What Was a Library Collection: Overlap among College and University Libraries

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Abstract
Analysis of the monographic holdings of 13 college and 13 university libraries in WorldCat shows that university libraries hold more radically rare titles and their collections are seven times larger than college libraries. Colleges typically collect more frequently-held titles. Literature, social sciences, and world history account for about half of the university collections; in college libraries, philosophy/psychology/religion replaces world history. The median publication date for university collections is 1978; for colleges, 1976. The number of books held declines and the number of books owned by only one library increases after the 2000 publication year. These changes align with academic libraries’ twenty-first century orientations toward priorities other than collection building.

1. Introduction
Academic libraries appear to be robust, long-standing institutions now being wracked by tides of change that threaten the core of library practices and values. The Association of College and Research Libraries (Research Planning and Review Committee, 2015) identifies trends that have significant impact on the nature and future of library collections and acquisitions, including: the complex and contested adoption of ebooks, patron/demand-driven acquisition, and the shift from local to collaborative collection development and management. An understanding of today’s library collections can provide both an historical basis and sense of possibilities as librarians respond to these changes.

Academic libraries have adapted and evolved throughout their existence. Higher education in the U.S. emerged from the founding fathers’ commitment to develop an educated citizenry (Scott, 2006). Hamlin (1981, p. 3) notes that until late in the nineteenth century, college and university libraries “for the most part, were limited to a few thousand poorly selected volumes and [offered] virtually no service programs.” After the Civil War universities began to differentiate from colleges. Following the model of German universities and influenced by the Morrill Acts’ support for technical and agricultural innovation, universities focused on research (Scott, 2006). University libraries developed large collections to support scholarly research. Edelman and Tatum (1977, p. 42) trace the exponential growth of these collections from 1875 to 1975, observing that for “most academic libraries acquisitions rates increased, but not enough to keep up with rising demands.”

Colleges maintained their emphasis on undergraduate education (Scott, 2006); and college libraries followed a different path. According to Radford (1984, p. 13), “In the old American college, the library was a relatively unimportant appendage.” He notes that the early twentieth century saw a revolution in teaching—including, for example, more social sciences classes,
survey courses, and independent study—placing more demands on the libraries, most of which held fewer than 30,000 volumes in a 1930 study.

Technological and social changes over the past 100 years have encouraged major changes in expectations, services, and holdings of academic libraries generally as well as increasing differentiation between college and university libraries. The nature, size, and purposes of collections are evolving rapidly as libraries move from “just in case” to “just in time” collecting; libraries increase their collaboration to extend access to materials, and access receives priority over ownership in some situations. Johnson (2014, 154) describes this situation: “Libraries no longer purchase all materials outright for addition to a physical collection; they license access to digital content through contracts with providers.”

Calls for rethinking collections abound. Wolf and Bloss (1998, 212) for example, contend that “building and maintaining large, self-sufficient collections is not only anachronistic, it is also economically moronic.” As we move away from the emphasis on ownership, it is worth looking back at the impressive collections developed by the generations of book men (and women) who stewarded academic libraries’ holdings through the twentieth century. What are the dimensions of academic library collections? How much do college and university collections differ? How much do libraries hold in common and what is the dispersion of rare or unique materials?

2. Literature review
Dempsey, Malpas, and Lavoie (2014, p. 395) give the following rationale for academic libraries in the twentieth century:

In the print environment, it was convenient for each university to internalize a collection of locally assembled materials, to organize them, and to interpret them for its users. ... the bigger the local library was, the better it was seen to be, because it satisfied potentially more of local needs without having to go outside the institution.

