

The CTW Consortium: Its Purpose and Principles of Collaboration

Approved by the CTW Library Directors, April 2009

Mission Statement:

The CTW Consortium exists to provide the best possible service to member campus constituencies through collaborative efforts. The primary purpose of the consortium is to share library collections among member libraries. The secondary purpose of the consortium is to share other resources such as staff expertise, programming, technology and professional development opportunities.

(Dated: 2/26/2001)

Consortial History:

In February 1987, Connecticut College, Trinity College and Wesleyan University formed the CTW Consortium to share the development and implementation costs of an online, integrated system. Shortly afterwards, the three institutions also started to share their collections through consortial borrowing agreements and instituted a jointly financed delivery operation among the campuses.

Collaborative collection development has been informal, with the primary goals of minimizing duplication for narrowly specialized, research level publications and, conversely, maximizing the unique content available within the consortium. There has been consistent agreement that each library needs to maintain core collections for undergraduate courses in the local curriculum.

Additional collaboration in recent years included shared review and selection of electronic databases; staff workshops on new technologies and services; a consortial grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the development of information literacy programs; and currently, a second A. W. Mellon grant for collaborative collection projects.

Principles of Collaboration:

The CTW Consortium consists of three separate libraries that are committed to collaborating on:

- Sharing and providing access to resources
- Enhancing collections
- Exchanging information
- Developing shared projects
- Implementing new technologies
- Conserving and preserving resources

While governed by local administrations, budgets, and priorities, the three CTW libraries recognize the value and benefits of collaboration both for their campus constituencies and their staff. The purpose of this document is to outline the basic principles and agreements that guide the consortial collaboration, and to indicate areas in need of action and policy development.

1. Sharing and Providing Access to Resources

At the core of CTW's collaboration are reciprocal borrowing agreements that allow patrons from all three institutions access to the shared collections. While the loan policies are set by the lending libraries, they are coordinated to grant equitable borrowing privileges across all three CTW libraries. Being able to borrow material under similar conditions as at their home institution is particularly important for faculty who often need material for more extended loan periods than set for regular ILL requests. The long-term viability of building consortial collections is based on securing reliable and efficient access to all circulating material.

Needed action and policy development:

- Maintain regular communication among access services staff in the three libraries to share changes and enhancements to systems and services
- Explore consortial purchases of shared e-resources
- Develop coordinated access services policies
- Investigate service enhancements to our delivery system

2. Enhancing Collections

Connecticut College, Trinity College and Wesleyan University are all liberal arts institutions with similar missions, but each has unique programs and collections. The strengths of each institution enhance CTW as a whole. Because of CTW's commitment to sharing resources, each library can rely on the others to provide resources that are used by our patrons but not core to the curriculum. Because of this reliance, the combined CTW collections are more diverse and offer a broader bibliographic base than each library by itself.

Needed action and policy development:

- Complete individual and consortial collection analysis to determine collection strengths and weaknesses
- Create collection development policies to guide consortial collaboration
- Explore shared weeding and storage options for consortial resource retention

3. Exchanging Information

To ensure the success of the consortium, CTW provides a variety of ways for staff at all levels to communicate with each other. Directors have regular meetings to assess existing services and determine the future direction of CTW. The CTW Op-Comm group meets regularly and has a listserv to discuss issues pertaining to policies and technology applications within the consortium. Functional SIGs, although less active than in the past, conduct meetings of staff who perform similar functions at the three libraries. There is also an annual retreat at which consortial issues are discussed and each library reviews their major accomplishments of the year.

Needed action and policy development:

- Encourage SIGs to meet more often and confer with each other on procedural and policy changes that are likely to have an impact on the consortium
- Explore innovative ways to communicate within the consortium

4. Developing Shared Projects

In addition to sharing an online library system, CTW has undertaken a number of projects to evaluate and implement new services and processes. In many cases these projects have been funded by grants, most recently projects to coordinate enhanced reference services, information literacy instruction and collaborative collection development. In addition to their stated objectives, these projects strengthen the relationships among staff members at each library, resulting in better communication and collaboration among the three schools.

Needed action and policy development:

- Develop a process for staff at all levels to recommend projects to CTW directors for their consideration
- Create a way to notify and regularly update library staff on the progress of CTW projects
- Identify opportunities for grant-funded collaboration

5. Implementing New Technologies

One of the original purposes of CTW is to develop and maintain shared integrated library systems that enhance consortial access to shared resources. As more and more library functions incorporate new technologies, CTW provides technical expertise and financial support for implementing these into library processes. The consortium also evaluates new systems to determine whether they can improve library services and access.

Needed action and policy development:

- Continue to evaluate and selectively implement new systems and enhancement to existing systems
- Share information with consortial partners on technological developments at each library, and explore how some might be implemented in the consortium

6. Conserving and Preserving Resources

CTW shares with other libraries the problem of aging legacy collections. Many books and other items are damaged in use, other material becomes brittle with age, and some are in obsolete formats. It is necessary to limit access to rare and fragile items in order to preserve them. CTW plans to find ways to share the cost of conserving, preserving, and otherwise providing access to these materials.

Needed action and policy development:

- Compare CTW preservation policies, procedures and resources
- Explore ways to share the cost of conservation and preservation
- Identify collections at each library that could be digitized to protect the original items and improve access
- Explore grant opportunities for shared digitization and preservation projects

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