

---

## Collaborative Collection Development in a Digital Age

**Jeffrey D. Carroll**

Director, Collection Development, Columbia University Libraries, New York, NY, USA  
[Jc677@columbia.edu](mailto:Jc677@columbia.edu)



Copyright © 2016 by Jeffrey D. Carroll. This work is made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>

---

### Abstract:

*Columbia University Libraries have been involved in collaborative collection development since at least the late Nineteenth Century. This presentation reflects on that early collaboration and the factors that made it necessary, and then brings us forward across parts of three centuries to the present day where many of the same factors are still at play. What began as a simple concept, born out of concerns over cost and space, has now grown into a complex organism—an ecosystem really—of overlapping objectives and responsibilities. And while cost and space continue to be the primary limiting factors of our efforts (too much of one, not enough of the other), preservation has become the third leg of the stool on which the future rests. What are the strategies then for addressing these three factors of cost, space, and preservation? What interactive relationships have we built to ensure broad access to knowledge through the course of time? We'll talk about Columbia's participation in four specific partnerships (2CUL, MaRLI, Ivy Plus/Borrow Direct, and ReCAP), and how these efforts have enabled us to expand our researchers' access to the outputs of scholarly activity.*

### Keywords:

Collaborative Collection Development, Library Collections Management, Shared Library Collections

---

### Introduction

The extraordinary growth in scholarly output during the Twentieth Century far outpaced the capacity, both in terms of space and budget, of any single institution seeking to build comprehensive collections. Even the largest and most well funded have found it necessary to forgo deep collecting in non-core areas in order to focus on traditional strengths. Building partnerships with fellow institutions then becomes a logical strategy to fill in the gaps. But which partnerships and to what ends? Is it possible to participate in multiple partnerships with overlapping responsibilities and objectives without sacrificing the quality of services or core characteristics of an institution's identity? This presentation will show how Columbia University has leveraged four key relationships in order to expand the universe of material available to its researchers in a carefully orchestrated arrangement of services.