In their mid-twentieth-century textbook on library collections, Carter and Bonk (1959, p. 10) contend that “the most important job of the librarian [is] the selection of those books which he judges will be the best for his library.” Half a century earlier, John Cotton Dana (1908, p. 77) had urged, “a proper function of great research libraries is to preserve and hold ready for use either all the printed things they can gather and make available, or all they can within the fields they mark out for themselves.... though at the present rate of increase in printing the time will soon come when no library can persist in the attempt to be the omnium-gatherum, and storehouse libraries must become storehouses only within chosen fields.” In his 1944 book, Fremont Rider (1944) contends that academic libraries (he includes both college and university libraries) double in size every sixteen years—and that this rate of growth is essential to the survival of an educational institution. Some twenty years later, Verner Clapp (1964) makes suggestions on how to cope with the consequences of this growth through improved bibliographic control, resource sharing, and cooperative off-site storage, among other techniques.
The college library has a different mission. Kaser (1976) traces the mid-twentieth century pursuit of standards for college libraries, including the compilation of several lists of recommended books. The Carnegie list, for example, excludes books for graduate students or researchers, aiming to “include only those books which the undergraduate student could reasonably be expected to use in the pursuit of his work in courses commonly offered in the various liberal-arts colleges and those additional books to which students would go for their recreational and general reading” (Carnegie Corporation of New York. Advisory Group on College Libraries, 1931, p. viii). Recent literature also acknowledges a special role to the college library. Johnson (2014, p. 205) points to limited storage space and increased online availability of journals and reference materials as factors that discourage these libraries from continually growing their collections. Instead, she says, college libraries seek to develop and maintain “working collection[s] for undergraduates.”

In contrast, the university library’s just-in-case approach creates an “emphasis on research [that] will lead to the collecting of much that is scholarly, little-used, and expensive” as “librarians hunt out the publications of scientific institutions of every country—foreign languages and knowledge of foreign bibliography become imperative” (Carter & Bonk, 1959, p. 82). Spurred by World War II and the sheer enormity of trying to develop comprehensive collections, university libraries made various attempts at cooperative collection development (e.g., Rutledge & Swindler, 1988); Clement (2012) provides a good review of these efforts. The natural result is a large collection that houses these esoteric research materials; indeed, “similarity of size” is one of three criteria for university library membership in the Association of Research Libraries (Association of Research Libraries, 2009).

Collection similarity, measured as the extent of overlap, is another way libraries have assessed their collections (Potter, 1982). This approach has been used to plan for digitization (Lavoie, Connaway, & Dempsey, 2005), print repositories (Genoni & Varga, 2005; Malpas & Lavoie, 2014), or increased reliance on e-books (Anderson & Pham, 2013). White’s (1995) “brief tests” establish levels of aptitude for subject collections based on the number of WorldCat holdings—a measure of overlap—for a short list of recommended titles. He extends this approach with his “coverage power tests,” which avoid the reliance on the recommended lists (White, 2008). The WorldShare Collection Evaluation (formerly WorldCat Collection Analysis Tool) also adopts comparison with the entire OCLC database and with a range of peer institutions; Monroe-Gulick and Currie (2011) present a thoughtful account and good example of how this tool was deployed in a university library.

Davis and Shaw (1979) contend that the extent of overlap correlates with the size (number of volumes) in public library collections. Shaw (1985) reports a similar correlation between library size and overlap among public and academic libraries. Potter’s (1986) study of 21 academic libraries also finds correlation between size and overlap, but the relationship is strongest when the largest library (a major research library) is removed from the analysis. He hypothesizes that, “Very large libraries do not duplicate smaller collections as much as might be expected... [It] may be that very large libraries include within themselves specialized collections as well as large general collections (Potter, 1986, p. 132). Sanders and colleagues also suggest that specialized
collections affect the size-to-overlap relationship in major research libraries; in their study the
correlation holds for books in biology but not for those in mathematical analysis (Sanders,
O’Neill, & Weibel, 1988). Doll (1983) reports that school libraries overlap by less than one third
of their collections and 50% with public libraries. The work summarized in this paragraph relies
on samples from library catalogs and often restricts the analysis to recent publications. The
authors’ suggestions and conclusions have not been tested in the much more complete
representations of library holdings available, for example, in WorldCat.

Today’s collection managers must work carefully to locate material that will be useful locally as
self-publishing increases the number of books available (Bowker, 2014) and the extent and
variety of digital information expand. Librarians continue to debate the nature and future of
library collections. The ACRL’s 2015 Environmental Scan notes that “libraries are reassessing
their collection practices and strategies and developing a more holistic approach to collections,
particularly in light of emerging diversification of the scholarly record (e.g., learning
materials/objects, open access materials, freely available digital resources, etc.)”(Association of

Although library users continue to use physical books, developments such as e-books,
patron/demand-driven acquisition, externally-controlled e-collections such as Books 24x7, and
competing budget priorities are challenging the centrality of the library collection, as was (Long
& Schonfeld, 2014). At the same time, academic libraries are emphasizing “the library as place”
and have less space to house physical collections as they move to support student academic
services (Association of College and Research Libraries. Research Planning and Review
Committee, 2015). According to Dempsey and colleagues, libraries are starting “to manage
down institutional collections”(Dempsey, Malpas, & Lavoie, 2014, p. 415) as they move from “a
relatively static, document-based world to a more dynamic informational or data-driven one” (p.
397).

