

The Nature of Library Consortia

E-Books Acquisition as a Shared Service in M25 (E-BASS25) is a Jisc-funded project seeking to explore the opportunities and challenges relating to Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) of e-books within the context of a consortium of libraries.

Forming the basis for work package two of the E-BASS25 Project, this document seeks briefly to define:

- The factors affecting the make-up of library consortia
- The types of library consortia in the UK at present
- The reasons libraries belong to consortia
- The types of consortial procurement.

For more information and detail on landscape and context, the work of Ken Chad on this subject is recommended.

1. What are the different factors affecting library consortia

Consortia can be grouped by the 'common factor' that defines them as a consortium:

- Geographical
 - National bodies, such as SCONUL, SCURL etc.
 - Regional bodies such as M25, NOWAL etc.
- Sector (HE, FE, museums)
- Mission group (RLUK = Russell Group libraries, 1994 group libraries etc.)

The 'common factors' that define a consortium usually underpin their goals and motivations for acting as a consortium, and so relate closely to the activities they engage in and the benefits they seek to achieve through acting as a consortium

- A geographical consortium, due to the member libraries being physically nearby to each other, have a remit to develop shared collections to which all members will have access.
- HE libraries may engage in collaborative procurement to get licensing terms which meet the needs of university communities.

In addition to the defining factors, there are lots of other factors that differentiate consortia:

- Size of consortium
 - Number of member institutions
 - Size of each member institution
- How diverse is the membership?
 - Depending on how the consortium is defined, it may have a diverse membership

- Mix of big/small members?
- Mix of interests, sectors etc.?
- Mix of subject specialisms in collections?

A geographical consortium may have members from mix of sectors, of different sizes

- M25 has small, specialist libraries + large research libraries
- M25 has both HE and museum libraries
- A mission group consortium may have members from across the country
- How close is the relationship?
 - [Federation] can the consortium mandate that all members must act together?
 - [Close] do all members agree to act together?
 - [Loose] do members choose whether to opt into/out of individual deals offered to them?
 - [Collaborative group] more about lobbying/networking than collections and services?
- How formalised is the relationship / how long does it last?
 - Ad hoc group of libraries, acting together to participate in one-off consortial deal, with no other shared activities?
 - Established, ongoing consortia acting together in range of activity areas, maybe well resourced with staff / operating budget
- What resources does the consortium have?
 - Has central staff / employs external agent / relies on support from member institution staff?
 - An operating budget?

A consortium's resources are likely to be closely related to other factors, i.e. a large, ongoing consortium more likely to have significant resources than small ad-hoc grouping. The following factors are less likely to relate to the goals and motivations of the consortium, but will affect the way in which they achieve these goals:

- A consortium that has a very diverse membership in terms of size or sector, may find it more difficult to develop shared collections because it may be more difficult to identify common content needs or a suitable funding model.
- A consortium that is strongly formalised (with a governing body, central staff, operating budget) may already have the infrastructure to support collaborative procurement, but a looser consortium may need to act through an agent (such as JISC Collections)

2. What are the different types of UK consortia and related players?

2.1 Library consortia

- Many defined by library sector (such as MLAG, a consortium of museum libraries)
- Many geographical
 - Mainly regional, e.g. M25, NOWAL
 - Most national bodies are collaborative/lobbying bodies (SCONUL, SCURL, WHELP, RLUK) rather than consortia, although some have sub-groups acting as consortia (SHEDL/ SCURL; WHELP e-book deal)

2.2 Agents

- HE purchasing consortia
 - Some are general university purchasing consortia (LUPC, SUPC)
 - Some are library specific (NOWAL, MUAC, NEYAL)
 - They negotiate supplier contracts and frameworks for range of services and supplies such as the Joint National Book Agreement, Serials Framework Agreements.
 - They offer a source of procurement advice to support individual libraries requiring tendering
- Agents acting on behalf of libraries (JISC, Eduserv)
 - These are not consortia of libraries, but act on their behalf
 - They offer consortial deals which offer advantageous pricing /licencing to 'loose consortia of HE/FE/museum libraries'
 - They offer efficiencies, e.g. single point of payment
 - They have an increasing role in offering 'above campus' shared services (e.g. Eduserv authentication services, JISC licence checker, KB+)
- Agents acting as intermediaries or on behalf of publishers
 - Broker consortia deals between libraries and publishers (such as Content Online acting for IEEE)

2.3 National libraries

- National libraries are not consortia, but in the UK they support some of the activities which are undertaken by consortia in the United States, such as:
 - Collaborative collection management, for example UKRR cooperative management of print periodicals
 - ILL supplier
 - Digitisation copyright clearance (British Library)

3. Why do libraries act belong to consortia?

There are many areas of activity for consortia and collaborative bodies, including lobbying, networking, and shared staff development programmes, but there are 3 key areas of activity relevant to and with potential for e-books.

These are: E-book procurement; Collection development; and Business support. Methods and benefits are described in the following sections.

3.1 E-Book Procurement

Consortia undertake collaborative negotiation of deals .