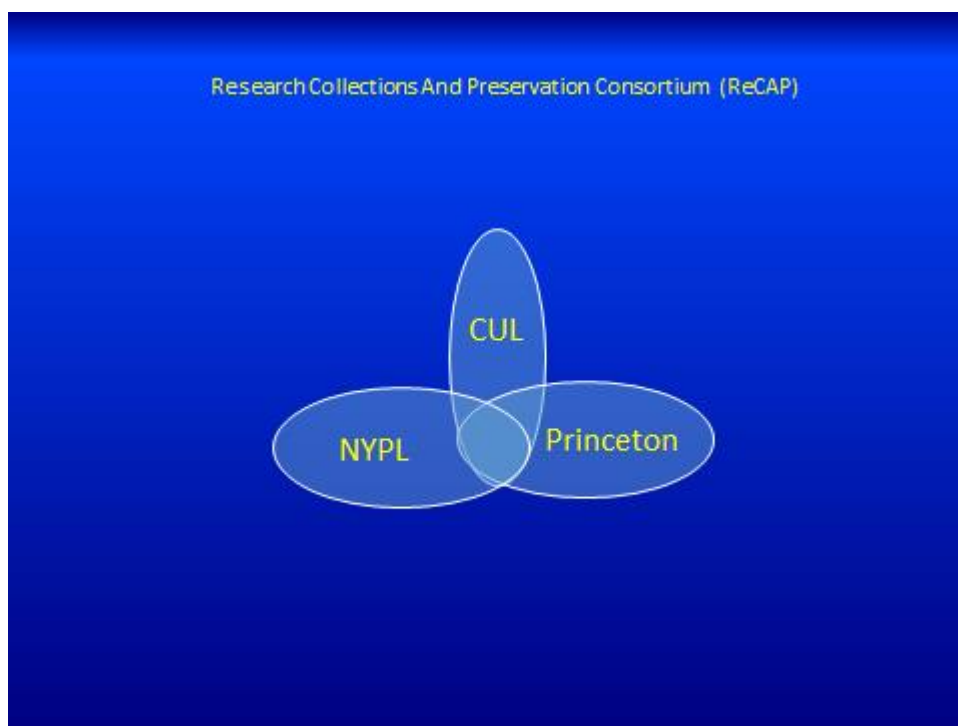
## A History of Collaboration

One of the earliest efforts of collaborative collection building at Columbia is documented in a pamphlet dated 16 December 1896. In two columns on page after page the pamphlet spells out the levels at which the collecting efforts of Columbia and the New York Public Library (NYPL) would compliment each other. This effort began only a year after the completion of Columbia's Low Memorial Library, which was to consolidate the collections of Columbia into a single location for ease of access at Columbia's new Morningside Heights location at 116<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan. Unfortunately, there is no evidence as to how long the specific collaborative arrangement between Columbia and NYPL lasted nor how closely it was followed. What is known, however, is that within a mere two decades Low Memorial Library had reached its capacity as expanding study space supplanted space for books. As a result a new, larger library—South Hall, with a capacity of two-million volumes—was constructed in 1934. South Hall would eventually be renamed Butler Library (after Nicholas Murray Butler, Columbia's president from 1902-1945) and it too would eventually run out of space with departmental libraries cropping up to accommodate Columbia's rapidly growing collections. Over the ensuing years Columbia resorted to using a number of storage facilities with sub-optimal conditions until a new collaborative effort with NYPL and Princeton University was forged to build a state-of-the-art, high-density remote storage facility that would be shared by the three institutions. Named **ReCAP** (**R**esearch **C**ollections **A**nd **P**reservation Consortium) the collaboration was primarily a shared facility for its first fifteen years, but it was always intended to become a shared collection so long as an efficient mechanism for cross-institutional sharing could be devised.

In the meantime, Columbia joined in a print resource sharing effort with two of its Ivy League peers, the University of Pennsylvania and Yale to form a sort of closed ILL system among the three collections. Referred to initially as **CoPY** (**C**olumbia **P**enn **Y**ale) the project proved successful and ultimately expanded to include all eight of the Ivy League schools. Rechristened as **BorrowDirect**, it now includes the University of Chicago, M.I.T., Johns Hopkins and Duke in addition to the Ivy League institutions.

Additional collaborative efforts were forged with Cornell and Columbia's long-time partner NYPL. With Cornell, Columbia entered into an arrangement (**2CUL**) to explore means by which the two institutions might achieve efficiencies by reducing redundancy. NYPL and Columbia joined with New York University (NYU) to form **MaRLI** (**M**anhattan **R**esearch **L**ibraries **I**nitiative) to forge a partnership among institutions in close geographic proximity.

## ReCAP



As mentioned ReCAP began as a shared facility but is finally moving toward a true shared collection with the development of middleware through a project called *Discovery to Delivery* (or *D2D*). The specs call for this middleware to show the ReCAP holdings of all three institutions directly in the respective public facing catalogs and to make those holdings seamlessly available to researchers at all three institutions. In other words, a researcher at Columbia will be able to discover and request material from the ReCAP holdings of Princeton and NYPL as easily as she would if those items were owned by Columbia. Nor would there be any difference in delivery time.

ReCAP holdings will be sorted into three categories: Shared, Open, and Private. Shared will be those items that the owning institution has committed to retaining and for which all three institutions will share the cost of storage. It is also intended—but not mandated—that the group will not duplicate items held in the shared collection. The Open Collection will contain items that are available to the whole group but for which the owning institution has made no long-term commitment on retention or sharing. An item might be designated as Open rather than Shared because of its condition, it falls into a category that could be designated as Rare at some point in the near future, or it is a duplicate of an item already in the Shared Collection. Private will include items that are restricted to use by the owning institution or by special arrangement at ReCAP. Items may be designated Private because of condition, rare or unique status, or for any other reason the owning institution has for not making the item available to the other partners.

The middleware itself will be open source and may ultimately hold broader potential. Might it, for example, be adapted as a *Discovery to Delivery* tool for Borrow Direct? It is important to note that the Middleware is not intended to replace the underlying systems on which

ReCAP or even Borrow Direct depend. Rather, it is intended to seamlessly link these systems to the respective user interfaces at the partner institutions.

