



# Building the Future of Collective Stewardship: The Big Ten Shared Print Collection

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## Executive Summary

This white paper explores foundational ideas and commitments framing the Shared Print Collection, summarizes the current progress and next steps for initiating a distributed phase of collection growth, and captures a range of ideas that have surfaced for how the community could focus its efforts to significantly strengthen and enhance the value of print collections for users. In 2019, the Deans of the Big Ten Academic Alliance's research libraries committed to unifying their individual collections into a single, functional entity—one that is jointly managed, fully networked, and integrated. Print collections play a central role in the BIG Collection, reflecting shared values, principles of collective action, and broader commitments. A distributed, networked collection operating across member libraries' holdings and services aims to provide users with access to a vastly larger pool of materials, far exceeding any single library's local collection. This approach promises a cohesive resource with consistent, enhanced services accessible to the entire Big Ten community.

The initial Big Ten Shared Print Repository (SPR), built from 2012 to 2022, focused on consolidating print serials in centralized repositories (see Figure 1). Now, the Shared Print initiative aims to expand by transitioning to a "distributed, federated, networked archive," incorporating monographs alongside serials. The research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance will designate locally held items for inclusion in the Shared Print collection, transferring them to joint stewardship under the Alliance. This stewardship involves both preservation and access, guided by Shared Print Agreements that set the requirements for joint management. These agreements, currently in draft form, will lay the foundation for ongoing collaboration and investment in an expanding community asset.



Figure 1 - Timeline of evolving the "Shared Print Repository" into the "Shared Print Program"

## Benefits of the Shared Print Collection

An analysis of the holdings within the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance shows that they collectively manage over 20 million unique print book titles. Over half of these titles are

single copies held by only one library. While initial expectations for the collection centered on cost and space savings through de-duplication, the low duplication rate revealed a significant insight: this is not a “general education” collection but a distinctive research resource (see Figure 2). No individual library possesses a comprehensive collection; however, users can access a much larger resource pool through a distributed Shared Print Collection. This collaborative approach enables the community to:

- Optimize delivery times across the Big Ten Academic Alliance
- Enhance digital delivery services
- Address biases and improve representation
- Coordinate the acquisition of new items
- Enhance item-level metadata for improved discoverability

Once fully implemented, the Shared Print Collection will continually evolve, offering greater convenience and new research capabilities.

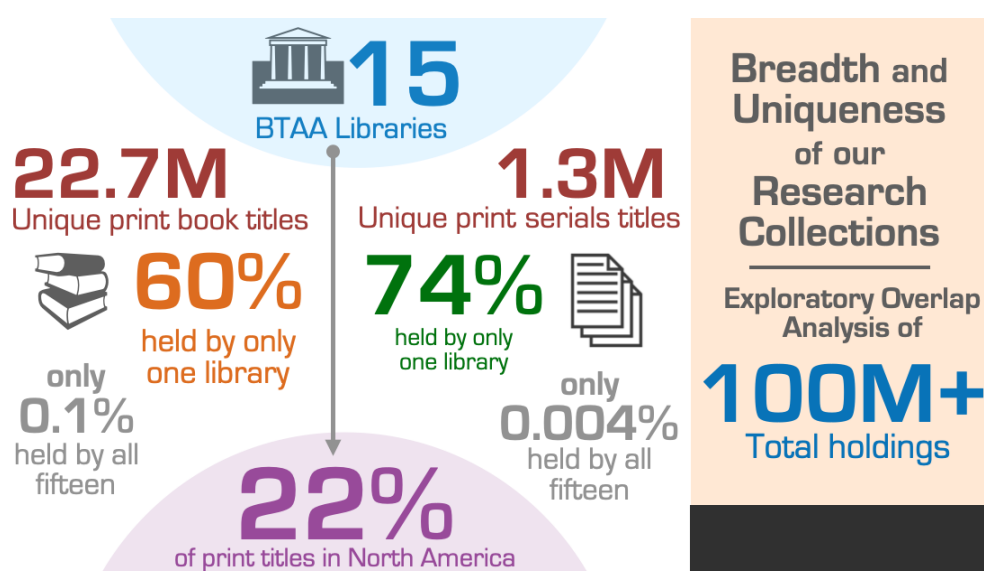


Figure 2 - Initial exploratory analysis of the collective holdings of fifteen member libraries (pre-expansion)

## Strategic Vision

The Shared Print Collection of the Big Ten Academic Alliance is a tangible resource, not an abstract concept. Each research library, rich in resources, supports substantial research and teaching operations. However, all Alliance libraries face limitations, including constrained resources and expertise. Meeting user needs through independent collection management is increasingly unsustainable. Interdependence is essential for sustainability and added user value. Through coordination, libraries can reduce duplication, improve access, enhance digital holdings within HathiTrust, and address gaps in content.

