

Bernadette A. Lear and Karla M. Schmit

# Frog and Toad make friends

## Cooperative development of preK-12 collections at a multicampus university

“Help!” said Toad. “I cannot see anything.”  
“Don’t be silly, said Frog. “What you see is the clear warm light of April. And it means that we can begin a whole year together, Toad. *Think* of it,” said Frog.

—Arnold Lobel, *Frog and Toad Are Friends*<sup>1</sup>

**A**s Frog says, “Think of it,” the Penn State University Libraries (PSUL) consist of 36 libraries serving more than 100,000 students, yet operating within a finite budget. Even though it’s a challenge to see “clearly” and agree, PSUL must share resources among its locations, making it important that we consider ways in which we can be cooperative and, as Frog said, “...begin a whole year together.”

In pursuit of shared collection development, we have recently canceled local print subscriptions in favor of electronic reference works and scholarly journal packages that are accessible throughout the system. PSUL has also experimented with e-books, floating collections, and patron-driven acquisitions to build responsive collections while saving costs. Although such efforts help reduce duplication of academic books and periodicals, they do not always address inefficiencies that can occur when collecting other items. PreK–12 instructional materials are a case in point.

In this article, we will describe a collaborative collection development initiative between two PSUL locations that stretched our individual budgets and made it possible for

each of us to have up-to-date pertinent textbooks, realia, and other curriculum materials.

### Support for Education

Education is one of the most popular courses of study throughout the United States.<sup>2</sup> Thus it is not uncommon for a multicampus university to offer the major at more than one location. Curriculum collections often support undergraduate and graduate programs for students enrolled in elementary education, secondary education, special education, and curriculum instruction encompassing literacy, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, music, art, and other specialty subject areas.

Libraries supporting education degrees typically provide a variety of materials and services, including children’s literature, professional books, textbooks, kits, games, manipulatives, realia, media, and educational software.<sup>3</sup> While academic libraries acquire juvenile materials to support Education departments and other constituents, it is impossible to obtain all the items that librarians and users desire.

In a state like Pennsylvania, simply

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identifying which curricula are used at nearby schools is a challenge, as there are approximately 500 school districts and no statewide adoption of textbooks. There are also a number of Education students who will seek teaching positions in states other than Pennsylvania, making the effort to find ideas or materials that may be used in future employment more difficult. Furthermore, modern “textbooks” include supplementary components such as assessments, manipulatives, big books, and software, sometimes totaling more than \$1,000 per grade. Ordering entails extra work, because instructional materials are seldom carried by book jobbers. Bibliographic records, when they can be found in OCLC, require substantial editing to reflect the specific editions, grade levels, and components held locally.

Concerns about efficiency are amplified at an institution like Penn State, where seven campuses offer baccalaureate programs in Education: Abington, Altoona, Berks, Erie, Harrisburg, Lehigh Valley, and University Park. At the current time, PSUL lacks formal, subject-level coordinators who monitor collection development across the entire system. Instead, each location receives a base allocation and may informally consult others regarding expensive purchases.

Yet, as “one library, geographically dispersed,” with centralized technical services, a shared public access catalog, and librarians willing to work together, PSUL is well-positioned to develop shared, multicampus collections. In fact, tentative efforts to involve campus librarians in writing system-wide collection development policies have already begun. This process led us, Education librarians at two locations—University Park and Harrisburg—to begin collaborating strategically to enhance preK–12 holdings.

### **First steps: Instructional materials**

When University Park and Harrisburg began collaborating in 2009, graded sets of textbooks were the primary concern because of their cost. Bernadette, the librarian at Harrisburg, wanted to update her location’s

holdings in elementary mathematics and secondary language arts, but had an insufficient budget and donation network for such materials. So she contacted her opposite number, Karla, at University Park, to ask whether she shared similar interests. Since then, we have collaborated several times on such purchases. Typically, the conversation begins in the Fall, soon after both locations receive their allocations. The purpose of the discussion is to identify gaps in our holdings, items that have become outdated, and new courses that require support. Next, one of us examines publisher catalogs and websites to note any items that fit shared needs. Then a detailed e-mail is prepared for the other, including titles, key components, ISBNs, vendor contact information, and related URLs. In December, we meet a second time to determine which items to purchase. We also discuss how to distribute them between our locations. Next, the order list is finalized, documented, and submitted to the acquisitions staff.

Over the past five years, we have become creative in divvying purchases, even with nonbook items. When buying more than one title on the same subject and grade level, each location simply acquires materials from a different publisher. Yet sometimes, we cannot afford to buy curricula from more than one vendor. This is especially true for language arts/reading programs, which have many grade levels and components. In such cases, each campus acquires alternate grades. Typically, University Park purchases kindergarten, 2, 4, and other “even” grades, while Harrisburg gets preK, 1, 3, and other “odd” grades. Thus between our two locations, the library system has one copy of each level, and each location has materials for students to survey and gain an understanding of the textbook’s scope and sequence. If a location needs the full complement of grade-levels, we can easily send the evens or odds to each other through intercampus mail.

This said, some instructional materials are not conveniently graded. This is common with supplementary items, such as sets of

science and social studies “big books” we purchased several years ago from Benchmark Education. Within the science group there were 12 titles: three relating to animals, three on habitats, three regarding plants, and three on weather. Both University Park and Harrisburg needed big books on these subjects. So we conversed via telephone and used the “you pick one, then I pick one” method.

