

Communication in Shared Print at Academic Libraries: Report of Findings

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Introduction

The primary mission of an academic library is to provide scholars with “access to collections sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, format, and currency to support the research and teaching missions of the institution.”¹ The changing publication landscape, in particular the rapid and on-going expansion of scholarly material has made it impossible for any single institution to create a comprehensive collection.^{2,3} This does not mean libraries have lessened their efforts to achieve their mission; instead, they have pivoted towards collaborative approaches and extensive networking.⁴ This shift began decades ago with programs such as interlibrary loan and has continuously evolved.

This deeper collaboration and networking gave rise to the concept of [shared print](#) initiatives.⁵ Shared print programs have a long history, beginning with discussions at Harvard in 1902 about relocating less-used books off-campus, and later with the establishment of the New England Deposit Library in 1942. Today, over 750 libraries (2%)⁶ participate in more than 40 shared print programs in North America, with share print efforts also expanding on a global scale⁷.

Shared print programs are defined as “the collaborative effort of libraries, institutions, centers, and consortia to document, preserve and provide long-term widespread access to their print collections”⁸. They are formal agreements among libraries to retain specific content and share it with program partners. Such partnerships “elevate the concept of a library collection to scales above a single institution, extending its boundaries to encompass the resources concentrated among a group of libraries.”⁹ The value proposition of shared print programs has remained consistent over the years, focusing on preservation, collaboration, space, and access.¹⁰ These programs emphasize the long-term preservation of scholarship in a space where rarity is common and comprehensive coverage requires cooperation.¹¹

“Shared print programs help ensure a legacy of print for libraries and future scholars. These collections will continue to connect generations of students, scholars, and users”

Heather Weltin and Natalie Fulkerson
Old Texts, New Networks HathiTrust
and the Future of Shared Print, p.6.

Individual libraries face growing challenges such as limited budgets, space constraints, new areas of responsibility such as research data management, publishing, copyright, and open science, and evolving user preferences. Collaboration and shared print programs play a vital role in helping library collection management respond to these challenges.

¹ ACRL, ACRL Standards for Libraries in Higher Education, p 9.

² Rieger, O. Y., What’s a Collection Anyway.

³ Nichols, S., The Evidence in Hand, p 1.

⁴ Dempsey, L., Malpas, C., & Sandler, M., Operationalizing the BIG Collective Collection.

⁵ Research Planning and Review Committee, Top trends in academic libraries.

⁶ Wood, A., Weltin, H., Wohlers, A., Inclusive Models to Sustain Shared Print and the Future of Print Collections.

⁷ Byström, K., First Steps towards Shared Print Collaboration in Sweden.

Hassel, L., *bwLastCopies – Identifying the Last Copy: Activities in the German State of Baden-Württemberg*.

Appleyard, Andy, et al. *European Shared Print Initiatives and the Epico Network*.

⁸ Partnership for Shared Book Collections, Glossary.

⁹ Lavoie, B., Dempsey, L., & Malpas, C., Reflections on Collective Collections.

¹⁰ Wood, A., Weltin, H., Wohlers, A., Inclusive Models to Sustain Shared Print and the Future of Print Collections.

¹¹ Lavoie, B., Dempsey, L., & Malpas, C., Reflections on Collective Collections.

See Appendix A for more resources on an introduction to shared print.

In 2021-22, the ACRL report "*Top Trends in Academic Libraries*" identified collaborative collections and the growth of shared print as a trending topic, noting that "as these programs have grown, so has the need for more coordination, standards, and infrastructure".¹²

Many shared print programs have been actively collaborating with member libraries, consortia, external partners, and researchers to address challenges such as metadata matching, risk management, and partner workflow coordination. Several groups have published their findings, such as the research on risk in monograph preservation, which outlines a model to determine the optimal number of copies to preserve.¹³ Additionally, groups like COPPUL SPAN and the Partnership for Shared Book Collections have established communication working groups which have created tools and resources that support members' communication efforts. Initiatives like the CCH Collaboration (CDL, CRL & HathiTrust Collaboration) have also contributed to advance the conversation. At the [Summit for Shared Print in the Collections Lifecycle](#), participants noted achievements in communication, particularly in collaboration and relationship building; but at the same time identified communication as a challenge observing that they have "built strong collaborations, but lack the tools to optimize those relationships."¹⁴

Ultimately, the challenges faced in shared print initiatives, along with the efforts to find corresponding solutions, are deeply rooted in communication. This communication must encompass a wide range of stakeholders, each holding diverse perspectives on the value proposition of shared print programs.

Project Goal & Objectives

This project emerged from two key factors: (1) the recognition of the need for high-level and often complex communication within the shared print landscape, and (2) the limited understanding of existing communication challenges among shared print stakeholders. The goal is to explore how member libraries communicate shared print initiatives to stakeholders and to assess whether a communication and change management plan could enhance the successful integration and normalization of shared print efforts within a library's collection strategy and practice.

Objectives:

1. Identify key stakeholders in library shared print initiatives and their impact on achieving the program's goals. (Interviews, Focus Groups)
2. Assess the current status of communication activities related to shared print between libraries and key stakeholders, including how libraries engage with shared print programs and communicate with their stakeholders. (Interviews, Survey, Focus Groups)

¹² Research Planning and Review Committee, *Top trends in academic libraries*.

¹³ Bogus, Ian, et al., *A Model to Determine Optimal Numbers of Monograph Copies for Preservation in Shared Print Collections*.

¹⁴ CCH Collaboration, *Official Public Notes SHARED PRINT IN THE COLLECTIONS LIFECYCLE*.

3. Examine the current status related to the integration of shared print in libraries' strategic plans, collection policies, and collection lifecycle management practice. (Interviews, Survey, Focus Groups)
4. Explore whether improved communication and change management could enhance the integration of shared print work. (Interviews, Focus Groups)

Hypothesis

It is expected that implementing a communication strategy and plan, including a change management approach for shared print at both member libraries and the shared print program level, will lead to more sustained integration of shared print efforts. This, in turn, would positively impact stakeholder engagement and understanding of the role and benefits of shared print, ultimately making it easier to advance shared print initiatives across stakeholder groups.

To validate this hypothesis, the following methods will be employed:

1. Interviews
2. Surveys
3. Focus Groups

"The future of print collections is shared. Embedding shared print within the lifecycle of library collections promotes equity of access, enriches the scholarly record, and increases opportunity for research and teaching. A well-developed, collaborative, and interoperable infrastructure ensures we will realize the full potential of our networks and their collective collections."

CDL, CDL, CRL & HathiTrust Collaboration for Shared Print Infrastructure.

Initial Steps

Before proceeding to the assessment phase, a comprehensive overview of the current status was necessary to establish a solid foundation for the project. This phase served as a critical starting point, identifying key issues for further investigation and shaping the framework for subsequent analysis. It also informed the development of interview questions and the design of the survey questionnaire. Key activities in this phase included conducting a literature review, examining library collection web pages and existing communication tools, and engaging in informal discussions with stakeholders.

Conduct a Literature Review

The literature review was conducted in two phases: (1) a comprehensive analysis of shared print literature spanning from 1902 to 2023, and (2) a targeted review focusing on communication practices by member libraries over the past decade.

While the existing body of work provides extensive coverage on the development and technical operations of shared print programs, a significant gap emerges in understanding how member libraries communicate these initiatives to stakeholders and the extent to which shared print is integrated into collection lifecycle management.

Numerous foundational articles provide a solid overview of shared print concepts and history. For example,

- Bird, Gwen, and Sabrina Wong. "Consortial Shared Print Archiving: Perspectives from Canada." *Library Management*, vol. 35, no. 1/2, 2014, pp. 45–55.
- Murray-Rust, Catherine. "From Failure to Success: Creating Shared Print Repositories." *ACRL Twelfth National Conference*, 2005, pp. 146–54.
- Stearns, Susan, and Alison Wohlers. "Shared Print on the Threshold: Looking Back and Forging the Future." *Collaborative Librarianship*, vol. 12, no. 2, Apr. 2020, pp. 159–70.

A third search focused on news articles related to academic libraries and communication practices. This search revealed a number of articles highlighting discomfort surrounding changes to physical collections. In particular, weeding projects were reported as eliciting strong emotional responses from faculty members.

Review Library Collections Web Pages

A review was conducted of the "Collections" web pages from 30 randomly selected academic libraries, all of which were members of at least one shared print programs. The objective of this review was to assess whether libraries communicated information about their shared print initiatives to stakeholders via their websites. The search focused on identifying references to terms such as "shared print," "collaborative collection," or "collective collection" on the relevant pages, where available.

The primary finding revealed that only a small number of libraries explicitly mentioned their involvement in shared print initiatives on their websites; however, references to resource sharing were significantly more prevalent.

Review Existing Communication Tools

A review was conducted to identify and assess existing communication tools developed by shared print programs for member libraries. This process uncovered several resources, including:

- the Partnership for Shared Book Collection's [Shared Print Toolkit](#) and their [Best Practice for Education and Awareness](#)
 - the [Weeding Communications in the Collections Lifecycle](#) tool
 - [EAST's Onboarding New Staff](#) document
 - COPPUL SPAN infographics for [decision-makers](#) and for [library staff](#)
- (For further details, see Appendix A.)*

The key finding from this review was the availability of numerous high-quality communication tools, which are openly accessible on the respective shared print program websites.

Conduct Informal Discussions

A series of informal discussions were conducted with library colleagues involved in shared print initiatives to gather insights into their experiences with shared print communication and the use of the existing tools identified in the previous review.

The primary aim of these discussions was to explore the current state of the project's working hypothesis: the expectation that implementing a comprehensive communication strategy, incorporating a change management approach at both the member library and shared print program levels, would lead to more sustained integration of shared print efforts.

