

Culture, values and change: observations from three consortia in Canada

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1 Introduction

Cultural change. It's a common phrase these days as most of us grapple with organizational transformation brought about by technological advances, budget constraints and numerous other factors. How do we cause cultural change? What are the new values essential to effective collaborations?

The answers are difficult because the questions are wrong. Anyone trying to "cause cultural change" or invoke "new values" has already missed the point. Let's refocus the questions and open up some new opportunities. The more appropriate question is framed as "how do we nurture effective organizational cultures and their underlying values?"

While discussing culture and values in abstract terms is important, it is often not directly applicable to the real world situations we face in academic libraries. As a result this analysis explores these issues through the lens of specific collaborations and partnerships. The nature and importance of values and culture will be examined by investigating the implementation and sustainability of three Canadian collaborations: the TriUniversity Group of Libraries (TUG), the Scholars Portal of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN). These three initiatives, whilst different in scale, approach and focus, share common characteristics which have made them successful. Their longevity (each one is more than 10 years old) is evidence of a strong foundation and an ability to adapt.

2 Background

Collaborations, partnerships, joint ventures and collectives of all sorts and sizes have become commonplace in academic libraries. The United States has been a leader in recognizing the power of working together. The Ohio College Library Center, formed in 1967, gradually transformed into OCLC, the largest library cooperative in the world with over 25,000 member libraries (www.oclc.org). Hirshon's review OhioLINK (2002), an early and influential state-wide initiative, outlines the organizational and culture adjustments essential to success. This focus continues with the recent creation of innovation projects such as 2CUL, the "transformative and enduring partnership" of the Cornell University Library and the Columbia University Libraries (www.2cul.org). The extent and depth of collaboration as a key academic library strategy is best illustrated by the formation and growth of the International Coalition of Library Consortia

(www.library.yale.edu/consortia). ICOLC now has over 200 participating consortia globally.

As the power and effectiveness of working together became apparent, libraries and their staff have had to learn new skills and perspectives. Collaboration is a muscle; the more it is used, the stronger it gets. Conversely, neglect a collaborative initiative and it will atrophy.

It is instructive to note that all three of the collaborations discussed in this chapter arose from adversity: severe budget reductions, dramatic and crippling increases in journal pricing and the need to respond to rapid technological change are just three of the motivators that led to the formation of these collectives. Although many new partnerships arise in times of challenge, most, as with the three documented here, move well beyond the initial rationale for their inception. This highlights something that many politicians have long known and used to their advantage: never let a good crisis go to waste. The heightened sense of urgency during a time of crisis opens new doors. The unthinkable is now considered, orthodoxies are challenged and sacred cows are on the menu.

Illustrative of this is the percentage of the acquisitions budget spent through consortia. Initially small or negligible (under 5%), now libraries can spend up to 80% of their acquisitions budget through a variety of consortial arrangements. Such dramatic change doesn't happen overnight, it must be carefully nurtured. As collaborations have become essential to the success of academic libraries, change management has become a critical preoccupation for librarians and particularly library directors:

'It is easy to underestimate the difficulty of making the transition to teams and collaboration. During the change of perspective from "me" to "us", for "I" to "we", and from "them" to "us", there are many opportunities to revert to the "way we always did it." Sustaining the culture of the collaboration requires vigilance and maintenance (Shepherd, Gillham & Ridley, 1999, 336)'.

Ultimately any collaboration is about mutual self-interest. We work collectively for local and individual benefit. As a result foundational values and organizational cultures exist both in the individual libraries and in the consortium itself. Leslie Weir, University Librarian, University of Ottawa and former Chair of OCUL and Member of the Board of CRKN provided some context for Canadian consortia when she wrote:

'In Canada, consortia have been key, and perhaps even more so than in some other countries. We are a relatively homogenous country and yet extremely different at the same time. All of our universities are public, so we do not have the concept of public and private, but our universities are scattered across a very large country. We are bilingual—French and English. We have universities that specialize in various fields (for instance, business and engineering), we have ones that are comprehensive, we have our doctoral-granting institutions, we have our law schools, our medical schools. All this creates both challenges and opportunities'. (Weir, 2008, 582)

As Deb deBruijn, Executive Director of CRKN, notes, many library consortia are key to national or regional agenda for advancing research and higher education. (2004, 10) As

such is it critical to think of "content as infrastructure" and to see academic libraries as essential to public policy initiatives aimed at developing a thriving knowledge-based society.

