



Library Networks, Cooperatives, and Consortia: A Definitional Study and Survey

Interim Report I

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Project Director: Denise M. Davis, Director, Office for Research and Statistics

dmdavis@ala.org

312-280-4273

Project Consultants: RSL Research Group

Web Master: Letitia Earvin

Project Evaluator: John Carlo Bertot

Project Website: <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/lbcc/lbcc.htm>

Project Sponsors: U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services

Interim Report 1 submitted by:

Keith Michael Fiels, Executive Director
American Library Association

Date

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1. Introduction

This report summarizes activities between November 2005 and May 2006. In addition, this report begins to assemble the more detailed activities of the project, including historical perspective, and presents them in a fuller context.

The following tasks have been completed during the reporting period:

- Formed a project Advisory Committee
- Setup a project website <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/lnc/lnc.htm>
- Held a meeting of the Advisory Committee
- Developed and tested a definition of library network
- Designed and tested a survey instrument to gather baseline information about library networks, cooperatives and consortia to form the universe file
- Conducted the baseline survey (March 6-May 15, 2006)
- Conducted baseline survey follow-up (April 17-May 26, 2006)
- Designed a preliminary database to collected responses from baseline study
- Designed a database shell for the report-generation capabilities of the database
- ALA Library began environmental scan and document ordering

These activities set the groundwork for project, and ensure its success.

2. Background

The purpose of this project, “*Library Networks, Cooperatives, and Consortia: A Definitional Study and Survey*,” is to present clear and current understanding of how library networks and cooperatives operate, and the many ways in which these collaborative organizations help to advance learning communities. To accomplish this, researchers will first define what library networks and cooperatives are, and then describe the kinds of services they now provide, in order to better understand the future trends that will affect these multi-type library entities. For all intents and purposes, we know nothing about the recent state of cooperatives since the last comprehensive study of cooperatives dated 1986.

3. Project activities

Summary

In November 2005 the project Advisory Committee was formed and a website developed. The committee roster appears as Appendix A in this report. The project website is <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/lnc> .

In January 2006 project researchers, in collaboration with the LNCC Advisory Committee, developed a definition for networks and cooperatives to ensure that the

universe file is comprehensive. The definition was tested and baseline survey questions developed following the Advisory Committee meeting in January 2006. A baseline survey was launched on March 6, 2006 and remained open until May 15th. The purpose of the baseline survey was to develop the universe of library networks, cooperatives and consortia and to begin collecting meaningful information about them. The survey invitation letter, sample form and instructions are attached in Appendix B.

The ALA technology staff worked with the Office for Research staff to design the web-based baseline survey and develop the back-end data collection database. The database is designed using Cold Fusion software, outputs as an MS Access database, and resides on a shared SQL server. Design of the interactive search functionality began after the baseline study was completed (May 2006). A preliminary database design will be shared with the LNCC Advisory Committee at its June 23, 2006 meeting (during the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA).

The ALA Library staff has begun assembling relevant research to support the environmental scan activities of this project. The Library's work will continue through calendar year 2006, and possibly into 2007. The preliminary environmental scan is attached as Appendix C.

The Project Director, Denise Davis, and researcher Keith Lance attended IMLS sponsored OBE training in March 2006. The work of that training appears in Section 5 of this report ("An outcomes perspective").

Project Design and Planning Detail

This project's methodology consists of six objectives and twenty-five key activities. Areas of concern with a project of this magnitude include:

- Defining the study cohort
- Burden of collection
 - Implementing a reasonably burden free data collection and reporting process for library organization via state library agencies, academic liaisons and library consortia
- Limits of longitudinal data
- Presenting the data in a useful format
- Presentation of study findings
- Creating an ongoing design to ensure regular updating of database

Defining Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia:

Networks and cooperatives were first formed in the 1960s to leverage staff and resources, in order to provide cost-effective and efficient services libraries individually could not afford. It was through these early networks and cooperatives that library automation was initially introduced and pioneering efforts in statewide resource sharing began.

There are no comprehensive studies that define the universe of library networks and cooperatives, describe the range of activities of this group, or collect operational level data that is required to understand functions, staffing, revenue and expenditures.

Although the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) defined a library cooperative in 2004 as “... *an organization that has a formal arrangement whereby library and information services are supported for the mutual benefit of participating libraries,*” this definition has not been tested for validity. Further, NISO proposes that library cooperatives also meet all of the following criteria:

- Participants/members are primarily libraries;
- The organization is a U.S. not-for-profit entity, which has its own budget and its own paid staff;
- The organization serves multiple institutions (e.g., libraries, school districts) that are not under the organization's administrative control; and

The research team, in collaboration with the project Advisory Committee, affirmed the NISO definition with the following clarifications:

- “Not-for-profit” includes any such tax status recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service. In order for a not-for-profit organization to be "legal" it needs to be incorporated under the laws of a state. The entity would be ineligible to receive any governmental funding without such legal status.
- For the purposes of this study governmentally based library entities with independent budgets and staff also are within the definition of a library cooperative.

The scope of the organization's activities includes support of library and information services by performing such functions as resource sharing, training, planning, and advocacy.”¹

Designing the Baseline Survey Instrument and Protocol for Collection:

The baseline survey (Appendix B) is divided into six short sections, and researchers estimate a burden of approximately 10 minutes for completion. The questions include:

- Contact information
- Characteristics (do you have a budget, do you have paid staff, etc.)
- Primary service area jurisdiction (local, county, etc.)
- Library types your organization supports
- Purposes your organization serves (professional development, digitization, etc.)
- Best person to complete a more detailed questionnaire

The baseline survey and supporting materials appears as Appendix B of this report. Survey follow-up and analysis will continue through June 2006, with an update provided at the Advisory Committee meeting on June 23, 2006 at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans. Results of this survey begin to populate the online directory and report-generating database. Database design and testing was well underway in May, and

¹ ANSI/NISO Z39.7-2004. Information Services and Use: Metrics & statistics for libraries and information providers--Data Dictionary, Section 2.1.8 Library Cooperatives. <http://www.niso.org/emetrics> .

preliminary sample screens will be available for consideration by the Advisory Committee at its June meeting.

