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HELIN Approval Plans Task Force Report

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HELIN Collection Development Committee
Approval Plans Task Force
Report and Recommendations
January 2010

Background: The Approval Plans Task Force was an outcome of the HELIN Collection Development E-Forum discussion on June 24, 2009. Its charge was later revised to be more closely aligned with the HELIN Strategic Initiatives developed during Summer 2009 -- in particular, Goal #3 of the HELIN Strategic Direction document: to "create efficiencies and reduce redundancies in collections and services with a focus on centralized cataloging and cooperative collection development."

Members of the Approval Plans Task Force are Susan McMullen (RWU), Nancy Barta-Norton (Chair, JWU), Martha Rice Sanders (HELIN), Norman Desmarais (PC), Russ Bailey (PC), and Andrée Rathemacher (URI).

Charge: "The Approval Plans Task Force will investigate print and e-book approval plans that make sense for HELIN cooperative collection development. Working in tandem with the Collection Analysis Task Force, this group will make a recommendation for a pilot approval plan project by early 2010. Study and investigation will include: 1) An examination of the YBP Library Services' approval plans and other vendor options – what they offer, in what formats, how the plan can work in a consortium setting, and shelf-ready cataloging, and 2) Discussion with other consortia about their experience with approval plans." **(Revised- August 14, 2009).**

To date, the Approval Plans Task Force has had three meetings at Providence College, on September 28, 2009, October 26, 2009, and November 30, 2009. Minutes of these meetings have been posted to the HELIN list.

Study and Investigation:

The Task Force has engaged in a review of relevant literature and has contacted other consortia for further information on their collaborative collection development efforts using vendor approval plans.

1. **Literature Review:** Some of the most relevant articles on the subject are listed and summarized below:

   Connell, R. (2008). Eight may be too many: Getting a toe-hold on cooperative collection building. *Collection Management 33* (1/2):17-28.doi: 10.1080/0146270802157858

   Discusses John Carroll University's policy of avoiding needless duplication of resources by notifying faculty selectors when a book was requested which already had more than eight copies circulating in the OhioLINK system. This policy excluded titles earmarked for reference, reserve, and support of a course or curriculum. The author examines cost savings and faculty/selector acceptance of this pilot program.

   Curl, M., & Zeoli, M. (2004).Developing a consortial shared approval plan for monographs. *Collection Building 23* (3):122-128.doi:10.1108/01604950410544656

   Details the experience of the four CONSORT Colleges (Denison University, Kenyon College, Ohio Wesleyan University, and The College of Wooster) in implementing a shared monographic approval plan through YBP Library Services.

Seiden, P., Pumroy, E., Medeiros, N., Morrison, A., & Luther, J. (2002). Should three college collections add up to one research collection? A study of collaborative collection development at three undergraduate colleges. *Resource Sharing & Information Networks 16* (2):189-204.doi:10.1300/J121v16n02_05

Describes the long history of cooperation among the Tri-College Consortium (Bryn Mawr, Haverford, and Swarthmore) and recent initiatives toward "distributed, integrated tri-college collections" (203-204). More recent efforts in collaborative collection development among these institutions were supported by a Mellon Planning Grant (2001).

Walker, M., & Kulczak, D. (2007). Shelf-ready books using PromptCat and YBP: Issues to consider (an analysis of errors at the University of Arkansas). *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services 31*: 62-84.doi: 10.1016/j.leats2007.07.016

Examines the University of Arkansas Libraries' experience with shelf-ready cataloging and physical processing through YBP Library Services and PromptCat in 2005/2006. While outsourcing provided some benefits in terms of workflow, OCLC searching, and processing, the authors concluded the following: "the answer to our initial question – could we dispense with more of our review procedures [of vendor-supplied records] without significantly compromising the quality of our database? – is a resounding 'no.' Our study reveals that accepting vendor-supplied records into our catalog without review would be to invite an unacceptable number of access errors" (82).

