The RLG Partnership

Fostering collective action among libraries, archives and museums

Purpose

Today’s libraries, archives and museums have to manage their collections differently, organize what they deliver more effectively, and create innovative infrastructures to sustain a new service array to remain a valued part of the scholarly process. Confronted with disruptive technologies and challenging economics, they must genuinely transform how they make their collections available to their users—a feat that is beyond the ability of any individual institution.

How can libraries, archives and museums meet these challenges and create a new future? By working with like-minded institutions in the RLG Partnership.

Supported by OCLC Research, the RLG Partnership is a unique, transnational partnership organization that coordinates the efforts of its affiliated institutions. RLG partner libraries, archives and museums are committed to exploiting technology to make their collections accessible for research. Through active collaboration, RLG partners develop shared solutions, participate in innovative experiments, assist in the design and testing of new prototypes and reach consensus on exciting new approaches to shared challenges. Partner institutions drive the ongoing development of an ambitious work agenda, setting the foundation for their collective success and enabling all partners to thrive in times of stimulating and provocative change.

“The RLG Partnership represents a set of institutions that can invest their collective energy to bring about the services, features and operational processes that will characterize the 21st-century research library. The staff of RLG partner institutions are the most important force that we can challenge, fund and empower to lead us into the future.”
—Gary Strong, University Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles; Past Chair, RLG Partnership Council

Collective action

Collective action is a hallmark of the RLG Partnership. Leading libraries, archives and museums share mutual ambitions and invest collectively to bring about the operational transformations that will characterize 21st-century cultural heritage institutions. The contributions and support of partner institutions are critical to our mutual success. Dedication to our collective future drives investment and engagement; it also shapes the change for partner institutions and the community of cultural heritage institutions as a whole.

These are challenging and potentially exciting times for libraries and the future of libraries; but at an individual institution level we can so easily get bogged down in just trying to keep our library running every day that the time, energy, and ideas to engage in innovation are hard to come by. I love that the RLG Partnership folks seem to be stepping up to provide the structure to bring together the small pockets of innovative thinking at individual institutions...It is just too hard and too risky for individual institutions to come up with the kind of provocative new thinking and new services that libraries need right now. I am hopeful that collaborative work like that being nurtured by the RLG Partnership will effectively harness the collective energy and ideas that are out there. I see it as a kind of collective rabble-rousing...which sounds like a lot of fun.
—Chris Bourg, Head, Information Center, Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources
Working together

An expert staff of program officers coordinates the collaborative innovation of the RLG Partnership. Together, RLG partners and program officers pursue a high-level work agenda through which we seek to form consensus and address changing architectural, workflow and service challenges through a number of projects that span preservation, data curation, researcher needs and digitization issues. Our collective goal is to improve efficiency and service for libraries, archives and museums.

Staff from partner institutions and program officers combine their full range of capacities—from community building to prototype creation—to advance our collective areas of focus. Our work will shape successful operational processes of partner institutions. It includes programs that address the grand challenges in the future of libraries, archives and museums—work that builds from community needs, staff proficiencies and partner expertise to address some of the most pressing and transformative issues ever faced by these institutions. As such, the success of this collective work relies on the interest, investment and commitment of our partners.

Outputs of our work include reports, articles, opinion pieces and survey results that are shared with partners on a regular basis online and in-person in a variety of ways, such as meetings, conferences, podcasts and webinars.

For more information about our work, visit www.oclc.org/programs/ourwork/.
For a current list of all RLG Partnership Institutions, visit www.oclc.org/programs/partnership/roster.htm.
See what we’re talking about in our blog at hangingtogether.org.

Collaboration has always been very important to us—BYU was one of the early members of RLG. In today’s rapidly changing, technologically charged environment, we consider it more important than ever to be part of a community of research libraries. The research sponsored by RLG, the white papers generated by that research, and the conferences and programs that are available to us as a result of it are key as we develop the strategic plans for our library.

—Randy Olsen, University Librarian, Brigham Young University

RLG Programs is creating a synergy in working with archivists and special collections. By working with them, we can explore innovations in description, reference and outreach by better understanding our metadata and our users.

—Mark A. Matienzo, Applications Developer, Digital Experience Group, The New York Public Library

The RLG Partnership has taken a leadership role in designing next generation solutions for collaborative print collection management. Its recent analyses of emerging print retention policies, governance models and service infrastructures revealed some of the common elements of effective collaboration among library consortia. We are excited about the Partnership’s upcoming work on prospective print journal preservation; we expect that work may reveal some very promising new models for network-level print collection management. The RLG Partnership’s vision and collaborative approach to research, experimentation and solution design are invaluable to the research library community and will help us to address some of our pressing needs to actively manage the collective print collection in more robust ways.

—Emily Stambaugh, Shared Print Manager, California Digital Library

While research in all fields benefits tremendously from digital collections, print collections in academic and research libraries continue to play a very important role in support of advanced humanities scholarship. The RLG Shared Print Program is taking timely steps to insure that journal collections, in particular, continue to exist as paper files for as long as they are needed.

—Susan M. Allen, Chief Librarian, Research Library, The Getty Research Institute

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