After a universe file has been created from the baseline study, the researchers will conduct a second web-based sample survey. This second survey is scheduled to launch fall 2006 and will pose descriptive questions addressing policy related topics that will be determined by the responses we gather during the first baseline survey. Key areas identified by the Advisory Committee for inclusion in the second survey include:

- a. Governance structure and membership
- b. Facilities and infrastructure
- c. Revenue and expenditures
- d. Staffing
- e. Collections by type
- f. Services and usage (including cataloging and other technical services support, resource sharing, hosted databases, and consulting contracts, as well as services including virtual reference, training, and continuing education)

The results from the second survey also will be made available through the web-based interactive report-generating tool. The baseline and secondary sample responses also will be summarized, and the results and key findings will be presented in a written report.

4. Project timeline

	2005		2006								
	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
YEAR ONE: DEFINING UNIVERSE											
GOAL 1: Identifying and Describing the Universe	<i>COMPLETED</i>										
Objectives:											
Conduct environmental scan and literature review											
Compile available data from ALA, ASCLA, IMLS, NCES, etc .											
Organize a project Advisory Committee to help define the term library cooperative											
Develop definitions for and classification of library cooperatives											
Design, test and conduct preliminary survey of library cooperatives							Data follow-up and analysis				
GOAL 2: Designing the Survey											
Objectives:											
Determine scope of survey											
Recruit and train state-level survey coordinators.											
Formulate and produce survey questions											
Design and select sample; pre-test and finalize questionnaire											
Produce e-mailing lists to be utilized in administering online questionnaire											

	2006				2007								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
YEAR TWO: TAKING STOCK													
GOAL 3: Conducting the Survey													
Objectives:													
Produce, test and administer online survey													
Assess and address response rate													
Process data													
Tabulate and chart data													
Analyze data; Produce narrative that employs survey data to address each major policy question about library cooperatives													
Solicit success stories from responding cooperatives to illustrate major findings													
GOAL 4: Reporting the Results													
Objectives:													
Complete survey report													
Design library cooperatives website, including interactive report generator for customized reports													

	2007				2008								
	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
YEAR THREE: TAKING ACTION													
GOAL 5: Spreading the Word													
Objectives:													
Produce an article manuscript for American Libraries and other library literature													
Produce and make available via the project website 5-, 15- and 30-minute narrated PowerPoint presentations about actionable survey results													
Propose programs for the 2007 and 2008 American Library Association Annual Conferences to be co-sponsored by the ASCLA and COSLA research and statistics committees.													
GOAL 6: Making a Difference (pending)													
Objectives:													
Develop a national action plan for strengthening library cooperatives.													

5. An outcomes perspective

Preliminary outcomes developed in March 2006 are outlined below. John Bertot (BICS, Inc.) is conducting the project evaluation and will work with the Project Director to refine the high-level and interim outcomes of the project to ensure they are reasonable, measurable and achievable.

Project purpose: Provide a clear and current understanding of how library networks and cooperatives operate, and the many ways in which these collaborative organizations help to advance learning communities.

Target audience: Library networks, cooperatives and consortia (LNCC); Government offices and agencies; Associations; Researchers; Vendors.

Result: LNCC's will utilize the baseline dataset to support comparison, planning, evaluation, budgeting, advocacy, training, and research. Vendors will utilize the baseline dataset for product design and development.

Assumptions:

- Need current and reliable information and data about LNCC's
- Need online access to reported data
- Need a web-based peer tool to make data usable, in addition to a raw data set for researchers
- Need sampling frame for researchers
- Need database to support secondary analysis about LNCC's
- Need current and reliable contact info of LNCC's [mailing list potential]

Solutions:

- Survey states to determine LNCC's to create universe file
- Conduct detailed survey(s) against universe of LNCC's
- Conduct additional policy-based survey as possible
- Develop database of responses and data analysis tool
- Develop training documentation
- Develop presentations of project, project findings and present at conferences and post to project website
- Ongoing updating of data

Results:

- Baseline data about LNCC's
- Use of tool (internal) – comparison, planning, evaluation, budgeting
- Use of tool (external) – advocacy by local, state and national groups; action plan for strengthening of LNCC's
- Research about LNCC's - use of data for sampling frame, and secondary analysis of primary data from the initial research

- Data reported in initial surveys are updated by respondents
- Respondents recommend improvements and additions to the baseline data set

References:

ANSI/NISO Z39.7-2004. Information Services and Use: Metrics & statistics for libraries and information providers--Data Dictionary, Section 2.1.8 Library Cooperatives.
<http://www.niso.org/emetrics> .

Eckard, Helen M. *Statistics of Library Networks and Cooperative Organizations, 1977-1978*. National Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. 1982. U.S. Department of Education: Washington, D.C.

Himmel, Ethel and Bill Wilson. *Library Systems and Cooperatives*. (undated study, but presumed to have been conducted between 2000 and March 2003)
<http://www.libraryconsultant.com/LibrarySystems.htm>

McGuckin, Patrick (ed.). *Special Issue: Illinois Regional Library Systems 40 Years (1965-2005)*. Illinois Libraries. 86(1), December, 2005.

King, Donald W. *Survey of Library Networks and Cooperative Library Organizations: 1985-86*. Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. April, 1987. U.S. Department of Education: Washington, DC.