Sample questions guiding these discussions included:

- How is communication disseminated from shared print programs to member libraries, and how is it subsequently relayed to library users?
- How do you receive information about new communication tools, and what actions, if any, do you take in response?
- How do stakeholders receive and respond to this information? Have there been observable impacts?
- Despite the availability of communication tools and the collaborative nature of the shared print community, why do challenges persist with communication and change management among individual library staff and users?

These questions provided a foundation for understanding the current communication pathways and identifying potential areas for investigation.

The key observations included that the communication pathway between the tool creators and stakeholders—particularly library staff—remains unclear and fragmented. While shared print initiatives are advancing and evolving positively, there is a significant lack of awareness among many stakeholders about the purpose and importance of these efforts. This gap in understanding is contributing to communication challenges and creating barriers to the effective integration of shared print strategies within individual libraries.

[Develop a Conversation Starter about the Library Collection](#)

Initial discussions with stakeholders revealed a lack of awareness and understanding regarding shared print initiatives and the broader concept of collection lifecycle management in academic libraries. To facilitate meaningful engagement, it became clear that the conversation needed to begin by contextualizing the academic library collection in a way that stakeholders could quickly and easily grasp.

For project participants to provide informed feedback, they first needed to understand the various components that make up a library collection and the role of shared print within it. To aid this, a visual representation was created to illustrate how shared print fits into the broader context of the library's collection (Figure 1 Library Collection Visual).

The visual is based on Lorcan Dempsey's concept of the facilitated collection which emphasizes the importance of providing access to a coordinated blend of local, external, and collaborative content that aligns with the research, learning, and teaching needs of their users¹⁵.

Using this visual as a conversation starter, it was possible to highlight several key points such as:

- The library collection consists of local, external, and collaborative elements.
- That these elements are not new (examples include interlibrary loan -a collaborative collection- and Google Scholar or the Internet Archive -curated external collections) but they continue to evolve.
- Libraries are responsible for curating and sustaining this entire collection.
- Users are central to the library's collection strategy.
- As scholarship expands and library resources become more constrained, the focus shifts from what the library owns to what it can provide access to. The visual highlights the importance of access to materials beyond ownership.
- Shared print plays an important role in this broader access strategy.

¹⁵ Dempsey, L., The Facilitated Collection.

The visual served as an effective communication tool, helping to situate shared print within the larger framework of the library collection. It is an illustrative guide, not an exhaustive or definitive interpretation, and highlights the centrality of the library user. Moreover, it underscores the diverse sources from which the library gathers scholarly resources to meet user needs.

The visual successfully initiated productive discussions about shared print in the context of the library’s overall collection strategy.

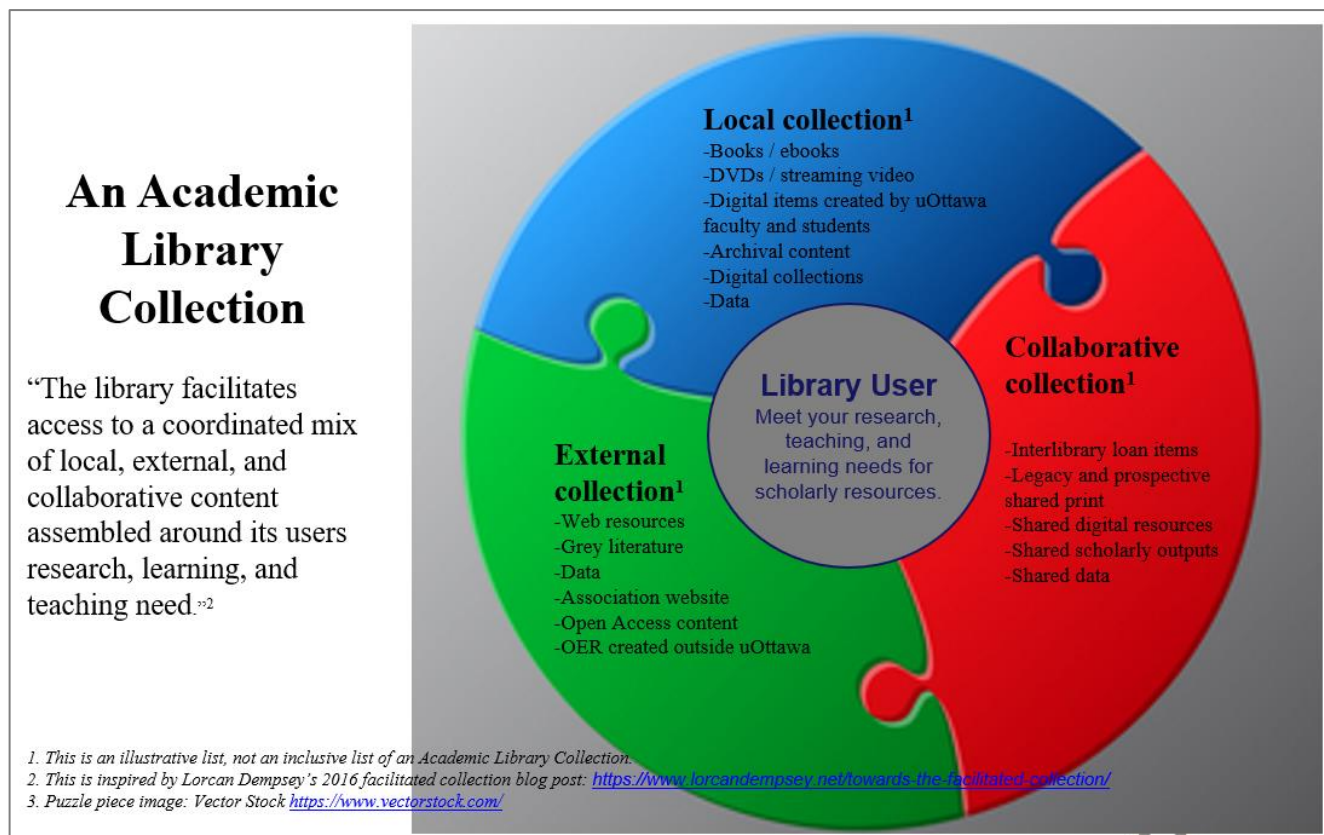


Figure 1 Library Collection Visual

Summary of Initial Steps

The following summary of the participant feedback gathered during the initial phase of the project is presented under four themes:

1. Stakeholder Concerns and Trust
2. Status of the Current Communication Path
3. Changing the Message (and Improving the Communication Path)
4. Use of Change Management

The first theme highlights the concerns of stakeholders, including angst about collection weeding, source of scholarly items, and the importance of building trust among stakeholders. The second theme discusses the current communication path, which is nebulous and unclear to stakeholders. The third theme suggests ways to improve communication, such as clarifying responsibility for communication about shared print, managing stakeholders' expectations, and developing targeted messages to stakeholders. The fourth theme emphasizes the importance of change management in communication planning and strategy and suggests using a change management method to support the work.

1. Stakeholder Concerns and Trust

- Stakeholders, particularly library staff and faculty members in the humanities, express apprehension regarding the weeding collection, which is the most visible part of the shared print process.
- Faculty members are concerned about the source of materials, preferring that their library own content. This thinking will necessitate a cultural shift from ownership to access.
- Dispelling the misconception that the library neglects print books is imperative; a clearer communication strategy is needed to convey the evolving landscape while affirming libraries' commitment to print content.
- Building trust is foundational with researchers needing assurance in the library's ability to provide necessary content.
- Understanding the 'What's in it for me' factor is crucial at all stakeholder levels. Authentic consultations before changes, relationship-building, and face-to-face interactions, especially at the faculty's department level, are vital trust-building measures.

2. Status of the Current Communication Path

- The current communication path is nebulous, and the concept of shared print lacks clarity among stakeholders -even simply how it works (discovery, workflow, etc.) and key benefits.
- The library wants stakeholders to understand the collection; as much as they want/need to, but at least enough to understand how to get the most of it (reap the benefits). A more effective story needs to be communicated to better convey the library's goals and benefits with respect to shared print.
- We need a better sense of who our stakeholders are (Figure 2 Stakeholders) and who needs what information.

- There is a lack of clarity about the responsibility for communicating about shared print to stakeholders, necessitating clarification between the library and shared print programs.
- There are more and more shared print programs and projects, the landscape is becoming more complex; how does one library liaison person manage all the intersections? Consider how this could be successfully managed. Don't simply add more communication (e.g., more emails to read) without evaluating impact at the library level.
- We need a better understanding of the status/use/applicability (e.g., case study) of the available communication tools. This would be useful information.
- Currently there is a lack of understanding in libraries related to the W5 of shared print; especially how it works (discovery, workflow, etc.) and benefits to user (a key message for front line staff).
- Addressing this gap will require realigning communication strategies to ensure that stakeholders are better informed and engaged with shared print initiatives, thus enabling more effective collaboration and long-term sustainability of these efforts.

Key stakeholders identified by interviewees (prioritized based on influence and interest)

- Shared print program staff members and member library official representatives
- Library staff members involved in shared print work at every level (i.e., Collections, Metadata, Resource Sharing, etc.)
- Library staff members in all user facing positions
- Faculty groups who work with and rely on print content
- Library senior administrators
- Provost, Vice-President Academic
- University Research office

Figure 2 Stakeholders

3. [Changing the Message](#)

- We must clarify and modernize our stakeholders' thinking, moving away from the old narrative of a library collection.
- Cultural shift is required (ownership to access), clear expectations, change management and tailored communication.
- The library has to lead (we are the decision-makers, we have accountability). Leading the conversation is important; libraries should drive the agenda, emphasizing the positive impacts on stakeholders and providing a clear roadmap for the changes ahead.
- Consider that the term 'shared print' may not effectively convey the message; alternative options, such as 'shared collection,' should be considered.
- We need to understand scholars' needs AND the collection (local & collaborative).
- Stakeholders' understanding of the collection needs to be kept more up to date.
- Targeted messages that manage stakeholders' expectations, clarify roles, and explain the impact of weeding on shared print are essential.
- Making shared print core to collection lifecycle management is a critical step. We need to identify the skill set required to make this integration successful and train/support our library team.
- The value proposition of shared print initiatives must be widely shared and understood, necessitating expertise from instructional design and communication specialists.
- What data do we actually need? Combine data with stories for best results.