Before examining the factors and characteristics that impact values and culture in cooperative initiatives, it is useful to have a short overview of each of the consortia that form the basis for these observations.

2.1 TriUniversity Group of Libraries (TUG) (www.tug-libraries.on.ca)

Founded in 1995, the TriUniversity Group of Libraries is a partnership of the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Guelph. The initial agreement called for "a seamlessly integrated program of library collections and services" (Integrated Programme Development, 1995). Under the auspices of TUG the libraries share a single integrated library system, a discovery layer service, an offsite storage facility, a delivery service that transports requested materials among the libraries on a daily basis, collective resource licensing and purchasing and a data resource service for statistical information.

The objectives of the partnership are both pragmatic enhancements to existing services as well as a platform to explore opportunities for new innovations:

‘The expansion of access to library resources and the efficiency of access to these resources substantially enrich the processes of scholarship in our universities. Current fiscal constraint requires that we explore all forms of co-operative activity with a view to achieving efficiencies’. (TUG, 2000).

Alongside the service expectations, TUG also articulated some business principles that guide the consortium:

- prepare development plans to deliver agreed upon levels of service
- have a clear and agreed concept of our core business
- optimize human and financial resource investment through sharing common technical and administrative infrastructure, when feasible
- ensure, where practical, that the infrastructure facilitates access to public and private sector providers of educational products and services
- maintain a healthy balance between collaboration and independence
- define models for life cycle investment costs to sustain the infrastructure
- develop and maintain appropriate cost-sharing models (TUG, *Business Principles*, 2012, para 1).

While much of the initial consortial licensing undertaken by TUG has since moved to regional (OCUL) or national (CRKN) alternatives, TUG continues to provide core services and resources to the three institutions. Much of the recruitment information for

students and faculty continue to highlight TUG as a key asset for the individual universities.

2.2 Scholars Portal, Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL)

scholarsportal.info

www.ocul.on.ca

The Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL) is a consortium of the 21 university libraries in the province. OCUL enhances information services in Ontario and beyond through collective purchasing and shared digital information infrastructure, collaborative planning, advocacy, assessment, research, partnerships, communications and professional development.

Under the rubric of "Collaborate, Innovate, Deliver" OCUL has articulated three main objectives:

- collaborate to provide a world-class learning experience for Ontario's students
- expand digital research infrastructure
- provide and preserve academic resources essential for teaching, learning, and research. (OCUL Strategic Plan, 2011)

Scholars Portal provides the technological infrastructure that preserves and provides access to information resources collected and shared by OCUL members. Through the online services of Scholars Portal, students, faculty and researchers have access to millions of e-journal articles, an extensive collection of e-books, an expanding number of social science data sets and an innovative geospatial information system. Scholars Portal also offers an online inter-library loan platform, an "Ask a Librarian" e-reference service, support for the RefWorks and WizFolio citation management systems and a variety of other tools designed to aid and enhance academic research in Ontario.

Scholars Portal has become the de facto digital library for each of the members of OCUL. While many of the services and resources are rebranded locally to reflect the local library context, the underlying infrastructure, support and expertise is provided centrally by the Scholars Portal staff at OCUL.

As an affiliate group of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), the major advocacy group for universities in Ontario, OCUL is well connected to the strategic planning and policy development initiatives of the university presidents and their chief academic officers. This strong linkage between the libraries and the executive heads of the universities has been important in securing external funding and informing the academic leadership of key trends and developments.

2.3 Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN)

www.ckrn.ca

CRKN is a partnership of Canadian universities dedicated to expanding digital content for the academic research enterprise in Canada. Through the coordinated leadership of librarians, researchers and administrators CRKN undertakes large-scale content acquisition and licensing initiatives in order to build knowledge infrastructure and research capacity in Canada's universities. CRKN collaborates with 75 university members and provides access to over 900,000 researchers and students. The organization brings together universities in 10 provinces, speaking two official languages (French and English) and diverse degree and program offerings and puts in place a national foundation for acquiring scholarly research content in digital formats.

