

The PACE Library Initiatives: a True Lesson in Regional Collaboration

Rosann Bazirjian

Dean of University Libraries, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Abstract

Purpose – This paper seeks to describe the collaborative process undertaken by seventeen university libraries toward cost reduction and efficiencies in response to initiatives encouraged by the President of the university system.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper describes the initiative and collaborative process followed by ULAC, the University Library Advisory Council.

Findings – The seventeen libraries were able to collaborate and work together in a positive and enthusiastic manner to achieve four out of six initiatives designed to improve the efficiencies of the university system libraries.

Practical implications – A number of practical implications may be drawn: the intrinsic ability of libraries to collaborate and partner with one another; the desire on the part of libraries to provide the best and most efficient services to our users; the drive to succeed in making changes in response to a larger program and need.

Originality/value – This paper focuses on the specific activities sparked by the work of a university system-wide initiative called PACE, President's Advisory Committee on Efficiency and Effectiveness.

Keywords – Libraries, Collaboration, Efficiency and Effectiveness

Paper type –Case Study

Introduction

This paper will focus on regional collaboration and the steps taken within the University of North Carolina System to re-define its agenda in light of the installation of a new system-wide President and in the threat and reality of financial challenge. A number of initiatives have been undertaken that exemplify the benefits of regional collaboration among the seventeen libraries of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system – these initiatives are in direct response to one very significant state-wide program: the PACE Initiative.

In June 2006 the new University of North Carolina (UNC) System president, Erskine Bowles, appointed a blue-ribbon President's Advisory Committee on Efficiency and Effectiveness (PACE) to examine efficiency among the seventeen UNC campuses. As a champion for the UNC system, Mr. Bowles' priority was to assure the state's legislature that the resources dedicated to the UNC were utilized as effectively as possible. PACE was composed of state and business leaders as

well as faculty, Chancellors and a representative from the UNC Board of Governors.

PACE operated on several core principles that emphasized collaboration and cost efficiencies throughout the seventeen campus system. The Committee was looking not only at opportunities to maximize the strengths of the system but also to underscore the importance of campus-wide initiatives. They examined the core functions of instruction, research, and public service that are representative of the mission of the University and also the enabling functions that support them. It was felt that the University must foster an environment of continually seeking, promoting and implementing measures to achieve ongoing efficiency and effectiveness.

PACE Principles

The key operating principles for PACE were the following:

- Collaborate within constituent institutions. Collaboration informs, assists and creates best practices.
- Leverage the strength of the system when possible. Seventeen is more powerful than one.
- Enable innovative purchasing techniques and focus on negotiation capabilities across the system.
- Avoid redundancy in processes.
- Benchmark where practical.
- Facilitate information aggregation and dispersal. Gathering and sharing information across the campuses needs to be easier. **(Final Report, 2006)**

Seven workgroups with experts from across the system were appointed to work on the PACE initiative. The goal of all working groups was to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness through reworking processes that serve as barriers to current work, leveraging system strength and identifying and quantifying cost savings.

The workgroups were charged to construct, finalize, judge and prioritize ideas to eliminate and/or ease internal and external barriers. They were also asked to identify relevant benchmarks, and use them to support or disprove ideas. As a system-wide strategy, they were to map out potential cross-campus, regional and system-wide partnerships to address issues that were identified. Efficiency and effectiveness were to be examined from all vantage points including cost, quality and level of service, barriers and results.

The workgroups were expected to produce short white papers discussing each initiative considered, the assumptions behind the ideas, and the final determination and estimated impact of the idea.

The Libraries' Initiatives

Within the framework of PACE, the seventeen libraries fell into the category of *Academic Administration and Support*. The libraries working team was composed of librarians from some, but not all, of the seventeen campuses.

The "Libraries" sub-group of *Academic Administration and Support* developed six ideas for improved efficiencies and collaboration, including 1) rapid delivery of library materials, 2) one library catalog system, 3) centralized approval contract, 4) coordinated purchasing, 5) remote storage for library materials and 6) central electronic records management (archiving). (**Final Report 2006**). It was noted that aside from a centralized approval plan contract, none of the suggestions would yield cost savings. It was projected, however, that they provided future cost avoidance opportunities.

This paper addresses each of the six ideas for libraries identified through the PACE initiative. It will show how the seventeen UNC libraries collaborated to bring about four of the six ideas, and the plans for implementation of a fifth idea. It describes the process that took place and the benefits reaped from this collaboration. The libraries have made sweeping changes based on the PACE initiative that are altering the way we do things, enhancing collaborative efforts between the libraries and at the same time addressing the current financial crisis within the state of North Carolina.