- We should consider not only preserving content but also increasing its value (not just sit on the shelf forever). For instance, increase scholars' awareness about what is available in storage across the ecosystem and how they might use it, recommend it, etc.
- Building an ecosystem for shared print, fostering collaboration, and expanding relationships beyond consortia networks to national libraries and vendors are identified as necessary steps for the successful advancement of the shared print landscape.

4. Use of Change Management

- Change management needs to be embedded in communication planning and strategy, utilizing a change management method or tool (e.g., Prosci's ADKAR).
- Messages should focus on emphasizing benefits rather than explaining why the change is better for the stakeholder.
- Stakeholder-specific messages about 'What's in it for me' are crucial, and transparency about the current and upcoming state is essential to avoid surprises.
- Collaborative collecting will develop and grow; it needs an increase in collaborative coordination.
- Librarians (esp. with collections responsibility) are having trouble ceding authority. Define how we get past this pain point.
- Who should we be making decisions for? For example, there is concern about the space, energy, and time taken up by a small but very vocal group of faculty members.
- We must ensure that users understand how to use the library. Hand in hand with that, we need to meet users where they are. For example, students are active on social media, so using social media ambassadors could be effective. Faculty, on the other hand, may be more receptive to messages delivered at faculty council meetings or through campus learning management systems like Brightspace.

Findings

Summary of Findings from the Interviews

Introduction

The first step in the data collection process involved a series of stakeholder interviews. Between November 2023 and May 2024, over 25 interviews were conducted, with 20 being retained for this summary. Participants included representatives from shared print programs and libraries across Canada and the USA. These individuals were selected from key stakeholder groups and included those who (1) worked directly within shared print programs, (2) served as liaisons to shared print programs for their libraries, (3) worked on shared print initiatives within their libraries, (4) were involved in user-facing or front-line services at their library, or (5) were faculty members in the humanities.

The primary goal of these interviews was to gain a preliminary understanding of communication challenges and identify potential strategies for improvement. Given this objective, the interviews were relatively unstructured, using simple prompts to explore interviewees' views on the current state of shared print, communication challenges, key stakeholders, and the role of change management.

Key themes that emerged from these discussions included the need to build trust and relationships among stakeholders, engage in change management, develop a communication strategy, and adapt to the evolving shared print landscape. This section of the report synthesizes the insights gathered from these interviews.

Key Themes from Interviews

1. Building Trust and Maintaining Relationships Among Stakeholders

Building and maintaining trust emerged as a fundamental issue among interviewees. Trust issues were particularly noted in the context of changes in collection management practices, such as weeding and retention commitments. Common examples included:

- researchers trusting that library would promptly provide access to necessary content
- library staff working with users needing to trust their colleagues making the collection decisions
- member libraries trusting each other with respect to honouring retention commitments long-term.

Interviewees emphasized that libraries must communicate the benefits of shared print initiatives more clearly and consistently to maintain stakeholder confidence, particularly the preservation and accessibility advantages. They also must manage the expectations of stakeholders with respect to roles and responsibilities related to the collection, such as decision-making.

Building trust necessitates starting communication efforts early and fostering authentic consultation with stakeholders. Establishing trust was viewed as essential for maintaining credibility in the event of any issues and for facilitating problem resolution.

Staff turnover was identified as another challenge. It was noted that it is difficult to build awareness and understanding, let alone trust, when there is frequent staff turnover and no training or continuity plan in place.

2. [Engaging in Change Management](#)

Interviewees were asked for their thoughts on the relevance of change management strategies in improving communication within the shared print landscape. There was widespread agreement that employing change management strategies could help address the concerns and resistance of various stakeholders, including faculty, administrators, and library staff. A key aspect of this is answering the question "What's in it for me?" for each stakeholder group.

Another important point highlighted was the need to ensure that both library staff and users understand how to use and benefit from the library's collection overall, not just shared print resources. The library's collection management and its systems have evolved and a lack of understanding of these changes can hinder discussions about shared print initiatives.

Understanding the tensions among stakeholders regarding the shift from content ownership to access, as well as the discomfort associated with weeding, is central for developing strategies to mitigate these challenges. Clear, consistent messaging and proactive engagement were identified as important. It was suggested that the communication on the cultural shift from content ownership to access be tailored and emphasize positive messages.

Faculty members interviewed expressed a preference for print formats but acknowledged that ensuring comprehensive access to materials, regardless of format, is the library's most important role. Availability and prompt retrievability of content were seen as key.

Effective change management also requires resource planning, and the use of existing change management frameworks was noted as helpful for structuring these efforts.

3. [Planning a Communication Strategy](#)

Interviewees unanimously recognized the need for a communication strategy and a structured communication plan as essential tools for the success of shared print. The current flow of information across stakeholder groups was seen as inconsistent, leading to misunderstandings and misalignment.

A critical component of building a more effective communication framework is ensuring a common understanding of shared print—its terminology, stakeholders, goals, and landscape.

A few interviewees spoke about the importance of communicating shared print in the context of the library's broader work, as it is one of many aspects of the collection lifecycle management process. Another highlighted the complex intersections throughout the library and its partners, underscoring the importance of not viewing shared print through a narrow lens.

Libraries need to identify the key communication needs of their different stakeholders and provide targeted, focused communication. Maintaining an open dialogue with all stakeholder groups was also noted as important. Communication strategies should also address the practical aspects of shared print, such as the impact on weeding, collection development, and library workflows.

Several interviewees discussed the lack of staff capacity, and the lack of clarity related to the role of communication as challenges in their libraries. They discussed the existing communication tools developed by shared print programs and highlighted the need to increase awareness of these tools instead of recreating similar content elsewhere. The need to leverage the expertise of communication experts and instructional design experts to design effective messaging was noted. Suggestions were also made to combine data with compelling stories to convey the benefits of shared print. Additionally, it was emphasized that it is crucial to be judicious in using communication resources due to the high volume of information stakeholders receive daily.

4. [Evolving Shared Print Landscape](#)

Several interviewees emphasized the importance of transitioning from traditional shared print initiatives to a more integrated approach focused on shared collective collections across our networks. This shift is seen as crucial for establishing a sustainable shared print ecosystem. The ultimate goal of this transition is not only to create a smooth process that fulfills the core purpose of shared print initiatives at a network scale but also to foster vision, growth, and innovation in this landscape.

Suggestions for achieving this goal included integrating shared print work into the library's collection lifecycle management, providing ongoing training, and advancing skill development, coordination, and support systems across partnerships. This approach must be sustained over time to counteract challenges such as staff turnover, lack of capacity, shifting priorities, and lack of awareness or understanding of retention policies.

Identifying factors that contribute to successful, cohesive collaboration and building strong relationships—with existing and new partners like national libraries, vendors, and ISSN authorities—will further support the development of a robust and resilient shared print ecosystem.

By moving towards a more collaborative and holistic strategy, libraries can ensure that their shared print efforts are not just about preservation but also about creating value. This involves collaborating to develop innovative approaches related to scholars' needs and concerns, such as actively increasing the usability and accessibility of these collections.

Conclusion and Next Steps

It is clear from this initial set of interviews that effective communication and change management are crucial for the success of shared print programs in academic libraries. Building trust and relationships, engaging stakeholders in change management, planning strategic communication, and evolving the shared print landscape are all essential components that were further assessed in this project.

The next step was to survey library members of shared print programs on these issues.

Summary of Findings from the Survey

A survey was distributed to the listservs of seven shared print programs—four in Canada and three in the United States—and 121 completed responses were received. Over half of the respondents identified as the official representative or liaison for their library’s shared print program, with primary responsibilities in collection management, governance, and metadata/technical services.

After analyzing the survey data, ten key points were selected to highlight in this report of findings. These points were chosen to represent the main themes of the survey, such as communication practices, change management, roles and responsibilities, challenges, benefits, and engagement with shared print initiatives. The selection includes diverse perspectives from both Canadian and American respondents, covering various types and sizes of institutions. This approach helps to provide a comprehensive overview of the survey’s findings, balancing the discussion of positive outcomes (like collaboration and resource management) with the negative ones (such as resource constraints and communication challenges). The aim is to ensure a well-rounded summary that captures the essence of the survey findings, offering insights into both the successes and challenges faced by libraries in managing shared print initiatives.

Ten Key Points from Survey

1. [Sharing Information about Shared Print with Stakeholders](#)

Overall, communicating about shared print initiatives with stakeholders was seen as highly beneficial. Reported benefits included increased awareness, understanding, collaboration, and trust. For example, it was noted that such communication reassures users about faster and more efficient access to print journal articles and other materials, complementing interlibrary loan services.

However, challenges were also identified, such as information overload, ensuring that messages are read and understood, and managing expectations. Respondents particularly highlighted difficulties in communicating the benefits and procedures of shared print to internal stakeholders, such as subject librarians and library administrators.

Effective information sharing requires clear, concise communication tailored to different stakeholder needs. The survey revealed varied levels of engagement and effectiveness in communication within library teams and with library users, suggesting a gap in actively informing stakeholders about shared print initiatives. Several respondents emphasized the need for ongoing communication and engagement with stakeholders to manage their expectations and mitigate resistance to changes brought about by shared print initiatives.

Survey respondents:

"It reassures patrons and reduces 'book grief' by explaining why certain materials are retained or moved offsite."