Initiated in 2000 as the Canadian National Site Licensing Project (CNSLP), a federally funded research initiative, CRKN incorporated in 2004 and has since expanded its membership and broadened its licensing programs. The consortium is inclusive. Member universities are committed to licensing a broad portfolio of research content from multiple vendors, with resources acquired available equally to all participants. Using an innovative model license and a well designed negotiating process and strategy, CRKN has built strong relationships with vendors as it also secured cost effective deals for its members.

In 2011 CRKN secured nearly \$100m worth of licensing and purchases on behalf of its members. Currently CRKN manages 44 national licenses from publishers such as Elsevier, Springer, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, and American Chemical Society (Canadian Research Knowledge Network, 2011).

3 Values: a cautionary note

Management and leadership books consistently identify values as crucial to organizational effectiveness and personal commitment. Widely read texts such as *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2008) and *The Future of Management* (Hamel, 2007) emphasize the preeminent role of values (both individual and institutional) in shaping a clear direction and establishing a strong foundation. Articulated values tell our community what is important to us and what they can expect from us. They also guide our choices and decisions about how we operate our organizations. As a result we spend considerable time working on our values. We hold workshops and organize information sessions. We are careful to be inclusive in these gatherings, inviting all staff, representative users and others who are impacted by our resources and services. At the end of all this we clean up the language, post them on our website, and then, sometimes (perhaps quite often), actually live them.

The values so derived are important and useful but they are not actually the values that inform the organization. As much as we would like to think otherwise, values are not documented they are revealed. The real value system of any organization is the one illustrated by its actions and its processes. Think of values not as a definitive set of preconditions but rather as an evolving ecology in which through time and visibility, the

actual organization emerges. This is important because it is easy to identify libraries or groups that articulate one set of values (agreed to once upon a time by all staff) but actually live by something completely different.

Contemporary academic libraries must manage interactions with a large number of organizations and their respective value systems. Individual universities and libraries have expressed values but so too do the various consortia that we have come to rely on. As a result, the interdependency of these organizations bring with it a web or matrix of values, lived or stated, that need to be understood and mediated. Values define and motivate individual actions, while culture operationalizes these in an organizational context.

This is not to say that values cannot or should not be developed, or that a conflict of values is inevitable in a multi-consortial environment. Rather it suggests that a more organic approach to the understanding and expression of values is necessary.

4 Characteristics of culture and change in Consortia

What do consortial experiences tell us about values, culture and change? TUG, OCUL and CRKN all have long histories during which the actions and attitudes of the members and the organizations reveal characteristics that define how consortia operate and the effect they have on staff and the individual member organizations. The observations in the rest of this chapter provide insights into how future consortia must be structured and operated if they wish to interoperate with their member institutions and enhance their effectiveness as collectives. Nurturing values and effective organizational cultures arise from attention to core elements in any collaboration. The following observations are signals, signposts or opportunities that can assist in decoding the health of a consortia and in laying the foundations for healthy cultures and aligned values.

4.1 Shared objectives

Common, shared objectives are the obvious core of any collaboration. It is surprising, therefore, that many cooperative ventures lack a clear articulation of exactly what these are. There is a reason for this. Many collaborations, the better ones, are not about solving just a current, acute problem but building capacity and capability for a more ambiguous future. They are tools or vehicles for growth and evolution. Since we don't always know clearly where we are going or exactly how we will get there, these partnerships are leaps of faith. On the surface, while collaborations are tasked with "buying this" or "implementing that", the larger and more profound objective is to collectively transform the participating libraries by giving them more capability than they had separately.

Defining shared objectives is critical. However, overly specifying those objectives is a recipe for trouble. This will unnecessarily focus on the here and now, and limit the possibility that the partnership could move into broader and different areas.

Having said all this, finding common ground is essential. TUG arose because each library was considering a new integrated library system, Scholars Portal started because few of the individual OCUL members could implement an effective digital library service on their own and CKRN arose as a result of budget pressures for scholarly journals and the need to move to e-journals. While each continues to have these as core purposes, all have moved into areas that were largely unconsidered during the formative years.

An example of this is the decision of OCUL to extend its digital services to non-OCUL institutions by acting as a service provider. Taking on external clients for financial gain was not part of the initial vision and yet the values that guided the collaborative model among OCUL members also informed the service provider model for paying clients. Monetizing the collaboration was seen as consistent with the original objectives.