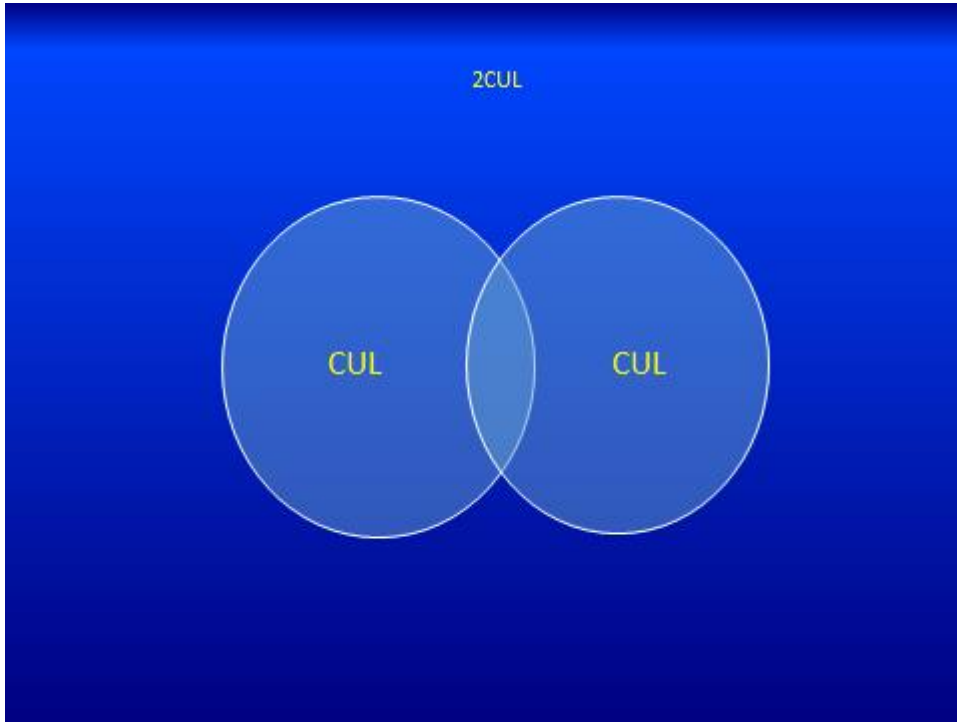
## Borrow Direct/Ivy Plus



**BorrowDirect** began as an experiment referred to in its early years as **CoPY** (**C**olumbia, the University of **P**ennsylvania and **Y**ale). The experiment proved successful and eventually expanded so that it now includes all eight Ivy League institutions plus Johns Hopkins, M.I.T., the University of Chicago and Duke, giving its members access to nearly 50 million volumes.