Achieving success means new benefits for users, equitable access to print resources, greater impact for library staff, and enhanced collaboration within and beyond the Big Ten Academic Alliance.

## Launching a New Community Asset

In the coming year, the Shared Print Collection will expand with the inclusion of distributed holdings. The harmonization of interlibrary loan (ILL) policies and the continued development of the UBorrow Platform create a consistent foundation for rapid, equitable fulfillment across member libraries. Shared print Agreements will allow our libraries to begin selection from their existing collections with the Big Ten Collection Analysis Tool. To ensure sustained development, the Shared Print Collection will need strong community structures that promote joint governance, decision-making, and resource allocation.

New collaborative structures, such as the Shared Print Program Interest Group, the Shared Print Agreements Working Group, and the Metadata Exchange (MDEX) Community of Practice, have already begun forming to support these efforts.

## Potential For Collective Action

The established Shared Print Collection will provide a platform for further alignment and collective action within the Big Ten Academic Alliance. Since 2019, research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance have identified several areas for potential collaborative efforts, including:

### **Addressing Bias and Representation**

The collection can support equity by addressing biases in access and representation through metadata improvements, digitization services, and better representation in discovery environments.

### **Improving Access and Fulfillment**

Harmonized ILL lending and enhanced UBorrow services set the stage for further service innovations, such as expedited delivery and on-demand digitization.

### **Prospective Collection Building**

The Shared Print Collection framework can support new agreements for coordinated collection development, including improved metadata and faster fulfillment.

### **Metadata Improvement**

Coordinated metadata enhancement efforts can address barriers like unevenly distributed expertise and capacity limitations, leading to significant improvements in discovery and access.

## Immediate Priorities

- Strengthen community engagement and understanding through ongoing communication.
- Using an early adopter cohort model to initiate distributed collection building which implements new agreements, infrastructures, and workflows.
- Develop governance, management, and policy structures to support the shared collection.
- Design technology infrastructures to enable item registry, collective management, and user discoverability.
- Develop pathways for prioritizing collective actions that improve the user experience and demonstrate the value of shared investment.
- Advance members' efforts to align internal practices and infrastructure to reap the benefits of community investments

## Future Outlook

Building on the BIG Collection paradigm, the Shared Print Collection represents a promising new phase for the Big Ten research library community. This white paper provides clarity on the benefits of joint management and deepened interdependence among research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, outlining strategies and potential outcomes that will benefit users across the Alliance.

## Introduction

This white paper explores foundational ideas and commitments framing the Shared Print Collection, summarizes the current progress and next steps for initiating a distributed phase of collection growth, and captures a range of ideas that have surfaced for how the community could focus its efforts to significantly strengthen and enhance the value of print collections for users. It draws on a range of documents, meetings, and conversations with leaders and experts in the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance. The perspectives presented here are the author's. They are based on her research into and experience of observing, facilitating, and participating in the work (particularly since January 2023).

## Vision, Intention, and Principles of the BIG Collection

In 2019, the Deans of the research libraries within the Big Ten Academic Alliance set a vision to unite their individual collections into a functional, single entity— jointly managed and fully integrated<sup>1</sup>. Known as the BIG Collection, this effort represents a comprehensive strategic shift, urging member libraries to collaborate more deeply, evolve their practices, and create greater value for users while enhancing sustainability.

The BIG Collection is not merely a repository of resources; it encompasses technologies, infrastructures, people, and expertise. It embodies a paradigm shift from individual ownership to joint stewardship of a geographically expansive, distinctive collection that covers over a quarter of North America's published titles. The BIG Collection integrates all formats of content, emphasizing the management, sharing, and use of resources. As part of this transformation, the BTAA Center for Library Programs has already implemented foundational services, such as Big Ten-licensed content and Shared Print Repositories, to unify locally managed collections and introduce new resources.

In 2022, a new guiding purpose, called the North Star, was established for the BIG Collection: "to make open, more equitable scholarship the community's lead purpose in order to build a just, trustworthy, scalable, and sustainable open knowledge ecosystem." This North Star clarifies that the intentions behind the BIG Collection are part of something grander: building a Knowledge Commons for the Big Ten, one that is not solely for the benefit of the members but necessarily dedicated to open knowledge for the public good.<sup>2</sup> By early 2023, the Deans

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<sup>1</sup>The BIG Collection Commitment to an Interdependent Future: A Statement by the Big Ten Library Leadership. September 2019. [https://btaa.org/docs/default-source/library/the-big-collection6d72.pdf?sfvrsn=ce3aab61\\_2](https://btaa.org/docs/default-source/library/the-big-collection6d72.pdf?sfvrsn=ce3aab61_2) and

<sup>2</sup> "Support for Collective Action Toward an Interdependent Future". February 2023. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dvLUqXI1rTamNA5lbLTObUu-\\_EDvIrcVHd-R94j-jgs/edit#heading=h.87uelspaon54](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dvLUqXI1rTamNA5lbLTObUu-_EDvIrcVHd-R94j-jgs/edit#heading=h.87uelspaon54)



reaffirmed this vision and endorsed a set of mutual principles and agreements to bring it into operational reality.