Shared objectives evolve and the purpose of any consortium can change over time. In fact a consortia that "sticks to its knitting" is likely one becoming less and less valuable to its members.

4.2 Trust

At the heart of any collaborative venture is trust. Trust is the glue that keeps an initiative together and makes it effective. Without a deliberate attempt to build trust a partnership will wither. For some people trust is a natural reaction you immediately have their trust but you can lose it with your actions. For others trust must be earned and typically that is through working together.

Pilot projects, working groups, opportunities to exchange ideas, even purely social engagements all create the foundation for trust to emerge or flourish. In the formative days of TUG, staff from all three institutions were brought together to learn together. The focus of the training sessions varied but the real objective was to build confidence in each other. Similarly, TUG launched numerous working groups and task groups, almost certainly more than were really necessary, in order to allow the work assignments to act as foundations for trust.

Don't assume trust is hierarchical or only important to professional staff (i.e. librarians and managers). While it is absolutely true that the library directors must trust each other and visibly demonstrate this to the staff of the libraries, trust accrues in a library in very idiosyncratic ways. Staff in all areas of the library need to be engaged and committed.

Often trust is forged during times of conflict or strain. Difficult situations both challenge trust but also solidify it. As a result nurturing trust is probably a better metaphor than "winning" or "building" trust. It relies on leaders who are comfortable with the expertise and instincts of their staff and on staff who are willing to build new relationships across organizational boundaries.

4.3 Getting to know each other

Since the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University are virtually across the street from each other and the University Guelph is only 20 kms away, it was surprising that the staff, especially the librarians, really didn't know each other very well. As observed, since trust is forged by working together, a key priority was to create opportunities for staff to get to know each other.

In addition to the various work assignments, TUG placed a singular emphasis on the social aspects of the consortium. We hosted numerous parties for all staff with special buses to bring folks together. It was all about the food, drink, music, and community. No work, just fun (and the briefest possible requisite speeches by the university librarians!).

The importance of face-to-face interactions during the early phase of the consortia or any new projects of the consortia can't be overestimated. While much of the work of TUG (or any of the other groups) is now conducted via email, shared systems, social media or whatever, the initial "getting to know you" process is almost always in-person.

The challenge is different for consortia that are geographically disperse. OCUL attempts to address this by hosting a series of "Scholars Portal Days" designed to bring staff, mostly librarians and managers, together. These events are used to review, plan and simply to provide professional development. The consortium staff work diligently to make these compelling and valuable days. As a result they are now a "must attend" meeting for many.

In a similar way, CRKN has fashioned its annual meeting, a legal requirement to enact the business of the corporation, into a multi-day conference with workshops, keynote speakers, "birds of a feather" type session and awards ceremonies. CRKN has hosted a completely online annual meeting and currently offers a hybrid of online and face-to-face.

In the examples of OCUL and CRKN, it is critical that the libraries are willing to fund the costs for staff to participate. This extra cost of consortial involvement, difficult for some of the smaller institutions, is a concrete demonstration of the importance of face-to-face to relationship building.

4.4 Loss of control and authority

One clear outcome of consortial purchasing has been the loss of control and authority at the local level regarding collection development. Previously libraries, and specifically collections librarians, built their own collections quite deliberately. Each library had detailed collections development policies, procedures and processes often approved through university governance processes. In some cases individual monographs were hand selected or refused in response to those policies.

Buying or licensing through consortia changed all that. Leveraging the purchasing power of the collective meant relinquishing much local responsibility for individual collection development. Not everyone was happy about this. It took some time for librarians (and directors) to accept the tradeoffs involved. The debate about the value of the Big Deal is, in part, predicated on the desire to return to local control over collections. Both Frazier (2005) and Friend (2003) question the cost effectiveness of the Big deal approach and suggest that large scale purchases have resulted in collections unresponsive to the specific needs of the local library's users.

Releasing control and authority to a collective can only occur if there is trust in that group and accountability back to the members or those responsible at the local level. Library directors have institutional responsibility for their library. If things go awry, they will be held accountable. The bargain implicit in consortial initiatives is that releasing control and authority at the local level gains other capacities and capabilities that would otherwise be unattainable. Some library directors and libraries are able to accept that situation; other chafe at it throughout the entire process.

