

## Library Collaboration – Exploring New Business Models: An Interview with Marvin Pollard

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### Abstract

In the past few years, academic libraries have faced many significant challenges. Due to the financial crisis, the cuts to library collections have caused an evolution in the philosophy of collecting, accessing, and delivering information. Financial constraints have resulted considerations of a “just-in-time” collection philosophy, where libraries have explored new models of collecting information and delivering content to their patrons. *Collaborative Librarianship* caught up with Marvin Pollard to discuss this issue.

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Marvin Pollard is the Director of System-wide Digital Library Services at the California State University, Office of the Chancellor. Marvin has been with the California State University since 1997. Prior to joining the California State University system, he held positions at the College Center for Library Automation in Florida, the University of Alaska – Fairbanks, and was a Director of a Community College library in Arizona. Marvin received his B.A. degree from the University of Wisconsin – Madison; an M.L.I.S. degree from the Dominican University (Graduate School of Library & Information Science), and he pursued doctoral studies in Library and Information Science at the Florida State University (ABD).

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**CL:** Please provide some information on the collaboration between libraries in the California State University System (CSU).

**Pollard:** The California State University has a long history of collaboration among its libraries. The areas of collaboration touch most aspects of the CSU libraries, such as personnel, facilities, budgets, but there has certainly been a strong focus on the licensing of digital content and the systems to fully utilize digital content. Like most library collaborations, the CSU libraries collabo-

rate in the area of resource sharing and cooperative collection development.

Since all employees of CSU libraries are employees of the State of California there are a lot of shared interests, even though there is great diversity in the size and history of the 23 CSU universities.

**CL:** What are some of the obstacles the California State University System has had to overcome in the last few years?

**Pollard:** The dramatic shift to licensed digital content in libraries provides a challenge to library organizations that need to adjust personnel and budgets to accommodate current demand. At the same time there has been tremendous pressure to reduce budgets even though costs for content continue to increase.

**CL:** Recently, your organization implemented a journal article Pay-Per-View service. How did this project get started?

**Pollard:** We initiated the Get it Now Service in response to a recognition that our users’ ability to use content was not keeping pace with their ability to identify desirable content in the discovery process. We have seen this same recognition identified at the University of Michigan in 2010 when they conducted a study of their users



in the context of evaluating new discovery systems.

See: [Article Discovery Working Group's Final Report](#)

In that situation, like ours in 2008, users were vocal in expressing frustration in getting the articles they could easily locate. Comments made by users in the UM survey were organized by themes. Here was the most popular theme:

**“Users want full text and they want it immediately”**

We have known for probably seven years that our users were not satisfied with their ability to get the full text of articles that they can now easily locate. Interlibrary loan was being used by many users, but satisfaction with this service was low and actual use of the articles provided by the Interlibrary Loan/Document Delivery office was surprising low too.

We began the process to develop Get it Now in 2008 as part of a larger project called the Digital Marketplace. In 2009 we were able to begin co-development of the Get it Now service with the Copyright Clearance Center. The Get it Now service was launched as a Pilot in the fall of 2009. The key findings of our pilot were:

Satisfaction with the service was High. The service exceeded users' and our expectations for content delivery.

The simplest explanation for the success of Get it Now was that it operated 24 hours a day, every day of the week, 52 weeks of the year. We were able to document that 75% of the requests for articles filled by the Get it Now service were submitted and filled when the ILL offices were not processing requests.

Costs for the Get it Now service were found to actually be reasonable. Royalty fees alone for articles delivered via ILL Document Delivery can now run about \$39.00. This is a reflection of the skyrocketing costs for scholarly journals.

When these marginal costs are added to the fixed costs for document delivery and the fact

that up to 50% of the articles delivered by Document Delivery were not being used, we could see that the delivered cost of articles for Get it Now was often less than traditional service for articles delivered in a few days via a Document Delivery service.

**CL:** The Pay-Per-View service involved collaboration with the Copyright Clearance Center. Please provide more information on how this relationship came to fruition.

**Pollard:** We approached both the Copyright Clearance Center as well as EBSCO Publishing at the American Library Association meeting in Anaheim in June 2008 about working with us to develop a Get it Now service. Get it Now was the name we used, by the way. We considered both companies to be well positioned in the library and publishing industries and to be motivated and capable of providing this type of service. We projected that this could be a Win-Win situation for libraries, publishers and the broker for these transactions and that there was an incentive for all three entities to participate in the Get it Now ecosystem.

**CL:** How were publishers involved in the pay-per-view service?

**Pollard:** The Get it Now service would not have been possible without the participation of scholarly publishers. In our analysis of document delivery usage in the 2007-2008 academic year we identified the top publishers for articles requested through the CSU ILL offices. We then encouraged Copyright Clearance Center to approach these same publishers for participation in the Get it Now service.