"Shared print helps reassure users that the library is committed to preserving important materials and providing access, even if the physical collections are not always on-site."

2. Benefits of Participating in Shared Print Initiatives

The majority of respondents see significant benefits from participating in shared print programs. The commitment to preserving the scholarly record was seen as a fundamental reason for involvement, benefiting future generations and maintaining access to essential research materials. Additionally, enhanced collaboration, access to resources, sustainable collection management, and space savings were commonly mentioned benefits.

Survey respondents:

"We can explain the benefits of shared print to users and administrators, but we have failed to engage those who consider collections a main part of their library work."

"The collaboration aspect is crucial, and it's one of the reasons we continue to participate despite the challenges."

3. Challenges of Participating in Shared Print Initiatives

Sustainability was a major concern, with respondents emphasizing the need for adequate staffing, funding, and technological support to sustain these programs over time. Metadata matching, workflow management, resistance to change and concerns about access to physical collections were also noted.

A recurring theme was the weighing of operational challenges and resource intensity against the perceived benefits of participating in shared print programs. Some respondents questioned whether the tangible outcomes matched the investment required. However, there was a general consensus that continued participation is vital for preserving access to resources and contributing to collective preservation efforts.

Survey respondents:

"[I wish I knew] If it is worth the time and energy it takes to participate"

"I think the biggest challenge is convincing faculty/subject librarians that we don't need to have everything on campus anymore"

"We're concerned about whether we have the capacity to maintain our shared print commitments over the long term."

"We need more evidence of the effectiveness of these programs to justify continued participation."

4. Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders identified as crucial to the success of shared print initiatives included library staff who are directly involved in these projects, as well as those in front-line service positions, such as subject specialist/liaison librarians, reference staff, and circulation staff. Ensuring that front-line staff are equipped with the appropriate messaging and maintaining engagement across various staff levels were noted as significant challenges. Additionally,

Survey respondent:

"It is critical that both internal and external stakeholders begin to understand legacy print content in terms of national stewardship rather than just local. Engaging in and communicating about shared print can help with that."

several respondents highlighted difficulties with library leadership, particularly regarding shifts in their support for shared print initiatives over time.

Effective communication between shared print program staff and member library staff was emphasized as essential. Clear communication paths and consistent messaging were seen as critical to aligning all stakeholders and ensuring broad-based support for shared print initiatives.

5. Internal Stakeholder Communication (Library Staff)

Internal communication was often reported as inconsistent or incomplete, leading to misalignment in managing shared print commitments and hindering effective collaboration. This was highlighted at times in the survey where respondents from the same institution provided differing responses to several survey questions. For example, the questions *'Is shared print noted in your library's collection strategy or collection policy?'* and *'Is shared print embedded in your collection lifecycle management practice?'* elicited both 'Yes' and 'No' responses from respondents at the same institutions.

Many respondents reported a lack of adequate staffing to manage shared print initiatives, leading to overload, delays, and increased risk of errors in project execution. A few expressed uncertainties about whether the benefits of shared print justified the resources required.

Survey respondents:

"We do not have staff that are sufficiently trained or have the capacity to take advantage of these new opportunities - at least not currently."

"Retention commitment decisions become misunderstood and difficult to justify/explain/defend over time"

"We have so much going on at our library and no increase in staffing that adding this project was an overload of duties and it gets lost."

"Due to staff shortages, I do not have anyone who can share the burden of managing shared print initiatives or projects with me."

Key operational challenges noted included the need for better documentation, ongoing training, and streamlined workflows, particularly as technologies evolve. The lack of clearly assigned roles and responsibilities for communication, both within the library and at the program level, was also highlighted.

6. Embedding Shared Print in Library Strategy, Policy, and Practice

Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported that shared print is embedded in at least one aspect of their library's strategy, policy, or collection lifecycle management practice. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that embedding shared print in the library's strategic goals could enhance communication with both internal and external stakeholders, providing a foundation for more coherent and strategic messaging. Embedding shared print was recognized as a key support for collection management and decision-making, particularly in facilitating communication about weeding projects. It was also highlighted as a foundation for demonstrating stewardship and fostering trust and collaboration with stakeholders.

However, there was a high rate of "Not Sure" responses, with some respondents from the same institutions providing different answers, highlighting a communication challenge within the core group of library staff working most closely with shared print at member libraries.

One respondent noted that embedding shared print also requires the library to assess and report on its initiatives. Ongoing communication, training, and integration into workflows were identified as essential for embedding shared print successfully. Challenges included resistance to change, a lack of understanding of shared print benefits, and shared print initiatives not aligned with library goals and priorities.

Survey respondents:

"Shared print needs to be more closely aligned with our institutional goals to be truly effective and sustainable."

"[Embedding shared print] would reinforce the enduring culture of cooperation that characterizes libraries. It would strengthen the collection development policy and, if communicated effectively, could reshape outdated collecting practices."

"[Embedding shared print] reinforces the idea of our local collection as part of larger 'collective collection' that is stable and accessible, and sustainable over the long-term."

7. [Existing Shared Print Communication Tools](#)

Most respondents were either unaware of existing communication tools to support them in their work or had not used them. Reasons included: never having heard of the tools, not remembering the tools at the time of need, or not having the capacity to investigate the tools. Those who were aware of communication tools generally found them useful. Respondents were more likely to be aware of and use tools if they were created by their own shared print program. For example, members of COPPUL SPAN were more familiar with the COPPUL SPAN infographic communication tool than respondents from other shared print programs.

8. [Culture Shift Needed](#)

A significant culture shift is required to change the mindset among stakeholders. To counter the fear and misunderstanding, libraries must have a communication strategy that emphasizes the benefits of shared print, explains how it fits in the context of the overall collection strategy, and addresses concerns about access and preservation. Effective change management and communication strategies are essential to facilitate resistance to change.

Survey respondents:

"We had some resistance from faculty concerned about losing access to unique copies, and the loss of serendipitous discovery by browsing physical shelves"

"[Shared print] gives us a solid rationale to engage in weeding, which is not popular with some faculty (and some librarians). We can say: you are not losing access, and we are managing the collection in a responsible way."

9. Strategic Vision of Shared Print Landscape

Respondents expressed concerns about how well libraries have communicated the alignment of their shared print programs with their institutional goals, particularly in terms of sustainability and long-term planning. One respondent highlighted the importance of having a strategic communications professional on board to help align the library's shared print initiatives with broader strategic goals.

Throughout the open-ended survey comments, respondents shared thoughts related to the strategic vision of shared print. There was a call to develop and communicate a clearer, more cohesive strategy outlining the future trajectory of shared print programs, particularly at the national level, to help libraries better align their efforts and advocate for resources for future cooperative collection development and print retention efforts. This was seen as crucial for effective planning and advocacy within libraries.

Survey respondents:

"Shared print has the potential to transform how libraries manage collections collaboratively."

"Without a clear strategy, it's difficult to see how shared print will continue to be relevant and effective."

"We see the value, but the practical challenges make us question how sustainable this really is, especially with limited resources."

"Shared print is strategically important, but we need more clarity and support to ensure its effectiveness."

"We need more investment and support to keep these programs going and to make sure they are sustainable."

"I wish I had a crystal ball to understand how it will pan out at the national level."

"Is there an overall strategy or goal shared by most of the academic libraries in the US?"

10. Engagement in Shared Print Work

Throughout the survey's open-ended comments, respondents expressed cautious optimism. Despite challenges, the benefits of shared print programs and initiatives were seen as outweighing the difficulties, particularly in the long-term context of library collection management. When asked to self-assess their engagement level, 71% of respondents rated themselves as engaged or very engaged with shared print initiatives.

Respondents expressed hope that shared print initiatives would continue to evolve and improve, particularly as more libraries participate and as the programs become more integrated into library strategies. Many respondents were optimistic about the collaborative nature of shared print programs,

viewing them as essential for preserving access to resources and enabling libraries to work together more effectively.

Conclusion

The survey results underscore the vital role that communication plays in the success of shared print initiatives. Effective communication emerged as a key factor in engaging stakeholders, managing expectations, and overcoming resistance to change. The survey highlighted the challenges libraries face in consistently conveying the benefits and procedures of shared print to both internal and external audiences. Gaps in communication often led to misalignment and confusion, particularly within library teams. Leading to a variety of impacts from the consistency of the shared print workflows, to relationship building with users, to maintaining support from leadership.

The findings suggest that a more strategic approach to communication, tailored to the needs of different stakeholder groups, is essential for fostering understanding and support for shared print initiatives. Additionally, robust change management practices, including ongoing training and clear messaging, are vital for navigating the cultural shift required to fully integrate shared print into library strategies. By prioritizing these aspects, libraries may better position themselves to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving information landscape.

The next step was to organize focus groups with library members of shared print programs to delve further into these issues.

Summary of Findings from the Focus Groups

Introduction

Following the interviews and the survey, a series of focus groups was held in March 2024. A total of 22 library staff members participated, selected from volunteers at member libraries of Canadian shared print programs.

The goal of these focus groups was to build on the preliminary understanding of communication issues identified in earlier stages of data collection and to identify potential strategies and actions for improvement. To achieve this, participants were asked six questions related to the following themes: challenges, key stakeholders, communication paths, communication tools, embedding shared print, and culture change.

Key Themes from Focus Groups

1. The Impact of the Lack of Common Understanding and Awareness About Shared Print

Many participants highlighted that stakeholders often lack a common understanding of the purpose, goals, and strategy of shared print initiatives. This lack of common understanding leads to varying levels of confusion, mistrust, and errors across stakeholder groups—some of which were quite impactful, such as mistakenly weeding items with retention statements.

Communicating the value and benefits of shared print programs, such as improved access and preservation, is essential to gain buy-in from stakeholders. Emphasizing how these programs align with institutional goals can help in securing support.

