

RESOURCE - SHARING VIA COMPUTER
CATALOG: A PILOT PROJECT

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The following report describes a pilot project in resource-sharing through the establishment of a Computer-Output-Microform (COM) Catalog begun in late 1979 by the Northwestern Library District (NORWELD), Bowling Green, Ohio. The objectives of this project were to improve the quality and quantity of resource-sharing among the libraries participating in NORWELD and to reduce the number of interlibrary loan demands made on one central resource center.

The potential represented by such an undertaking was indicated in a recent holdings survey, based upon a random sampling of 500 entries contained in the last five years of Book Publishing Record, taken among thirty-four NORWELD libraries and branches. While no one library owned more than 8.4% of the sample entries, as a cooperative system the libraries showed a 33% ownership rate. With the publication of a COM Catalog, these entries and others could be made accessible throughout NORWELD.

A broader context of the meaning of "resource-sharing" would be instituted by the participating libraries. They would be able to share their resources forming a reciprocal arrangement not previously available to the smaller libraries who had only been on the receiving end. In addition, requests for materials not available for loan by the central resource center would be accessible. This resource center was not in a position to loan recently-published titles nor would it request fiction materials from other libraries if those materials were not available in its own collection. A unique opportunity for studying resource-sharing was at hand.

The possibility of undertaking the project came in the summer of 1979 when it was determined that there would be a surplus in the 1979 budget. Owing to the difference in the salaries of the two project directors that NORWELD had employed that year, and the fact that an assistant had not been hired, approximately \$18,000 remained. To capitalize on these unspent funds, a proposal was submitted to the State Library of Ohio in September requesting that these funds be used to establish a COM Catalog in microfiche form within NORWELD.

In November, a COM Catalog project officer was hired, and a letter was sent to the NORWELD libraries explaining the proposed project and requesting that those interested in formally participating in the project return an enclosed questionnaire. Notification as to the need of a microfiche reader was also requested.

After a follow-up letter, responses were received from thirty-two libraries incorporating public, academic, and special institutions which wished to participate in the COM Catalog project.

An initial investigation into the cost of this project was broached with Auto-Graphics, Inc., Brodart, Inc., and Science Press, all producers of COM Catalogs. Brodart, Inc. submitted the lowest bid and was chosen. Inquiry into microfiche readers brought about the purchase of thirty Bell & Howell ABR-VIII readers in December. One Portafiche microfiche reader was purchased from Fordham Equipment Company, Inc. of New York for Oak Harbor Public Library which needed a smaller reader due to space problems. The remaining library already owned a microfiche reader. The purchased readers were delivered to the participating libraries in January.

This investigation resulted in the projected costs as listed below:

Salary	\$ 2,050
Equipment	5,554
Contractual Services, Brodart, Inc.	<u>7,656</u>
	\$15,260

After the cost of the project was ascertained and approved, the compilation of the COM Catalog was begun. It was a long, tedious but educational process. All of the libraries were requested to submit listings of their current (1979 to the present) adult non-fiction and fiction holdings. Eleven libraries were requested to send in their retrospective adult fiction by authors whose last name began with the letters A through E.

Most of the current holdings arrived in a 3"x5" card format. The retrospective holdings arrived in card form, on photocopied sheets of various sizes, and even in typed lists. Each entry was to include the author, title, publisher, publication date, and the Library of Congress Card Number or International Standard Book Number (ISBN), if known. When more than one library held a title, the entry having the most complete information was used. All entries were filed alphabetically by author when known. Exceptions were filed by title.

When the entry was available in card form, the card was stamped with the two letter codes of all of the libraries. Those codes representing the libraries having the entry were circled. A numbered label was placed on each card which would become the computer retrieval number for changes or withdrawals when needed at a later time. Photocopied entries or typed entries were cut apart or retyped to fit a 3"x5" format in paper or card form.

At a predetermined date, no more entries were included in a catalog. Having completed the processes listed above, statistics were taken on the number of entries contributed by each library, the number of non-fiction and fiction entries, and the number of unique (held by only one library) or duplicate entries. The cards were then sent to Brodart, Inc. In approximately four to six weeks, NORWELD would receive the catalog in microfiche form, accessible by author and title.

