
Copac Collections Management Tools – Proposed Strategy

Proposed Strategy July 2012

Project Partners & Associates:
Mimas, RLUK, White Rose
Consortium, libraries of University
of Manchester; UCL; Warwick; and
the V&A

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1 Introduction

The purpose behind developing this strategy is to look beyond the current development project and to inform the sustainability planning for a prospective service that will deliver collection management tools to UK academic libraries and facilitate a broader vision: the development of a national research collection. The following provides some context, the vision, mission and aims and objectives and is intended to form the basis of a three year rolling strategy.

1.1 Technology context

There are at least two significant elements that have facilitated the development of CCM Tools at this time:

- a) Advances in communications and interface technologies, functionality, and system capacity;
- b) Database development and expansion, reaching the critical mass sufficient to exploit Copac to deliver quality value added services such as Collection Management Tools. The Copac database has grown over many years, bringing together the catalogues of over 70 major UK and Irish libraries. The quality of the data UK HEI catalogue records in the Copac database is of prime importance and is valued by contributors and users alike.

The project has identified technical challenges and worked on solutions to usability; visualisation of result sets; interoperability with local LMSs enabling results sets to be imported; de-duplication of records and search strategies.

Technology advances means that mobile applications can now be developed and there are indications from the library community that there will be demand for this. To ensure continued relevance it is vital that the CCM Tools develop over time and changes in technology make new functionality possible.

The progress and findings of related initiatives and studies will be important to inform the development of the CCM Tools. These include the work of UKRR, the RLUK mapping exercise, and the work of OCLC through WorldCAT Collection Analysis¹ and the Print Archives Disclosure Pilot². The first and last of these listed initiatives relate to serials and not monographs, however, there are often parallels and common themes that chime with the work and ambitions of the Copac Collection Management Tools project.

1.2 Economic context

With demands on budgets and space at a premium, libraries need to make sure that their research collections are effectively used and managed. Currently libraries are largely making do with in-house solutions but practitioners acknowledge³ that informed decisions about the retention, conservation, and disposal of materials can currently be very difficult and sometimes impossible. The provision of tools that will integrate well in libraries workflows and make collections management more effective and efficient is something that has the potential to bring tangible savings and improvements over time.

¹ <http://www.oclc.org/collectionanalysis/>

² <http://www.cdlib.org/cdlinfo/2012/04/25/oclc-print-archives-disclosure-pilot-final-report/>

³ CCM2 Project survey of librarians February 2012.

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The tools allow effective planning by pull together the information that then feeds into a look at strategic drivers, focusing upon quality not quantity, giving confidence in decisions that not only address retention but also the release of space, a scarce resource and certainly a driver when considering the student experience. Many libraries are looking to consolidate space and inform service development decision making.

Copac has also recognised within its draft strategy the issues emerging as a consequence of budgetary constraint and on-going harsh economic times. “The current economic context highlights the need for institutions to save money but also to drive academic excellence through reputation. In the context of Copac developments, this means balancing the drive for innovation with the need to implement pragmatic solutions that offer immediate benefits to researchers and also institutions around cost/time saving and efficiency gains.”⁴

Our project partners, RLUK, also address this within their strategic plan: “The funding and policy environment in the UK is in the midst of significant change, and research libraries are facing the challenges of reduced funding, increased competition, and wider and more diverse audiences.”⁵

1.3 Political and broader strategic context

The political drive for shared and collaborative services is as strong as ever and technology advances plus the economic priorities have come together to provide the will and the means to realise such services. The number one strategic objective for the JISC is:

Provide cost-effective and sustainable shared national services and resources⁶

This is complimented in the RLUK strategic aims⁷ that prioritise:

AIM 2 Collaborating to reduce costs and improve quality;

AIM 4 Promoting unique and distinctive collections.

The JISC describes a change agenda where:

“Further and higher education are entering a period of financial difficulty. Both UK funding and the global economic environment mean that the period of growth over the past 10 to 12 years has almost certainly ended for the foreseeable future. It is therefore essential to continue to improve efficiency and cut costs in universities and colleges.”⁸

And it is suggested that developing and exploiting shared national services can contribute in this.

The JISC transition that is currently active post the HEFCE commissioned Wilson Review⁹ is expected to move the organisation towards a new legal entity as announced in the most recent communication from Professor Martyn Harrow, JISC executive secretary, and this will also see a review of strategic direction and priorities.