## The Shared Print Collection: Promise and Integration

### The Role of Shared Print

As one of the foundational components of the BIG Collection, the Shared Print Collection operationalizes the overall vision and principles of collective action. It involves a distributed, networked print collection that operates across member libraries, providing a cohesive resource that surpasses individual holdings. This approach allows for consistent, enhanced services accessible to all members of the Big Ten community.

### What is the Shared Print Collection?<sup>3</sup>

The Big Ten Shared Print Program, initially focused on centralizing print serials, is now transitioning to a distributed, federated, networked archive strategy. Items are designated for the Shared Print Collection by member libraries, governed by the community's Shared Print Agreements. These agreements lay the groundwork for ongoing management and investment in a growing shared asset.

Items designated for the Shared Print Collection will be owned by the designating member library, and that library will be responsible for ongoing stewardship and services for those items. A joint registry will maintain an evolving record of designations, enabling all Alliance libraries to make local collection decisions informed by Alliance-wide commitments. This approach ensures persistence and access, as outlined in community-developed agreements. Currently, a Working Group is defining the initial management expectations for items in the Shared Print Collection, which will be followed by the creation of an ongoing mechanism for community management.

The Shared Print Collection will continue focusing on loanable published materials as a single collection distributed across member libraries. It is positioned to leverage the recently harmonized interlibrary loan (ILL) policies implemented across member libraries<sup>4</sup>. The shift to a

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<sup>3</sup> This description draws on the Principles of Engagement Among the Libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance: Support for Collective Action Toward an Interdependent Future. Approved: December 2022  
Add a link here to the publicly accessible version of the "Principles of Engagement"

<sup>4</sup> Big Ten Academic Alliance Resource Sharing Agreement. August 2023. [https://btaa.org/docs/default-source/library/2023-btaa-resource-sharing-agreement92e025e5-bed8-4a54-b626-1501c2ea9548.pdf?sfvrsn=98cea7d5\\_2](https://btaa.org/docs/default-source/library/2023-btaa-resource-sharing-agreement92e025e5-bed8-4a54-b626-1501c2ea9548.pdf?sfvrsn=98cea7d5_2)

unified ILL platform ensures a consistent user experience, facilitating borrowing across the network.

The Shared Print Collection aims to be a sustainable, enduring collection with indefinite preservation expectations. Designated items will be retained indefinitely, with community-determined processes governing their removal, addressing issues such as loss or damage.

## Benefits of the Shared Print Collection

An initial analysis of the collections of the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance revealed more than 100 million items, including 20 million distinct print book titles, with more than half being single copies held by only one member library. Integrating these holdings into a jointly managed Shared Print Collection offers several benefits:

- **Optimized Delivery Times:** Faster resource sharing across the Big Ten Academic Alliance through coordinated logistics.
- **Support for Digital Services:** Facilitates digital delivery, improving access to remote users.
- **Addressing Biases and Gaps:** Promotes equitable access by uncovering and addressing biases in the collection.
- **Coordinated Acquisition:** Enables joint decision-making for new acquisitions, broadening collecting by reducing duplication.
- **Improved Metadata:** Ensures consistent and comprehensive metadata for better discoverability.

When fully implemented, the Shared Print Collection will be a continuously evolving asset, supporting increased convenience, ongoing growth, and new modes of scholarly engagement.

## On the Path to Increased Value Through Mutual Interdependence

### What's at Stake?

The Shared Print Collection is a tangible resource, not an abstract concept. Member libraries, robust in content, capacity, and expertise, support vast research and teaching endeavors. However, all Alliance libraries face limitations due to constrained and often diminishing resources. Individually, no library can fully meet the needs of its community using only its resources. The traditional model—where libraries work independently, focus on local needs, and stretch resources—is no longer sustainable.

To adapt to today's realities—changes in information access, user expectations, and organizational capacities—libraries must embrace a new approach. By working together,

members can leverage the Shared Print Collection as a focal point for joint investments that address individual gaps and amplify collective efforts.

Interdependence can magnify existing resources without decreasing them; it is a pathway to sustainability and enhanced value for users. Coordinated efforts can yield more comprehensive collections with fewer redundancies, improved access, an expanded digitized collection in HathiTrust, reduced inequities, and the exposure of previously underutilized content.