The six ideas for transformation were brought forward to the University Library Advisory Council (ULAC) which includes the deans or directors of the seventeen UNC libraries (<http://www.northcarolina.edu/academics/ulac/index.htm>). The author of this paper served as the Chair of the ULAC for two of the years that these initiatives were being implemented. ULAC met three times a year to ensure that the defined initiatives would become reality. In addition to in-person meetings, sub-committees and groups were appointed, and much was accomplished via conference calls and e-mail.

1) Rapid delivery of library materials.

It was determined that the UNC libraries could better leverage the existing interlibrary loan system by contracting with a courier service to reduce the delivery time of returnables between

the campus libraries. Returnables, as defined by this group, are print resources as opposed to electronic journal articles. The net impact would mean improved service for library patrons with minimal cost impact in terms of postage. The savings would come from no longer expending funds on highly duplicative collections if there was a courier service that could quickly deliver materials from one campus to another. The plan was to negotiate a system-wide contract with a courier or high-speed delivery service to reduce delivery time from 7-14 days down to a 2-day turnaround. The UNC campuses process approximately 50,000 items annually via interlibrary loan. In April 2008, a sub-committee was appointed with representatives from three UNC libraries: Western Carolina University, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. That committee easily developed a list of nine items that would need to be addressed in an RFP for the rapid statewide delivery of ILL materials:

- a) the need for pricing to include insurance
- b) the need to include tracking capabilities
- c) the need for separate billing accounts
- d) the need to include costs for home delivery and pick-up of packages
- e) there should be one price for all of the universities
- f) there should be no differential pricing outside a geographic zone. **(RFP Memorandum, 2008)**

Another committee, chaired by North Carolina State University, was appointed to deal with actual implementation and vendor comparisons. By October 2008, this initiative was completed and we had a contract with a vendor for two-day delivery of ILL materials between campuses at a cost of \$4.98 per package/one direction. The courier service was available by February 2009 and is growing in use among the UNC libraries. Generally, it was a fairly painless task to initiate the rapid delivery system for library materials among the UNC libraries. Libraries easily agreed on what the system should provide and believed that paying for prompt service for our students and faculty was a very high priority.

In conjunction with this initiative, the UNC libraries, led by North Carolina State University, conducted an analysis of our collections using the OCLC WorldCat Collection Analysis Tool to identify collection strengths, weaknesses and overlaps and uniqueness. Along with the rapid delivery of materials between campuses, this detailed knowledge of the collections could be the first step toward coordinated purchasing. Key findings told us that the UNC Libraries contain over 11.1 million copies of titles and 5.5 million distinct titles. Duplication across the system is relatively low. Of the distinct titles held, 63% are unique, meaning only one campus holds that

title, and over 86% of the titles are owned by no more than three institutions. The WorldCat Collection Analysis Tool allowed us to easily compare the holdings of the libraries for uniqueness by individual subject area and then by individual library. **(Orcutt et al., 2008)**

2) One library catalog system

Implementing one library catalog for the seventeen campuses was the hardest initiative to accomplish. Within the UNC system libraries, there are four different library catalog systems in use with no mechanism to easily search across all catalogs by users. The PACE initiative called for a virtual union catalog that is able to support searching and interlibrary loan across all UNC libraries by a user coming from any library in the system. In Spring 2006, the UNC libraries (spearheaded by North Carolina State University) applied for and received a Library and Services Technology (LSTA) Grant to engage a consultant and investigate options for a virtual union catalog system, a statewide user-initiated request and delivery service for library materials and a collection analysis project. It was hoped that the joint catalog would be operational by March 2008. The Automation and Networking Committee, a subcommittee of ULAC chaired by a librarian from UNC Greensboro, was directed to oversee implementation of this product. If cost savings/avoidance was based on increased usage, we determined that there would be a savings of over \$484,000 annually. By February 2008, ULAC selected the Group Catalog product available from OCLC after discussions regarding other available products. By March 2008, it was decided to include OCLC's VDX product as our means of unmediated document delivery between campuses. A VDX Committee was appointed, co-chaired by UNC Greensboro and North Carolina State University. As time went on, however, and OCLC further developed this product, there were many changes to what would be delivered and when it would be available. By June 2008, we were informed that Group Catalog and VDX needed to be implemented together. The Committee began working to complete the needed specs and information and submit that to OCLC. In September 2008, we were told that we would need to utilize the WorldCat Navigator product. VDX, now called NRE (Navigator Request Engine) would be integrated into the Navigator product and would allow for unmediated document delivery. We eventually ended up with the WorldCat Localized Group Catalog rather than WorldCat Navigator. We were pleased with this change knowing that WorldCat Local was robust with greater functionality. Instead of searching a single WorldCat interface for all libraries, each library was to receive its own WorldCat Local interface that would search the holdings of all libraries. This product, we were told, would be available in June 2009. In July, 2009, we were also told that the non-ILLiad libraries (at six of the seventeen campuses) would