_____. (2002) *The Role of Library Consortia in Electronic Journal Services*. Published as a chapter in Edited Proceedings of a meeting held on September 24, 2002, organized by the Ingenta Institute. *The Consortium Site Licence: Is it a sustainable model?* Ingenta: Oxford, England.

Long, Sarah A. (1995) *Systems, Quo Vadis?: An examination of the history, current status, and future role of regional library systems*. Advances in Librarianship. Volume 19, p117-158. 1995.

State Library Agencies Fiscal Year 2002. National Center for Education Statistics, E.D. Tabs (NCES 2004-304) defines a system as "...a group of autonomous libraries joined together by formal or informal agreements to perform a various services cooperatively such as resource sharing, communications, etc. Includes multi-type library systems and public library systems. Excludes multiple outlets under the same administration."
<http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004304.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix A – Advisory Committee Roster

COMMITTEE CHAIR AND PROJECT DIRECTOR:

Denise Davis
Director, Office for Research and Statistics
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2795
Phone: (800) 545-2433 ext. 4273
Fax: (312) 280-4392
E-mail: dmdavis@ala.org

RESEARCHERS TO PROJECT:

Keith Curry Lance, Ph.D.
RSL Research Group
527 W. Ash Ct.
Louisville, CO 80027
Phone: (303) 466-1860
Fax: N/A
Email: keithlance@comcast.net

John Carlo Bertot
BICS, Inc.
Tallahassee, FL
Email: jcbertot@earthlink.net

ALA STAFF:

Cathleen Bourdon
Executive Director, ASCLA and RUSA
Phone: (312) 280-4395
Email: cbourdon@ala.org
Letitia Earvin
Administrative Assistant, ORS
Phone: (312) 280-4274
Email: learvin@ala.org
Gerald Hodges
Associate Executive Director
Communications & Marketing
Email: ghodges@ala.org

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Donald King
204 Ukiah Lane
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: (919) 967-9421
Email: donaldwking@gmail.com

Paul Kissman
Library Information Specialist
Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
98 North Washington Street, Ste 401
Boston, MA 02114
Phone: (617) 725-1860 ext. 238
Fax: (617) 725-0140
Email: Paul.Kissman@state.ma.us

Martha Kyrillidou
Director, Statistics and Measurements Program
Association of Research Libraries
21 Dupont Circle
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: (202) 296-2296
Fax: (202) 872-0084
Email: martha@arl.org

Sarah A. Long
Director
North Suburban Library System
200 W. Dundee Road
Wheeling, IL 60090-2799
Phone: (847) 459-1300
Fax: (847) 459-0380
Email: slong@nsls.info

Leslie Manning, representing CORS
Dean of Library
University of Colorado
P.O. Box 7150
Colorado Springs, CO 80933
Phone: (719) 262-3115
Fax: (719) 528-5227
Email: lmanning@uccs.edu
Suzanne Miller, representing COSLA

Director/State Librarian
MN State Library Services and School
Technology
Library Development and Services
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113
Phone: (651) 582-8251
Fax: (651) 582-8752
E-mail: suzanne.miller@state.mn.us

Ann Okerson, representing ICOLC
Associate University Librarian for
Collections and
Technical Services
Sterling Memorial Library
Yale University
P.O. Box 208240
New Haven, CT 06520-8240
Phone: (203) 432-1764
Email: ann.okerson@yale.edu

Connie S. Paul
representing ASCLA and ICAN
Executive Director
Central Jersey Regional Library
Cooperative
4400 Route 9 South
Suite 3400
Freehold, NJ 07728-1383
Phone: (732) 409-6484
Fax: (732) 409-6492
Email: connie@cjrlc.org

Helen Wilbur
V.P., Consortia Sales
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington, MI 48331-3535
Phone: (212) 714-0170
Fax: (212) 967-6368
Email: Helen.Wilbur@thomson.com

Barratt Wilkins, representing StLA
Steering
Committee
3103 Brockton Way
Tallahassee, FL 32308-9711
Phone: (850) 386-3561
Fax: N/A
E-mail: barratt.wilkins@mac.com

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:

Neal Kaske
Director, Statistics and Surveys
U.S. NCLIS
1800 M Street, NW; Suite 350
Washington, DC 20036-5841
Phone: (202) 606-9200
Fax: (202) 606-9203
E-mail: nkaske@nclis.gov

Jeffrey Williams
Library Program Director
NCES
1990 K Street, NW; # 9105
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 502-7476
Fax: (202) 502-7466
E-mail: jeffrey.williams@ed.gov

Barbara Holton
Institute of Education Sciences,
Statistics Division
NCES
1990 K Street, NW; # 9030
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 219-7095
Fax: (202) 502-7468
E-mail: barbara.holton@ed.gov

Appendix B – Baseline Survey Materials



Dear [Chief Officer first name] :

Libraries and library organizations, as well as national, state, and regional policy planners are forced to rely upon outdated information about library networks, cooperatives, and consortia (hereafter cooperatives). To rectify this problem, the American Library Association (ALA), Office for Research and Statistics, with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), has undertaken a comprehensive study of library consortia throughout the United States. The final products of these surveys will include a web-based directory of library cooperatives, an online report generator, slide presentations about the project and outcomes, and a final written report, including success stories. This research project will result in a clear and current understanding of how library cooperatives operate, and the many ways in which these collaborative organizations help to advance learning communities.

To do this we need your help as a Chief Officer, and the help of appropriate staff in your state agency. To make sure we have a complete response from all library networks, cooperatives and consortia, we ask that you encourage those in your state to participate in this project's preliminary survey.