For the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, success means improved user benefits, greater equity in access, increased impact of library employees' work, collections with added value for external partners, and a collaborative model that reshapes library consortia.

## Innovation and Change: Models

The commitment to the BIG Collection represents a commitment to continuous improvement of systems, technologies, workflows, community structures, and collaboration methods. Several core strategies have emerged as crucial to realizing a new vision for the Shared Print Collection.

### **Establishing a Self-Reinforcing Participation System**

Successful change requires both the embrace and management of risks. An essential component of the Shared Print Collection program is the development of social and technical infrastructure that encourages ongoing participation. This involves creating policies balancing member contributions while maintaining high standards that ensure consistent user access and value.

Over time, effective management of the Shared Print Collection must focus on strategic investments that enhance its growth and utility for users. Demonstrating the value of the Shared Print Collection will foster support for further development, incentivizing research libraries to integrate more of their materials into the collective system.

### **Learning and Communication to Facilitate Change**

Collective work enriches the ability of members to assess their readiness, prepare locally, and adapt to benefit from collective efforts. Effective communication is vital to this process. The scale, timeframe, and pace of the BIG Collection initiative require new communication methods and pathways that extend across the community.

The Center for Library Programs has been strengthening communication channels, increasing engagement, and supporting stakeholders at member libraries. In turn, member libraries are enhancing their internal communication networks to contextualize and transmit information

effectively.

The development of communication networks has enabled libraries to deploy staff expertise across a broad, evolving consortium network. The success of the BIG Collection is driven by the involvement and contributions of these experts, who serve as communicators and interpreters within their organizations.

## **Achieving Incremental Benefits for Members**

A comprehensive, long-term strategy—integrating both collective and local efforts—is essential for the success of the Shared Print Collection. The current approach emphasizes building multiple infrastructure components in parallel, each designed to contribute to the shared goal of launching the distributed collection. This has already provided short-term benefits, such as improved interlibrary loan (ILL) policies and analytic capabilities for local decision-making, even before full integration is achieved.

While incremental gains are valuable, some developments require longer periods of planning, assessment, and infrastructure construction before benefits can be realized. For instance, an Agreements Engine must be populated with metadata before delivering benefits. Trust-building and shared decision-making practices become crucial to maintaining momentum during these interim phases.

## **Drawing on a Roadmap for Implementation**

The work of the Big Collection has been organized and managed with the guidance of Project Model called “the Roadmap”. A Big Collection Steering Committee has been overseeing a range of pilots that advance key priorities across the Big Collection. The work is captured through a Roadmap that organizes focuses, activities, goals, and milestones. In the context of the Shared Print Collection, the Roadmap focuses on work in four streams of activity, ILL and fulfillment, collection analysis, Shared Print Collection agreements, and a technical infrastructure to support registry and joint management of the Shared Print Collection. Work in each stream operates through separate working groups and the broader community network and progresses at its own pace. Yet each is aligned to progressively provide the needed foundation for initiating the distributed component of the Shared Print Collection. The Roadmap makes it possible to track across the activities and facilitates needed engagement across the workstreams.

## **Early Adopters as Change Agents**

Coordinating different readiness levels across the Alliance’s research libraries is a central challenge in collaborative projects. In the context of the BIG Collection, differing institutional capacities and readiness levels often necessitate a phased approach to implementation.

The strategy of forming early adopter groups has proven effective for several pilots and programs, such as migrating to a new UBBorrow ILL platform. Once the libraries set the course and foundational work supports implementation, early adopters establish processes, address issues, create documentation, and provide peer support, facilitating smoother transitions for the other research libraries. This model of phased implementation builds trust and confidence, paving the way for broader participation.

The early adopter strategy also guides some enhancements of the Collection Analysis Tool, with plans to apply it to the distributed Shared Print Collection. As members assess their readiness to designate materials, some will self-identify to form an early adopter cohort to test procedures, resolve issues, and advise others. The early adopters' work enables a timeline to be established to include all Alliance libraries.

## Scaling the Shared Print Collection: Where the Work is Now

### Collection Analysis: Assessing Capacity Needs

The new Big Ten Collection Analysis Tool now encompasses the complete holdings of pre-expansion member libraries.<sup>5</sup> Enhanced tool functionality and improved metadata contributions allow members to evaluate which items could be integrated into the Shared Print Collection. This tool enables assessment of the potential benefits of inclusion and any impacts on local workflows. As the collection expands, metadata updates will support ongoing analysis, offering visibility of the Shared Print Collection both collectively and at individual member levels.

