collection development and management towards the establishment of the collective collection
as opposed to the individual ownership of resources (Dempsey, Malpas, & Lavoie, 2014; Dempsey, Malpas, & Sandler, 2019; McDonald & Kieft, 2016; Uziel, 2017). This aspect will continue to influence what CCD programs look like, both conceptually and in practice.

**Important perceptions about collaborative collection development**

Many participants held similar opinions about CCD. As illustrated by the data in Table 1, an overwhelming majority either agreed or strongly agreed that trust among CCD participants was one of the most important elements for success. This finding aligns with the existing professional literature, where librarians have repeatedly emphasized trust among library participants as an essential element for success in collaborative endeavors (Clement, 2012; Demas & Miller, 2012; Lehman, 2014; Sandler et al., 2012; Sohn, 1986; Turner, 2014).

Two of the statements participants considered about whether other librarians at their institutions understood the value of CCD, or were supportive of CCD, were closely connected; as such, individuals responded similarly to these prompts. While the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with both of these statements, a notable number either somewhat agreed, or neither agreed nor disagreed, with these two statements. This discrepancy in opinion suggests that CCD buy-in among librarians at the same institution is not a given. In the same vein, a number of respondents mostly disagreed or strongly disagreed that librarians at their libraries were resistant to CCD. No respondent strongly agreed with this statement and only 5 out of 83 agreed with this statement. Still, a number of participants either somewhat disagreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, or somewhat agreed with this statement. Individuals’ mixed opinions to these three statements may warrant further exploration. Are librarians at certain institutions, with certain roles, or with certain amounts of experience particularly resistant to - or supportive of - CCD? Are there factors that can help establish broader librarian buy-in across academic librarians? The authors assert that additional inquiry into participants’ beliefs about these statements could better consider these questions.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the benefits of collaborative CD outweighed its potential drawbacks, and a smaller group somewhat agreed. Virtually no participants disagreed with this statement. Individuals’ beliefs about this particular statement suggest that, even in spite of the known obstacles to and complications of CCD, they understand the long-term benefits that come from the applied efforts to implement CCD projects. Their opinions on this statement signify that CCD will continue to progress in 21st century academic librarianship.

**Greatest benefits of collaborative collection development**

Participants’ responses about the greatest benefits of CCD, as illustrated in Fig. 8, were quite predictable, and they reflect the benefits of CCD that is regularly cited in the literature (Burgett, Haar, & Phillips, 2004; Carter & Ostendorf, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Turner, 2014). Cost savings was seen as the primary benefit, and this factor is extremely important as all academic libraries face budgetary challenges, particularly more so within the current pandemic related environment. Respondents indicated that providing increased breadth and depth of resources resulting from access to shared collections was similarly important. The combination of these two factors offers libraries the best of both worlds: Increased access to resources at lower costs is the backbone of CCD, and participants’ comments to this question firmly reinforced this viewpoint. One individual noted that “[t]he biggest benefit is increased access to needed information by members’ users. No one library can collect all things of interest to their user populations.” Another stated, “COST SAVINGS is my primary reason for collaborative collection development” (emphasis by respondent). These responses verify what CCD participants have experienced from actual implementations of CCD projects and initiatives. Participants’ views of CCD’s benefits are clear, consistent, and align with the existing literature on the topic (Carter & Ostendorf, 2017; Evans, 2002; Hosoi, 2019).