To meet the study's specifications, a library network, consortium, or cooperative must:

1. Be a legally established not-for-profit U.S. entity or government agency with its own budget and staff;
2. Have members that are primarily libraries, not individual librarians;
3. Serve multiple institutions (e.g., libraries, school districts) that are not under the organization's administrative control; and,
4. Support library and information services by performing such functions as resource sharing, education/training, planning, and advocacy.

At this early stage, we would rather risk the preliminary survey response being too large than too small, so, if you are doubtful about whether or not an organization meets this definition, please encourage its representatives to participate in the survey.

Accompanying this letter is suggested text for your message to library cooperatives in your state. Please feel free to amend it as you see fit, but please do not omit any portion of it.

ALA is being assisted in this project by the RSL Research Group, whose principals are Marcia J. Rodney, Bill Schwarz, and Keith Curry Lance. In pursuit of subsequent activities of this project, you may hear from one or more of them. For more information about this study, please contact Denise M. Davis (dmdavis@ala.org) or the research team at libcoop@rslresearch.com. The project website is <http://www.ala.org/ala/ors/lbcc/lbcc.htm>.

Sincerely,

[digital signature]
Keith Michael Fiels
Executive Director

[digital signature]
Denise M. Davis
Director, Office for Research and Statistics

Survey Instructions

This survey is the first in a series to gather information about how library networks, cooperatives and consortia operate, and the many ways in which these collaborative organizations help to advance learning communities. The information gathered from these surveys will be aggregated and made available in a searchable, report-generating database.

Your organization has been identified as one that may meet the minimum specifications for inclusion in this study. The definition for a library cooperative adopted in the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) standard Z39.7-2004, Information Services and Use: Metrics & statistics for libraries and information providers--Data Dictionary, is being used for this study. The definition is:

2.1.8 *Library Cooperative*

A Library Cooperative (network, system, and consortium) is an organization that has a formal arrangement whereby library and information services are supported for the mutual benefit of participating libraries. It must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Participants/members are primarily libraries.
2. The organization is a U.S. not-for-profit entity, which has its own budget and its own paid staff.
3. The organization serves multiple institutions (e.g., libraries, school districts) that are not under the organization's administrative control.
4. The scope of the organization's activities includes support of library and information services by performing such functions as resource sharing, training, planning, and advocacy.

<http://www.niso.org/emetrics/current/subcategory2.1.8.html>

“Not-for-profit” includes any such tax status recognized by the US Internal Revenue Service. In order for a not-for-profit organization to be "legal" it needs to be incorporated under the laws of a state. The entity would be ineligible to receive any governmental funding without such legal status.

For the purposes of this study governmentally based library entities with independent budgets and staff also are within the definition of a library cooperative.

The survey is divided into six short sections, with a total of 11 questions, and takes about 10 minutes to complete. The questions include:

- Contact information
- Characteristics (do you have a budget, do you have paid staff, etc.)
- Primary service area jurisdiction (local, county, etc.)
- Library types your organization supports
- Purposes your organization serves (professional development, digitization, etc.)
- Best person to complete a more detailed questionnaire

Questions about the survey should be directed to the RSL Research Group, whose principals are Marcia J. Rodney, Bill Schwarz, and Keith Curry Lance, at libcoop@rslresearch.com.

The survey response period is *March 6 through April 14, 2006*.

Survey Form

This survey is the first in a series to gather information about how library networks, cooperatives and consortia operate, and the many ways in which these collaborative organizations help to advance learning communities. The last comprehensive study of these organizations was in 1988. Many aspects of library services provided by these organizations has changed since then, and this study will gather that information and make it available in a searchable, report-generating database.

Your organization has been identified as one that may meet the minimum specifications for inclusion in this study. The survey is divided into six short sections, with a total of 11 questions and takes about 10 minutes to complete.

The questions include:

- Contact information
- Characteristics (do you have a budget, do you have paid staff, etc.)
- Primary service area jurisdiction (local, county, etc.)
- Library types your organization supports
- Purposes your organization serves (professional development, digitization, etc.)
- Best person to complete a more detailed questionnaire

Again, the survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Thank you for taking the time to respond and being a part of this very important project.

This project is funded in part by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and is coordinated by the ALA Office for Research & Statistics (ORS) in collaboration with the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA). The team of RSL Research Group is analyzing responses and preparing a final report. The project timeline is 2006 and 2007.

A. IDENTIFICATION

Organization Name: _____

Contact Name / Title: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone / Fax: _____

Email: _____

URL: _____

B. CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR ORGANIZATION

1. Is your organization legally established? Yes No

2. Is your organization a not-for-profit? Yes No
3. Does your organization have its own budget? Yes No
4. Does your organization have paid staff? Yes No
5. Are your organization's members or participant groups primarily libraries? Yes No
6. Does your organization primarily serve institutions that are not under your administrative control? Yes No

C. JURISDICTION

What type of geographic area is your organization's primary service area?

Please check only one.

- Local(e.g., town, city, township, municipality, county)
- State
- Regional (e.g., multi-state region, intra-state region)
- National
- International
- Other – please explain _____

D. LIBRARY TYPES

Which types of libraries are included in the membership of your organization?

- Academic
- Public
- School
- Special—If special, also mark sub-types:
- Medical or health sciences
- Law
- Institutional (correctional, youth, mental health)
- Corporate
- Non-profit

E. PURPOSES

Which of the following purposes is your organization primarily and explicitly charged to serve? Mark all that apply.

