

Preprint

Title: The Growth of Shared Print as Seen Through the EAST Lens

Authors: Susan Stearns, Program Director, Eastern Academic Scholars Trust; Sara Amato, Program Manager, Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust

Abstract: Using the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST) shared print program as the focus, the authors, both of whom are members of the EAST Program Team, discuss the changes that EAST has experienced in the last few years. This includes significant growth of the membership of EAST, particularly with the addition of large library consortia; advances in the software tools that support shared print; the broadening and deepening of collaboration across shared print programs; and the opportunities that exist for further research in support of preserving and providing access to the print scholarly and cultural record.

Text:

In 2022, *College and Research Libraries News* named shared print a “top trend” in academic and research libraries noting that “by creating a collaborative collection which elevates the concept of a library collection to scale above a single institution, shared print programs help research libraries to fulfill their mission to preserve the scholarly record in an era of changing usage, limited funding, and space constraints”¹. That same year, the Eastern Academic Scholars' Trust (EAST) shared print program saw significant growth in its membership, particularly among academic library consortia. By 2023, EAST, which began life in 2015/2016 with an initial cohort of 40 individual academic and research libraries, had grown to over 150 members, many of whom are also members of regional library consortia such as the VIVA and PASCAL consortia in Virginia and South Carolina respectively.

This journal and many others in the academic and research library community have commented on the drivers that have seen shared print become one of the strategies used to manage local print collections as funding for print continues to decrease, library space continues to be repurposed to serve a myriad of needs, and the use of print collections continues to shrink in the digital age. And, while those attributes of the ecosystem in which shared print programs exist have evolved, other developments and pressures have contributed to this growth.

This article focuses on the evolution of shared print from 2019 – 2023 by focusing on the work of EAST and the ways in which its growth as a shared print program reflects trends which may drive shared print in the future. (Note: While EAST retains both monograph and journal titles, our focus will be on the work in support of monograph retention.) We will discuss changes in the technology and infrastructure that serve shared print programs and their member libraries, the growth of collaboration at the national and continental arenas, growing interest in research relating to shared print, new initiatives being undertaken to support the value of shared print within member libraries, and the focus on increasing the diversity and inclusivity of shared print. While our focus and examples will be specific to EAST, its membership, strategy, and operations, we believe much of this focus and many of these examples apply to shared print more generally and can, we hope, better inform how best to continue to allow shared print to flourish as it provides value to individual and consortia members as well as to the community at large.

The Tools and Infrastructure of Shared Print

Most shared print programs, at least in the U.S. and Canada, utilize some form of collection analysis as part of the selection process to determine which titles should be retained to ensure long-term access. This is particularly true for monograph-based shared print programs where the candidates for retention typically number in the hundreds of thousands or millions. In the early days of monograph shared print programs, which for the most part came after serials and journal initiatives, there were few tools available to support this collection analysis work at scale.

The first comprehensive collection analysis tool, and one which continues to support shared print today, was GreenGlass^{®2}, originally developed by Sustainable Collection Services and acquired by OCLC[®] in 2015. Beginning in 2012/2013, both the Maine Shared Collections Cooperative (MSCC) and the Central Iowa Collaborative Collections Initiative (Ci-CCI) began using GreenGlass to compare the individual libraries' collections as well as understand their collective holdings in comparison to OCLC WorldCat[®].

EAST, a fiscally sponsored program of the Boston Library Consortium (BLC) at the time, contracted with GreenGlass to undertake the analysis for the Cohort 1 libraries in 2015/2016 and continues to work with GreenGlass today. The software provides not only robust analytic capabilities that are geared to shared print, but also offers individual libraries the ability to better understand and manage their local collections.

As early as 2017, EAST began to experiment with the Gold Rush Library Comparator Tool³, developed by the Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries. Early work was focused on using Gold Rush as a tool for member libraries to search for existing EAST retention commitments. Recognizing that the cost of collection analysis could be a significant barrier to the participation in shared print, EAST began to consider ways in which Gold Rush could be used for collection analysis work and, in 2019, undertook the first collection analysis with Gold Rush. Although it is neither as full functioned nor as end-user friendly as GreenGlass, EAST is now successfully using Gold Rush as a lower cost alternative for both individual libraries and groups. There are challenges with larger groups, particularly when it comes to the allocation of commitments across multiple libraries which hold a copy of the same title, but by working with the group or consortia, we are able to develop an algorithm that can be applied outside of Gold Rush. Having these two options for collection analysis has contributed to the growth of EAST.