**Factors that support, or obstruct, collaborative collection development**

Participants’ beliefs about what elements can lead to success, or hinder success, in CCD also provides important insight for those considering the future of such initiatives. Respondents believed that the most influential factors in ensuring CCD success involved collaboration with peer libraries; statewide or regional partnerships; partnerships centered around electronic formats; and initiatives that provided enhanced access to resources (see Fig. 6). These selections suggest that academic libraries engaged in CCD feel most comfortable about such activities with institutions that have similar collection goals or with libraries in close geographic proximity. Collaboration among libraries within close geographic proximity reflects how consortia have traditionally developed (Bostick, 2001; Haar, 2004), and this kind of structure also allows for resource sharing of physical items to be relatively inexpensive and to occur in a more timely fashion. Participants may have also selected these options because their organizations have been involved in such blueprints for some time and have seen longstanding benefits (Booth & O’Brien, 2011; Currie & Greene, 2017; Pan & Fong, 2010; Seiden, Pumroy, Medeiros, Morrison, & Luther, 2002). Participants’ responses reinforce that CCD success involves partner libraries striking an acceptable balance between their local collection priorities and needs, combined with the broader goals of the larger partnership (Burgett et al., 2004; Jakubs, 2015; Johnson, 2018; Reilly Jr., 2004). Relationships based on geography or institution type may more reliably ensure that shared collection goals exist and equitable resource acquisitions or stewardship obligations can be established than CCD initiatives at a broader, or national, scale.

Participants’ responses also suggested that resource format can impact CCD success. They were twice as likely to indicate that electronic format CCD would lead to success than print format CCD. E-resource CCD is a time-honored, well-established activity with clear price advantages. Prospective print format CCD is more complex to initiate and sustain and its benefits would not be as apparent for a large geographic area. E-resource collaborations can provide immediate and wide-ranging access to materials, and these aspects would be more difficult to universally achieve with print formats (Wu, 2019). Additionally, participants believed that enhanced access to resources was a key factor in creating successful CCD initiatives. Others have recognized this benefit (Carter & Ostendorf, 2017; Evans, 2002; Hosoi, 2019), and this factor may align with why participants believed that e-resource CCD could more efficiently achieve this goal than print resource CCD. Participants’ observations reinforce that electronic CCD can provide more obvious initial cost savings and may be more outwardly impactful for academic libraries and their patrons. This observation, coupled with the survey findings that a proportionally higher number of respondents reported that they participated in consortia-based e-resource purchasing (as illustrated in Fig. 5), indicates that this well-established CCD activity will be a consistent part of such activities in the future.

Although participants believed that partnerships with similar institutions - in size, focus, or location - could lead to CCD success, as noted in Fig. 6, they also recognized the obstacles that academic libraries had to overcome to achieve meaningful collaborations. As Fig. 7 demonstrates, respondents most frequently cited institutions’ individual differences in resource selection methods, and limited individual library autonomy in collection decisions as obstacles to CCD successes. The limitation of library autonomy in collection decisions was an element in the demise of the Farmington Plan; it remains as a challenge to other large-scale CCD projects today. The decrease in autonomy is an understandable apprehension depending how tightly bound collection development obligations are within CCD initiatives. Academic libraries may question whether other academic institutions will collect sufficiently to fulfill their own patron’s needs and in turn, if they will end up
financing resources that would be of more import to patrons of other partner libraries. Interestingly, though, participants did not specifically cite a lack of autonomy as a drawback to CCD. In fact, when asked to consider the greatest drawbacks to CCD, respondents cited decreasing autonomy in resource selection far less than the concerns related to managing the complexity inherent in CCD activities, as is illustrated in Fig. 9. It may be important to note, though, that there are many types of CCD (e.g., opting in/out of purchases or subscriptions to e-resources, shared print retention partnerships) that do not involve losing autonomy in resource selection or collection decisions. Participants’ seemingly conflicting responses, then, could relate to the survey questions’ structure, but this dichotomy warrants further research.

There are other selections that should be investigated further. For instance, participants indicated that individual differences in resource selection methods from institution to institution can hinder CCD initiatives, which can be interpreted in two ways. First, it could reflect that participants are concerned about limited autonomy in collection decisions. Librarians in CCD partnerships may not feel confident that collection selectors will apply the same careful, objective selection criteria that is used in one’s own institution. Or, participants may have a much more mechanical concern: If different libraries are using different book approval plans, integrated library systems, or discovery platforms, it can be logistically difficult to implement CCD initiatives. A participant commented that “differences in library systems—Alma/Innovative” in response to this question, which reinforces the technical/practical obstacles sometimes incumbent in CCD. However, more focused research on this issue is necessary to more fully understand these responses and how these concerns could impact future CCD endeavors.