- General professional development, continuing education, or staff training
- General consulting/technical assistance
- Automation, networking, or other technology services
- Communication among member libraries (directories, e-mail lists, newsletters, other publications)
- Cooperative purchasing or group discounts
- Courier or other document delivery services
- Digitization or other preservation efforts
- Information and referral services (including databases)
- Library advocacy, public relations, or marketing
- Library and information science resource collection
- Resource sharing (reciprocal borrowing, cooperative collection)

- development, union catalog, union list of serials, requesting mechanisms)
 - Rotating or other shared collections
 - Standards/guidelines development or support
 - Support for services to special populations (children, blind and physically handicapped, rural residents) or other outreach services
 - Other—please specify:
-

F. FOLLOW-UP

Who is the best person to complete a more detailed questionnaire about your organization?

If the same person as reported in Section A, check here .

Otherwise, please complete this section.

Contact Name: _____

Contact Title: _____

Phone / Fax: _____

Email: _____

For problems with the submission of this survey, please contact: Letitia Earvin, Administrative Assistant - learvin@ala.org.

DRAFT DRAFT DRAFT

Library Networks, Cooperatives and Consortia: Environmental Scan

Introduction:

Networks and cooperatives were first formed in the 1960s to leverage staff and resources, in order to provide cost-effective and efficient services that libraries individually could not afford. It was through these early networks and cooperatives that library automation was initially introduced and pioneering efforts in statewide resource sharing began. As collaboration flourished, these burgeoning networks relied primarily on federal funding from the Library Services and Construction Act. By using federal funds to match local funds, many states were able to build early networks and cooperatives, primarily consisting of public libraries. With the revision of federal block grants to libraries, and the new guidelines established by the Library Services and Technology Act (1996), multi-type library cooperation was encouraged. This federal support promoted the development of learning communities, by leveraging local partnerships to advance projects that otherwise might not have succeeded had only local or state funding been available.

As the world of libraries changed, other services became the business of networks and library cooperatives. Frequently, services initiated by networks were later integrated into the daily operations of individual libraries. Examples of such pioneering services included: Internet connectivity and training; teleconferencing; services to special populations; distance learning; database licensing and training; “E-Rate” discount applications and technology planning, eBook and eJournal acquisitions; and most recently, digital virtual reference services. Had it not been for the early development of networks, individual libraries would have spent considerably more, both in real dollars and staff time, to develop the necessary expertise to implement these new services. Two such examples can be found in Maryland and Massachusetts:

- In Maryland, the **SAILOR** project, a statewide initiative to install a telecommunications backbone through the state, was made possible by “drawing down” federal Library Services and Construction Act, and Library Services and Technology monies. **SAILOR** has continued to improve, thanks to local library support, limited state aid, and “E-Rate” discounts (provided under the Telecommunications Act of 1996). It was this collaboration of public, academic, school and special libraries in Maryland that allowed for an even larger vision – that of linking all public libraries in Maryland to the Internet. This highly successful project would have been much harder to implement had the State Librarian in the 1960s not also established a strong

system of regional networks and library cooperation that spanned across library types.

- In Massachusetts, nine multi-type networks presently provide statewide resource sharing services as a result of the early automation efforts undertaken by these cooperatives. Today, these regional networks and consortia receive funding from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners, regional library systems, and members' fees. The services provided to all residents include access to books, magazines, audiotapes, CDs, videos and DVDs from more than 300 public libraries through regional automation systems, plus access to the collections of 38 academic libraries, and a small number of participating school libraries. Massachusetts' regional networks also negotiate statewide database licenses on behalf of its members and provide a digital virtual reference service, called **MassAnswers**, as part of a cooperative project of the Massachusetts Regional Reference Center libraries and other libraries who have joined the nationwide 24/7 reference collaborative.

Library Cooperation Paradigm:

Much has been written about library cooperation (see: Glenny, Nolting, Reynolds, Carlile, and Connor). It is important to understand the environment within which library cooperation is successful. Some influences are governmental (e.g., interlibrary cooperation legislation), while others are individual and attitudinal. Nolting outlined intergovernmental functions that could be provided cooperatively, thereby more effectively. Those highlighted include:

- (1) Informal cooperation,
- (2) Parallel actions,
- (3) Creation of regional councils and planning agencies,
- (4) Annexation and consolidation,
- (5) City-county consolidation,
- (6) Granting of extraterritorial powers,
- (7) Transfer of functions,
- (8) Creation of urban counties,
- (9) Regional agencies and metropolitan federation, and
- (10) Creation of special districts and authorities.²

Further, Nolting clustered these methods into four categories – cooperation, amalgamation, expansion, and new local unit. Methods (1) through (4) are cooperation, (5) and (6) are amalgamations, (7) through (9) are expansion of authority, and (11) is a new local unit.

² Nolting, Orin F. *Mobilizing Total Library Resources for Effective Service*. (p. 13-18) Chicago: ALA. 1969.

Defining library networks and cooperatives:

[develop introductory text]

In 1975, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science offered the following definition for networks:

“Two or more libraries and/or other organizations engaged in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications, for some functional purpose. A network usually consists of a formal arrangement whereby materials, information, and services provide by a variety of types of libraries and/or other organizations are made available to all potential users. (Libraries may be in different jurisdictions but agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own constituents. Computers and telecommunications may be among the tools used to facilitating communication among them.)”³

How best to define and organize networks and cooperatives was investigated by Susan K. Martin in three publications published between 1976 and 1986.⁴ Martin looked at networks and provided detail on regional library networks, OCLC, governance, national programs, the role of the private sector, and trends. In her last book, *Library Networks, 1986-87*, automation networks are the focus. Martin suggests the following definition:

“...a group of individuals or organizations that are interconnected to form a system to accomplish some specified goal. This linkage must include a communications mechanism, and many networks exist for the express purpose of facilitating certain types of communication among their members.”

Further outlined are characteristics of successful networks:

- Requires a significant level of financial and organizational commitment from participants;
- Based on agreement within the group of participants that specific tasks should be performed and specific guidelines adhered to;
- Provides an immediate facility for access through computer and communications technologies to databases, which may originate in either the public or the private sector of the information community.⁵

³ U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. *Toward a National Program for Libraries and Information services: Goals for Action*. Washington, DC: GPO. 1975. p.82.

