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Rethinking digital libraries: Collaborative models of collection management

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Rethinking Digital Libraries
Collaborative Models of Collection Management

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Over the past 30 years, digital libraries (DL) have shifted from monolithic, data-centric, and technology-driven operations to more open, user- and service-oriented operations. This project set out to explore the challenges and opportunities of the current DL landscape by interviewing DL managers and analyzing websites of six academic libraries in the United States and Canada. The study found DL programs embracing collaborative models of collection management by **partnering** across multiple library functional units, taking a **proactive** role in working with faculty, and engaging in **post-custodial** arrangements with community partners.
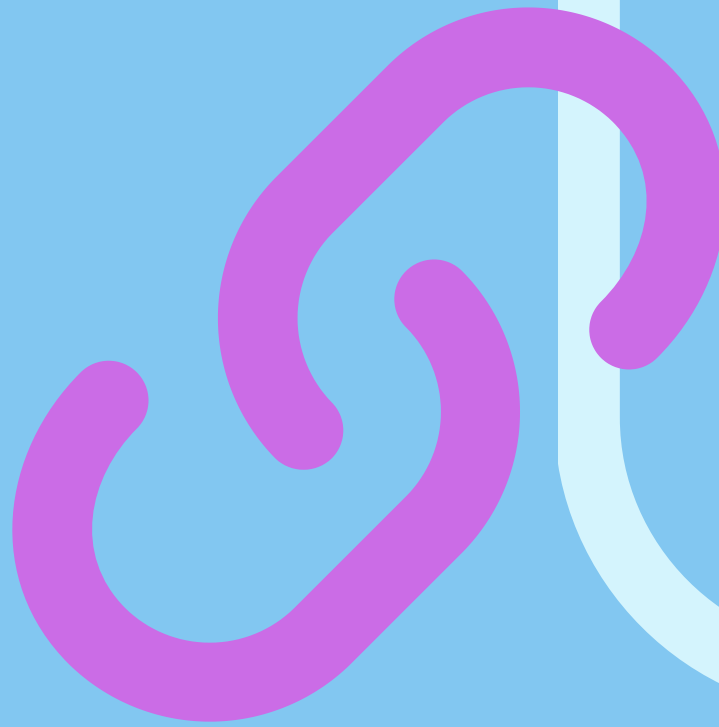
Proactive Collaboration

Digital librarians are reaching out to faculty much earlier in the research process, working together to pursue grants, illustrate data, and ensure access to content. UC Irvine exemplifies this model with its Digital Scholarship Services, which aim to "publish, promote, and preserve the digital products of research." USC provides a grant officer to work with faculty to seek funding for digitization projects.

Partnering across Units

Increasingly, DLs work with other library units to leverage distinct skills. UC San Diego deploys this strategy by having its DL managers pull together teams from areas such as Metadata, Academic Engagement, Scholarship Tools, and Technology & Digital Experience. Similarly, project managers at UBC Vancouver create teams from subject librarians and units such as Special Collections and IT.

Post-custodial Collections

Libraries are forging partnerships to digitize and host collections that they do not seek to own. UCLA's Sinai Library Digitization Project epitomizes this approach as the library brings online ancient manuscripts belonging to St. Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt. UC Merced also takes a post-custodial approach to archive the records of county cooperative extension offices in partnership with the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Participating Institutions
University of British Columbia, Vancouver • University of California (UC) Irvine • UCLA • UC Merced • UCSD • USC