### Establishing Collective Agreements for Shared Management

Developing foundational agreements is crucial for identifying which library holdings are appropriate for inclusion and determining necessary service levels. These agreements will emerge from a community-wide input process. The Agreements and Procedures Working Group, composed of various functional experts (e.g., access services, collection strategy, metadata, and preservation), has drafted initial guidelines covering access, fulfillment, storage, metadata, and digitization. These agreements provide a foundation for collective management and scaling as the distributed collection is built and governance is established. Alliance libraries will be able to use thresholds from the agreements to review their collections to scope their local decisions about integrating items into the Shared Print Collection. While the combination of agreements and analytics will scope members' selection decisions, they will not define them. Members will choose their own pace and focuses for building their contributions to the Shared Print Collection as it evolves.

### Building Technology for Collective Management

Parallel developments in technical infrastructure are ongoing. While multiple systems are needed, two are in place, and a third has been the focus of recent pilots. The U Borrow platform, fully installed at all campuses as of June 2024, supports enhanced ILL fulfillment. All Big Ten Academic Alliance research libraries have migrated into a common platform with expanded functionality, OCLC's Resource Sharing for Groups. The Alliance libraries have also established a development partnership with OCLC to help shape the tool's ongoing development to better meet the community's needs for digital delivery, optimized fulfillment, and ongoing performance assessment (of resource sharing).

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<sup>5</sup> In August 2024, the Alliance expanded its membership, welcoming University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), the University of Southern California (USC), the University of Oregon, and the University of Washington.

The Big Ten Collection Analysis Tool is similarly a foundational architecture currently in place and growing in functionality. It is based in partnership with the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, which provides its Gold Rush tool and hosts an instance enabling analyses using Alliance libraries' metadata.

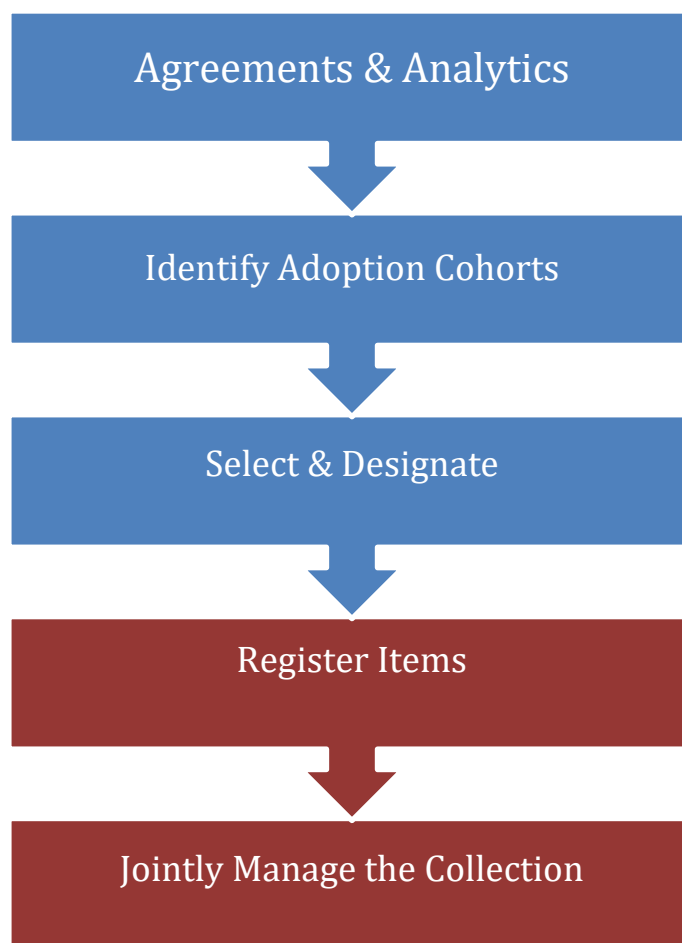
While that Collection Analysis Tool supports analytics, it lacks registry maintenance, collection management, item fulfillment, and user discovery functionalities. The SCSB pilot has explored functionality that could underpin registration and collection management. Further ahead lies work on systems to support streamlined metadata management across multiple applications and exposure for discovery.

## Establishing the Community Asset

Within the next year, the growth of the Shared Print Collection through the addition of distributed holdings will begin. Baseline agreements coupled with analytics will let members begin their selection.

At this stage, the Collection will begin to reflect important norms of collective investment:

- All research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance participate and designate portions of local collections
- All research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance contribute to governance and share expertise
- All research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance align some local resources with the shared collection
- Members work together to reduce gaps at the shared collection level
- Every member works internally to maximize the value of the collective for all Big Ten users - changing workflows and resource allocations as needed



*Figure 3 - Overview of key construction activities for operationalizing the Distributed Shared Print Collection*

Ongoing development and management of the Shared Print Collection will need to work to reinforce these norms.