In December of 2021, a collaboration of the California Digital Library, Center for Research Libraries, and HathiTrust (known then as the CCH collaborative⁴) hosted a webinar for shared print programs, service providers, and other interested parties entitled "Summit for Shared Print in the Collections Lifecycle". The webinar focused on the current status of shared print from a collections lifecycle perspective and engaged with technology and service providers to describe capabilities they had or were planning in support of shared print. Delegates from both the Partnership for Shared Book Collections and the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance discussed their roles in the shared print community and particular areas of need in the context of the collections lifecycle. Both groups were encouraged to make "expressions of action" as follow-up to the Summit.

Two subsequent webinars followed in mid and late 2022 which engaged the technologists and service providers in particular. While no major technology breakthrough resulted, a number of enhancements to workflows in Alma from Ex Libris/Clarivate, GOBI from EBSCO, and in services from SirsiDynix were presented and the vendors/service providers as well as the

delegates from the shared print community, including EAST, were pleased to see the level of engagement and resulting action. We hope the momentum will continue as more and more providers become aware of how shared print fits into collection management.

Growing Broader Collaboration

From its earliest grant-funded days, EAST has been committed to furthering collaboration across shared print programs and strengthening the bonds of cooperation in the hope of moving closer to a national/continental focus on the protection and preservation of the scholarly and cultural record. In 2017, as we were completing the initial serials and journal collection analysis work, EAST was asked to join the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance, a collaboration formed two years earlier by a group of serials and journals shared print programs: Scholars' Trust, the Big Ten Academic Alliance, the WEST program in California, and the FLARE repository in Florida. The Rosemont program partners had already begun to collaborate and were committed to principles that would ensure access to retained serials and journals across their many participating libraries. Their mission and the subsequent work EAST has been involved in through Rosemont has expanded access for EAST member libraries to valuable serials and journal content, including content held by libraries participating in other Rosemont programs, and exemplified the value of collaboration at scale.

A year later, in April and December of 2018 EAST, with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, sponsored two summit meetings of monograph shared print programs, representatives from funders, and other experts and parties interested in the future of shared print. At the conclusion of the April meeting, working groups had been formed to explore formation of a monograph shared print program federation. In December, that federation was formally named the Partnership for Shared Book Collections with proposed governance, business model, and service goals. The Partnership's vision was agreed "to ensure the long-term preservation of, access to, and integrity of monographic print resources" and working groups, later renamed as "standing committees" were formed to focus on the development of shared print best practices, communications and advocacy, infrastructure, and research.

In the intervening years, both the Partnership and Rosemont have expanded their memberships, collaborated on the development of a variety of best practices relating to shared print, and begun discussions to merge into a single, consolidated organization serving shared print in the United States and Canada. For more information on the status of this merger, see the Merging Shared Print Organizations web page at <https://sharedprint.org/shared-print-merger/>. While much is still to be accomplished in bringing together the various and varying threads of shared print that have evolved over the last 10-15 years, the work of Rosemont and the Partnership demonstrates a clear will to broaden and deepen collaboration in support of furthering the vision and mission of shared print.

Hope for a Research Agenda

Among the working groups established at the formation of the Partnership for Shared Book Collections was one named "Research and Network Level" formed to investigate "at scale" activities including research, communication, funding, and expanding shared print. One of the first activities of the group was to develop a Research Agenda⁵ to support an evidence-based approach for decision making and best practices for shared print, including development of a better understanding of the "universe" of print monographs and how best to expand shared print programs to further protect and preserve this universe. To address this, as well as attempt to

identify gaps in titles retained by shared print programs and determine if titles are “over retained” across shared print programs, the Partnership began conversations with OCLC®. This eventually led to a research collaboration between the two parties to answer key research questions such as “What is the overlap of retention commitments across academic and research libraries in the U.S. and Canada?” and “What subject areas are under retained by current shared print programs?”. Eventually it is hoped this research may lead to addressing a broader set of questions.