Identifying and engaging key stakeholders, particularly library staff who work on shared print initiatives and those in front-facing positions (e.g., subject specialists, liaison librarians, circulation staff, interlibrary loan staff), as well as faculty, is crucial. Effective communication with these groups ensures they understand the changes, their impact, and their roles in the process.

Customizing messages for different stakeholders was also mentioned. For example, using specific data and storytelling to address concerns of faculty and other user groups could help in gaining their support and understanding of shared print initiatives.

2. The Impact of the Lack of Common Understanding Among Internal Library Staff

Participants identified that the lack of common understanding among internal library staff significantly hinders communication and the advancement of shared print goals. The internal library staff serves as the conduit of information to external stakeholders such as the users, shared print program staff, and university senior administrators. When staff members do not fully understand shared print, the information shared with these stakeholders can be erroneous or negative.

This issue is exacerbated by staff turnover and a gradual drift from established processes and agreements over time. Maintaining engagement among library staff, particularly those not directly involved in shared print projects, is difficult.

To address these challenges, continuous communication -including training and advocacy - are seen as necessary to maintain commitment to shared print agreements, goals, and its successful future. Training staff to understand and communicate the objectives and processes of shared print programs is very important. Building a team of experts within the library (or shared among some member libraries) who can disseminate information and handle related tasks can help mitigate communication challenges. Training programs can also help counteract the knowledge loss caused by staff turnover, ensuring continuity and consistency in shared print projects.

The importance of collaboration and learning from peers was emphasized. Regular meetings and shared spaces for in person and documentation knowledge-sharing can help build a collective understanding and approach to shared print communication. Ideas such as joint webinars and communities of practice were discussed as opportunities to share experiences.

3. The Need for Communication Strategies and Plans

Participants stressed the importance of proactive communication plans that consistently reinforce the goals and benefits of shared print. The variety of stakeholders and complexity of interactions are a challenge to manage without a roadmap. A communication plan with defined goals, a plan for tailored messages for stakeholders, and assigned roles and responsibilities customized to the library could support more consistent and regular messaging in the specific areas of need.

The idea of creating simple infographic-style communication materials that can be easily understood by various stakeholders was also discussed. These materials should highlight the benefits, participation levels, and strategic importance of shared print initiatives.

Finally, the need for more robust information management was mentioned. Continuously documenting communication efforts and iterating them based on feedback is important and sharing this documentation could benefit other libraries. These written records can ensure transparency and provide reference points for staff who may have missed initial communications.

4. [The Need for Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities Related to Communication at the Shared Print Program Level and at the Member Library Level](#)

Throughout the discussions, the issue of capacity frequently arose, along with the acknowledgment of the need to identify solutions.

Clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for communication within the organization was identified as necessary. It was suggested that libraries should assign the responsibility for shared print communication to specific individuals or teams. This would ensure that communication is consistent, strategic, and reaches all relevant stakeholders. It also includes ensuring that these individuals or teams have the appropriate support, resources, and authority.

5. [The Benefit of Leveraging Existing Tools and Collaborating Across Libraries](#)

Despite the availability of various communication tools and resources, many participants admitted to not using them due to lack of awareness or time constraints. It was suggested that this gap between tool availability and usage needs to be addressed. Libraries and their shared print programs could focus on promoting and utilizing these tools more effectively.

One participant noted that library staff tend to create new tools instead of seeking out existing options. This practice can be time-consuming and inefficient, especially given the frequent feedback about challenges related to staffing capacity.

The importance of collaboration between libraries and shared print programs was emphasized. Participants suggested that highlighting shared understanding and collective benefits could foster a more cooperative approach to shared print initiatives. Ideas like creating opportunities to discuss use cases were also discussed.

6. [The Benefits of Embedding Shared Print in Library Strategy, Policy, and Collection Lifecycle Management Practice at Member Libraries](#)

There was broad agreement on the benefits of embedding shared print into the library's strategy, collection policy, and collection lifecycle management practices. This integration was seen as essential for supporting communication—both in maintaining consistency and efficiency within regular collection workflows and in elevating discussions beyond the library. Participants emphasized that aligning shared print with the library's broader mission enhances clarity in communication with stakeholders.

7. The Need for a Culture Shift Related to the Library Collection and How Shared Print Fits in the Collection Strategy

Participants agreed that a significant cultural shift is needed within libraries, partly to clarify the current state of library collections (including impacts, constraints, and efforts to mitigate these issues) and to shift the focus from owning every item to facilitating access to scholarship. This shift requires changing long-held perceptions among both staff and users about the role of libraries in managing collections.

Identifying and using data to support communication efforts was emphasized, although participants acknowledged that data alone may not be the best approach in all situations. Data analysis showing the impact of shared print, coupled with targeted messages and success stories, can help gain support from stakeholders.

Cultural change can evoke an emotional response, which cannot be addressed solely with data and statistics. This emotional aspect complicates communication and acceptance of shared print initiatives. It is important to acknowledge and address emotional reactions to weeding and material movement. Clear, empathetic communication that explains the rationale and benefits of shared print can help mitigate these emotional responses. This communication should be done well in advance and face-to-face where possible. One participant reminded the group of tools available to support these communication planning needs.

Addressing cultural and structural differences within and between institutions can be challenging. Tailoring communication strategies to account for these differences can improve understanding and cooperation among various library teams and consortia members. Sharing examples of successful shared print initiatives from other institutions was suggested as a useful way to demonstrate success. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration and learning from peers, with regular meetings, webinars, and knowledge-sharing sessions helping to build a collective understanding that supports the necessary culture shift.

Conclusion

These themes underscore the multifaceted challenges and strategies involved in implementing and communicating shared print initiatives in academic libraries. As libraries continue to evolve, addressing these communication and cultural challenges will be essential for the successful integration and sustainability of shared print programs.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The findings of this project underscore that effective communication is essential for the success and sustainability of shared print initiatives in academic libraries. Despite notable progress in the development of shared print programs, significant challenges remain in conveying the purpose and benefits of these initiatives to a range of stakeholders, both internal and external. Obstacles such as gaps in communication pathways, a lack of common understanding, and resistance to change—particularly regarding weeding and the shift from ownership to access—continue to hinder broader adoption.

Insights gathered from interviews, surveys, and focus groups highlight the importance of building trust, engaging stakeholders, and developing a clear communication strategy that addresses both the informational and emotional needs of stakeholders. Libraries must prioritize consistent, transparent communication tailored to different stakeholder groups to ensure alignment with shared print objectives.

Moreover, the evolution of shared print must continue to be communicated with a focus on its sustainability, the collective value it offers, and the long-term vision for library collections. By addressing these communication challenges, libraries can strengthen their shared print efforts, foster collaboration, and better position themselves to navigate future challenges in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing information landscape.

[Next Steps: Building on this Initial Report and Enhancing Communication in Library Shared Print Programs](#)

To turn these findings into actionable steps, the following initiatives will be pursued.

1. Member-Level Action: Develop a Use Case

A case study approach will be implemented at the University of Ottawa Library, a member of the Keep@Downsview shared print program. Using insights from this report, the library will draft a foundational communication plan to enhance their shared print messaging.

During the process of the interviews, surveys, and focus groups, participants shared a variety of suggestions for action steps that could be taken to improve their communication related to shared print initiatives and goals. In Appendix B, these suggestions are listed under 5 key elements which were consistently emphasized throughout the investigation:

- The need for a comprehensive and clear communication strategy and plan
- The need for a common understanding of shared print and its goals
- The need to shift the mind set of our stakeholders
- The need to integrate shared print more deeply within library strategy and operations
- The need to continue to evolve shared print efforts to meet stakeholder and institutional needs

This information will be used to guide our work.

2. Program-Level Action: Strengthen Communication Between Member Library and Program

At the program level, Keep@Downsview will focus on strengthening communication between member libraries and the shared print program by expanding its communication framework. This will include tailored messaging for different audiences, such as advocacy-focused communication for library directors, detailed strategic updates for collection and metadata subcommittees, and practical guidance for front-line staff who interact directly with library users. Rather than creating new materials from scratch, the assessment will be whether existing communication tools and templates can be identified and adapted, making only the necessary modifications to align them with the program's objectives.

3. National Collaboration: Advance Shared Print Across Canada

A strong national collaboration is essential to advancing shared print initiatives across Canada and ensuring a shared understanding of their goals, challenges, and opportunities. To foster this alignment, we will work with North/Nord to organize a national webinar that brings together stakeholders from across the country. This event will serve as a platform to explore the current state of shared print in Canada, providing both historical context and an overview of the evolving landscape.

4. Ongoing Communication and Training: Ensure Long-Term Engagement

Sustained communication is critical for initiating, driving, and maintaining progress. For the above actions, the focus will be on developing communication strategies that are:

- Sustainable and Repeatable
- Collaborative and Actionable

Working with programs and partners, further ideas to develop and test engagement initiatives include:

- An annual "Shared Print 101" session for library staff new to shared print roles.
- A mentorship program for new staff and/or new program members.
- Working sessions with shared print program directors and member liaisons to strategize message dissemination.
- Listening sessions to address communication challenges and identify solutions.
- A series on assessing communication effectiveness within institutions.
- Identifying existing groups (communities of practice, shared print program committees, etc.) where this information about communication strategies in shared print can be shared.

There is no single solution to improving communication within shared print programs. However, by leveraging collaboration, sharing best practices, and developing sustainable strategies, we can enhance communication effectiveness, create actionable solutions, and support each other in this critical work.