2. Activities:

A. **NELA Conference** - On 10/20/09, Martha Rice Sanders (HELIN) Sue McMullen (RWU), and Christine Fagan (RWU) attended a program at NELA's Annual Conference in Hartford, CT entitled *One for All: Collaborative Collection Development in Academia:* http://www.nelib.org/conference/2009/program/OneForAll.pdf

Task Force members reported on this presentation, which detailed the experience of librarians from Bowdoin, Bates, and Colby colleges with a collaborative approval plan. Planning for this initiative was facilitated by a Carnegie Mellon grant furnishing funding, allowing for additional staff so professionals could devote more time to structuring the program. The three libraries saw their distinct similarities in size, materials budgets, staffing, and curricula as making such close collaboration feasible. The schools report having realized $285,000 in savings by participating in this plan. A more complete report on this collaboration was included as an attachment to the October 26th task force minutes.

According to Martha, the CWT Consortium (Connecticut, Trinity, and Wesleyan) is also participating in collaborative collection development activities focusing on e-content.

B. **Listserv Inquiry** - The Approval Plans Task Force investigated the experience of other institutions and consortia with approval plans for print monographs:

Task force members agreed to contact institutions with experience in cooperative collection development/approval plans. To facilitate this process, Martha Rice Sanders created a brief questionnaire to be posted to several lists. The questions were as follows:

1. What consortium are you in?

2. How many libraries participate in the cooperative collection development/approval plan?
3. What vendor do you use?
4. What are the advantages of doing this for your library?
5. What are the disadvantages?
6. What are the 'roadblocks' to doing this successfully?

The Task Force received responses from six consortia - – Orbis Cascade Alliance; Tri-College Consortium (3 libraries – Swarthmore, Haverford, Bryn Mawr); CBB (Colby, Bates, Bowdoin); Triangle Research Libraries Network - TRLN (UNC-Chapel Hill, NCSU, Duke, NCCU); Five College Consortium in Central Massachusetts (Smith, Amherst, Mt. Holyoke, Hampshire, UMass Amherst); and Ohio Link (seven libraries in southwestern Ohio).

All six consortia used YBP as their vendor with its GOBI interface. The main advantages included a reduction in duplication of titles, financial savings, and increased awareness amongst bibliographers from participating schools. The main disadvantages included resistance to change, more work for some staff members, managing tacit understandings about which subject each library is collecting, determining the amount of duplication that should occur in regards to core content, and the need for more formal collection development policies.

C. **Brown University Consultation** - Nancy Barta-Norton (JWU) and Martha Rice Sanders (HELIN) also communicated with Sam Mizer, Co-Leader of Technical Services at Brown University, and Linda Gesualdi, Manager of Technical Services, at Brown University to discuss their experience with approval plans. As with many of the schools contacted, YBP Library Services manages their primary domestic approval plan and shelf-ready processing; overall, they have found their experience to be a positive one. They shared detailed information regarding planning, structuring, and implementing such a program with our Task Force.

D. **Gobi Investigation** - In discussing approval plan implementation, Nancy Barta-Norton (JWU) recommended that Task Force members look at the GobiWorks Profiles on the YBP Library Services website. GobiWorks "is a series of online feature articles describing different ways libraries have integrated GOBI into their acquisitions and selection workflows" ("GobiWorks" webpage): http://www.ybp.com/gobiworks.html. Russ Bailey also distributed content regarding the GOBI3 acquisitions and collection management services.

E. **Charlestown Conference** - Christine Fagan (RWU) attended our November 30th meeting to report on the 29th Annual Charleston Conference (November 4-7). The pre-conference included a great deal of discussion on e-books, which was of interest to the Task Force as our charge includes investigating both print and e-book formats. As reported in the November 30th minutes, presenters recognized many issues associated with e-books. These include: "standards, licensing agreements, pricing models, e-reserve uses, perpetual access, digital rights management/printing restrictions, availability of COUNTER-compliant statistics, proprietary software complications, availability of good-quality MARC records, interlibrary loan restrictions, concurrent use, and delays in publication" (Approval Plans Task Force, November 30, 2009 minutes).