We are witnessing a pivotal change in the history of academic library collections. Those we see
today represent the culmination of generations of careful collection development and
management. It is reasonable to ask, as these collections are rethought and repurposed, “what
was a library collection?”

3. Research questions
The nature of collections and the similarities of college and university library holdings can be
compared in terms of:

● Library holdings (number of books in the collection):
  • What is the range in collection size among college libraries and among
university libraries?
  • How much larger are university collections than those in college libraries?

● Age of collections
  • What are the range and average publication dates for college and university
libraries?
  • Which years are most represented in the collections?

● Subject
  • Which subjects are most heavily collected?
  • Do publication dates for top subjects differ from the collections overall?

● Rare or unique items
  • What percentage of the total holdings are held in only one library in the study?
  • How rare are these titles when compared with all WorldCat holdings?

● Frequently-held items
  • How many titles are owned by all 26 libraries?
  • What are the publication dates and subjects of these commonly-held titles?

● Collection overlap
  • Does library size correlate with the percentage of overlap in the titles held?

To address these questions, data from library consortia will make possible consideration of several libraries of each type. Consortia typically bring together institutions roughly similar in terms of their mission, resources, and location, thus reducing some of the variability in collection strategies that occur across institutions. Comparing a college consortium with a university consortium brings out differences between these types of institutions in terms of mission and priorities—differences that are reflected, for example, in number of students and collection budgets. This approach can demonstrate the results of the collection development strategies and priorities that shaped today’s libraries.

4. Methods
The OCLC WorldCat database includes new acquisitions and retrospective holdings for most U.S. academic libraries. It serves as a union catalog for library holdings and provides the most complete database from which to compare collections. The study will analyze monographic holdings only. Journals also consume a major part of academic library budgets, but assessing the extent of each library’s holdings is beyond the scope of this project. Although there are some questions about duplicate records or how carefully a library maintains its holdings information, WorldCat has been used extensively for collection analysis. OCLC holdings for several geographically similar libraries will be the basis for this study.

College libraries are represented by the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA), a consortium of 13 academic institutions that emphasize “education in the tradition of the liberal arts and sciences” (http://glca.org/about-us/our-mission). GLCA is one of relatively few multi-state consortia of liberal arts colleges. The Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) libraries will represent university library collections. The CIC includes the Big Ten plus the University of Chicago. Nearly all members are located in the upper Midwest (broadly defined). Two members from east of the Alleghenies are excluded because their collections might reflect historical differences from the other libraries studied: Rutgers University, and University of Maryland. All universities represented are classified as “doctoral universities: highest research activity” (R1) in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/). All are members of the Center for Research Libraries and
eight are among the founding members. Studying these two consortia provides a clear contrast between the institutional context for the libraries in the study. (See Appendix 1 for a list of the institutions included in this study.)

In February 2015 OCLC provided data from the WorldCat database for 12,593,584 print book manifestations (in an FRBR sense) published before 2014 and held by at least one library in the study. The dataset included the year of publication, LC classification as well as Dewey, and a key to which libraries had registered their holding of the book through OCLC. Selecting books published before 2014 is intended to reduce the impact of variations in speed of acquisition and cataloging. Descriptive statistics were compiled using unix; summary statistics were analyzed using Microsoft Excel.

5. Findings and discussion

5.1 Library holdings
In terms of collection size, the 12,593,584 titles generated 37,308,520 holdings. Overall, the university libraries hold more than seven times the number of books in college libraries. Some 12,383,615 titles are held in at least one university library; for these books, the median is two and mean number of holding libraries is three. The universities’ investments in a just-in-case resource generates large collections with many items that are owned by relatively few libraries—hence a highly skewed distribution, as seen in Figure 1.

The 1,628,884 titles held in at least one college library have a different distribution: the median is seven and the mean is eight libraries. This focus on “working collections” for undergraduates tends toward the choice and retention of materials that will be of more general interest; thus more
titles are owned by more libraries and the distribution is less skewed (Johnson, 2014, 205). Figure 2 shows this distribution. Appendix 2 presents the data for Figures 1 and 2.