Well before the Partnership was formed, a number of initiatives relating to better understanding issues relating to risk and survivability in shared print had been discussed and written about⁶. Many of these issues were further investigated by the Partnership’s Risk Research Working Group, culminating in the Working Group publishing “A Model to Determine Optimal Numbers of Monograph Copies for Preservation in Shared Print Collections” in College and Research Libraries in September, 2023⁷. This paper, which includes a statistical model that can be used by individual libraries and shared program programs, has significant implications for best practices in shared print. It is expected that programs, including EAST, will be using the model to both evaluate existing retention commitments and drive future development of selection criteria for retention. As described below, the current EAST 2011-2021 collection analysis initiative includes a review of the model and determination of ways in which it might influence retention commitments.

Moving Beyond Collection Analysis to Determine Retention Commitments

Since its founding, EAST has undertaken (or is currently engaged in) close to 20 separate collection analysis projects, ranging from those with a single library to those involving more than 60 libraries as part of a group analysis. This collection analysis work follows a fairly standard model which involves comparing the library or libraries’ collection(s) to the existing EAST collective collection of retention commitments (when using the GreenGlass tool, a comparison to WorldCat holdings is also available), developing a retention model by identifying unique, scarcely held, and overlapping titles, providing the library with candidates for retention based on this model, finalizing the commitments with the library/libraries, and registering the agreed upon retention commitments both in the local system(s) and in other databases – in EAST’s case that means in OCLC WorldCat and in Gold Rush. This process involves systems, metadata, and collections staff on the local library side as well as experienced program staff at EAST. Projects range in elapsed time from six months to a year for individual libraries and can take longer for large group projects. In many cases, while the software used greatly expedites the comparison process, metadata issues of various types (missing or corrupted data being most common), limited resources on the part of the participating library or libraries, and challenges libraries may have in finalizing their commitments (particularly if they wish to undertake any level of validation prior to doing so) can stretch out projects and result in projects at different levels of completion overlapping, which further impacts EAST staff bandwidth.

While an initial retrospective analysis of a library’s monograph and/or serials and journals print collection makes sense when a library first joins a shared print program such as EAST, that analysis is based on a snapshot of the collection at the time. As the library continues to purchase print (albeit likely at a reduced level and scale), this collection analysis model would necessitate subsequent projects in subsequent years.

In EAST’s case, the original retention model for monographs included titles published prior to 2011. In late 2022, and as part of our new strategic directions⁸, the EAST governing body agreed

to supplement these initial analyses with a group wide collection analysis project looking at monograph print titles published between 2011 and 2021. Over the first few months of 2023, the EAST Program Team worked to identify member libraries interested in participating in the project culminating in 67 EAST members agreeing to provide their records for analysis. For the first time, this analysis work was focused not only on circulating print monographs as five of the libraries chose to include materials from their special collections as well.

As of late 2023, over 3 million monograph print titles from these 67 libraries, most published between 2011 and 2021, have been loaded into Gold Rush for the EAST analysis work. A Working Group has been formed to work with the EAST Program Team on the analysis, which is expected to be completed in the spring/summer of 2024.

In addition to the “first” of including special collection titles, this analysis also looks at ways in which libraries can select the titles they wish to retain based on local criteria – such as those subject areas that most directly support their institutional teaching, research, and scholarship. While EAST expects to continue to focus on protecting and preserving unique and scarcely held titles, looking at ways to provide libraries more autonomy in the selection of titles they are committing to retain long-term is an important goal of this project.

In looking to the future of shared print, EAST is interested in exploring other ways in which large-scale collection analyses, done over time, could be replaced by truly embedding shared print decision making earlier in the life cycle of collection management. In March of 2022, EAST joined a number of libraries, library consortia, and others in providing a letter of support to the Institute of Museum and Library Services as part of the application for the Collaborative Collections Lifecycle Project⁹ submitted by the National Information Standards Organization (NISO) together with partners at Lehigh University and the Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration & Innovation (PALCI). EAST sees this project, and any community infrastructure or interoperability standards which may result, as exemplifying the importance of collaborative collection development and management. Over time, we hope that the tools for the selection and acquisition of print materials as well as the ongoing maintenance of the metadata describing these materials will support shared print in ways that negate or at least reduce the need for continued retrospective collection analysis work. EAST program staff have participated in discussions with the CCLP partners and expect to continue to be involved as the project moves from planning to implementation.

Growing and Diversifying the Collective Collection

In its early days growth and expansion was the result of individual libraries joining EAST. The first cohort of 40 libraries grew to 52 through the addition of a second cohort. Following that several individual libraries joined, bringing EAST’s total membership to 65 by 2019. The original EAST membership model assumed individual libraries would join and if there were enough who expressed interest at about the same time, we would form cohorts to facilitate the collection analysis work. Most if not all these libraries were – and are – part of other library consortia for resource sharing, cooperative purchasing, and other services, but joined EAST specifically to participate in shared print.