Initially libraries in the Early Adopter Cohort and later the rest of the community will need to undertake a local selection process to decide which parts of their collections they are ready to have participate in the Shared Print Collection. The Big Ten Collection Analysis Tool will support this process, allowing analysis based on the shared print agreements and by local collection locations and characteristics.

Member libraries will employ whatever local practices they use for making selection decisions and then go through a local process of designating selected items in their systems and metadata. Through metadata exports selected items can be represented in the Collection Analysis Tool for iterative analysis that supports ongoing growth and collective learning. A to-be-determined registration tool will be deployed to accept and manage metadata for the Shared Print Collection. The registration tool (to be developed) will ensure that collection is discrete and durable for ongoing community management.

## Implementing Collective Management Practices

As the distributed Shared Print Collection begins to grow, new community structures will be needed to address the ongoing development and management of the Shared Print Collection.

Operating the Shared Print Collection as a single asset that functions as a coherent whole requires ongoing collective management. This is something of a new frontier for a distributed print collection at scale which encompasses both serials and monographic materials. The ongoing practice of community management will require a coherent and sustainable organizational structure that supports community-level organization functions, including strategy, planning, decision-making, resource allocation, and the ability to make agreements, develop policies, and engage with and foster needed technology infrastructures.

The research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance's work together has succeeded in getting to this point of building out the Shared Print Collection but will be insufficient to fully realize the potential of the BIG Collection. Current community groups operating within the Alliance libraries' governance structures have marshaled sufficient resources to outline the highest-level strategy and investments required to scale the defined Shared Print Collection. To continue to move ahead, the community needs to evolve. The historical structure of the Big Ten Academic Alliance's Community Engagement Network has silos of functional areas. The initial Shared Print Collection development has relied on short-term, cross-functional working groups to coordinate the broad expertise needed to work at the collective, operational level. As the future vision of the expanded Shared Print Collection becomes a reality, ongoing groups that bridge functional perspectives and varied collection services need to be established. At the same time much of the existing community network has been waiting in the wings, so to speak,



for the shared collection to emerge at scale, with sufficient infrastructures to support the development of new collective and coordinated work. Addressing metadata issues at scale for the shared collection, creating coordinated acquisitions for the Shared Print Collection, and coordinating digitization across the shared collection are ideas ready for community engagement.

The technological infrastructures needed to support the Shared Print Collection are also currently aligned with the state of the collection, but new capacities will need to come online in sync with the establishment of the jointly managed shared collection. Most immediately needed is the capability to support the registration of items in the Shared Print Collection. The registry function maintains a defined collection of records with ongoing integrity; when investments are made in the Shared Print Collection, the benefits remain with the Shared Print Collection. All other work (e.g., exposing the Shared Print Collection for discovery, streamlining metadata exchange, and meeting other core capabilities) relies on the maintenance of the Shared Print Collection as a discrete asset subject to analysis and exposure to users.

## The Future of the Shared Print Collection

As the Shared Print Collection matures into a collective asset, it serves as the foundation for ongoing collaborative efforts to enhance its value. This collection marks a paradigm shift in research library management, challenging traditional assumptions about print collections. It reveals untapped value and addresses biases inherent in historic practices. Key shifts include:

<b>SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES IN SHARED PRINT MANAGEMENT</b>	
<b>From Past Commitments and Understandings</b>	<b>To New Perspectives and Commitments</b>
Local management to meet local needs. Scale and value for users is optimized at the local level	Local management both contributes to and builds on collective management to maximize scale and value for local users AND advance the common good.
Sharing is an act of generosity and reciprocity	Sharing is a core practice of maximizing the value of content for research and teaching
Access services are mature and need to be managed down as print use declines	Access services are realigned to current user needs and require new investments to deliver the value users require
A belief that collections have been described objectively and adequately for user needs for discovery and use	A recognition that collections are not described adequately to support current research, teaching, or collection management and often show bias, exclusion, silencing, and oppression
In the belief that print collections have declining value for users, the collection strategy for print is focused on the preservation of the existing collection with a declining selection of new content	An understanding that print collections have untapped value for users and that new approaches can unlock and increase the value of print
Print collections are a research resource for current users at member institutions	Print collections are essential to modern research productivity and must keep pace with scholarship's ever-increasing interdisciplinarity, multi-institution partnership, and global reach. They comprise invaluable cultural assets with value for communities around the globe

## Key Areas for Collective Action

Looking at the Shared Print Collection from this new perspective, the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance have surfaced a number of potential arenas for collective action in a range of conversations since 2019. Some of these include:

### **Addressing Bias, Silencing & Under-representation**

The BIG Collection embeds equity and justice in its work. The Shared Print Collection offers opportunities to advance these principles, focusing on metadata improvement, digitization, access services, and discovery environments. Analysis can identify metadata improvement needs, prioritize newly exposed content, and enhance fulfillment.