In January 1980, a packet was sent to each NORWELD library participating in the project. Included were the guidelines for the use of the COM Catalog, COM statistical report forms, inter-loan request forms, and a listing of the volumes contributed by participating libraries in the first catalog. As stated in the guidelines, the listing of the volumes contributed was to be used in determining which library should be contacted when requesting materials. The purpose of this listing was to equalize the work load so that the larger libraries, i.e., in terms of the number of volumes contributed to the COM Catalog, were not always being asked first. The list was updated with each new catalog.

The first copies of the COM Catalog fiche were sent to the participating libraries in late February. This catalog contained 3,052 titles, with a total of 6,298 volumes contributed by twenty libraries. The second fiche including 2,310 titles was sent in March; a third, cumulative catalog incorporating 11,714 titles was available in late April. The fourth and last catalog in this pilot project was completed in late June. Statistics taken from all of these catalogs are listed below:

	1st	2nd	3rd (Cumulative)	4th	Total
TOTAL ENTRIES (TITLES)	3,052	2,310	11,714	9,410	21,124
FICTION	1,979 (65%)	1,645 (71%)	8,245 (70%)	5,571 (59%)	13,816
NON-FICTION	1,073 (35%)	665 (29%)	3,469 (30%)	3,839 (41%)	7,308
UNIQUE	1,693 (55%)	1,192 (52%)	7,036 (60%)	7,527 (80%)	14,563
DUPLICATE	1,359 (45%)	1,118 (48%)	4,678 (40%)	1,883 (20%)	6,561
LIBRARIES PARTICIPATING	20	23	27	32	32
TOTAL VOLUMES CONTRIBUTED	6,298	6,157	24,431	11,508	35,939

After the random survey based upon entries in Book Publishing Record, it was estimated that, at most, 50% of the titles would be unique to only one library. As the statistics show, 69% of the titles are unique and available at only one of the thirty-two libraries participating. Admittedly, the diversity of holdings among public, academic, and special libraries would account for a large proportion of unique titles, but 69% seems extremely high and of great significance to those interested in the future of automated circulation systems.

The usage statistics, on the other hand, seem quite low. They are listed below for the months of March, April, and May:

	March (inc. last week of February)	April	May
REQUESTS	27	25	17
FILLS	25	28	15
TURN DOWNS	1	5	0
NOT ANSWERED (end of month requests, etc.)	1	2	2
LIBRARIES USING SERVICE	11	14	11

It should be noted, however, that the data base for these months never exceeded 11,714 titles, and consisted of only 5,362 titles or less for March and April.

All of these statistics can only be seen as inconclusive. Access to the entire data base of 21,124 titles was not available until late June and even then the data base must be judged small. In addition, a time period of three months is insufficient to determine the potential usage of the COM Catalog.

Unfortunately, the project cannot be continued at this time.

The costs of this project have been as follows:

Salary	\$ 2,623.50
Equipment	5,324.50
Contractual Services- Brodart, Inc.	<u>9,874.00</u>
	\$17,822.00

The monies allotted for the pilot project have all been spent, and lack of further funding will prevent this project from continuing. Letters to approximately thirty area foundations seeking additional monies have proven fruitless.

In order to satisfy the requirements for a constructive evaluation, a much larger data base is needed. Also, a usage study incorporating such an increased data base should be continued for at least one year as the data base grows and the participating libraries become more familiar with this interloan procedure.

It is too early to determine the impact this project could have on NORWELD or the interlibrary loan demands on the central resource center in this region, but the potential is there if a constructive and objective evaluation could be made. The support and participation of those libraries involved has been exceptional. Their resources are many. Resource sharing at local levels can work if given the opportunity to develop and grow. One conclusion that may be derived from the pilot project is not to expect immediate use of union catalogs linking small libraries. We have laid the groundwork; we would like to see the project continue.

Readers who are interested in additional details regarding the project should contact Allan Gray, NORWELD Director, 251 North Main Street, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402.