Beginning in 2019/2020, EAST began to see a growing interest from library consortia, many of whom share back-end library management systems. EAST refined its membership model in 2019 to support discounts for libraries joining as part of a consortium, with the discounts greatest for those with shared systems and those able to pay a single invoice on behalf of the consortium as

both of these factors impact on EAST’s resources and costs. This new model evolved to include a mix of consortia retention partners and supporting partners.

As Table 1 below demonstrates, EAST’s growth from 2019 was significantly attributable to libraries joining as part of an existing library consortium. This included three groups which had previously sponsored a shared print program at the consortia level – USMAI in Maryland, the CUSP group in North Carolina, and the VIVA libraries in Virginia. In all cases, the groups recognized the value of participation in shared print at scale and the efficiencies gained by working within an established and sustainable program.

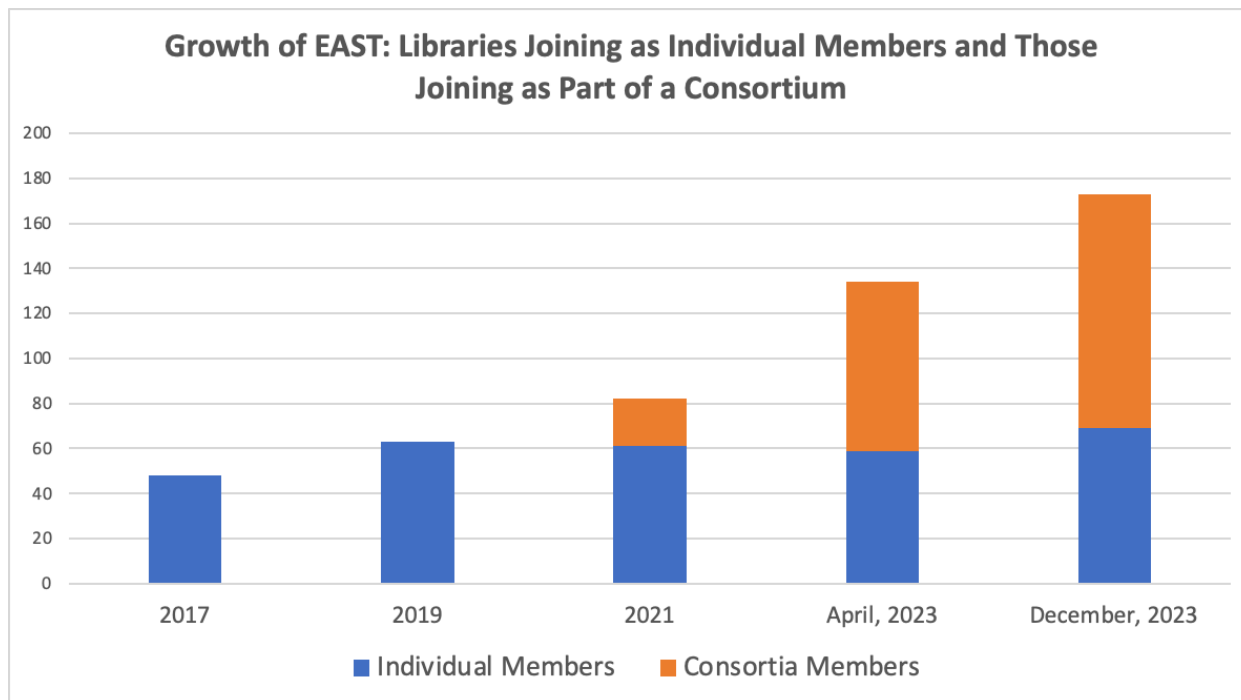


Table 1: The growth of the EAST membership through 2019 was exclusively through the addition of individual libraries. From 2020, and particularly in 2023, that growth is attributable primarily to the addition of members who join as part of a library consortium.

