

An Outline of Cooperative International Partnerships for Sci-Tech Libraries

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Introduction

As we enter a new era of global librarianship, it no longer matters where in the world the information is housed or where the librarian or user is physically situated. In the global networked environment, unique databases and other information resources can be made available to the scholarly science community worldwide. The networked environment lends itself to cooperation and the sharing of ideas and solutions to problems common to science and technology libraries no matter where they are located.

The goals of this document are:

- To demonstrate the importance and benefits of international cooperation for individual sci-tech libraries.
- To promote cooperation and sharing of ideas and solutions to problems common to sci-tech libraries worldwide.
- To create greater awareness of issues facing sci-tech libraries in developing countries.

Twinning Defined (UNESCO Guidelines, 1994)

"The ongoing relationship between two libraries in different countries for the purpose of improving the practice of librarianship across national boundaries.... The twinning relationship should have mutual but not necessarily equal benefits to both libraries."

Why Get Involved?

- Get fresh perspectives on problems, which challenges traditional thinking.
- Information is becoming internationalized and globally interdependent.

- Global information allows us to learn more about our world. (e.g. environment, health).
- Transforming the library from a building to a library with access to global information.
- Flow of information may aid in the continuation of a democratic free society.
- Promotes dialogue between cultures.
- Greater awareness of issues facing libraries in developing countries.

Benefits of Partnerships

- Access to unique resources and databases.
- Improved access to materials -- preservation.
- Provides experience and well-trained staff.
- Share instructional programs.
- Increased status of librarians supporting twinning efforts elsewhere in the organization.
- Your library will never be the same again

Challenges of Partnerships

- Language / Currency exchange.
- Lack of standards -- e.g. cataloging, protocols.
- Access to networks for some countries.
- Lack of resources -- trained staff, equipment.
- National policies discouraging data flow.
- Convincing an organization that libraries and information resources are important.

Guidelines and Process: First Steps

- Do a needs assessment.
- Review expectations and goals.

- Select an appropriate twinning partner.
- Organize local committee/institutional support.
- Seek financial support.
- Define the agreement.
- Determine evaluation methods.

Guidelines and Process: The Agreement

- Develop a contract or letter of mutual understanding.
- Specify the benefits to each institution.
- Plan for a minimum of 5 years or at the very least a trial of 2-3 years.
- Include background information and library descriptions.
- Articulate goals and proposed activities.
- Provide a realistic time frame and estimated budget.

Guidelines and Process: Other Considerations

- Exchange staff lists, annual reports, and guides.
- Provide access to journal holdings, OPAC, databases.
- Some face to face visits are essential.
- Need dedicated staff to serve as mentors.
- Coordinate visits to other libraries/vendors.
- Maintain records of all transactions -- ammunition for funding.
- Keep your institution and agencies up to date on progress.

Case Studies

University of New Mexico:

The IBERO American Scientific and Technology Education Consortium (ISTEC) is a program of the University of New Mexico with universities in Latin America. It began with the electrical engineering department at UNM and the wish of the university president for the university to serve as a gateway to the Americas. The mission of ISTEC is to "foster hemispheric development through the dissemination of information, joint scientific and technological research and innovative science education."

In 1993, the University of New Mexico Centennial Science Library became involved, viewing this endeavor as part of the library's mission to support institutional global cooperation. This is often a typical route for many library-twinning programs, where the library supports cooperative programs that develop within academic departments. The goals of the Centennial Library are: modernization of document delivery with Latin American libraries; to upgrade the information skills of library staff emphasizing the role of librarians in the electronic environment; to broaden access to international electronic research databases, and to encourage joint hemispheric research on digital research libraries.

An initial base budget of \$9000 provided for site visits, Internet training and the creation of an electronic request and delivery system. This system has already provided over 1000 pages of research documentation to five sites in Brazil, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela. Some of ISTEC's initiatives include the use of ARIEL for document delivery of documents, the development of a union list of serials among ISTEC libraries, development of a current contents database, the development of workshops (some of which are electronic) for faculty and students, and an online reference desk for ISTEC users. A major finding of the ISTEC library program is that it demonstrates that library collections and other library resources are assets that can be used to attract and support cooperative efforts elsewhere in the university. Consult the ISTEC website (<http://www.istec.org/>) for more information.

Iowa State University:

Iowa State University developed a partnership with the Ukrainian Academy of Agricultural Sciences which started as an outgrowth of the research agreements that Iowa State's College of Agriculture had with the Ukraine. An initial visit by Nancy Eaton, Dean of the Iowa State University Library was supported by a grant from IREX. The resulting Ukrainian visits to Iowa State came from a grant from Iowa State's Council on International Programs. A formal memorandum of understanding was signed by the two libraries in 1993 in which they agreed to continue and enhance their publication exchanges, collaborate in providing expertise in technology and languages, gain an understanding of the publishing industry and agricultural research initiatives in each others country, and to develop a program of professional training and continuing education.