“...[T]he way that I think about this is that we're part of a network of people who care a lot about print and about print preservation. And this is ultimately a project to ensure that this intellectual output is available for as long as possible, and a byproduct of that is that universities can be more confident when they're considering weeding parts of their collection. But the message is a really hopeful one, which is saying that previously libraries would go off and make decisions without necessarily considering the whole. And now we're in a position to work together and consider everybody and do this in a coordinated way, and it's ultimately a really happy message and I think sometimes when you dwell on the weeding, I think that disappears. But you know, there's better coordination now than there ever has been, and we're better equipped technologically to do this than we ever have been. So, I'm actually really hopeful about shared print.”

--Focus Group participant

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Appendix A: Introduction to Shared Print - Resources*

* This list of resources is not inclusive.

- Partnership for Shared Book Collections:
 - [Shared Print Toolkit](#)
 - [Shared Print 101 for New Program Officers](#)
 - [What is Shared Print? \(recording\)](#)
 - [Best Practice for Education and Awareness](#)
 - [Best Practices for Community and Trust Building](#)
- [Weeding Communications in the Collections Lifecycle](#)
- COPPUL SPAN:
 - infographics for [decision-makers](#) and for [library staff](#)
- EAST Project Team:
 - [Onboarding New Staff at EAST Member Institutions](#)
 - [The Value of EAST](#)
- [How Shared Print Aligns with Institutional Values](#) - infographic
- [Print Archive Network Forum \(PAN\)](#)

Appendix B: Participant Insights on Enhancing Shared Print Communication

This section outlines the action steps gathered from the interviews, surveys, and focus groups, with a focus on the participants' suggestions for improving communication about shared print initiatives within member libraries. Although some of the suggested actions reflect existing tools and practices, the fact that many stakeholders remain unaware of these resources raises important questions about why this communication gap persists.

As highlighted in the Findings section, there is widespread recognition of the important role that effective communication plays in the success of shared print initiatives. Key elements consistently emphasized throughout the investigation include:

- The need for a comprehensive and clear communication strategy and plan
- The need for a common understanding of shared print and its goals
- The need to shift the mind set of our stakeholders and the benefit of using a change management approach
- The need to integrate shared print more deeply within library strategy and operations
- The need to continue to evolve shared print efforts to meet stakeholder and institutional needs

The insights presented here are not formal recommendations but are intended as starting points for further discussion and consideration of potential next steps. The applicability of these ideas will vary depending on the specific circumstances of each library or shared print program. While efforts were made to minimize duplication, some comments overlap across multiple sections, reflecting the significant intersections between these areas.

A. Develop a Communication Strategy and Plan

Effective communication must be integral to resource planning for shared print initiatives. A comprehensive communication strategy should prioritize building awareness and ensuring that all stakeholders, both internal and external, understand and support these initiatives. This strategy ensures a cohesive and consistent approach to engaging stakeholders.

1-Define the Communication Goal

The foundational step in any communication effort is the clear definition of its goal. This step sets the direction for all subsequent actions, ensuring that communications are aligned with the broader objectives of shared print initiatives.

Participant feedback:

- *Develop a comprehensive, multifaceted approach that addresses both the internal and external dynamics of the institution.*

- *Clarify the scope of communication. This helps set expectations for what information will be shared, with whom, and how frequently. This clarity prevents confusion and ensures that all stakeholders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities within the initiative.*
- *Assess communication needs, differentiating between general communication—such as ongoing updates to maintain visibility—and targeted communication for specific projects or challenges, such as weeding initiatives or changes to retention statement workflow procedure.*
- *Tailor communication strategies to account for differences in needs based on the size, location, and type of library involved.*
- *Collaborate with member libraries to develop shared print communication plans that are holistic, focusing on internal coordination and external outreach.*

2-Develop a Common Understanding

Developing a shared understanding among stakeholders is critical to the success of shared print efforts. A weak foundational understanding, coupled with a lack of awareness and trust, can significantly hinder progress. Achieving a common understanding may require a reset at both the member library level and among shared print program partners.

i. Improve Internal Communication with Library Staff

To address communication challenges and ensure a clear understanding of shared print initiatives among all library staff, the following actions are suggested.

Participant feedback:

- *Ensure that all staff understand the rationale behind shared print initiatives, including the allocation of time and resources to these efforts.*
- *The objective is not perfection, but rather sustainable progress and successful implementation.*
- *Strengthen internal messaging to foster collaboration and understanding among all stakeholders. This includes enabling subject specialists, liaison librarians, and front-line staff to better grasp collection management principles and strategic directions, empowering them to effectively communicate these concepts to others.*
- *Establish open communication channels where challenges can be identified and discussed, particularly with stakeholders closest to the work, as they are most affected by potential negative impacts.*
- *Provide clear explanations of how shared print initiatives operate and how they can serve as valuable tools in collection development.*
- *Facilitate open discussions about internal challenges, such as possible resistance or future collection strategies, to promote a more cohesive approach to shared print efforts.*
- *Align all staff towards the same strategic goals for shared print initiatives by encouraging collaboration and shared understanding at all levels.*
- *Create a team with diverse expertise (cataloguing, public service) to help build shared print knowledge.*
- *Foster collaboration despite the constant demands on time, emphasizing proactive communication efforts to prevent problems.*

ii. *Provide Context: Clarifying Shared Print and Its Role in Library Collections*

While it is important to teach the fundamentals of shared print, it should be done within the broader context of the library's entire collection.

Participant feedback:

- *Provide a comprehensive update on the components, approaches, and constraints of library collections and the role of shared print within it.*
- *Reinforce the notion that the library's collection is part of a broader, interconnected network, with shared print as one key element.*
- *Define what users need to know and what constitutes responsible collection management practices.*
- *Emphasize that shared print is an integral part of the library's collection lifecycle, rather than an isolated function.*
- *Address the lack of clarity around shared print and its relationship with other library functions—such as copyright, open access, open science, and research data management. It is necessary to contextualize shared print within the broader collection work and highlight its intersections with other library priorities.*
- *Ensure users understand the library collection; specifically, what to do to have their needs met. Ensure everyone is aware of what we have and how to access/discover it (message regularly as it has to get to user at the right moment of need to be heard).*

iii. *Clarify the Nomenclature*

To enhance understanding, there is a need for clearer language and vocabulary that effectively communicates these concepts to all stakeholder groups.

Participant feedback:

- *Address the gap in understanding due to the terminology. The term "shared print" is not widely understood by stakeholders.*
- *Ensure consistency in terminology –multiple options have been suggested, but consistency is essential to ensure clarity in discussions within libraries, with shared print program partners, and across shared print programs.*

iv. *Build a Basic Level of Awareness*

Effectively communicating the benefits and value proposition of shared print initiatives to various audiences—staff, users, and administration—is essential.

Participant feedback:

- *Define how the library ascribes value and ensure that this value is communicated effectively to all stakeholders.*
- *Provide a clear understanding of the benefits and impact of shared print initiatives which can support stakeholder buy-in.*
- *Determine and then convey the elements of the value proposition that are most relevant to your stakeholders.*

- *Acknowledge the need for culture change within libraries to fully integrate shared print initiatives.*
- *Acknowledge the emotional attachment to physical collections and address the concerns of both library staff and users. Building a collective understanding of the benefits of shared print initiatives requires recognizing the significant transition involved and its impact on various stakeholders.*
- *Ensure that communication flows through all stakeholder groups to promote alignment and understanding.*
- *Go beyond simply transmitting information. Create communication pieces that actively foster understanding and promote collaboration, get people to care about the work involved in shared print initiatives.*
- *Each member library should determine which aspects of shared print to prioritize in their communications, based on the specific needs and interests of their audience.*
- *Clearly communicate the specifics of shared print agreements as needed for each stakeholder group, with tailored messages for projects such as weeding initiatives.*
- *Highlight that collaboration enables collective achievements far greater than what individual institutions can accomplish alone. Shift the focus from the individual institution to the network level, explaining how content access is enhanced, how shared print differs from interlibrary loan (ILL), and the associated constraints.*
- *Identify key data and statistics as talking points to show the tangible value of shared print.*

3-Define Responsibility for Communication

A key aspect of communication is the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities. This ensures that each stakeholder group understands their role in both disseminating and receiving information, promoting accountability and clarity within the communication process.

Participant feedback:

- *Clarify who is responsible for various communication tasks in order to enhance accountability and prevent misunderstandings.*
- *Coordinate the flow of information from various shared print programs to ensure consistency and clarity. Identify the institutional contact responsible for the library's shared print program(s) and clearly define their responsibilities in managing and disseminating the information they receive. This will help ensure that communications reach all relevant stakeholders within the library.*
- *Identify champions to keep communication efforts on track, including individuals closely involved in shared print initiatives and those with the authority to manage communication at both the library management and shared print program levels. This dual approach ensures that communication is grounded in practical realities and guided by strategic oversight.*
- *Train library leaders and decision-makers to be advocates for shared print and library collections more broadly. However, before they can effectively champion these initiatives, they need a thorough understanding of the shared print landscape and key messages.*
- *Ensure library staff play a central role in driving communication efforts and building strong relationships within the library and with external partners as they are most familiar with the*

intricacies of shared print work and are best positioned to convey its importance to other stakeholders. The communication plan should also consider the use of peer-to-peer communication, which is often the most effective way of sharing information among librarians. Peer-to-peer communication can foster a sense of collaboration and mutual understanding.

- *Allocate sufficient staff and resources to manage shared print effectively, preventing compromised communication or implementation due to workload challenges.*

4-Develop a Communication Plan

Creating a structured communication plan for shared print initiatives within academic libraries is essential to keeping all stakeholders informed, engaged, and aligned with the initiative's objectives. The communication plan should build upon the components outlined in the common understanding section (above A-2-iv, which included steps such as improving internal communication, providing context, defining nomenclature, and building basic awareness), with sustaining actions such as maintaining engagement and training new stakeholders.

i. *Build Awareness and Maintain Engagement*

Sustained awareness and engagement are vital to the success and long-term sustainability of shared print initiatives. This approach emphasizes the importance of trust, consistent communication, and tailored messages that resonate with various stakeholder groups. Trust is fundamental in shared print initiatives, where collaboration is essential.

