



**Canadian Association
of Research Libraries**

**Association des bibliothèques
de recherche du Canada**

**The Permanent Conservation of Print Collections in Canada:
A Model for Consideration by the CARL Scholarly Communication Committee**

Submitted by the CARL Permanent Conservation of Print Collections (PCPC) Working Group

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Introduction:

The widespread availability of digital versions of print library materials has enabled libraries to engage in weeding projects to recover shelving space for new materials and create floor space for new purposes. While this has proven advantageous to individual libraries in meeting evolving user needs, it raises concerns about the potential loss of heritage collections in research libraries. The development of a policy framework that governs the inter-institutional management of library print resources is critical for their long-term preservation.

The PCPC Working Group was established as a temporary working group in 2010 with specific reference to goal 1.4 in the *CARL Strategic Plan 2010-2012* ("CARL will work with other organizations to develop a plan for the long-term preservation of Canada's collective resources in print format"). While digitization is an important content preservation strategy, it is beyond the scope of this particular working group's mandate. The working group has followed the work of the inter-regional "Print Conservation of Collections in Canada Group", and has reviewed key reports on the management of print collections.

We provide in this brief document a set of general principles for print collection conservation in Canada based on a concept of a "national research collection" comprised of the combined print collections of Canada's research libraries.

General Principles:

1. That CARL libraries agree in principle to weed print items from their collections only after determining that a "reasonable" number of print copies exist in other CARL libraries (including our federal/national members). The exact number of copies may vary by class of material.

Rationale:

There will always be some uncertainty around the precision and currency of the holdings information in a union catalogue. As well, over time, individual copies may be lost or damaged. Under such an arrangement, a library holding one of the copies would keep that item in its collection, even if there is little local value in its retention, unless a home for it could be found at another CARL library.

This proposed scheme does not require any moving of materials from one library to another. As well, this proposal focuses on Canadian (and specifically CARL) collections, but recognizes that regional agreements and participation in international print collection conservation projects such as that proposed by the Center for Research Libraries will be factors in decision-making.



2. That an appropriate database (e.g. AMICUS, OCLC) serve as the source of evidence of the number of copies available in CARL libraries.

Rationale:

We have recommended the use of a database such as AMICUS or OCLC as sources of holdings information because they are information tools that already exist, are national/international in scope, and most CARL libraries contribute their holdings records to them with some regularity.

3. That CARL libraries each commit to regular uploading of their holdings records to a database such as AMICUS or OCLC.

Rationale:

The coordinated conservation of a national research collection depends on accurate holdings information. There is currently a variety of practices among CARL libraries around the contribution of their holdings records to AMICUS and OCLC; some may contribute regularly and fully, others more sporadically.

4. That "last copies" be marked as last or rare copies in some way, either in the database of record or by holding libraries.

Rationale:

There would be value in indicating rare copy status of a given title or edition to facilitate the creation of "no weed" lists for local use, for readily identifying priority items for digitization, for identifying a national "rare books collection," and for seeing the geographical distribution of rare items. This tagging could be done through a MARC field or as a holdings note.

Other Considerations:

A CARL agreement in principle on retention of last copies should not be interpreted to conflict with regional consortium agreements on retention of print journals or regional materials, which may be more restrictive, and will not be limited to CARL members.

PCPC endorses the efforts of the regional consortia to develop their own plans for the conservation of journals and other regional materials. While there are particularly good reasons for focusing on journals at this time, it is likely that in the long term, the regional consortia may want to focus on the conservation of other print (and possibly other analogue format) regional materials, whether originating in or about the local region. These regional materials might include provincial government documents as well. By supporting the above general principles, CARL academic libraries, in their role as members of the regional consortia, would thus ensure that another library in their local regional consortium had paper copies of a journal run or items of regional relevance.

PCPC recommends, however, that CARL libraries take a Canada-wide (but CARL-specific) perspective when considering the weeding of print monographs, federal government documents, or any materials of an extra-regional interest, unless the regional consortium has a more restrictive policy around weeding in the given class of materials.

The national/government library members of CARL (CISTI, LAC, and Library of Parliament), in their own de-accessioning activities, would want to decide for themselves whether they should act as a group (apart from the university libraries) in determining the focus of consideration for their Canadiana collections. However, given the shelving space issues of these libraries, the presence of an agreement in principle among CARL members to preserve the 'national research collection' may provide scope for the withdrawal of some items from a national/government library collection.