Many feel e-books constitute a fruitful area for cooperative collection development which HELIN libraries might wish to explore further. This would require close collaboration between HELIN standing committees and/or the

recently-formed Task Forces (Licensing, Collection Analysis, and Approval Plans) to implement such a plan in the HELIN consortium.

Recent trends such as e-book readers (which were not enthusiastically embraced for library use by Charleston presenters, who favored delivery to personal devices such as laptops, iPhones or iPads) and purchase-on-demand programs were also discussed at the Charleston Conference; some presentations are available online: http://www.katina.info/d/2009presentations.

Christine also recommended the *No Shelf Required* blog as a good resource: http://www.libraries.wright.edu/noshelfrequired/

F. **Ebrary Demonstration at URI** - With regard to cooperative collection development of e-books, Andrée Rathemacher (URI) discussed various options available from ebrary based on a vendor demonstration at the University of Rhode Island on October 23rd. The cost model is as follows:

i. List price = one simultaneous user, one institution
ii. List price x 1.5 = unlimited users, one institution
iii. List price x 2 = one simultaneous user, can share with other institutions (consortia)
iv. List price x 4 = unlimited users, multiple institutions (consortia)

In her report to the Task Force, she detailed the Academic Complete (subscription) and Purchase (perpetual access) plans. Andrée noted that ebrary offers some interesting options for hosting content such as .pdfs and other digital documents on its platform. Andrée also noted that they have an end-user driven purchase model, in which an e-book which is accessed a mutually agreed upon number of times is automatically slated for purchase.

G. **HELIN Majors Comparison** - An Excel spreadsheet was created to more easily view similarities in majors across HELIN institutions. Although HELIN libraries are quite diverse, this spreadsheet made it easier to find areas of common interest among groups of HELIN member institutions.

3. Actions:

At the November 30th Task Force meeting:

a. Bob Aspri, Executive Director of the HELIN Consortium, announced that the HELIN Board of Directors had decided at their November 20, 2009 meeting to implement a pilot approval plan program with YBP Library Services:

> The Board agreed that Bob should move forward with the initiative in Goal 3 of the HELIN Strategic Framework Report. The initiative stated that the Board would 'Pursue cooperative collection development (HELIN approval plan) with YBP (YBP Library Services). Bob will pursue a pilot with YBP for a 'selection plan,' and will ask the Directors for volunteers" (November 20, 2009 minutes, HELIN Board of Directors meeting).

b. The Task Force was asked to prepare a Findings and Recommendations Report detailing its work. It was agreed that this report would be completed by the end of January 2010**.**

c. The Task Force had planned to schedule another meeting at the end of January 2010.

4. Recommendations:

Task Force member Russ Bailey offered the following recommendation: It is recommended that the Approval Plans Task Force make itself available to Bob Aspri and the HELIN Selection Plan Task Force (SPTF), which he is constituting and will direct, to possibly continue its investigative study through the Spring 2010 semester. If Bob Aspri and the HELIN SPTF so request, the following activities would seem appropriate:

- **Pilot program assessment:** On November 30th, the HELIN Board of Directors informed the Approval Plans Task Force that Bob Aspri will initiate an approval plan pilot program in conjunction with YBP Library Services. The Task Force has been charged with examining "how the plan can work in a consortium setting." In order to more fully understand how a consortium plan would operate, this task force is very interested in working with the Directors' initiative for a Spring Selection Plan Pilot for print and electronic books.