In other words, Karla at University Park chose *The Life Cycle of the Frog* and then Bernadette at Harrisburg picked *What Do Animals Need?*, then Karla selected *The Life Cycle of the Butterfly*, then Bernadette wanted *Animals in Their Habitats*, and so on. We handled the Social Studies big books in the same manner.

We found another clever solution in 2010 when we bought several kits of food models for educators in agriculture, health, and nutrition. The vendor, NCES, offered substantial discounts to those who purchased all six kits: dairy, fats, fruits, grains, proteins, and vegetables. After considerable discussion, we decided not to break up the kits and split components between our locations. Instead, we used USDA maps to determine which Pennsylvania regions produced certain agricultural products. The Harrisburg area and counties to its south tend to produce more fruits and grains, while farms around University Park tend to focus on dairy. Based on such information, we concluded that the dairy, fats, and vegetables should remain at University Park, while fruits, grains, and proteins would go to Harrisburg.

### **Frog and Toad: Matching people to tasks**

When sharing work between several campuses, it is important to match talent and resources appropriately to each step. Karla at University Park and Bernadette at Harrisburg bring very different strengths to the table, much like the characters of Frog and Toad in Lobel’s much-loved books.

As a former elementary school teacher, Karla is adept at evaluating the practicality of materials for classroom use. She keeps

track of specific assignments in the education methods classes in which particular types of materials are needed. Karla and her staff’s location at University Park, where all incoming items are processed, is an asset toward ensuring they are acquired and cataloged in a timely way.

On the other hand, Bernadette enjoys learning about the latest products from educational companies. She maintains a personal list of nearly 200 vendors whose catalogs and websites she consults regularly. Also, Bernadette is very direct and precise in terms of written communication. Monitoring new offerings, checking system holdings, negotiating with publisher representatives, and submitting orders are activities that can take place at any PSUL location.

Thinking about our efforts in terms of talents and tasks, rather than traditional budget lines or job descriptions, may not feel comfortable to others in multicampus environments. However, we have been satisfied enough with our results that we continue to collaborate.

Selection is only one aspect of cooperative collection development. Clear, detailed instructions for ordering and processing are also very important. This is especially true when a set of items is paid for in one manner, but distributed in another.

For example, concerning the big books mentioned above, it was less complicated for University Park to pay for a set of 12 social studies items, and Harrisburg to pay for a set of 12 science books, rather than create separate orders for each of 24 titles. Yet we divided them so that each location received half of the science and half of the social studies materials.

To keep librarians and staff informed on complicated orders, we typically provide a detailed memo that can be used to “double-check” whether pieces are ordered, cataloged, and distributed correctly. Such a statement includes vendor contact information, total number of titles, total cost, which location’s funds should be charged and the

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changes and the integration between this survey and the required IPEDS questions, we hope to reach 50% participation. For us to reach that goal, we need your help.

### Deadlines and dates

The first email to libraries from ACRL was shared on September 18, 2015, with a link to the website to submit data. If you have questions or need to change the contact information for the survey, you can contact Counting Opinions by emailing [acrldsupport@countingopinions.com](mailto:acrldsupport@countingopinions.com) or by calling (800) 542-9847 (9:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. EST). The data collection period ends April 30, 2016, and it is anticipated that the 2015 data will be available by mid-June with publication of the print edition to follow in the fall of 2016. Complimentary access to the aggregate survey results will be provided to all who participate in the 2015 survey.

### Conclusion

We know that compiling statistics takes

time, but the contribution of your data is essential and extremely valuable for your colleagues. We are asking you to help ensure that we have the data to help assess trends in 21st-century academic libraries. This data is also invaluable for benchmarking and peer comparisons. All participants in the survey will receive complimentary access to the aggregate survey results (by Carnegie Classification) as soon as the data results are uploaded (June/July 2016.) As an added incentive, you can also help us develop future surveys by providing suggestions for additional questions, improvements to definitions, and future trends to explore.

We hope you'll agree the results are well worth the time you spend in compiling the data. And for those of you who truly embrace the role of collecting statistics, in the spring we will be sharing a webinar on dashboards and how to incorporate the statistics you collect into visually interesting presentations for your community. ♪

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*"Frog and Toad make friends" (continues from page 536)*

dollar amount, along with catalog pages or website printouts marked to indicate specific titles to be sent to each location. In other words, multicampus collaboration not only involves willing librarians, but attentive and flexible staff, too.

### Conclusion

Education librarians at University Park and Harrisburg are pleased with the results of ongoing collaboration. While retaining much of the individual decision-making authority we value, we are enhancing our instructional materials and reducing duplication. Most importantly, new resources are distributed to several locations. This serves faculty and students well, especially if they only need to compare several programs or show a few examples in class. Also, local teachers have a wider selection that they can borrow immediately, with the remaining levels or titles available within a few days through the

intercampus library loan. Finally, through five years of discussions, Karla and Bernadette have also learned a great deal about each location's course offerings, student needs, and collection strengths. Next steps include further coordinated purchasing of Newbery, Caldecott, and other award-winners, to ensure that PSUL has enough (but not too many!) copies of *Frog and Toad* and other children's favorites.

### Notes

1. Arnold Lobel, *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 7–8.
2. National Center for Education Statistics, "Fast Facts: Most Popular Majors," <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=37>.
3. Natalia Gelber and Jean Uhl, "Managing a Curriculum Materials Collection: One Academic Library Experience," *Collection Management* 38 (2013): 51–66. ♪