The development of EAST’s consortia membership models was driven by the strategic directions developed by the EAST Executive Committee (now the EAST Board of Directors) following a program-wide assessment in 2020. In addition to recognizing the need for models that work for large consortia, these strategic directions acknowledge the importance of continuing to diversify the collective collection of EAST retention commitments. In 2022, EAST was approached by our sister consortium, SCEL (the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium) to collaborate on a grant proposal to the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) focused on furthering participation in shared print among minority-serving institutions (MSI’s). The proposal for a planning grant, *Community Strategies to Expand Diversity and Inclusivity in the Collective Collection of Shared Print*¹⁰, was awarded in the summer of 2022. EAST’s primary role has been two-fold: to form an advisory group of libraries from MSI institutions, focusing primarily on HBCU and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI’s) to act as the Community Counsel

providing oversight and facilitating dissemination; and to engage directly with HBCU libraries to encourage their participation in shared print through a group collection analysis.

Much of the work with the Community Counsel in late 2022 and into 2023 was focused on understanding barriers to participation by MSI's and exploring ways to overcome these barriers. EAST's engagement with HBCU libraries included sponsored webinars with groups of libraries, including one for interested libraries from the HBCU Library Alliance.

As of late 2023, six HBCU libraries (Virginia Union University, Hampton University, and the four members of the Atlanta University Consortium – Spelman College, Morehouse College, Clark Atlanta University, and the Interdenominational Theological Institute) have agreed to work with EAST to form an HBCU Community Cohort and participate in a group collection analysis, beginning in early 2024. In addition to this work, the research team involved in the IMLS planning grant, based primarily at SCELCLC, will be undertaking further analysis of both these HBCU library collections as well as those of the existing EAST HBCUs with the goal of better understanding how these libraries' collections serve their distinctive communities. Preliminary results of this have been shared with the Community Council and we anticipate further information will be shared in upcoming conferences and shared print forums. Similar work has been done by SCELCLC to bring new Hispanic Serving Institutions' libraries into their shared print program and complete research on their local print collections. In both cases, the goal is to better understand the value of shared print across minority-serving institutions and best ensure programs can address any barriers to their participation in shared print.

Future Directions

As EAST closes out its eighth year, there are a number of important projects which we are initiating or anticipating for the future.

The first, how best to “rebalance” retention commitments across the growing EAST membership, acknowledges that the burden of a program such as EAST which has grown substantially over the years lies with the early adopters, our Cohorts 1 and 2 libraries. Because there was no collective collection of EAST retention commitments to compare to, decisions to retain multiple copies of a title were primarily made based on a comparison with WorldCat holdings through the OCLC GreenGlass service. As EAST grew in geographic reach and the collective collection of retention commitments increased, libraries and consortia members joining EAST were able to take advantage of the millions of titles already committed resulting (in most but not all cases) in newer members being asked to commit a smaller proportion of their holdings to retention.

While there is no magic percentage and only through collection analysis work can there be reasonable evidence for libraries committing to titles they own which are unique or scarcely held, revisiting the retained titles and looking to rebalance in those situations where an overabundance of copies of a title may be retained makes sense as EAST grows and as more and more shared print programs have overlapping retention commitments. We are now investigating effective ways to do this using the tools available and, particularly through the research work being undertaken by the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, envisioning ways that a better understanding of shared print collections across programs can inform future work.

Related to this is a project EAST began in late 2022 which has continued into 2023. As part of our collection analysis work, EAST uses programmatic tools to filter out what we call “ephemera” titles. These are titles which libraries are typically not interested in retaining long-term such as test prep guides, computer manuals, and - for some at least - juvenile literature. Over the years, as we have worked with new members, the list of publishers and

keywords that allow us to identify such titles has grown so that today's ephemera filtering is likely to result in identifying a larger number of titles in a given library's collection than would have been the case with our earliest members. We have, therefore, offered to libraries who joined EAST as part of those early cohorts the opportunity to review their existing retention commitments and identify titles that would meet today's criteria for ephemera filtering. To date 26 member libraries have taken advantage of this service resulting in identifying between 1.7% and 7% of their retained titles as ephemera. The libraries are then able to review the lists and may, at their discretion, choose to remove retention commitments to these titles.