need the hosted ILLiad service or they would not be able to share materials with other libraries. This hosted service would provide the non-ILLiad libraries with the same functionality as the other UNC libraries but without having to deal with the issues of server maintenance and software installation/upgrades. The ILLiad software needed to be configured for each of the six libraries and training needed to take place. From this, it should be evident that the service was being tweaked almost up to the time of implementation.

After a tremendous amount of work and collaboration between the libraries on all seventeen campuses, this product is available and is officially up and running as of January 2010. As stated earlier, this initiative was one of the most difficult to implement. It is easy to see, from the above description, that settling on what would become the final product for the virtual catalog was quite a challenge because the product was so new and was evolving as we were trying to implement it. Once the product was settled upon it seemed that something new always came along that better suited what we were trying to accomplish.

The libraries themselves agreed, relatively easily, on the look and feel of the catalog as well as on the pricing structure. Libraries agreed that the cost of WorldCat Local would be split among the seventeen campuses according to their profile and size. The libraries are currently working on a press release to celebrate the availability of this wonderful resource.

3) Centralized approval contract

The UNC Libraries have individual profiles for approval plans using several different vendors. With this approach, the larger libraries have better buying power than smaller ones due to their purchase volume. Through the PACE initiative, the UNC system libraries were asked to first study, and, if advantageous, implement a contract with one established vendor to leverage buying power while allowing individual libraries to structure their profiles to meet local campus needs. With proposed higher discounts due to volume, all libraries could leverage their buying power and save a considerable amount of money. ULAC estimated that total annual savings for the system could range from \$281,000 in the best-case scenario (18% discount) to \$171,000 in a moderate scenario (17% discount). This initiative was first discussed at a meeting of ULAC in September 2007. A discussion was facilitated to see if the group preferred one vendor over another, and when decided, to pursue negotiations with the preferred vendor. At the September meeting, it was decided that a steering committee would be established to work through the issues. By March 2008, it was decided that this same steering committee would also serve as the implementation committee and would work with the chosen vendor to obtain a consortia approval plan discount. Two librarians from North Carolina State University served as co-chairs of the steering committee. Participation in the centralized approval plan would be opt-in and

not mandatory, as this would make the plan more appealing to ULAC and would not force those who did not want to participate. This centralized contract would allow libraries to control their own plans. Meetings were held with the chosen vendor at the June 2008 meeting of the American Library Association to further discuss implementation and discount rates. Negotiations continued through the fall 2008. By February 2009, issues concerning rates of discount and shipping were still being negotiated. In this economy, a discussion about surcharges for fuel was also discussed. By June 2009, the centralized approval plan was implemented. Discounts were negotiated at 11.5% for paper and 18% for hardbound books. All firm orders placed with the vendor would be discounted at 18% as well. The vendor also offered 2008 prices for their database group view through 2009.

ULAC still needs to discuss how this new plan can be most advantageous in terms of coordinated collection development. Point of selection information shared among the participating libraries can truly aid selectors in making real time decisions on duplicating materials, and can reduce duplication to free funds for additional purchases. A separate meeting/summit to discuss this was suggested, and hopefully will take place in the near future.

4) Coordinated purchasing of Electronic Resources

For over 15 years, UNC libraries have been licensing the use of electronic resources. Most libraries belong to multiple consortia; some are funded by the respective institutions and others are centrally funded, such as NCLIVE. NC LIVE is a statewide collaborative among the nearly 200 public and academic libraries in North Carolina. Consisting of four Communities of Interest (COIs), the organization includes the libraries of the University of North Carolina System, North Carolina Community College System, and the public libraries of North Carolina, serving all 100 counties, and the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities.

(<http://www.nclive.org/index.phtml>)

NCLIVE provides content and indexing from more than 50,000 newspapers, journals, magazines, encyclopedias, e-books, e-audio, and streaming video titles. Students, faculty, and staff from any of North Carolina's community colleges, independent colleges and universities, and public universities, as well as patrons from the state's public libraries can access all of NCLIVE's content at no cost. NCLIVE has acquired resources worth \$28 million dollars at the cost of \$3.3 million dollars. **(Final Report 2006)**

The organization is advised and governed by representative committees of librarians, and the staff operates from offices located on the campus of North Carolina State University.