- They may be either general 'framework' agreements with particular supplier(s), for any content (Joint Consortia National Book Agreement, NESLi Nature deal) or deals for specific content (JISC Collections deals for specific databases)
- They may negotiate the deal directly between the consortium and the supplier, or the deal may be negotiated by an 'agent' such as purchasing consortia (LUPC, SUPC, NOWAL, NEYAL, MUAC) or other body (JISC Collections, Eduserv)

The benefits here of acting as a consortium are:

- Using economies of scale to achieve efficiency savings by sharing a single tender process.
- Using combined purchasing power to negotiate:
 - Advantageous pricing / licensing terms
 - New models (e.g. PDA/EBS from a publisher who doesn't normally offer it)
 - New content (e.g. e-textbooks not normally available)

For examples of three types of procurement, which can be applicable to consortia and ebooks, see section 4 below.

3.2 Collection Development

Consortial procurement may be for deals which give access to content only to individual libraries that choose to take up the deal (e.g. JISC Collection deals that libraries 'opt into').

Alternatively, consortia may negotiate a deal to give common access to content to all member libraries (e.g. SHEDL deals, deals where JISC Collections purchases content on behalf of all HE / MLA libraries).

The benefits here of acting as a consortium are:

- Using combined purchasing power to afford access to more titles than could be achieved by acting as an individual library (the more titles you can buy, the cheaper the cost per title, so pooling funding as a group should give better value, even if you have to pay a premium to get shared access)
- Quickly building a 'critical mass' of e-books for libraries without large e-book collections
- Achieving political objectives to create a 'level playing field' where all library users have access to a common body of content

In this type of 'Collaborative Collection Management' (CCM) each library primarily collects material to support the needs of its own users but also collaborates to ensure a coordinated approach to build complementary collections across a consortium. Paired with collaborative access and ILL schemes to facilitate sharing through access, this model of collection development can greatly increase the diversity of content available to consortia members.

However, it should be noted that most e-book licences do not allow content to be 'lent' between libraries, i.e. be made remotely available to users not members of the library which licenced the e-book. Therefore, it is difficult to transfer the print-based ILL approach to collaborative collection management in an e-book environment.

3.3 Business Support

Libraries are increasingly looking to share costs of managing collections by taking a 'shared services' or 'above campus' approach to key activities:

- Central coordination of processes for acquisition/metadata/usage.
- Central provision of systems/shared data to support management activities.
e.g. provision of a consortial/community knowledge base of data such as KB+.

The key benefits of acting as consortium are in using economies of scale to deliver efficiency savings:

- Saving staff time on acquisition administration (e.g. payment through consortium managing agent).
- Saving staff time on metadata management (e.g. use of KB+ shared services).
- Saving costs on shared systems.

For more specific information on how this might apply in the area of e-books, see E-books models & consortial purchasing: benefits & challenges etc.

4. Types of Consortial Procurement

4.1 Framework Agreements

The following seeks to outline the different types of consortial procurement:

The consortium **tenders for a framework agreement** with suppliers for type of content (e.g. books, journals), and individual libraries may place contracts with suppliers under the agreement. The consortium acts to manage the tender process and achieve favourable supply, licensing and pricing terms.

- The consortium does not select content; choice of what to purchase is for the individual library
- The consortium does not acquire content on behalf of member libraries, and any content acquired is paid for by the individual library and made available only to them.
- An opt-in model, libraries can choose to participate or not. Pricing may or may not depend on how many libraries place contracts under the agreement or on the level of spend achieved. E.g. rebates if spend by all libraries using the agreement reaches a threshold level.

- For HE libraries, this type of procurement has typically been the role of regional university purchasing consortia (e.g. SUPC-led Joint National Books Agreement, LUPC/NOWAL Serials framework agreement).

4.2 Agreements for Specific Content

The consortium **negotiates an agreement for specific content** with an individual supplier (eg an e-book package, e-journal package or database). As above, the consortium acts to manage the negotiation process and achieve favourable supply, licensing and pricing terms. In some cases the consortium may also administer the purchase / subscription process.

- The consortium selects the content to be negotiated for, although the agreement may cover a range of packages from which libraries can select.
- The consortium does not acquire content on behalf of member libraries, and any content acquired is paid for by the individual library and made available only to them.
- An opt-in model, libraries can choose to participate or not. Pricing may or may not depend on how many libraries take up the offer (e.g. ACM, IEEE)
- This type of consortial procurement has typically been managed by national bodies (e.g. Eduserv CHEST agreements, or JISC Collections NESLi deals), although it has also been done through regional university purchasing consortia (e.g. NOWAL NetLibrary deal, SUPC Safari deal).

4.3 Acquiring Content on Behalf of Member Libraries

The consortium **acquires content on behalf of member libraries** using consortial funds, and the content is made freely available to all member libraries via a sub-licence.

- At national level, this type of acquisition has typically been done by JISC Collections (e.g. Cambridge Journals Archive, ECCO e-books). Guided by wishes of members on what content to negotiate for.
- At regional / home nation level, library consortia may agree to negotiate a deal with a supplier (e.g. SHEDL).
- This is generally a 'closed consortium' model, with a guarantee that all members will participate in the agreement once it has been negotiated. The only exception is for JISC agreements where libraries may be charged an administration fee and/or platform fees for hosting.