### **Improving Access Through Fulfillment**

The research libraries of the Alliance's leaders and experts in Interlibrary Loan have a deep and rich history of working together. The experience of harmonizing ILL lending policies across the community network of member libraries, followed by the migration into a new platform for UBorrow services, has moved the community into a new arena for ongoing collective service development and enhancement. This work could be enriched by further analysis and examination of resource sharing of items participating in the Shared Print Collection. Additional services for users of the Shared Print Collection could be considered, such as expedited delivery and exploration of on-demand digitization-based fulfillment.

### **Prospective Collection Building**

The Shared Print Collection offers a new framework for ongoing collective collection development; newly acquired content can become reliably accessible and shareable as it joins the Shared Print Collection. The agreements guiding the Shared Print Collection provide baseline expectations for materials acquired through coordinated print planning efforts, ensuring consistent fulfillment, metadata, discovery, and preservation regimes across the collection. With ongoing joint management, the community can consider making additional agreements to provide enhanced access, persistence, description, etc.

The new and ongoing collection analysis capability is another enabler of coordinating collection building for the Shared Print Collection. Analyses can uncover existing overlaps and assess recent duplication versus historic duplication. It will be easier to identify complementary partnerships between subgroups of members through the ability to do detailed holdings and overlap analysis. The ability to incorporate fulfillment characteristics of items, such as lendability

and time to ship, further enriches decision-making when identifying targets for coordinated collecting and allocating collecting focuses and copies.

Joint management also reduces barriers by creating a collective action environment that ensures appropriate and consistent metadata for discovery and fulfillment. It could also provide a framework in the future for new agreements for enhanced services for subsets of the Shared Print Collection. Research libraries of the Alliance could agree to provide each other with accelerated fulfillment for new items, for instance.

Another potential focus for collective action to add value is digital collection building. All research libraries of the Alliance are participants in the Google Scan Partnership (for book digitization). In addition, most also manage in-house book digitization workflows. In a Shared Print Collection context, coordinated book digitization offers opportunities to align digitization workflows to intentionally build high-impact digital collections. The existing workflows feeding digitized content into the HathiTrust Digital Library ensure that the entire Big Ten Academic Alliance community benefits from digital collection building flowing from member library collections.

### **Enhancing Metadata Quality**

The research libraries of the Alliance are aware of many needs for metadata improvement of various forms. Uneven expertise, limited capacity, and the potential for duplication of effort are among the barriers that prevent the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance from making substantial progress against many of these challenges. These issues become addressable as the new asset of the Shared Print Collection becomes a target for organizing the limited resources of the community for impact and scale. With the Collection Analysis Tool providing new and regularly updated exposure to community metadata at scale, the community can assess the scale of different kinds of metadata problems, organize large sets of metadata for targeted action, and distribute effort among themselves. In some cases, that effort might operate at the level of automated remediation. In other cases, collective action could be more along the lines of how HathiTrust practices copyright review of items in its collection for identification of public domain content. For copyright review, small numbers of staff at HathiTrust member libraries can volunteer a few hours a week to review potential public domain titles. This small-scale but organized effort has opened hundreds of thousands of items to public access. Similarly, once community targets are identified for the Shared Print Collection, optimized workflows could allow employees across the network to aggregate small efforts to enhance metadata for high-value sets of content.

## The Broader Impact of the Shared Print Collection

### Collaboration with Other Networks

The research libraries of the Alliance are deeply embedded in a variety of community networks, such as state and regional consortia, providing access to their collections to key partners through other collective arrangements. The Shared Print Collection will not compete with those networks. Instead, by creating a new kind of community asset that can be a focus for ongoing enhancement and organized management, the overall Alliance-based collective resource will become more useful, sustainable, and accessible to users beyond the Big Ten research library community.

The value of the Shared Print Collection for community learning and risk management should not be underestimated either. As a high-trust, organized, and interdependent community, The research libraries of the Alliance can develop new practices, services, and infrastructures that would not otherwise be accessible to them individually or to other communities. For instance, mastering improved fulfillment at scale or enhancing metadata through collective action can pave the way for Big Ten member libraries to share their learning or even offer new service levels to other partners and the broader community.

### The Role of HathiTrust and Digital Preservation

HathiTrust stands to benefit significantly from the development of the Shared Print Collection. The research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance, as founding members of HathiTrust, share a community commitment to leveraging it for the preservation and access of digitized books created by member libraries. If the Shared Print Collection becomes a focus and enabler of digital collection building, the expanded digital collections will become part of the HathiTrust Collection. In addition, scans added to the HathiTrust corpus will become available for full-text searching, copyright review, and digital research for all HathiTrust members—and for public domain works, beyond.