The PACE recommendation was that libraries within the UNC system should continue to coordinate the purchasing of electronic resources in order to negotiate the best additional savings possible. UNC libraries were encouraged to find ways to expand NCLIVE and to grow its electronic resource base beyond current levels, focusing especially on system-wide high priority subject areas. At approximately the same time as this PACE recommendation was put forward, a new director of NCLIVE was hired. The individual was in the process of analyzing content and content needs, and was beginning to focus on acquiring PBS streaming video and music streaming audio. In September 2007, a matching grant (\$100,000) from the federal government was received to increase purchases for the NCLIVE consortium. By March 2008, it was reported that the PBS videos and streaming audio were very popular. A new focus would now be on adding materials for the K-12 users, and for eliminating the need for multiple passwords.

5) Remote storage for library materials

We are all aware that the number of electronic resources continues to grow, and as a result the amount of print materials that need to be stored are significant. Many of the UNC system libraries are quickly running out of space. The PACE report recommended that a secure, climate-controlled central storage facility that could house eight million volumes should be constructed to house lesser-used books and journals. This centrally-stored material would then be accessible to users from across the system via a delivery service. Although the cost of a central storage facility would be high, there would be significant cost avoidance savings money in the long run with this type of collaboration. The projected annual cost avoidance of \$2 million dollars would require an initial capital investment of \$25 million dollars. **(Final Report 2006)**. In September 2007, ULAC decided that a consultant should be hired. It was also determined that first we must see if this would be a capital priority by General Administration. By March 2008, funding for the storage facility was included in the Six-Year Appropriated Capital Improvements Priorities 2007-2013 Worksheet. The spreadsheet showed seed funding in 2009-2010 (\$2.5 million), and full funding in 2010-2011 (\$25 million). Although approved by the Board of Governors, this funding did not get State Legislative approval due to the budget situation in the state of North Carolina. However, a committee was appointed by the ULAC to produce a report on the needs of the constituent libraries in the storage facility. This committee was chaired by East Carolina University, and included members from the UNC Greensboro, the UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte and North Carolina State University. By May 2009, the ULAC offsite storage needs assessment was complete. Questions included:

- a) Do you have a need for offsite storage? Today? 54% said “yes”; Next 5 years? 46% said “yes”; Next ten years? No one said “yes”.
- b) If a center were constructed in the next 5 years, how many volumes would you want to deposit? Highest response was 500,000 volumes; lowest was 1,500 volumes.
- c) How close would the offsite facility need to be to your campus? “Within 100 miles” was the most popular response.
- d) Where do you think the offsite storage facility should be built? Many responded “Greenville”, “The Triad”. “The Triangle”.
- e) Are you familiar with the automated storage retrieval model? 80% said “yes”. **(Offsite Assessment Report 2009)**

As stated, due to budget cuts, the amount appropriated for the storage facility was cancelled. ULAC decided to continue with the work to show our need and be prepared to move quickly when state funds improve. We wanted to make sure that we were firm on the principles related to the types of materials that we wanted to place in storage, the number of copies and the issue of cold storage. By June 2009 it was decided that a collection development model covering all items we wish to be deposited should be written. ULAC agreed to make this their number one priority for the coming year. The Offsite Storage Task Force (composed of six UNC libraries) will get busy on this.

6) Central Electronic Records Management (Archiving)

The last recommendation from the PACE report called for a centralized approach to storing and managing electronic records. It was agreed that each of the UNC institutions were in varying stages as to their ability to archive electronic records. It was hoped that a centralized system and management of these records would lessen the impact in terms of investment on creating seventeen separate methods for records management. Because General Administration called for further study on this recommendation, and did not list it as a “go”, the UNC libraries decided to hold off doing anything about this until it becomes a General Administration priority.

Conclusion

As you can see, it was quite a process from the beginning of the concept of the PACE initiatives (2006) until actual implementation of each of the library initiatives. The Libraries were unified in their commitment to making the necessary changes to put these efficiencies into place. They worked well together despite timelines and technology glitches beyond their control. ULAC strives to be inclusive and works through the creation of committees and subcommittees.

Overall, four of these initiatives are in place and operating. They will need assessment and refinement in this new year, but, because the libraries are used to partnership and collaboration, and communicate often and well, this should not be a problem. We applaud the PACE initiatives and the efficiencies they have brought our students and faculty users.

¹ The seventeen campuses are: Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University, UNC Asheville, UNC Chapel Hill, UNC Charlotte, UNC Greensboro, UNC Pembroke, UNC Wilmington, University of North Carolina School of the Arts, Western Carolina University, North Carolina School of Science & Mathematics, Winston-Salem State University.

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