

## The Nature of Library Consortia

E-Books as a Shared Service in M25 (E-BASS25) is a JISC-funded project seeking to explore the opportunities and challenges relating to Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) of e-books within the context of a consortium of libraries.

Forming the basis for work package two of the E-BASS25 Project, this document seeks to briefly define:

- The factors affecting the make-up of library consortia
- The types of library consortia in the UK at present
- The reasons libraries belong to consortia
- The types of consortial procurement.

### 1. What are the different factors affecting library consortia

Consortia can be grouped by the 'common factor' that defines them as a consortium:

- Geographical
  - National bodies, such as SCONUL, SCURL etc.
  - Regional bodies such as M25, NOWAL etc.
- Sector (HE, FE, museums)
- Mission group (RLUK = Russell Group libraries, 1994 group libraries etc.)

The 'common factors' that define a consortium usually underpin their goals and motivations for acting as a consortium, and so relate closely to the activities they engage in and the benefits they seek to achieve through acting as a consortium

- A geographical consortium, due to the member libraries being physically nearby to each other, have a remit to develop shared collections to which all members will have access.
- HE libraries may engage in collaborative procurement to get licensing terms which meet the needs of university communities.

In addition to the defining factors, there are lots of other factors that differentiate consortia:

- Size of consortium
  - Number of member institutions
  - Size of each member institution
- How diverse is the membership?  
Depending on how the consortium is defined, it may have a diverse membership

- Mix of big/small members?
- Mix of interests, sectors etc.?
- Mix of subject specialisms in collections?

A geographical consortium may have members from mix of sectors, of different sizes

- M25 has small, specialist libraries + large research libraries
- M25 has both HE and museum libraries
- A mission group consortium may have members from across the country

- How close is the relationship?
  - [Federation] can the consortium mandate that all members must act together?
  - [Close] do all members agree to act together?
  - [Loose] do members choose whether to opt into/out of individual deals offered to them?
  - [Collaborative group] more about lobbying/networking than collections and services?
- How formalised is the relationship / how long does it last?
  - Ad hoc group of libraries, acting together to participate in one-off consortial deal, with no other shared activities?
  - Established, ongoing consortia acting together in range of activity areas, maybe well resources with staff / operating budget
- What resources does the consortium have?
  - Has central staff / employs external agent / relies on support from member institution staff?
  - An operating budget?
  - A consortium's resources are likely to be closely related to other factors, i.e. a large, ongoing consortium more likely to have significant resources than small ad-hoc grouping

The following factors are less likely to relate to the goals and motivations of the consortium, but will affect the way in which they achieve these goals:

- A consortium that has a very diverse membership in terms of size or sector, may find it more difficult to develop shared collections because it may be more difficult to identify common content needs or a suitable funding model.
- A consortium that is strongly formalised (with a governing body, central staff, operating budget) may already have the infrastructure to support collaborative procurement, but a looser consortium may need to act through an agent (such as JISC Collections)

## 2. What are the different types of UK consortia?

### 2.1 Library consortia

- Many defined by library sector (such as MLAG, a consortium of museum libraries)
- Many geographical
  - Mainly regional, e.g. M25, NOWAL
  - Most national bodies are collaborative/lobbying bodies (SCONUL, SCURL, WHELP, RLUK) rather than consortia, although some have sub-groups acting as consortia (SHEDL/ SCURL; WHELP e-book deal)

### 2.2 Agents

- HE purchasing consortia
  - Some are general university purchasing consortia (LUPC, SUPC)
  - Some are library specific (NOWAL, MUAC, NEYAL)
  - They negotiate supplier contracts and frameworks for range of services and supplies such as the Joint National Book Agreement, Serials Framework Agreements.
  - They offer a source of procurement advice to support individual libraries requiring tendering
- Agents acting on behalf of libraries (JISC, Eduserv)
  - These are not consortia of libraries, but act on their behalf
  - They offer consortial deals which offer advantageous pricing /licencing to 'loose consortia of HE/FE/museum libraries'
  - They offer efficiencies, e.g. single point of payment
  - They have an increasing role in offering 'above campus' shared services (e.g. Eduserv authentication services, JISC licence checker, KB+)
- Agents acting as intermediaries or on behalf of publishers
  - Broker consortia deals between libraries and publishers (such as Content Online acting for IEEE)

### 2.3 National libraries

- National libraries are not consortia, but in the UK they support some of the activities undertaken by consortia over in the United States, such as:
  - Collaborative collection management, for example UKRR cooperative management of print periodicals
  - ILL supplier
  - Digitisation copyright clearance (British Library)

### 3. Why do libraries act belong to consortia?

There are many areas of activity for consortia and collaborative bodies, including lobbying, networking, and shared staff development programmes, but there are 3 key **areas of activity** relating to e-books:

#### 3.1 E-Book Procurement

Consortia undertake collaborative negotiation of deals.