![Figure 2. Number of holding libraries for titles held by college libraries](image)

The number of holdings per university library ranged from 878,735 to 4,234,693, with a mean of 2,741,586 books per library. The largest college library was close in size to the smallest university library: the number of volumes in college libraries ranged from 156,777 to 709,710, with a mean of 271,596.

5.2 Age of collections
Reliable dates of publication are available for 12,235,074 records, or 97% of the dataset. Appendix 3 shows the number of books by publication year. For the university libraries, the ten publication years contributing the most titles are 1997-2006, which account for 1,852,483 or about 15% of all university holdings. The difference between the median publication date of 1978 and the mean of 1962 demonstrates the long tail of early publications, which is evident in Figure 3. The ten years contributing the most to college collections range from 1969 through 2002 (1969, 1970, and 1995-2002). These ten years account for only 2% of the college holdings, however, demonstrating a more consistent level of collection across the years and less emphasis on extremely old material. The median publication date is 1976, the mean 1965. The college libraries’ older top ten range and median publication date suggest that these collections contain relatively fewer of the newest materials, a possible indication that college library budgets have been straitened for a longer time.
Considering the books in all libraries, the 200,115 published in 2000 represent the high-water mark for acquisitions. The number of books acquired by these libraries declines consistently each year after 2000, with 2013 acquisitions more than 77,000 below the peak. The decline is not attributable to fewer books being published. According to *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information* (2002-2008) and the *Library and Book Trade Almanac* (2009-2015), the number of academic titles published averaged around 70,000 per year during this period, with a marked increase from 2007 through 2009 and a subsequent return to previous levels. Library book budgets, however, may explain the decline in acquisitions. The U.S. National Center for Education Statistics provides data on academic library collection budgets (http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/libraries/). These 26 libraries’ average book budgets, adjusted for inflation, were $1.54 million in 2000, rose to a peak of $1.86 million in 2004, and declined to $1.58 million in 2012. As a percentage of total library expenditures, allocations for books declined from 13.8% in 2000 to 10.7% in 2012.

The decline in book acquisitions may reflect changes, such as one or more of the following: libraries’ move to “just in time” purchasing, more collection resources going to electronic materials including ebook platforms, the effects of the economic recession, or reallocation of library priorities and budgets. The number of older titles reinforces the perception of library collections as sources for cultural heritage. The distribution also supports arguments for digitizing older materials to increase access to these carefully developed collections.

### 5.3 Subject

The first letter of the Library of Congress classification is used as an approximate representative for the books’ subjects. LC classifications are available for 10,921,278 titles, or 87% of the dataset. This portion of the analysis by subject uses only those records; no attempt is made to generate LC classifications from Dewey numbers. Language and Literature (class P) is by far the
most frequent, accounting for 30% of university collections (3,247,492) and 27% of college holdings (434,915). For universities, the next most frequent are class D (World History and History of Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) with 12% of titles and class H (Social Sciences) at 11%. Class B (Philosophy, Psychology, Religion) is fourth, with 8% of university libraries’ holdings. For college libraries class B rises to second place (12%), followed by class H (11%) and class D (9%). For both types of libraries, the top three classifications account for more than 50% of the collection. Appendix 4 gives the number of titles for each class number.

The second approach to analysis by subject looks at broad subject categories. Here the LC classification is supplemented by Dewey class when no LC class is available. Generalities (LC classes A and Z and Dewey class 0) are omitted. This analysis shows the libraries’ considerable strength in the social sciences and in the arts and humanities. The general strength by subject are the same for college and university libraries; college libraries have slightly more emphasis in the social sciences at the expense of the sciences, but the differences are negligible (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject (omits generalities and bibliography, LC classes A and Z and DDC class 0)</th>
<th>All Titles</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Colleges</th>
<th>Rare/Unique</th>
<th>All 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Humanities (LC classes M, N, P and DDC 2, 4, 7, and 8)</td>
<td>4,103,067 (38%)</td>
<td>4,030,111 (38%)</td>
<td>596,993 (37%)</td>
<td>1,809,569 (38%)</td>
<td>273 (38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences (B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L and DDC 1, 3, 9: includes history)</td>
<td>5,065,527 (46%)</td>
<td>4,971,181 (46%)</td>
<td>773,983 (49%)</td>
<td>2,199,134 (47%)</td>
<td>428 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences (Q, R, S, T, U, V, W and DDC 5, 6)</td>
<td>1,722,764 (16%)</td>
<td>1,705,678 (16%)</td>
<td>224,820 (14%)</td>
<td>715,272 (15%)</td>
<td>16 (2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Subject categories of books

The median publication year for university titles is 1978 but the most collected subjects have more current holdings. For the university libraries, the median for literature is 1980, world history 1981, and social sciences 1985. Among the college libraries, the social sciences are again more current than the other subjects, with a 1982 median publication date. The other two top subjects tend to be older than the 1976 median for college collections overall: literature is 1974 and philosophy/psychology/religion is 1971.