## Looking Ahead: Key Priorities

The initial efforts to conceive of, and develop, the Shared Print Collection involved many community conversations regarding possible priority areas for further work. Themes emerged, as well as design elements, dependencies, and requirements that could best realize the potential benefits for collection users at Big Ten Academic Alliance members. When applied to the launch of the Big Ten Shared Print Collection, as an indefinitely growing, jointly managed collection, the community is presented with several near-term tasks:

- **Strengthen Community Engagement:** With the incorporation of distributed print items, a new phase of community engagement is commencing. The span of the systems and services across our organization will require collective awareness, understanding, and learning through ongoing communication practices that reach deep into member libraries.
- **Determining the Pace and Scope of Growth:** Members will not all be ready to begin at the same pace or time. It makes sense to begin with a small early adopter cohort, developing a phased rollout across institutions. The initial steps for the early adopter cohort will be to engage in a library level selection process to identify items for initial contribution to the Shared Print Collection. Selected items will need to be designated within local systems and then metadata will need to be contributed to the Collection Analysis Tool and a to-be-developed registration system.
- **Develop New Governance Structures:** New community practices and structures (including governance, management, policies & agreements) are needed for the development of the Shared Print Collection. This will likely require a new group (or groups) that focuses on joint management of the Shared Print Collection, regularly advancing principles and guidelines. In addition, existing groups in the Alliance libraries' community network will need to review the new range of opportunities to engage in the Shared Print Collection work.
- **Establish Technology Infrastructure:** Plans must be finalized and implemented for the technology infrastructure required to support item registry, collective management, and members' exposure of the collection to users. Development of systems that allow for robust metadata exchange between elements of the infrastructure (such as the agreements engine and the Collection Analysis tool) is a priority.
- **Prioritize Collective Action for User Experience:** To build new value for users, the community must identify opportunities and set priorities for collective action and community investment to define a new level of consistent user experience of the shared collections. Demonstrating the potential value-adding effects of collective investment early is essential for continued investment. Important action areas to explore include metadata enhancement, coordinated collection building, and digital collection building. Any or all of these present significant opportunities for applying an equity and justice lens to ensure the work is aligned to shared values.

- **Aligning Internal Practices and Infrastructure:** The research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance will need to consciously engage their organizations in the work to modify their practices and priorities to both contribute to the Shared Print Collection and to align their internal workflows and infrastructures to capture the best benefits from development of the Shared Print Collection.

These tasks emerge from the learning and successes of the research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance community's work under the BIG Collection paradigm. Based on their success so far, there is every reason to look forward to ongoing achievements and benefits for users and for the libraries themselves.

## Conclusion

The research libraries of the Big Ten Academic Alliance are well on their way to achieving their ambitious goal of transforming the management of their print collections and services. They are on the verge of creating an unprecedented community asset—one that is jointly managed to be discrete, durable, and discoverable. The Shared Print Collection is the first step in making interdependence a core practice for members in the realm of print resources. With this foundation established, significant opportunities arise for joint investments that increase equity and add value for users through the growth of the shared collection, enhanced discovery, and improved access. The Shared Print Collection becomes a powerful focus for the research libraries of the Alliance to advance their commitment to equity and justice in their collections and the services that deliver value to users. The community's work and achievements so far are revealing the conditions, enabling tactics, and practices—as well as the inevitable barriers—that will determine the speed and direction of further progress. They are also illuminating important next steps and success factors.

## Author's Note

Since joining the Big Ten Academic Alliance Center for Library Programs in January 2023 as Visiting Program Officer, it has been my privilege to wrestle with forming my own understanding of what the Big Ten Shared Print Collection is intended to become and what it will mean for the users of our member institutions, our member libraries and their employees, as well as for our print collections. My learning is deeply indebted to the foundational work of many Big Ten library leaders and colleagues; as I have worked with many in the community who are building out the systems of trust, the many questions raised have forced me again and again to revise my own thinking and challenge my assumptions. Similarly, leaders and colleagues across the ecosystem of shared print have pushed me to dig into their learning and insights and sharpen my own. Often after my own struggle I find myself where they have already arrived. I stand humbly on the shoulders of visionaries and pragmatists.

As I have wrestled with my questions and the many thoughtful questions asked of me, I decided that formulating a white paper could be of value to the Big Ten library community. I seek to address the space between vision and the current work constructing the Shared Print Collection and lean into the near term value the Shared Print Collection offers. I hope that the white paper I am offering here is of value to my colleagues who have and hopefully will continue to seek my help in deepening our shared understanding of what the Big Collection is all about and what it could mean for our users, our work in libraries, and the future value of our collections.

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## Further Resources

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