The Negotiations Resource Team (NRT) of CRKN is responsible for negotiations with all the vendors. This small team is comprised of collections librarians, procurement professionals, IT experts and consortium staff. They establish the list of products to be acquired, set the criteria for negotiations, create RFPs, drafts proposed licenses, directly negotiate with vendors and then present the final agreements to members for their acceptance (most CRKN deals are opt-in/opt-out).

The CRKN deals are large, complex and must address the needs (and the financial capabilities) of a very diverse membership. The negotiations must also be conducted in a fair manner with complete confidentiality. In the initial period of the development of consortial purchasing it was challenging to keep members, particularly other collections librarians, involved and informed. Often only limited information could be released to the membership during the negotiations process. Similarly, it was difficult, if not impossible, to seek advice from the membership during those negotiations.

As a result tensions emerged when deals were announced. NRT was viewed as out of touch with members and of working in a closed, even defensive, manner. CRKN responded by creating an online forum, regional meetings and enhanced procedures to involve collections librarians and university librarians earlier in the process. All these initiatives served to engage members while still empowering the NRT to do their work. It

was critical for NRT to have the independence to negotiate on behalf of member. It was equally critical that members had confidence in the NRT.

4.5 Differential benefits and cost allocation

Most consortia are comprised of dissimilar libraries; there are differences in location, size, mandate, philosophy and virtually any other dimension possible. In fact the strength of an effective consortia is often not that the members are alike but that they are different and quite diverse. However, within that diversity, a partnership must find common ground.

OCUL is comprised of 21 member libraries. The largest, the University of Toronto, has over 60,000 students while the smallest, Algoma University, has less than 1,500 students. Both are active participants in virtually all OCUL initiatives. How can both derive value in an equal way? The answer is, they don't. Members derive differential benefits from participation in OCUL; the benefits are not equal but they are equitable. The consortium works diligently to ensure this is the case and that it is well understood by its members.

Scholars Portal is a good example of this. With an annual budget of over \$3m (excluding the cost of the licenses and other content), the system was designed to be located and operated primarily by the University of Toronto. Many of the decisions about the evolution of Scholars Portal are influenced by the directions preferred by Toronto. This is not an abdication to the whims of the larger institution but part of the structure and strategy that creates value for the largest members as well as the smallest.

Scholars Portal is highly valuable to both Toronto and Algoma albeit it in very different ways. Toronto easily has the resources to implement and sustain a service like Scholars Portal by itself. However, collaborating through OCUL it benefits from the substantial contributions of others (the University of Toronto pays approximately \$0.25 for every \$1 of value gained through OCUL).

The point about equity and differential benefits is that it mitigates tension around cost allocation formulae that often don't include all the potential factors (particular the benefits side of the equation). For example, TUG struggled for a number of years to effectively distribute costs across the three institutions. Finally the university librarians engaged a third party (Ernst & Young, a consulting firm) to recommend a solution (Ernst & Young, 2000). The consultants worked with the university librarians to help them understand the nature of metrics and to focus on key metrics as surrogates for value and cost. This intervention resolved many underlying tensions (among the university librarians as well as the staff of the libraries). The resulting metrics have now been in place for over 10 years.

A more difficult struggle occurred in CRKN. The diversity was greater in part because the consortia was larger, consisting seventy-five members spread across the country

with different regional and even linguistic differences. Creating cost allocation formulae for CRKN became an obsession. There were serious conflicts over costs to individual members for particular licenses. Fairness, equity and perceived value are difficult to align across a large membership. For the most part a disproportionate amount of the costs resided with 5 largest institutional members. While members usually have the option of opting out of CRKN deals, it is also true that without the largest institutions, the negotiating power of CRKN would be diminished (with resulting financial increases to other members).

CRKN has moved increasingly to alternative methods to allocate costs and align them more with institutional value. However, it remains an ongoing discussion. It is perhaps illustrative of the capacity of CRKN to engage openly with these concerns that the large institutions remain members and new universities have joined.

4.6 The art of the possible

Because collaborations are successful and beneficial there is a natural desire to do more, expand the reach, or explore new options. This can be very good but it can also be problematic. While collaborations built on solid, strategic foundations are able to grow into new areas, those that have a more limited vision of their purpose can resist such changes. The founding library directors of TUG often referred to it as the "art of the possible." The programs of TUG were those that were achievable (possible) not those that seemed beneficial.