In working with minority-serving institutions as part of the IMLS grant work described above, it has become clear that one of the major barriers to participation in shared print can be the lack of available staff resources to take on the local work associated with shared print, particularly on the systems and metadata side. As a result, EAST has begun to develop services to address this, working with our existing member libraries. An immediate outcome of this work has been to identify systems librarian "mentors" who offer to work with new EAST members on exporting their MARC records for collection analysis work. We will be using this experience to better document the steps and tasks in support of future work. In addition, the EAST Shared Print Consultant, Matthew Revitt of the Maine Shared Collections Cooperative, has developed a set of tools and tips to assist libraries in reviewing their proposed retention commitments¹¹. The EAST Program Team will be using this to assist under-resourced libraries in future cohorts. In both cases, we see EAST program staff and current members working in tandem with new members who may be unable to adequately provide local resources for the work involved.

In Conclusion

Shared print in general and the EAST shared print program in particular have seen significant changes over the last three to four years. EAST has seen its membership more than double from 2020 to 2023, much of this growth due to new membership models that support consortia. While not all join as Retention Partners, all contribute to the mission and purpose of EAST and shared print more widely.

Growth of EAST's membership was also enabled by providing options to libraries for the collection analysis work that is core to analyzing a library's print collection and selecting the titles to be retained. With Gold Rush, EAST has been able to provide a lower cost alternative for this work, which can be particularly attractive to smaller libraries as well as to groups such as consortia. This emphasis on diversifying the infrastructure supporting shared print is in early days and we see many opportunities, particularly through the work of the merger of the Rosemont Shared Print Alliance and the Partnership for Shared Book Collections, for tools and initiatives that create a better understanding of today's shared print landscape and offer cost-effective options for further ensuring shared print can be an important part of libraries' collection development and collection management strategies.

Just as major grant funding supported the organizational development of today's major shared print programs, such as MSCS, EAST, and WEST, we are again seeing an interest in looking at shared print in order to further its diversity and inclusivity and in determining the role it can play in the evolution of collaborative collection management.

The drivers of the first shared print programs – decreasing print collections and budgets, the accompanying shifts in usage of library materials and services, and the need to repurpose library space – have only been amplified in the last few years. Shared print programs are today better positioned to offer services across the range of academic and research libraries. Their scale

provides efficiencies not available in the early days of shared print. Their advocacy has helped improve infrastructure support for shared print, and their members are everywhere.

References

1. Research Planning and Review Committee, 2. (2022). Top trends in academic libraries: A review of the trends and issues. *College & Research Libraries News*, 83(6), 243. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.83.6.243>.
2. OCLC, “GreenGlass: Make evidence-based decisions about your print collection with confidence”, <https://www.oclc.org/en/greenglass.html>, accessed January 12, 2024.
3. Colorado Alliance of Research Libraries, “FAQ: Library Content Comparison System”, <https://coalliance.org/faq-library-content-comparison-system>, accessed January 12, 2024.
4. CDL, CRL and HathiTrust Shared Print Collaborative, “About”, <https://www.cchcollab.org/about>, accessed January 12, 2024.
5. Partnership for Shared Book Collections, “Research Agenda”, <https://sharedprint.org/about/research-agenda/>, accessed January 12, 2024.
6. Mary Miller, Jennifer Teper, "Preserving the Past for the Future: Moving Toward Best Practices and Tools for Thoughtful Monographic Withdrawal," in *Where Do We Go from Here?: Charleston Conference Proceedings 2015*, ed. Beth R. Bernhardt, Leah H. Hinds, Katina P. Strauch, 316-321.
7. BOGUS, Ian et al. A Model to Determine Optimal Numbers of Monograph Copies for Preservation in Shared Print Collections. *College & Research Libraries*, [S.l.], v. 84, n. 5, p. 767, aug. 2023. ISSN 2150-6701. Available at: <<https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/26029/33943>>. Date accessed: 12 jan. 2024. doi:<https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.84.5.767>.
8. Eastern Academic Scholars’ Trust, “Strategic Directions 2022-2025”, <https://eastlibraries.org/about-us/2022-strategic-directions/>, accessed January 12, 2024.
9. National Information Standards Organization, Partnership for Academic Library Collaboration & Innovation (PALCI), and Lehigh University Libraries, “Collaborative Collections Lifecycle Project”, <https://sites.google.com/view/cclifecycleproject/home>, accessed January 12, 2024.
10. SCELIC, “SCELIC and EAST Shared Print Project”, <https://scelc.org/scelc-east-shared-print-project>, accessed January 12, 2024.
11. Eastern Academic Scholars’ Trust, “EAST Tips for Reviewing your Retention Allocations”, <https://eastlibraries.org/collection-analysis/tips-for-reviewing-allocations>, accessed January 12, 2024.