- They may be either general 'framework' agreements with particular supplier(s), for any content (Joint Consortia National Book Agreement, NESLi Nature deal) or deals for specific content (JISC Collections deals for specific databases)
- They may negotiate the deal directly between the consortium and the supplier, or the deal may be negotiated by an 'agent' such as purchasing consortia (LUPC, SUPC, NOWAL, NEYAL, MUAC) or other body (JISC Collections, Eduserv)

The benefits of acting as a consortium are:

- Using economies of scale to achieve efficiency savings by sharing a single tender process.
- Using combined purchasing power to negotiate:
  - Advantageous pricing / licensing terms
  - New models (e.g. PDA/EBS from a publisher who doesn't normally offer it)
  - New content (e.g. e-textbooks not normally available)

#### 3.2 Collection Development

Consortial procurement may be for deals which give access to content only to individual libraries that choose to take up the deal (e.g. JISC Collection deals that library 'opt into'),

Alternatively, consortia may be negotiate a deal to give common access to content to all member libraries (e.g. SHEDL deals, deals where JISC Collections purchases content on behalf of all HE / MLA libraries). The benefits of acting as a consortium are:

- Using combined purchasing power to afford access to more titles than could be achieved by acting as an individual library (the more titles you can buy, the cheaper the cost per title, so pooling funding as a group should give better value, even if you have to pay a premium to get shared access)
- Quickly building a 'critical mass' of e-books for libraries without large e-book collections
- Achieving political objectives to create a 'level playing field' where all library users have access to a common body of content

Note that this type of 'Collaborative Collection Management' (CCM) to develop common collections of e-resources is fundamentally different to the collaborative development of print collections.

Each library primarily collects material to support needs of own users, but also collaborates to ensure coordinated approach to build complementary collections across consortium. Paired with collaborative access and ILL schemes to facilitate sharing through access, this model of collection development greatly increases the diversity of content available to consortia members.

This approach to sharing through access and lending was a necessary means to an end for getting access to content not held by the home library. There was no business model for 'borrowing' print content directly from publisher, but libraries are able to lend print books between libraries.

E-books can be seen as a barrier to continuation of this activity. Most licences allow walk-in access, so content still available through shared access or visiting schemes. However, most e-book licences do not allow content to be 'lent' between libraries, i.e. be made remotely available to users not members of the library which licenced the e-book. Therefore, it is difficult to transfer the print approach to collaborative collection management to e-book environment.

However, to some extent, the development of new e-book models gives an alternative way to get access to content. Libraries need to consider their ongoing need for sharing through inter-library lending now that there are other options for getting access to content:

- Open-access through institutional repositories.
- Temporary access direct from publisher or supplier via pay-per-view (PPV) or patron-driven acquisition (PDA) business models.

Note that neither of these *necessarily* requires consortial approach, because libraries are not reliant on one another as suppliers. Libraries could act as individual library using PPV or PDA models to provide access to content not held.

Therefore because a library has engaged in CCM to support shared access to print books, it does not necessarily follow that they should engage in CCM to develop shared content using e-books, or to work together to offer PDA. There may be other benefits to be gained by acting as consortium, but because of current e-book licences, supporting diversity by attempting to use the same model of CCM as print is *not* an available benefit.

It's important to bear in mind that although both about 'sharing' they are fundamentally different in their goals and means:

- The goal of shared **content** schemes is to delivery **greater uniformity** of content; **increasing duplication/overlap** between collections in order to create a 'level playing field' where all users at all member institutions have access to the same **content**. This could be either to support high-use material (e.g. a core textbook collection) or a common core of research material (e.g. a core research journal collection, or large database of digitised historic documents. 'Sharing' in this context means 'held in common', and the shared collection represents a centralised, common resource.
- The goal of shared **access** schemes and ILL is to provide access to a **greater diversity** of content to meet **occasional, specialist needs**; using collaboration to **reduce duplication** between collections, thereby enabling libraries to focus funds on building deep collections in subject areas relevant to their own institution. Sharing in this context means 'lending' and the shared collection represents a distributed resource.