The strength of the language and literature collections reinforces the description of the library as the laboratory of the humanities also strongly suggests the emphasis on non-monographic resources in science and technology disciplines. The subject distribution may also reflect the backgrounds and interests of collection developers as well as library users. The apparent
priorities for recent collecting, as reflected in median age, correspond to current demands on library collections (Rose-Wiles, 2013, see percent of total checkouts, Table 3).

5.4 Rare materials
Rare items are identified as those owned by only one of the libraries in this study. These would presumably be unique among these 26 libraries; however, some of the actual duplication may result from cataloging inconsistencies or duplicate records that are not yet merged within WorldCat. Thus, the works held by only one library in the study are considered “rare.” They constitute a large portion of these collections: 6,279,099 records, or 51% of the dataset. The median publication year of 1975 and mean of 1954 demonstrate that the rare materials are older than for the dataset overall (see Potter, 1986). Rarely held titles have a similar subject distribution to the entire dataset, with social sciences accounting for 47% of titles and the arts and humanities at 38% (see Table 1, column 5).

Given their comparative size and orientation toward collecting “just in case,” it is not surprising that rare items were found more often in the university library collections. University libraries’ rarely held titles account for 48% of the dataset (6,083,681 unique titles). College libraries’ 195,418 rarely held titles contribute 2%.

A random sample of 200 titles held by only one library was checked in WorldCat to see how many OCLC libraries own copies, whether other editions are listed, and the language of these books. Comparing the holdings from these consortia with WorldCat as a whole may demonstrate cooperative collection management arrangements (e.g., Sloan et al., 1984). For example, an item that is widely held in WorldCat but unique within this dataset might indicate that members of the consortium relied on this single copy for their members and directed resources to other purchases. The number of OCLC holding libraries for these rare materials ranges from 1 to 542, with a median of 6. No other editions are available for 22% of the titles. At the other extreme is an edition of The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes that is unique within the dataset but for which WorldCat lists 5,310 alternative editions. The median is 3 other editions available for the books in only one of the libraries in the study. The variation in availability of other copies and other editions illustrates that some of the rare items are unusual materials (e.g., Sap Preheaters: Efficient Maple Syrup Processing or a 1997 volume in Chinese on economic policy) and others are rare because they represent unusual editions of more common works (e.g., Madame Bovary and Sherlock Holmes). English titles account for 47% of these rarely held books, with German (9%), French (8%), and Spanish (7%) also well represented. Languages such as Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Catalan, Icelandic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Sinhalese are represented by one book each and in total account for 20% of the sample. Potter (1986) also notes the greater share of older materials and non-English titles among uniquely held materials.

5.5 Titles in all 26 libraries
The other end of the skewed distribution of holdings represents the small number of books that are widely held. All 26 libraries own 717 books in common. The publication dates range from 1886 to 2012; the distribution is generally a bell-shaped curve, with the mode at 1966 and median at 1970. The top LC classifications are language and literature (33%), world history and
American history (15% each). Table 1, column 6 shows the coverage by general subject groups. The core includes a much higher percentage of social science and much less science/technology than the collections overall. Checking a random sample of 100 titles in WorldCat finds that on average these books are held in 1,427 libraries, with a range of 596 to 3,182 (Michener’s *Hawaii*). All are in English; the number of other editions available ranges from 11 to 514 (*The Cambridge History of China*).

Malpas and Lavoie (2014) note that both the rare and commonly-held materials will be focal points for regional repository planning. The rare materials add distinctiveness to the consortial or regional collection and are a likely focus for digitization projects. The 717 titles owned by all 26 institutions represents only 0.006% of the dataset. Assuming that popularity (the number of holding libraries) generally reflects user need, libraries may on occasion require access to these and other relatively redundant titles when the local copy is in use. Thus, the commonly-collected titles also represent an important resource for libraries collaborating in a repository or resource-sharing arrangement.