⁴ Martin, Susan K. *Library Networks, 1976-1977*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications. 1976. *Library Networks, 1981-82*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. 1981. *Library Networks, 1986-1987: Libraries in Partnership*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. 1986.

⁵ _____ . *Library Networks, 1986-1987: Libraries in Partnership*. White Plains, NY: Knowledge Industry Publications, Inc. 1986. p.2.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) administered three surveys of library networks and cooperatives, the first in 1977-78, the second in 1985-86, and the third in 1997. The definitions used in each of these questionnaires were modified in subsequent years based on what was learned in the previous study.

Survey of Library Networks and Cooperative Library Organizations, 1977-1978:

A cooperative library organization is one whose participants agree to share their resources through interinstitutional cooperation, either formally or informally. For the purposes of this survey a cooperative library organization must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- a. The participants in the organization are primarily or exclusively libraries.
- b. The organization and/or its participants engage in cooperative activities which are beyond the scope of traditional interlibrary loan services as stated in the American Library Association code.
- c. The activities of the organization must extend beyond reciprocal borrowing, which is defined on page 3 (Line 57) of the specific instructions.
- d. The organization operates for the mutual benefit of participating libraries.
- e. The scope of the organization is interinstitutional.

[Line 57 – Reciprocal Borrowing. Special borrowing privileges which enable persons to check out materials from libraries where they are not entitled to normal borrowing privileges.]

Survey of Library Networks and Cooperative Library Organizations, 1985:

Definition of Library Networks and Cooperative Library Organizations. A network is a cooperative library organization that usually consists of a formal arrangement whereby materials, information, and services provided by a variety of types of libraries and other organizations are made available to all members. Member libraries may be in different jurisdictions but agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own constituents. Computers and telecommunications may be among the tools used for facilitating communication among them. The term “network” is used throughout the survey to designate library networks, cooperative library organizations, library consortia and cooperative library arrangements. For the purposes of this survey, a network must meet ALL of the following criteria:

1. The participants in the network are primarily or exclusively libraries
2. The network and/or its participants engage in cooperative activities which are beyond the scope of traditional interlibrary loan services as state in the American Library Association Code.
3. The activities of the organization extend beyond reciprocal borrowing.
4. The organization operates for the mutual benefit of participating libraries.
5. The scope of the organization is interinstitutional (i.e., beyond branch libraries within an organization or libraries that are under a common funding source, such as school libraries in a municipality).

6. The scope of activities involves resource sharing (e.g., interlibrary lending, equipment, staff with special skills, collection development, cooperative purchasing, etc.).
7. The operation of the network is based on a verbal or written agreement between its members.

Library Cooperatives Survey, Fiscal Year 1997:

A library cooperative (network, system, or consortium) is an organization which meets all of the following criteria:

1. The organization is **not** a for-profit entity.
2. The participants or members of the organization are primarily libraries.
3. The organization is a U.S. not-for-profit entity with a governance structure, a budget, and paid staff.
4. The organization serves multiple institutions (e.g., libraries, school districts) that are not under your organization's administrative control.
5. The scope of your organization's activities includes support of library and information services by performing such functions as (but not limited to) resource sharing, training, planning, and advocacy.⁶

There are no recent comprehensive studies that define the universe of library networks and cooperatives, describe the range of activities of this group, or collect operational level data that is required to understand functions, staffing, revenue and expenditures. Although the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) defined library cooperatives in 2004 as “... *an organization that has a formal arrangement whereby library and information services are supported for the mutual benefit of participating libraries,*” **this definition has not been tested for validity**. Further, NISO proposes that library cooperatives also meet all of the following criteria:

- Participants/members are primarily libraries;
- The organization is a U.S. not-for-profit entity, which has its own budget and its own paid staff;
- The organization serves multiple institutions (e.g., libraries, school districts) that are not under the organization's administrative control; and
- The scope of the organization's activities includes support of library and information services by performing such functions as resource sharing, training, planning, and advocacy.”⁷

Other national surveys supported by the National Center for Education Statistics, the American Library Association, and the Association of Research Libraries neither

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. (Acting as Collection Agent for the U.S. Department of Education. National Center for Education Statistics. Library Cooperatives Survey: Fiscal Year 1997.

⁷ ANSI/NISO Z39.7-2004. Information Services and Use: Metrics & statistics for libraries and information providers--Data Dictionary, Section 2.1.8 Library Cooperatives. <http://www.niso.org/emetrics> .

describe this group nor collect data in any detailed way. Further, although national academic library surveys do ask about a library's membership in cooperative organizations, they do not link these responses to any specific definitions of these organizations, or to information about expenditures, staffing, or acquisitions.

Prior Federal Surveys – 1977-78, 1985-86, and 1995:

To better understand the urgent need for this study, it is important to review the results of past research efforts. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) administered three surveys of library networks and cooperatives, the first in 1977-78, the second in 1985-86, and the third in 1997.⁸ The findings of the 1977-78 and 1985-86 studies were published, but the results of the 1997 study were not. The primary reason for not publishing this 1997 study had to do with the poor definition that was used to describe the universe of library networks and cooperatives, as well as the poor quality of responses from those surveyed. In fact, the 1997 study was so problematic that NCES has since repeatedly declined to conduct another survey of this group.