“One of the first changes will see JISC become a company limited by guarantee on 1 August 2012 managing the JISC offering across its products and services. The new company’s primary focus will be on three distinct areas for UK education and research:

⁴ Taken from the Copac draft Strategy

⁵ <http://www.rluk.ac.uk/content/rluk-strategic-plan-power-knowledge-phase-two-2011-2014>

⁶ <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/aboutus/strategy/strategy1012.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.rluk.ac.uk/files/RLUK%20Strategic%20Plan-%202011%20-%202014.pdf>

⁸ JISC Strategy 2010-2012, <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/aboutus/strategy/strategy1012.pdf>

⁹ Available via <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/hefcreview/background.aspx>

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- **Infrastructure services:** networks, access management, cloud services
- **Data and content services:** procurement, data hosting, data management and interoperability
- **JISC Futures/Solution Services:** focussed on supporting education, students, research, and the running of institutions as businesses

JISC will be set-up initially as a holding (parent) company and following this, over two to three years, the current elements of JISC will be brought into this new company structure.

As we move towards the creation of the new JISC in August, work will be taking place to review the strategic direction and priorities for us, a full business review for all areas of JISC will be completed and agreement will be reached on who the community representative owners of the new JISC will be.”¹⁰

At this time of broader change it will be important to keep sight of university libraries collection management policies and ensure that the CCM service is aligned to common themes emerging from these. An analysis of these is being done as part of the projects sustainability planning process. Overlaps with serials preservation work done through UKRR and the work of international comparators needs to be taken into account. It is important to gain experience from others in the field and to collaborate where there is mutual advantage in doing so, to bring benefit to the research community. The project team invited a representative from OCLC to the workshop on retention and preservation and acknowledges that further dialogue could be productive. Currently the OCLC WorldCAT Collection Analysis has not been widely adopted by the UK academic libraries but the OCLC engagement with public libraries is recognised. This could offer an interesting contribution to a cross-sectorial approach. Practitioners attending the preservation and retention workshop in March 2012 also noted the potential role of digitised material and the issues around a UK registry of digital surrogates. International exemplars such as the OCLC/DLF Digital Masters Registry¹¹ are important to explore.

2 The Vision

The application of the CCM Tools will promote the efficient management and exploitation of collections, pursuing excellence in research, and safeguarding long-term access to materials. Through collective action the use of the CCM Tools will help to realise the community vision to build the “national research collection”.

3 A Shared Mission

It is important that the mission for the CCM Tools service chimes with the mission of its parent service, Copac. Indeed, adopting a part of the Copac mission seems most appropriate:

“To provide a robust enabling infrastructure that supports shared library services, creates efficiencies, reduces duplication of effort, and increases discoverability of collections.”

¹⁰ The March Termly Update found at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/aboutus/hefcereview/takingthereviewforward.aspx>

¹¹ <http://www.oclc.org/digitalregistry/>

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4 Principle Aims and Objectives

Aim 1: Deliver solutions to support collection management and access.

With the objective of providing tools that facilitate:

- i. Managing and reviewing individual items in individual libraries
- ii. Collection comparison
- iii. Preservation & retention

Aim 2: To make collection management less time consuming and less difficult.

With the objectives of:

- i. Reducing the need for libraries to develop and maintain unique solutions to CM.
- ii. Providing tools that produce outputs that will inform and enhance liaison and advocacy with academic schools.
- iii. Delivering value for money and cost savings both to individual libraries and to the sector as a whole.

Aim 3: To provide enabling tools to facilitate the broader vision of a “national research collection”

With the objectives of:

- i. Recognising the issues faced by libraries when addressing monograph retention and preservation.
- ii. Supporting through tool development the collaborative efforts of RLUK, JISC, the WRC and others to achieve the longer term aim of developing the technical framework required to support a more proactive and cohesive approach to collection management at a national level.
- iii. Providing tools to facilitate discovery and access to material.

Aim 4: To secure future funding and stability through the application of sustainable business models

With the objectives of:

- i. Transitioning to a full service.
- ii. Bringing certainty and confidence to users considering investing time and money in the application of the CCM Tools into their workflows.
- iii. Securing support and future maintenance and development of the tools to ensure relevance to sector requirements over time.
- iv. Encouraging active partnerships with organisations where joint effort could bring benefit to the research community.

Aim 5: To have a positive strategic engagement with other connected initiatives

With the objectives of:

- i. Being informed and informing others.
- ii. Connecting developments with the wider strategic landscape.