- **Investigate vendor options:** At its inception, the Approval Plans Task Force was charged with "an examination of YBP Library Services' approval plans and other vendor options." Consequently, it had planned to investigate approval plans offered by YBP, Blackwell, Coutts, Eastern, Book House, and Cassalini, and possibly some other vendors. On November 20, the Board decided to move forward with an approval plan pilot program with YBP Library Services. Also, on 12/7, Baker & Taylor announced its acquisition of Blackwell, rendering further investigation of that vendor's approval services unnecessary: http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6710238.html
  To date, the Task Force has not had the opportunity to conduct an examination of vendor options as charged or to invite vendors to make presentations. It would be useful to obtain detailed information on programs offered by other vendors.

- **E-book approval plans:** Apart from reports on ebrary and on the electronic book presentations at the Charleston pre-conference, the Task Force has not completed its investigation of collaborative collection development of e-books. This activity would require input from and close collaboration with the Licensing Task Force, as it will require negotiation with content providers to secure a consortium-wide agreement governing the use of this licensed content.

- **Pursue areas for further cooperative purchasing:** In accordance with its charge, the Approval Plans Task Force would like to work more closely with the Collection Analysis Task Force to determine areas for print and electronic cooperative collection development.

- **Examine the range of vendor-provided services:** Approval plans, vendor-supplied catalog records, and shelf-ready processing are all distinct and separate services and the merits of each activity should be examined and evaluated separately (as defined below).* Issues for further discussion might, for example, include impact on workflows, encumbrances, and end-processing specifications of institutions participating in the pilot.

- **Pursue grant opportunities:** As a number of the institutions we examined had successfully obtained Carnegie Mellon grants to support their collaborative collection development efforts, it is recommended that the HELIN Consortium consult with these schools about their application processes and investigate the possibilities of obtaining such a grant. HELIN may also wish to examine other

grant sources in addition to the Mellon Planning Grants. Requests for Proposals (RFP) for grants should be examined as discussed.

- **Establish best practices:** The Collection Development Task Forces (Approval Plans, Licensing, and Collection Analysis) and/or relevant HELIN Standing Committees, in conjunction with HELIN's Central Office, should consider establishing best practices as well as oversight and quality assurance procedures and plan to collect relevant empirical data on the implementation of the various elements of the collaborative approval plans. Specifics of the implementation, oversight, and evaluation of pilot programs will require careful planning and discussion (see below).**

- **Examine cost of plan:** An examination of how much money would be necessary to create a worthwhile plan and the level of commitment required from participating institutions is needed.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Approval Plans Task Force,
Nancy Barta-Norton, Chair

*__Approval Plan__: The vendor sends clients notification (electronic or paper slips) or the actual materials matching a library's profile. The librarians or selectors select which items to keep and which to return.

Selection Plan: The vendor selects the materials matching a library's profile and ships them to the client. In the case of returns, the library pays shipment both ways for both approval plans and selection plans.

Shelf-Ready Processing: Clients can contract with vendors to pre-process materials before shipment. Clients set up a profile with a vendor to specify which processing steps should be done and the level of detail. Each service element is usually priced separately and the costs added to the price of the book. Service elements include: pre-binding (and selection of type of binding), location and types of stamps (property/ownership, location, etc.), insertion and placement of security strips, RFID tags, pockets, cards, labels, etc. Because this service affects resale value, items are non-returnable. Any errors will require replacement.

**After the Approval Plans Task Force formulated its recommendations (see bullet points above), further clarification of the governance structure was furnished by HELIN Executive Director Robert H. Aspri and posted to the HELIN list (1/20/10):

". . . the Standing Committees can continue to meet throughout the Spring semester. They will then be disbanded with the close of the fiscal year at the end of June . . .

At this point, I foresee that the Board Work Groups will be formed immediately as needed. The Executive Director Task Forces, that will begin work on initiatives outlined in the HELIN Strategic Framework Report, will be prioritized and formed during the Spring semester. The Standing Committees will be replaced by Affinity Groups, and those groups will be formed beginning with the new fiscal year in July 2010 . . ."