For example, given the geographic proximity of the three libraries one would think that significant collection rationalization (and relocation) would be an obvious opportunity. Since there was a shared catalogue with an effective delivery system among the libraries, why not reduce duplication, expand unique purchases and specialize collections and expertise? At a strategic level, this is perfectly obvious and advantageous. On a more pragmatic level, it was a non-starter. While librarians saw this as a useful direction, faculty were outraged. Despite the fact that it would increase the resources available to them in their specific disciplines, the idea that the urban geography books and journals (to pick an example) would be at a campus other than theirs was anathema. The art of the possible was recognizing, before going too far, that such a perfectly reasonable direction was not going to work.

Appealing to the "art of the possible" can sometimes be used as a defense against change. "It can't be done" or "we tried this before and it didn't work" are common ways this defense is used. However, more often it is a clear realization of the limits of any collaboration and that pushing an initiative beyond that limit could have negative and long lasting consequences to the partnership as a whole.

4.7 Broadening the community of practice

A tremendous benefit of consortia is the ability to build capacity and capability through sharing and joint actions. All academic libraries constitute a community of practice. This perspective on our professional roles enriches how we approach our work and especially how we develop ourselves as librarians. Co-operative ventures broaden this community of practice by engaging professional staff across institutional boundaries. We learn from each other, we challenge each other and we build new mental models of what our roles are and how we perform them.

Critically this is an active, goal oriented engagement. It is not like communing at a conference or workshop. It is work focused, deadline based, resource constrained and ultimately very creative. As such it is real work and the resulting learning has a deep and profound impact on professional growth.

In TUG, a particularly important resource was the ongoing involvement of what was then The Office of Management and Leadership Services (OMLS) of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). OMLS staff led various workshops and sessions for TUG professional staff focused on management practices and team building. Working with OMLS allowed the libraries to study and practice the same philosophy of library management and administration. This foundation curriculum was important in aligning the expectations, procedures, attitudes of staff as TUG evolved. The values driving the decision making of the consortium were discussed, explored, and confirmed during those sessions.

4.8 Local issues and consortial impact

Consortia are tools for leveraging common purpose but all consortia are ultimately comprised of individual institutional members. The organizational health and vitality of the consortia are always impacted by whatever is happening in the individual institutions. Typically those local issues are different for each institution at different times. One library may be experiencing budget reductions while another has just received a substantial increase. As a result one wants to reduce consortia costs while the other is ready to invest in new projects.

One response from the consortia is to ignore this and say it can't be accommodated because it is beyond our control. This is a poor idea. While it is true that consortia don't manage the member institutions, they are impacted by what is happening in each member library. Consortia must have very effective ears and eyes among their members. Knowing how each is evolving, struggling or thriving is essential to leading the collective to common solutions.

An important outcome of this is to see a consortia as a normal, definitive part of the local organization. For the University of Guelph, TUG is not "it" but "us." Scholars Portal is Guelph's digital library and the staff of Scholars Portal are effectively Guelph staff. It would be a clear indication of this if the consortia staff appeared on all our organization charts. Despite our commitment to and reliance on consortia, there often remains a

demarcation between the "real" staff of the library and consortial staff. The latter are viewed less central to the organization.

This is especially important as budget challenges at the local level almost always result first in trying to reduce consortial expenditures. The remote or distant nature of a consortia means that many find it is easier to cut them first. However, from a budget or service perspective, consortia are almost always financially attractive and cost effective. A modest investment typically reaps much larger rewards. Hence reducing local costs first is actually a better strategy.

Of course (to give an extreme example), laying off local staff while increasing consortial staff during times of budget constraint may be so politically untenable that individual libraries are required to make suboptimal financial decisions. Bridging the distance between the member institution and the consortia is important. Consortia staff and local staff must be seen to be on the same team, wanting the same outcomes and experiencing the same constraints or opportunities.

4.9 Governance

As collaborations have matured, so has our attitude towards governance. Leading a small partnership required aligned leaders. A large scale collaboration requires formal governance. When a collaboration grows to have its own staff, the nature of the engagement and involvement of the member libraries (and their leaders) changes irrevocably. In small collaborations the library directors, for example, can collectively make the management decisions. The "board" is often the entire complement of directors. Moving a collaboration into a more formal organization requires a different level of engagement. For example, CRKN is incorporated separately and OCUL is part of a larger non-profit organization, while TUG remains an agreement among the institutions. Not all library directors, library staff or university administrators are able make this transition.