In April 1995, two Iowa State librarians went to the Ukraine and presented lectures and demonstrations of agricultural literature in the United States. As part of this visit, they learned about information and bibliographic activities of Ukrainian agricultural libraries. In April 1996, two Ukrainian agriculture librarians came to Iowa State to help develop a focused materials selection plan. In a subsequent agreement, Iowa State agreed to provide key journal subscriptions, tables of contents from selected titles, and to subsidize document delivery. The Ukrainians agreed to provide copies of their publications and work with Iowa State's library to establish full Internet connections and electronic transmission of selected documents. As part of the partnership, Iowa State also provides expertise in library technology and the Ukrainians provide expertise and help with translations and an understanding of their country's agricultural research and publishing industry.

Seton Hall University:

Seton Hall has a long history of Asian involvement and the library's partnership with the Chinese Academy of Sciences dates back to 1983. The partnership started out from a chance social meeting by a Seton Hall librarian with the deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Sciences Library, who at the time was studying at Columbia University's Library School. This meeting led to more serious discussions by the respective library directors. Seton Hall already had an

extensive faculty exchange program and with the initiation of this agreement, librarians were able to participate as well.

As part of the agreement, Seton Hall librarians go to China to provide workshops and lectures and Chinese librarians come to Seton Hall to take up six-month internships. These internships include working with librarians, taking classes in English as a second language and provide opportunities for external professional contacts. The major thrust of the internship is for the intern to complete a project with the assistance of a Seton Hall librarian/mentor. Participating interns in the Seton Hall program have often gone on to positions of greater responsibility and stature in China.

Over the years, several librarians have prepared reports of their experiences in China, which assists future participants. These librarians have found it useful to provide topics and abstracts of several lectures and workshops that could be given in advance of their arrival. The hosts then decide which of these topics would be of the greatest value. Seton Hall librarians have found that it greatly enhances the value of these programs if they bring along photographs and illustrations as well as canned demonstrations utilizing programs such as Web Whacker, an offline web browser.

Seton Hall, by providing an investment in training, gets help with various library projects. This partnership has also provided very good publicity for the library as they have gotten involved with many other departmental programs on campus related to China. This partnership has also helped Seton Hall librarians in their work with providing assistance to a great number of international students and visiting researchers at the university.

Major Programs Facilitating Cooperation

IFLA Science and Technology Standing Committee:

<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s7/sstl.htm>

The section has sponsored the project to develop this website and is working to increase access to science and technical information for developing countries.

IFLA Twinning Database:

(email to: ifla@bl.uk)

The IFLA UAP office, with funding from UNESCO, sponsors a database of potential twinning partners in the library world. This service can be thought of as a dating agency for libraries and includes information such as type of library, type of partnership desired and contact information. Areas of interest include improved access to collections, technology and professional development, exchanges of materials and staff, staff training and development and document delivery. Libraries in developed countries are particularly needed in the database.

ALA IRC/IRRT Library Exchanges Database:

(<http://www.ala.org/work/international/>)

The American Library Association's International Relations Committee and International Relations Roundtable have developed a database of libraries willing to host international exchanges or study visits. Their web pages also include an excellent directory of funding resources.

INASP (International Network for the Availability of Science Publications):

(<http://www.oneworld.org/inasp/index.html>)

A program of ICSU (the International Council of Scientific Unions) which works together with UNESCO's UNITWIN program (which brings universities together in twinning arrangements) and the Third World Academy of Sciences. INASP offers a clearinghouse to facilitate donations of sci-tech books and journals, promotes journal subscriptions at reduced rates for universities in developing countries, and strengthens national production of books and scholarly publications in developing countries.

SATELIFE:

(<http://www.healthnet.org/>)

Based in the U.S. and U.K., SatelLife sponsors library partnerships between developed and developing countries in the areas of public health, medicine, and the environment. SatelLife's HealthNet network provides access to the latest medical information, databases, email, and electronic conferencing. SatelLife has launched 2 low orbiting satellites that provide access to HealthNet where otherwise Internet connections would not be possible.

Other Programs Facilitating Cooperation

Council for the International Exchange of Scholars:

(<http://www.iie.org/cies/>)

Administers the Fulbright program.

Council on International Educational Exchange:

(<http://www.ciee.org/>)

Sponsors International Faculty Development Seminars

UNAL (UNESCO Network of Associated Libraries):

(<http://www.unesco.org/webworld/unal/>)

Establishes contacts for cooperative partnerships for public libraries.

US Information Agency:

(<http://www.usia.gov>)

On October 1, 1999, the U.S. Information Agency was abolished. Certain functions of the former agency were transferred to the Department of State. The website identifies the new locations of these functions.

World Bank:

(<http://www.worldbank.org/>)

Has a Development Mall in which participation by libraries is desired.

Print Sources

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