Limitations and future research

This survey was designed to capture the current landscape of CCD and librarians’ experiences and perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks from involvement in this type of collection building. By virtue of its dissemination through listservs and the number of responses received, the survey responses are not intended to be comprehensive and some require further investigation to clarify any ambiguities or conflicting information. One avenue of further research that may prove fruitful would be to gather more information from consortia. Although the authors’ survey included some questions directed to consortia (see Appendix), the numbers received were too small a sampling from which to draw meaningful findings. Therefore, surveying members of an organization such as the International Coalition of Library Consortia would provide additional perspectives and valuable research for CCD activities. Directly surveying consortia bodies could also provide insights into the contractual aspects of CCD projects since consortia entities can be the coordinating parties of such agreements. Combining this with future research on the structure of libraries’ decision-making processes in initiating or authorizing CCD activities could provide useful research in understanding the broader, management aspects of these initiatives.

Conclusion

CCD has existed within the academic library environment for some time in a number of configurations. The authors sought to investigate librarians’ current engagement in, beliefs about, and perspectives on CCD to understand the current state of affairs within the profession. Their research affirms that CCD is ongoing and evolving, and that both opportunities and issues remain. As library collections grow and evolve into a multitude of different formats, the structure of CCD initiatives and agreements have correspondingly changed through time. This work will continue to change as libraries investigate ways to apply the principles and benefits of CCD to newer resource formats and access opportunities. Research participants spoke to the budgetary realities and meaningful efforts to provide patrons with the greatest access to resources in the most cost-responsible ways. This remains the driving force of CCD initiatives. Participants’ perspectives highlighted that earlier goals of comprehensive academic collection development have been heavily tempered by sobering economic realities, making it no longer feasible for single educational institutions to acquire all the valuable scholarly research materials that their patrons may need. This has never been more true than it is now, in the midst of the current pandemic. As academic libraries seek to meet their scholars’ needs, they may find it useful to revisit CCD, or consider CCD in new ways.

Library collections currently consist of a multitude of material formats, including print, electronic, streaming video and audio, demand driven acquisitions, data sets, among others. Newer publishing and access models have also drastically changed the traditional library collection profile. CCD may be able to bring its inherent benefits to even these newer material formats (Booth & O’Brien, 2011; DiVittorio, Gaddis, Browning, Rainard, & Brammer, 2020) with economic, budgetary realities being the driving force behind this exploration. Although there will be logistical challenges to be faced, just as the creation of online public access catalogs created much more feasible pathways for CCD to flourish, increasingly more sophisticated technological infrastructures have the possibility to support varying kinds of CCD endeavors in the future.

The survey findings illustrated an example of a more innovative approach to CCD initiatives; one library cited collaborative web archiving as a CCD activity in which they participate. The professional literature also notes pilot projects that explored patron driven acquisitions (PDA) as an integrated part of CCD (Booth & O’Brien, 2011; Davis et al., 2012; Hobbs & Klare, 2016; McGee, 2015). These studies included analyses of developing future directions for linking PDA strategies with those of CCD projects.

As the academic librarian mindset changes from building independent collection silos to building and supporting collective collections in a variety of formats, the traditional role of academic libraries as responsible stewards of the scholarly record can continue to be vigorously upheld. The methods and opportunities of doing so will just be altered. But these alterations will come with the long-standing benefits that CCD holds for its participants, namely increased access to a wider variety of resources at overall lower costs. This has always been at the heart of quality collection development and with the potential need for budgetary austerity in the wake of COVID-19, it will continue to be so. In both the present and in the future, this essential element of building and maintaining collections has the brightest future possible with CCD being an essential part of achieving this overall collection goal.

Credit author statement

Helen N. Levenson: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Formal Analysis, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Project Administration.

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Declaration of competing interest

The two authors, Helen N. Levenson and Amanda Nichols Hess, of this article, titled Collaborative Collection Development: Current Perspectives Leading to Future Initiatives have no conflicts of interest between them.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102201.

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