With an Executive Director (and their staff) comes a Board of Directors and a community of members. Each of these has very different responsibilities and obligations. Members don't determine policy, the Board doesn't manage staff and the Executive Director doesn't run the libraries. Understanding the different roles and letting each perform their designated responsibilities is crucial. Many partnerships experience deep conflict because individuals exceed or ignore their accountability.

The most common challenges are Board members who want to run the organization and direct the staff, or an Executive Director who wants to "guide" the decisions of the Board (i.e. read "manipulate"). With the current multitude of overlapping organizations, collaborations and partnerships it has never been more important to ensure effective Board orientation. Knowing what the Board is accountable for and what its job is remains critical. Frankly, this is done far less than is necessary. Guides to Board member duties

and responsibilities (Kelly & Frederick, 1999) and to effective orientation processes (Ingram, 2003) are essential resources for any formally governed consortium.

While part of any Board orientation is a clear understanding of responsibilities and accountabilities (including specific legal and fiduciary obligations which are binding and serious), another key purpose is to build community among the Board. This is done not to forge a happy, complacent family but rather to ensure that a comfortable level of interaction exists so that difficult and contentious issues can be raised.

CRKN undertook a substantial organizational review arising from a lack of clarity around Board roles. Tension between the Board and some institutional members over decision making and accountability reflected a misunderstanding of the role a Board plays in a membership organization. Some members, who previously were in a position to exert individual direction on the organization, found the Board a limit on their personal influence. They were unwilling to accept the responsibility delegated to the Board. The loss of control discussed earlier with respect to collections librarians applies to university librarians as well. The context is different but the tension and dislocation are the same.

4.10 Managing transparency and conflict

Collaborations, like marriages, have their moments of conflict and doubt. This is especially true of initiatives that have long histories and have evolved over that period. Members can lose their way and lose their resolve. As a result, concerns about directions, costs, expertise, succession or leadership can creep in. If these issues can be raised and addressed through a clear governance model and process, most organizations are able to address these issues successfully, even if this means drastic actions such as terminating an Executive Director, refocusing the organization or even winding down the organization. However, the lack of a transparent process can be disastrous.

The rise of activist members of corporate Boards in recent years is in many ways a reaction to complacency and lack of purpose on the part of those Boards. In Canada, the power struggle for board control at the iconic Canadian Pacific Railway is illustrative of how contentious this can get. (McNish et al., 2012) While activism is most common in the corporate environment, there is evidence that this is also occurring in higher education, affecting Boards with a direct relation to academic libraries (Bastedo, 2005; Immerwahr, 2011).

The activist Board member is often reflecting similar concerns among the stakeholders. It would be a cliché to note that effective, ongoing communication is central to avoiding conflict or addressing it when it arrives. Many organizations have learned to do this very well. Creating multiple communications channels that engage directors, library staff, external partners (i.e. vendors) and even library users in different ways using different tools is a key strategy for transparency. CRKN, for example, has created forums and communication vehicles that correspond specifically to different groups within the

member organizations. Hence general e-newsletters are matched by an online license information exchange for collections librarians, personal e-updates from the Executive Director for library directors and OpenLine, a series of teleconferences or webinars with guest presenters on timely topics relevant to library staff, vendors and researchers.

5 Conclusion

At the outset we asked "how do we nurture effective organizational cultures and their underlying values?" The observations from the TriUniversity Group of Libraries (TUG), Scholars Portal of the Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL), and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN) illustrate both prerequisites and warnings. All suggest that effective organizational cultures and aligned values arise not from strategic plans, executive decrees, or merely wishful thinking but from a consistent focus on how individuals interact within an organizational setting.

The continuous transformation of academic libraries as they engage in increasingly broad and complex collaborative initiatives means that long held values will be challenged, traditional practices will be abandoned, and organizations will be re-shaped to suit new purposes. As a result it will require leaders at all levels and in all places of the organization to adopt strategies and techniques that surface key concerns and enable new ways of working together.

Values are revealed and culture is nurtured. Successful organizations understand these dynamics and facilitate processes that engender healthy workplaces and effective institutions.

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