The 1977-78 and 1985-86 studies relied upon a confirmation method to determine the respondent universe. The researchers, Donald King principal, built a response universe of 1,050 library networks from the 1977-78 responses, a list from the American Library Association, and contact with states and consultants. In addition, the survey instruments changed slightly between the two study periods, leaving some earlier respondents ineligible for the 1985-86 study⁹. The sample frame of the 1985-86 study was 968 libraries, with an additional 82 networks identified by state libraries (1,050 in total). The sample included 696 networks, with 678 valid responses, approximately 65% of the sample frame.

The 1985-86 survey instrument consisted of five sections and a resource list:

1. Organizational structure of networks
2. Staff organization
3. Funds received
4. Expenditures
5. Major network services and activities

⁸ Eckard, Helen M. *Statistics of Library Networks and Cooperative Organizations, 1977-1978*. National Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. 1982. U.S. Department of Education: Washington, D.C.

King, Donald W. *Survey of Library Networks and Cooperative Library Organizations: 1985-86*. Center for Education Statistics. Office of Educational Research and Improvement. April, 1987. U.S. Department of Education: Washington, DC.

⁹ King, Donald W. (1987). The 1985-1986 definition included two new criteria: "The scope of network activities involves resource sharing (e.g., interlibrary lending, equipment, staff with special skills, collection development, cooperative purchasing, etc.)", and "The operation of the network is based on a verbal or written agreement between its members."

The study also determined the number of library networks becoming operational between 1960-1984, and identified the number in existence prior to 1960¹⁰ (see Figure X).

Figure X

Period	Number of New Library Networks
1980-1984	103
1975-1979	179
1970-1974	164
1960-1969	160
Prior to 1960	62

Further, the study noted the increase in network participants as opposed to the increase in networks themselves. There was an estimated 137 increase in network participants between 1978 and 1986. This is a very important finding, especially as the detailed responses from the 2006-07 surveys are reviewed. Figure XX details the participant responses across the first two NCES studies¹¹. Unfortunately, no findings were released from the 1995 NCES study.

Figure XX

Type of Participating Organizations	Number of Participants		Proportion of Participants		Change %
	1977-1978	1985-1986	1977-1978	1985-1986	
College or University	6,999	13,664	22%	18%	95%
Public School	3,395	20,393	11%	27%	501%
Public Library					
Central	8,191	11,189	25%	15%	37%
Branch	2,778	4,134	9%	5%	49%
Special	8,088	18,600	25%	24%	130%
State Library Agencies	405	502	1%	1%	24%
Total	32,148	76,280	100%	100%	100%

NOTE: The authors of this environmental scan have identified mathematical errors in this table. The results are reproduced as they appeared in the King study (1987).

¹⁰ _____, p.15.

¹¹ _____, p.20.

Prior Federal Research:

A study commissioned in 1978 by the Office of Planning, Budgeting, and Evaluation, United States Office of Education studied the impact of federal library service programs (Library Research and Demonstration Program (Title II-B) and the Library Services and Construction Act – Interlibrary Cooperation) and the results were published in two volumes titled *A study of library cooperatives, networks, and demonstration projects* (Vol.1 Findings and Recommendations; Vol. 2 Case Study Reports) by Ruth J. Patrick, Joseph Casey, and Carol M. Novalis. (New York: K.G. Saur Publishing.1980).

Key findings of this study were on the program for policy evaluation, rather than library networking services. However, there is useful information on the number of projects funded through these programs. Research and Demonstration projects were categorized as community resources, networking, services to target groups, training, and other and reported by type of library (e.g., state, academic, public, school, private organizations, and federal government).¹² Seventy-five projects were reported for the period 1971-1976, with 13 reported each in Community Resources and Networking, 28 in Target Groups, 11 in Training, and 10 in Other. Two-year institutions of higher education reported the largest number of supported programs, 31 in all. Private non-profit organizations reported 22 supported programs. The case studies provide additional information and include OCLC, The Demonstration and Evaluation of Effects of Incentives on Research Sharing Using NELINET, and The Study to Design an Optimal System for Mail Order Book Delivery.

Library Services and Construction Act – Interlibrary Cooperation projects (LSCA-III) were intended to encourage networking and interlibrary cooperation to increase cost-effective services. This Act defined cooperation:

“Interlibrary cooperation,” in reference to assistance under Title III of the Act, means the establishment, expansion and operation of local, regional, and interstate cooperative library networks which will provide for the systematic and effective coordination of the resources of school, public, academic and special libraries and information centers to improve supplementary services for the special clientele served by each type of library or center. Such networks may be designed to serve a community, metropolitan area, or region within a State, or may serve a Statewide or multistate area and shall consist of two or more types of libraries.”¹³

The Department of Education study detailed the network definition to include resources and services that supported goals of the Act:

- Information resources

¹² Patrick, Ruth J., Casey, Joseph, and Novalis, Carol M. *A study of library cooperatives, networks, and demonstration projects*. Vol.1 Findings and Recommendations, Tables 5.1-5.4, p.42-43. New York: K.G. Saur Publishing.1980.

¹³ *Federal Register* (December 2, 1974). 39(232):41712.

- Readers and users
- Schemes for the intellectual organization of documents or data (e.g., directories for use by readers or users)
- Methods for the delivery of resources to readers or users
- Bidirectional communications networks (high speed computer access)

Patrick further outlined the percentage of states reporting products, services and procedures resulting from LSCA III funded projects. Figure XX reproduces findings reported in Table 9.4 of the original report.¹⁴

Figure XX. Proportion of States Reporting Specific Products, Services, and Procedures Resulting from LSCA III

Product or Service	Percent of States Reporting the Product/Service	Average Number of Products	Percent of States Reporting Product and Able to Estimate Number of Products
Participation in intrastate and multistate cooperative projects	76.8%	3.1	79.1%
Staff Development	67.9%	N/A	N/A
Installation of TWX equipment in libraries	62.5%	19	80%
Implementation of centralized clearinghouse of requests	57.1%	N/A	N/A
Completion of special studies	51.8%	2.2	72.4%
Participation in OCLC	37.5%	N/A	N/A
Retention of systems personnel	23.2%	2.5	75%
Computer-based research services	12.5%	N/A	N/A
Union lists and catalogs	10.7%	N/A	N/A

¹⁴ Patrick, Ruth J., Casey, Joseph, and Novalis, Carol M. *A study of library cooperatives, networks, and demonstration projects*. Vol.1 Findings and Recommendations, Tables 9.4, p.102. New York: K.G. Saur Publishing.1980.