Participant feedback:

- *Build collective interest at the appropriate level for each stakeholder.*
- *Consistently reinforce the importance of shared print through various communication channels to solidify its role within the institution.*
- *Highlight the collaborative nature of shared print work and how these efforts enable the library to achieve more collectively than it could individually.*
- *Develop a common language and understanding across all levels to ensure messages are consistent and adaptable to evolving circumstances.*
- *Create a plan for continuous engagement with faculty, staff, and other stakeholders to maintain interest and support for shared print initiatives.*
- *Ensure everyone is aware of what we have and how to access/discover it (message regularly as it has to move at the right moment of need to be heard)*
- *Connect stakeholders to the broader context by using examples such as Lorcan Dempsey's "collection as a service" concept to convey the messages about the collection and shared print.*
- *Encourage participation in working groups, such as shared print and shared print program working groups, to foster active involvement in decision-making processes.*
- *Acknowledge and address concerns regarding the management of physical collections.*
- *Clarify the rationale ("demystify decisions") behind collection management practices, such as weeding, to reduce anxiety and build trust among stakeholders.*
- *Ensure transparency by clearly communicating decision-making criteria and who is involved in making final decisions.*

- *Stakeholder engagement should go beyond information dissemination. Foster understanding and promote collaboration by engaging senior library executives, frontline staff, and shared print colleagues in joint discussions. Listening to stakeholders and providing feedback mechanisms are essential for building trust.*
- *Trust is particularly crucial when collaborating across institutions or departments within the library, as perceptions of shared print initiatives can vary. To sustain engagement, ensure efforts are not seen as token gestures but are reinforced by consistent, transparent, and ongoing communication, demonstrating genuine commitment and accountability.*
- *Create specific support arguments. For example, a solid and engagement piece for staff who have to explain the library's shared print budget to library administrators.*

ii. *Address Emotional Responses and Misconceptions*

Addressing emotional responses and misconceptions is equally important in maintaining engagement. Resistance or anxiety may arise in response to significant changes in the management of physical collections. These concerns must be addressed through clear and empathetic communication, ensuring stakeholders understand the benefits of shared print initiatives. (See *Section B -Shift the Mindset* for more information)

Participant feedback:

- *Acknowledge the emotions while clearly explaining the constraints and rationale behind decisions to help manage expectations and reduce resistance.*
- *Collaborate with a communication specialist to develop a strategy that specifically addresses emotional responses, which can prevent misunderstandings and foster a more supportive environment for shared print initiatives.*

iii. *Develop a Consistent and Celebratory Communication Plan*

Using optimistic, celebratory messaging can help highlight the successes and potential of shared print initiatives. Shifting the tone of communication to emphasize achievements and future possibilities can foster a more positive reception among stakeholders.

Participant feedback:

- *Share stories and examples from successful shared print initiatives within your program or others to inspire confidence and demonstrate the tangible benefits of collaboration.*
- *Make it easier for stakeholders to support these initiatives by sharing celebratory messaging which can help counteract negative perceptions or anxieties associated with shared print work.*
- *Highlight achievements through infographics, case studies, and success stories to help stakeholders recognize the tangible value of shared print work, further strengthening their commitment to the program.*
- *Tell the right story, it's more comforting (& let the old story go).*
- *Avoid getting in the weeds when explaining shared print.*
- *Use the tools already available from the Partnership for Shared Book Collections as a base for the communication plan.*
- *Provide communication plan information to members in a way that members can share/use easily.*

- *Get support from communication experts. Use communication experts to review education and awareness plans and prioritize information by streamlining communication to focus on essential details. This will help prevent stakeholders from becoming overwhelmed. This approach ensures that the most important information is highlighted and that stakeholders are not bombarded with excessive data, which can lead to disengagement.*
- *While advocacy may not be the first priority, it is important to gradually incorporate it into the communication strategy. Identify who should be advocating what message to which stakeholder. Teach the advocates how to advocate successfully and provide speaking points (e.g., elevator pitch).*
- *Highlight collaborative achievements and reinforce the message that working together allows the library to accomplish more than it could independently to help build a strong, cohesive communication strategy that aligns with the library's overall goals.*
- *Establish clear conduits of information to ensure that the right information reaches the right people at the right time.*

5-Tailor Communication to Stakeholders

Communication strategies must be customized for different stakeholder groups, including faculty, library staff, and external partners, to ensure that messages are relevant and resonate with each group's concerns and interests.

Participant feedback:

- *Identify stakeholder groups and prioritize them based on their level of involvement and influence in shared print initiatives.*
- *Develop messages for specific stakeholders and adjust as needed. For instance, explaining how content access is improved through shared print initiatives or how these efforts differ from traditional interlibrary loan (ILL) services can help faculty and students see the value. Stories and messages that resonate with groups like liaisons, front-line staff, or subject librarians are essential for fostering a deeper understanding and commitment to shared print work. Combining data with stories can enhance the effectiveness of communication. Decide who is best suited to deliver these messages for maximum impact.*
- *Create specific messages for staff involved in weeding or moving collections to help them understand the purpose and benefits of these actions.*
- *Explain alternative access methods to faculty and end-users to alleviate concerns about the impact of shared print initiatives on access to resources.*
- *Consistently communicate project status changes and goals to keep all parties aligned with the objectives of the shared print initiative.*
- *Ensure that communication is regular and targeted to maintain stakeholder engagement. Regular updates help keep stakeholders informed and reduce misunderstandings or misinformation.*
- *Ensure that the library staff responsible for creating and sharing messages are fully engaged in the shared print initiatives.*
- *Provide clear and accessible communication. Library staff who represent shared print programs must remember that while they may have a deep understanding of the initiatives, their colleagues may not.*

- *Identify champions to keep communication efforts on track is key to sustaining momentum, with champions including both internal figures close to the work and external figures who manage communication at a higher level.*
- *Explain the actions and messages used to bridge communication gaps to ensure everyone understands the library's direction related to shared print initiatives. These steps may vary depending on the needs and circumstances of each library.*
- *Focus on Library staff who are often the stakeholder group most in need of awareness and information support regarding shared print initiatives. Those closest to the work may struggle with understanding why certain actions are taken, causing friction. Addressing this through clear communication is essential.*
- *Get challenging internal stakeholders on board, especially those who may have misperceptions about the initiative. Helping liaisons and front-line staff better understand collection principles and strategic directions will empower them to communicate more effectively with users and other stakeholders.*
- *Use peer-to-peer communication which is often more effective than top-down approaches. Identify who needs to be kept informed without overwhelming them with unnecessary information to maintain positive engagement.*
- *Gain and sustain commitment at the leadership level for the success of shared print initiatives. This may involve convincing the library of the need for funding, especially in a climate where skepticism about the relevance of print collections exists.*
- *Collect and analyze data tailored to specific audiences to demonstrate the impact of shared print initiatives effectively. Customize messages to target specific audiences, such as providing relevant data for departments like Classics.*
- *Improve inter-institutional communication to ensure that all partners are aligned and working toward the same goals.*
- *Identify gaps in communication and address misconceptions, such as the belief that collaborative collecting means not purchasing items already acquired by peer institutions. Align expectations to foster a more collaborative environment.*
- *Use communication techniques to bridge identified gaps between stakeholders, ensuring a consistent flow of information.*

6-Develop Feedback Mechanisms

A comprehensive communication plan must incorporate well-designed feedback mechanisms. These mechanisms provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of communication efforts and foster a culture of transparency and continuous improvement. Regular feedback can help refine strategies and ensure that communication remains responsive to stakeholder needs.

Participant feedback:

- *Actively seek feedback and use it to make adjustments in order to ensure that communication efforts remain relevant and effective. This iterative process not only enhances communication but also builds trust with stakeholders, as they see that their input is valued and acted upon.*
- *Establish clear and transparent channels for stakeholders to provide input.*

- *Make feedback opportunities easily accessible and provide a straightforward way for stakeholders to follow up if they have additional questions or concerns. For instance, having a designated contact person within the library who is responsible for receiving and responding to feedback can make the process more personal and effective. This individual should be well-informed about the shared print initiatives and capable of addressing stakeholder inquiries promptly.*
- *Assess which feedback methods work best with different stakeholders, whether it's email, in-person meetings, or online forums. Choosing the right method can significantly impact the quality and quantity of feedback received.*
- *Feedback should be viewed as a tool for continuous improvement. Systematically analyze and use feedback collected to make tangible improvements to the shared print initiatives. This process not only helps refine the initiatives but also demonstrates to stakeholders that their input is valued and acted upon.*
- *Ensure feedback mechanisms are most effective by having ongoing and iterative processes; rather than relying on one-off feedback sessions, regular check-ins should be scheduled to ensure that the feedback loop is continuous and responsive.*
- *Remind stakeholders periodically about the existence of these feedback mechanisms to encourage their use.*
- *Actively seek out feedback from those who have not responded, using different methods or follow-up reminders to ensure their voices are heard. This proactive approach can prevent misunderstandings and ensure that all relevant perspectives are considered before making decisions.*

7-Develop and Promote Tools, Training Materials, and Information Management

To enhance the effectiveness of shared print initiatives, it is essential to develop and promote tools, training materials, and information management systems collaboratively. By building on existing work and leveraging proven resources, libraries can streamline communication, support staff, and foster stakeholder engagement.

i. Promote Tools

Optimizing communication for shared print work begins with the effective use of existing tools and ensuring that staff are well-trained in their use (See *Appendix A* for examples). These tools streamline communication, enhance stakeholder engagement, and ensure that initiatives are understood and supported.