5.6 Collection overlap
Library collection size clearly correlates with percentage of the total titles owned. As shown in Figure 4, all libraries are remarkably close to the polynomial trend line of best fit: \( r^2 = 0.98 \). This indicates an especially strong correlation and suggests that these academic libraries make similar decisions in selecting books for their collections. One university library, with 1,968,714 volumes and 15.6% overlap holds more of the titles than would be expected for its size and is slightly above the curve; one college library, with 314,598 titles and 2.5% overlap, has a collecting profile somewhat less similar to the other libraries and is slightly below the trend line.

![Figure 4. Percentage overlap by library size](image-url)
After reviewing numerous studies of collection overlap – some using methods that would be questionable today – or involving few libraries, Potter (1982) reports that the amount of unique material held by a single library ranges from 50% to 86%. The 50% unique holdings reported in this study is based on analysis of complete collections, not samples of current acquisitions, specific subject areas, or random samples from catalogs. University librarians have clearly developed impressively large collections “in the attempt to be the *omnium-gatherum*” that Dana (1908, p. 77) described. College collections are about seven times smaller than university libraries, a relationship that supports the accounts of differentiation by type of institution. Nonetheless, every library offers some unique items to the dataset. The number of unique items ranges from 5,845 for one of the smaller college libraries to 1,679,889 for the largest university library. The number of uniquely held titles correlates with collection size ($r^2=0.97$).

6. Conclusion
The collections in these 26 libraries are testaments to careful stewardship by generations of librarians. The collections’ strengths and diversity are apparent in the numbers of books and especially in the range of subjects and historical coverage. Differences among the collections provide evidence of the varying institutional needs (and capabilities) that affected how librarians have approached and accomplished their “most important job” (Carter& Bonk, 1959, p. 10). This project provides new perspectives on the 1980s questions about library collection overlap. The availability of data for all library holdings demonstrates the limits of samples: they can give a glimpse of an underlying phenomenon but cannot provide a complete picture. From this analysis of WorldCat holdings, library collections are seen to reflect their context and purpose: small libraries are not simply subsets of larger ones and collection overlap is not (merely) a function of library size. Moreover, it is possible to extend Potter’s (1986, p. 132) suggestion beyond “very large libraries” to say that all library collections “include within themselves specialized collections.”

Signs of shifts in collecting are evident. Libraries hold fewer copies of recent books (2000 to date). The aging of print collections can be seen in the range of the top ten publication years: 1997 to 2006 for the universities and 1969 to 2002 for the college libraries. Lavoie and colleagues (2005) report increasing divergence in collections among the five Google Print Library Project participants from 1996 through 2005; as they remark, this “warrants closer inspection.” The current study indicates that collection decisions since 2000 have decreased the number of books purchased and continued the trend toward divergence: the number of uniquely held titles rose from 45% to more than 50% between 2000 and 2013. Figure 5 shows both the decline in number of titles and the increase in the number that are uniquely held during this period.
Always limited library funds have been stretched even further by economic developments. According to *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information* (2002-2009) and the *Library and Book Trade Almanac* (2009-2015) the cost of an average academic book rose from $55.67 in 2000 to $107.02 in 2013. Even adjusted for inflation, this is a 42% increase. Over these years total library budgets barely kept pace with inflation and book budgets declined as a percentage of library expenditures. Little wonder, then, that these libraries have acquired fewer books since 2000 and more of the titles they did purchase are held by fewer (half the time only one) of the libraries.

Book collections also change in response to new technologies and the expectations of both users and administrators. Libraries are expected to provide electronic materials that may be leased rather than purchased, and thus not represented as library holdings in WorldCat. Ebook platforms and patron/demand-driven acquisition (a form of “just in time” purchasing) likely affect the collection profile as well.

This analysis of their overlap shows the robustness of library collections. Institutional investments in libraries through the twentieth century have been deployed to acquire recognized standard materials and to meet specific local needs. Malpas and Lavoie (2014, p. 14) note that, for twenty-first century libraries, “coverage requires collaboration.” Library consortia are finding creative ways to leverage their collective strengths, among other things to preserve print and to create digital images that extend access to rare materials. The problems Rider and Clapp highlighted in the mid-twentieth century are finally being handled with twenty-first century technologies and perspectives: what ACRL termed “a more holistic approach to collections” is already evident (Association of College and Research Libraries. Research Planning and Review Committee, 2015, p. 3).
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