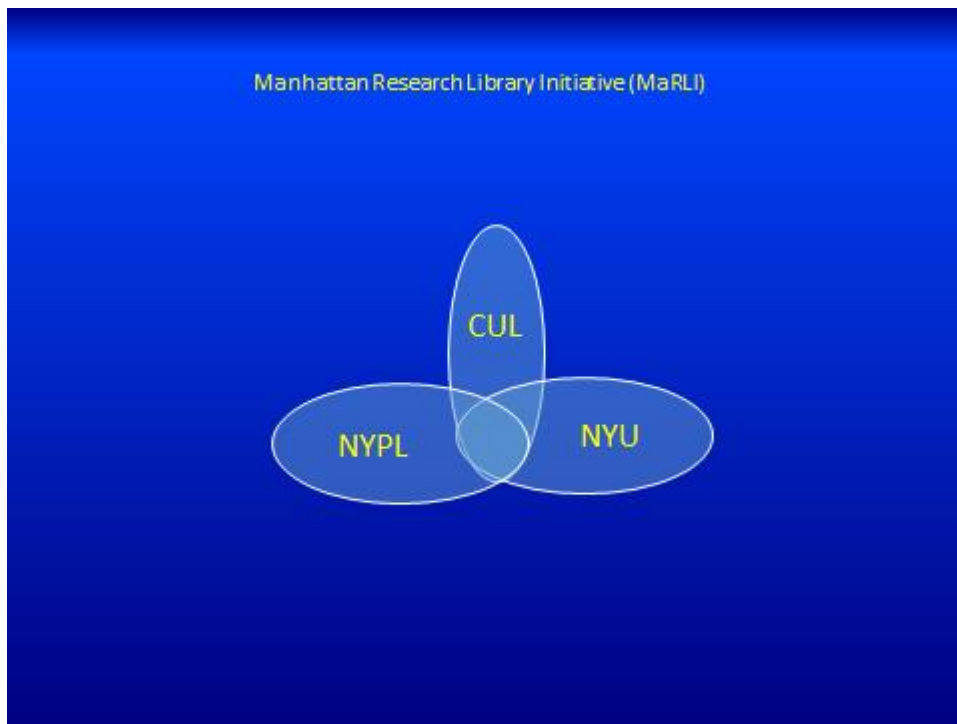
Ivy Plus itself is an initiative broader than Borrow Direct. For this we've thrown in Stanford and are laying the groundwork for collaboration in such areas as Web Collectng, de-duplication of print resources, and shared digital initiatives. Ivy Plus has recently hired a Director of Collections Initiatives (DCI) whose job it will be to coordinate the logistics involved in moing forward the initiatives of the group and attempting to facilitate consensus among these vastly different and extraordinarily distinctive institutions.

## 2CUL



Pronounced *Two Cool* or even *Too Cool*. Effort between two closely aligned institutions—began as an initiative to explore ways of aligning our tech services operations to see if we could gain efficiencies through economies of scale and by reducing redundancies (could we find functions that both institutions performed separately but that could be taken on by just one of the partners performing for both more efficiently?) Among the most lasting examples is the sharing of selectors in the areas of Slavic and East European Studies, and in Latin American and Iberian Studies. In both cases there is a single selector, both based at Columbia but operating on behalf of both institutions including being liaisons to both groups of faculty and selecting material on behalf of both while seeking to reduce duplication. (We gain in two ways. In these two areas we've cut the number of selectors by half and have reduced duplication in our prospective purchasing, broadening and deepening the collections available to both.) In the area of Southeast Asian Studies, while not sharing selectors we have developed a loosely defined agreement that seeks to reduce duplication between our collections through more coordinated purchasing and consultation, and we are exploring ways to do the same with our respective Middle Eastern collections. The two institutions will continue to consult in other areas opportunistically as staff vacancies arise at either institution.

## MaRLI



**MaRLI** (**M**anhattan **R**esearch **L**ibraries **I**nitiative) is an effort among three institutions (Columbia, New York University, and the research arm of the New York Public Library) in close geographic proximity. Researchers at any one of these institutions can apply to gain access to any of the others' collections. This arrangement is enhanced through a Cooperative Collection Development initiative focused around the low-use scholarly monograph and a strategy of collecting as broadly as possible while reducing print duplication. We have sought where possible to enhance the single print copy with immediate and unlimited access to the electronic format at all three institutions. This we believe enhances discoverability, provides immediate access with a provision for print retrieval when the electronic format is not sufficient for the task at hand.

## Conclusion (Bringing it all together)

What does this complicated mix of collaborations look like and how do we keep it all straight?



Each collaborative initiative should be understood for its distinctive objectives and informed by data-driven decision-making. Goals for participation should align closely with those of the university and with the library's own stated objectives. Looking forward, one might imagine a network of collaborative efforts across a multitude of institutions that comprise a staggering number of interconnected resources. Might we leverage our unique position in this space to explore new means of connecting our researchers to the corpus of human knowledge?

## References

Columbia University School of Library Service (1896). Preliminary Scheme for the Relation Between Columbia University Library and the New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, in the Matter of the Development of the Libraries and the Purchase of Books.

ReCAP: The Research Collections And Preservation Consortium (2009). Website. Accessed 7/15/2016. <http://recap.princeton.edu/>

Cornell University Library (2014). 2CUL. Website. Accessed 7/15/2016. <https://www.2cul.org/>