Participant feedback:

- *Prevent unnecessary duplication of effort and leverage tools that have already proven effective.*
- *Provide practical, purpose-driven tools that offer concrete examples and case studies of successful communication strategies. This includes offering draft communications or sample messages tailored to different stakeholder groups to save time and ensure impactful communication.*
- *Ensure staff are aware of available tools and understand how to use them effectively.*
- *Assess the impact of these tools and make improvements to keep them relevant as the needs of the library evolve. Plan regular touchstone meetings to revisit and update tools, venues such as Communities of Practice (CoP) and webinars could be used.*

- *Create joint webinars with shared print program member libraries to share best practices, showcase successes, and foster a sense of community among participants. These webinars not only educate but also promote collaboration.*
- *Provide simple infographic-style communication materials to convey complex information in an accessible and visually engaging way.*
- *Ensure tools being created are meeting an identified need and that a dissemination and training plan exists to ensure the tool is used.*
- *Ensure on-going communication about tools and other supports. This could include webinars or blog posts of libraries experiences using the tools.*

ii. *Develop Training Materials*

Training plays a necessary role in preventing process drift and mitigating incomplete or inconsistent internal communications. Ensuring that staff at all levels are properly trained in shared print tools and processes is essential for maintaining effective communication.

Participant feedback:

- *Identify the necessary skill set needed.*
- *Organize ongoing training, which is essential to maximize effectiveness of the tools.*
- *Create and implement mandatory ongoing training to prevent established processes from being forgotten and to manage staff turnover effectively, maintaining the effectiveness of shared print initiatives.*
- *Encourage cross-functional collaboration to develop a common understanding of shared print across the library. For example, creating and providing ongoing training regarding retention statements can be part of this collaborative effort.*
- *For any new support tool, document, or plan developed by the shared print program, create a corresponding communication plan to ensure the information is widely disseminated. This plan should include ongoing training as new people are hired in member organizations to keep everyone informed.*

iii. *Develop an Information Management System*

An efficient information management system that preserves and facilitates the reuse of communication materials is essential for the long-term sustainability of shared print initiatives.

Participant feedback:

- *Create a repository for training materials, project documentation, and communication templates, enabling member libraries and shared print programs to maintain continuity and consistency in their communication efforts over time.*

8-Engage in Assessment

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of communication efforts are critical to ensure their effectiveness and alignment with shared print goals.

Participant feedback:

- *Conduct regular assessments using tools such as surveys, focus groups, or direct interviews, to gauge stakeholder understanding and satisfaction with the communication they receive. These evaluations help identify areas of success and areas in need of improvement, ensuring that communication strategies are continually refined.*
- *Shared print programs could conduct a needs assessment of member libraries to determine their requirements, awareness, and expectations regarding shared print.*
- *Explore the use of AI for data analysis to further enhance data-driven communication strategies.*

B. Shift the Mindset: Build Trust and Manage Change

Shifting the organizational mindset around shared print management is a fundamental challenge that requires careful management of both informational and emotional aspects. Effective communication is key to successfully managing this cultural shift within libraries.

Participant feedback:

- *Reframe the narrative around shared print to emphasize collective management of collections, moving beyond the institutional level. Highlight the benefits of collaboration and resource sharing, ensuring the message is framed in a way that resonates with stakeholders and provides reassurance.*
- *Develop a communication strategy that bridges informational gaps and allows project participants to share experiences and updates.*
- *Define the message about the culture shift. Ensure that the narrative focuses on the positive aspects of shared print using stories and examples relevant to different stakeholder groups. This will help build collective interest and support for shared print initiatives.*
- *Incorporate shared print into collection lifecycle management conversations, emphasizing the preservation of scholarship through both shared print and digitization programs.*
- *Promote the notion that the library will continue to provide access to needed materials regardless of the source. Break through the myth that libraries don't care.*
- *Use positive language such as "collective ownership" or "book heaven" to frame shared print initiatives.*
- *Clearly communicate which collections will be retained onsite and why, providing stakeholders with an understanding of the value and rationale behind these decisions. This transparency will help address concerns about the preservation of physical collections.*
- *Acknowledge the emotional attachment to physical collections and address the concerns of both library staff and users. Building a collective understanding of the benefits of shared print initiatives requires recognizing the significant transition involved and its impact on various stakeholders.*
- *Build interest and trust by crafting the right message for each stakeholder group. Ensure that the "What's in it for me?" (WIIFM) question is addressed to demonstrate the personal and professional benefits of supporting shared print. Consider creating a WIIFM table to outline these benefits clearly.*
- *Encourage staff, particularly liaison librarians, to participate in discussions about internal resistance and focus on the future of collections to align with current and future student needs.*
- *Prioritize face-to-face communication at the department level to build relationships and trust.*

- *Build confidence in decision-making processes, especially when encountering resistance from small groups of faculty members. Decisions should prioritize the greater good, and libraries must determine how to handle stakeholders who do not fully support the initiative.*
- *Ensure decision-making processes are transparent and inclusive. Share decision-making criteria with stakeholders, involve multiple levels in the decision process, and communicate openly about who makes final decisions. Make decision information accessible and ensure ongoing communication about both shared print and overall collection strategies.*
- *Engage faculty and subject librarians in the decision-making process to promote their involvement and buy-in. Effective communication should be clear and emphasize the library's role in preservation and safeguarding scholarship.*
- *Foster trust among stakeholders by addressing confusion promptly, engaging in relationship-building activities, and using change management frameworks to guide the transition. Trust is critical to managing the cultural shift from ownership to access.*
- *Address the lack of trust by deliberately involving diverse stakeholders, including senior library executives, faculty, and subject specialists/liaison librarians, in the communication process.*
- *Foster trust through the use of formal agreements, regular check-ins, and ongoing assessments, which promote accountability and transparency.*
- *Use peer-to-peer communication to ensure that staff fully understand the changes, rather than relying solely on senior administrators to deliver messages. Peer communication is often more effective in building understanding and support.*
- *Recognize that different stakeholder groups are at varying stages of readiness for change. A change management plan using a known process or method should be developed to balance these differences and facilitate progress at the network level.*
- *Promote shared print across the library system by encouraging leaders to shift from being mere messengers to becoming advocates for shared print. This cultural shift will be essential to fostering long-term support for shared print initiatives.*
- *Recognize that shared print is not only a technical or operational shift but also a cultural one. Libraries need to be proactive in managing the emotional and psychological impacts on staff and users, ensuring that everyone understands the long-term benefits of transitioning from a model of ownership to one of access. Seek communication expertise to support designing appropriate communication strategies.*
- *Socialize the concept of shared print throughout the library system by embedding it into daily operations and decision-making processes. This should include regular discussions within teams to reinforce the role and value of shared print in long-term collection strategies.*
- *Manage expectations and address the inherent challenges of change.*
- *Engage faculty and staff in these discussions and provide them with the information they need to understand the broader context will help manage expectations and mitigate resistance to change.*
- *Address resistance related to workload. Staff have to care deeply and be given capacity for success.*
- *Prove that we do understand user needs related to the collection, to gain credibility and trust.*
- *Understand and address the concerns of different groups—whether they be about the changing role of physical collections, the shifting responsibilities of staff, or the perceived impact on research – to foster a positive reception of shared print initiatives.*
- *Address the discomfort with weeding.*

C. Embed Shared Print in the Library's Strategy, Collection Policy, and Collection Lifecycle Management Practice

The integration of shared print initiatives into the overall library strategy, collection policy, and collection lifecycle management practice is essential for sustaining these core efforts and ensuring adoption and resource allocation.

Participant feedback:

- *Embed shared print initiatives into the library's overall strategy, ensuring they are seen as integral to the library's mission.*
- *Make shared print a core component of library operations.*
- *Promote a culture of shared stewardship, reinforcing the idea of the local collection as part of larger collaborative collection that is stable, accessible, and sustainable over the long-term.*
- *Anchor unit and library staff members' annual objectives in shared print work.*
- *Manage stakeholder expectations and perceptions, particularly regarding weeding and retention commitments, by integrating shared print into library operations.*
- *Maximize resource efficiency and strengthen the shared print infrastructure through embedding initiatives.*
- *Allows for projects to be considered within the institutions project management framework, ensuring that resources are allocated.*
- *Allows the library to build its capacity by developing necessary skills and team capabilities and by identifying appropriate data points to fully support shared print initiatives.*

Participant insights on the impact of embedding shared print related to stakeholder communication:

- *Clarifies the importance and value of shared print to stakeholders.*
- *Builds trust in the initiative.*
- *Highlights the library's commitment.*
- *Increases visibility, awareness, and support.*
- *Facilitates informed decisions about collection maintenance and clear communication to stakeholders.*
- *Improves engagement.*
- *Provides opportunity to develop tailored communication strategies for stakeholders with strong attachments to print collections.*
- *Emphasizes shared stewardship and collective efforts in managing print collections.*
- *Allows for reporting of shared print work in reports to stakeholders, such as annual reports or budget reports to the institution's senior management.*
- *Provides opportunity to address the disconnect between administration and staff responsible for implementing shared print programs, particularly regarding the significant staff time required.*

D. Communicate the Continued Evolution and Sustainability of Shared Print

The consultations generated a significant number of comments about the sustainability and development of the shared print landscape. The central communication question was: What should be communicated to stakeholders about the future and sustainability of shared print efforts?

Participant feedback:

- *Confirm the sustainability of shared print in order to make a pitch for resourcing.*
- *Develop a clear vision and goals that align both within individual libraries and across shared print programs to advance the shared print landscape.*
- *Focus on creating value of the preserved collections, fostering innovation (particularly focused on scholars' concerns), and establishing a sustainable ecosystem for shared print.*
- *Grow partnerships, maintain strong relationships, and recognize the potential of skilled teams to achieve more ambitious goals in the realm of shared print.*
- *Rethink the organization of shared print programs at a national or multi-institutional level to overcome existing challenges.*