As well as lack of options to borrow from supplier, another role for libraries relating to CCM is as the 'just in case' provider for out-of-print books. Importantly, there is still a role for libraries here. Whilst print-on-demand means less likely to go out of print, does not mean that book always available – publisher may go out of business. There are also issues around long term access to and preservation of e-books to be addressed. There may be potential for libraries to address a shared service, but need to address licensing / technical issues. Focus of this project is on consortial acquisition, so not covered in depth here.

- 'Shared access' schemes allow users to visit other libraries for reference and/or borrowing (such as SCONUL Access). Libraries may also develop shared catalogues to support discovery of materials in other libraries (e.g. COPAC, Search25)

- By contrast, ‘inter-library loan’ schemes enable users to request material via their home library, which arranges to borrow the required material from another library on the reader’s behalf. Libraries which lend to each other may also use ‘collaborative collection development’ to set policies on who collects in which subject areas, to ensure that all subjects are covered.

There are differences between the UK and US in this area:

- In the UK, shared **access** schemes operate at national sectoral level (e.g. SCONUL Access scheme for UK higher education libraries), and through regional schemes / agreements between specific libraries. ILL operates primarily at national level, coordinated by the British Library, with other collections used to support specialist requests that the BL cannot supply. Collaborative collection development may occur at the regional level, or at national level through schemes such as UK Research Reserve (UKRR).
- By contrast in the US, ILL operates through regional consortia and networks.

### **3.3 Business Support**

Libraries are increasingly looking to share costs of managing collections by taking a ‘shared services’ or ‘above campus’ approach to key activities:

- Central coordination of processes for acquisition/metadata/usage.
- Central provision of systems/shared data to support management activities e.g. provision of a consortial/community knowledge base of data such as KB+.

The key benefits of acting as consortium are in using economies of scale to deliver efficiency savings:

- Saving staff time on acquisition admin (e.g. payment through consortium managing agent).
- Saving staff time on metadata management (e.g. use of KB+ shared services).
- Saving costs on shared systems.

#### 4. Types of Consortial Procurement

The following seeks to outline the different types of consortial procurement:

The consortium **tenders for a framework agreement** with suppliers for type of content (e.g. books, journals), and individual libraries may place contracts with suppliers under agreement. The consortium acts to manage the tender process and achieve favourable supply, licensing and pricing terms.

- The consortium does not select content; choice of what to purchase is for individual library
- The consortium does not acquire content on behalf of member libraries, and any content acquired is paid for by the individual library and made available only to them.
- An opt-in model, libraries can choose to participate or not. Pricing may or may not depend on how many libraries place contracts under the agreement or on the level of spend achieved. E.g. rebates if spend by all libraries using the agreement reaches a threshold level.
- For HE libraries, this type of procurement has typically been the role of regional university purchasing consortia (e.g. SUPC-led Joint National Books Agreement, LUPC/NOWAL Serials framework agreement).

The consortium **negotiates an agreement for specific content** with an individual supplier (eg an e-book package, e-journal package or database). As above, the consortium acts to manage the negotiation process and achieve favourable supply, licensing and pricing terms. In some cases the consortium may also administer the purchase / subscription process.

- The consortium selects the content to be negotiated for, although the agreement may cover a range of packages from which libraries can select.
- The consortium does not acquire content on behalf of member libraries, and any content acquired is paid for by the individual library and made available only to them.
- An opt-in model, libraries can choose to participate or not. Pricing may or may not depend on how many libraries take up the offer (e.g. ACM, IEEE)
- This type of consortial procurement has typically been managed by national bodies (e.g. Eduserv CHEST agreements, or JISC Collections NESLi deals), although it has also been done through regional university purchasing consortia (e.g. NOWAL NetLibrary deal, SUPC Safari deal).

The consortium **acquires content on behalf of member libraries** using consortial funds, and the content is made freely available to all member libraries via a sub-licence.

- At national level, this type of acquisition has typically been done by JISC Collections (e.g. Cambridge Journals Archive, ECCO e-books). Guided by wishes of members on what content to negotiate for.
- At regional / home nation level, library consortia may agree to negotiate a deal with a supplier (e.g. SHEDL).
- This is generally a 'closed consortium' model, with a guarantee that all members will participate in the agreement once it has been negotiated. The only exception is for JISC agreements where libraries may be charged an administration fee and/or platform fees for hosting.