**CL:** Are you doing the service for everything or just the titles in the “long tail?”

**Pollard:** We use Get it Now in an unmediated, Patron Driven system that is built on our systemwide knowledgebase of article holdings. It is key that we can instantly determine if an article is locally available in print or in a licensed resource. We can do this for each CSU library, and take into account their unique holdings. Then, in collaboration with the library staff, we can activate the content they don't normally offer access

to using the Get it Now Service for quick fulfillment.

A library can choose what publishers, what journals and what data ranges to make available to their students and faculty in the Get it Now service. A library using Get it Now can rightly claim to have ready access to this content, since it is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The key is that we try to avoid using Get it Now for content that is already available through the library.

**CL:** How does the billing system work? Is it to the system, the institution, or the individual?

**Pollard:** The Office of the Chancellor has a contract with the Copyright Clearance Center that defines the terms of use and costs. CSU Libraries contact our office to initiate the service and we activate the service for them, per their specification. We then bill the library each month for their usage. Our office has also offered incentives to use the service. We also provide detailed usage reports which we encourage libraries to analyze immediately to determine trends in usage and to identify candidate journal titles for subscription.

**CL:** How are you assessing the impact of the program?

**Pollard:** One of our goals with Get it Now was to be able to use the service to balance content available through Big Deal contacts. We are doing analysis across the complete range of publications now to help us improve how we spend our limited content dollars. Get it Now provides a new powerful way to understand what content our users want and can help us in negotiating better deals for content going forward. Our office negotiates contracts for the majority of digital content in use today in CSU libraries.

We continue to get very positive feedback from students and faculty who are impressed with the level of service the library is providing.

**CL:** Will the project be expanded to include other publishers or other types of materials?

**Pollard:** The scope of content and the libraries using the service are both expanding. There is strength in numbers, so both trends are encouraging.

**CL:** Give us an update on how the program is working. Any unforeseen challenges?

**Pollard:** The Get it Now service continues to expand and grow. Launched as a commercial service in April 2011, Copyright Clearance Center has indicated to me that they are increasing their resources to meet the growing demand for the service from university libraries in the United States. This benefits the CSU libraries since the future of the service seems assured and it continues to expand the scope of content which is available through Get it Now. Our office, the libraries and especially the end users are very pleased with the service.

**CL:** Where do you see library collaboration going in the next decade and what do you anticipate will be major issues?

**Pollard:** I see a trend towards looking at budget for content as being a yearly “Allowance” for content that can meet most demands for content that year. This is in contrast to looking at the yearly budget as an investment in an ongoing effort to build a collection.

Rather than building a collection, I think we are building an agile, intelligent licensing system. This is a somewhat radical way to look at library management and this point of view does encounter resistance.

Some content is licensed in three-year increments while other content is licensed at the moment it is needed by the user. Since demand for specific content varies from year to year, usually in response to what is happening in the classroom, which itself is a reflection of what is happening in the world, it can be difficult if not impossible to anticipate what information our users will be looking for next year or the year after that.

Likewise, seeing what content our users actually use, when they have access to a much larger virtual collection of content, gives us better data to

license long-term content. In our opinion we can meet the new demands for content with a static budget for content if the budget is used more efficiently than it is now to meet the high demands of today's information seeker.

Now that the majority of the content that we are delivering is not delivered in a physical object that we can put on a shelf, the expertise we have in licensing content, in the most flexible way possible for the university, has become our focus and area of growing expertise. We understand the publishing industry for scholarly and instructional content. We maintain high level relationships with these publishers and work with them to help us deliver the content in-demand by our faculty and students. At the same time, we work to lower the costs for content, by supporting use of open access content when possible.

For the time-being we must maintain good relationships with publishers who are responsible for keeping the cost of content that we use in the university at an all-time high and frankly at an unsustainable level.

**CL:** How does the current economic crisis impact the effectiveness of collaborative projects?

**Pollard:** The economic crisis amplifies the difference between the bigger more endowed institutions and the smaller newer institutions and their libraries. Our office can play a role in leveling out the access to content and services across all of the CSU universities. The CSU Virtual Library has a goal of providing equal access to services and content across all 23 universities.

**CL:** What haven't we asked that you feel should be explored?

**Pollard:** I'll just wrap up my comments by saying that I am confident that academic libraries are finding their way to a new model of service that will be based on licensed and open content and that the academy will continue to rely on libraries to provide access to the content needed for research and instruction. This will happen while the publishing industry continues to embrace the digital world we live in today.