Greater detail is provided for cooperative library services projects receiving LSCA III funds in Fiscal Year 1976. Those findings are summarized in Figure XX.¹⁵

Figure XX – Summary of Cooperative Library Services and Activities Performed by Cooperative and Networking Projects Receiving LSCA III Funds in Fiscal Year 1976 by Whether or not Project was Completely Dependent upon LSCA III Funding

Cooperative Service or Activity	Total Percent of Projects Reporting	Percent of LSCA III Dependent Projects Reporting	Percent of Non-LSCA III Projects Reporting	Percent of Time Activity Reported
Routing of interlibrary loan requests	59.3%	44.2%	69.2%	9.7%
Reference services	55.6%	39.5%	66.2%	9.0%
Planning	53.7%	37.2%	64.6%	8.7%
Continuing education and training	51.9%	44.2%	56.9%	8.4%
Public relations and publicity	48.1%	30.2%	60%	7.8%
Telecommunications	46.3%	39.5%	50.8%	7.5%
Participation in interstate networks	45.5%	39.5%	49.2%	7.4%
Preparation of union catalogs and lists	44.4%	30.2%	53.8%	7.2%
Reciprocal borrowing privileges	35.2%	23.3%	47.1%	5.7%
Delivery services	27.8%	14%	36.9%	4.5%
Clearinghouses	26.9%	20.9%	30.8%	4.4%
Research and development	25%	11.6%	33.8%	4.1%
Purchasing of supplies and equipment	24.1%	25.6%	23.1%	3.9%
Sharing and exchange of equipment	16.6%	16.3%	16.9%	2.7%
Cataloging	15.7%	14%	16.9%	2.6%
Acquisition and selection of library materials	14.8%	9.3%	18.5%	2.4%
Depositories	6.5%	2.3%	9.2%	1.1%
Learning/Resource Centers	6.5%	7%	6.2%	1.1%

¹⁵ _____, Table 9.5, p.107.

Other (development of automated data bases)	6.5%	4.7%	7.7%	1.1%
Warehousing	3.7%	0%	6.2%	.6%
<i>Total number of projects</i>	108	43	65	

Non-Federal Surveys and Research:

The Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies (ASCLA), a division of the American Library Association describes library cooperatives as “*Multi-type or other library agencies providing interlibrary cooperation and networking which cross jurisdictional, institutional, or political boundaries, working together to achieve maximum effective use of funds to provide library and information services to all persons above and beyond those that can be provided through one institution.*” In 1994, ASCLA outlined a series of research agendas at its Executive Board meeting. Topics included: the future of cooperative libraries; funding; education requirements; planning and decision-making; measures of productivity and value; client/user satisfaction measures; and issues relating to cooperation.

With the discontinuation in 1989 of ASCLA’s series *The Report on Library Cooperation*, and the lack of regular data collection for this group, the organization that was best positioned to provide the lead for research on library cooperatives must now rely on others. In a study conducted between 2000 and March 2003 by library consultants Himmel & Wilson, they reported on some of the characteristics found in exemplary multi-type cooperative library systems, commenting that nearly 50% of those surveyed had formed its system in the 1960s.¹⁶ However, this study failed to describe the major changes that have since affected library cooperatives since the 1960s, including serious governance and funding issues that have virtually reinvented many of these early systems. Since 1997, library literature about consortia, networks and cooperatives indicates a shift from cooperative purchasing of library automation systems to an environment of cooperative purchasing of materials and services – specifically electronic materials and services. As state library agencies continue to take the lead in statewide database purchases, often using federal funds to do so, it becomes even more critical to understand how these library cooperatives form, are governed, operate, merge, or disband. The Himmel & Wilson study did not investigate this, nor did their study attempt to define the universe of networks, cooperatives, and consortia.

¹⁶ Himmel, Ethel and Bill Wilson. Library Systems and Cooperatives. (undated study, but presumed to have been conducted between 2000 and March 2003)

<http://www.libraryconsultant.com/LibrarySystems.htm>

What data about networks and library cooperatives are we presently collecting?

In fiscal year 2002, state library agencies reported that twenty agencies provide cooperative purchasing services to public libraries, fourteen to academic libraries, eleven to school libraries, twelve to special libraries, and ten to systems.¹⁷ State libraries also reported that 31 states provided financial support for statewide database licensing to library cooperatives. However, critical information of special interest to the library field was not collected, including:

- ❑ The membership of the cooperatives;
- ❑ A definition of the cooperatives; and
- ❑ A comprehensive directory of cooperatives.

To further illustrates the need to understand library cooperatives and how they operate, we offer the following: As of September 2003, the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) listed among its members more than 170 consortia from around the world, approximately 100 of which could be identified as U.S. consortia. However, nothing is known about what these self-identified consortia may have in common.

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¹⁷ State Library Agencies Fiscal Year 2002. National Center for Education Statistics, E.D. Tabs (NCES 2004-304) defines a system as "...a group of autonomous libraries joined together by formal or informal agreements to perform a various services cooperatively such as resource sharing, communications, etc. Includes multi-type library systems and public library systems. Excludes multiple outlets under the same administration." <http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2004/2004304.pdf>

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