ERALL (Electronic Resources Academic Library Link)

Introduction

ERALL (Electronic Resources Academic Library Link) is an attempt to form the eight UGC-funded university libraries into a Hong Kong-based consortium to move from a group-purchasing model to collaborative collection development with emphasis on English-language E-books. With the support from the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the eight UGC-funded university libraries, the 24-month project led by City University of Hong Kong (CityU) was initiated in August 2006.

Background

Shrinking English-language print monograph collections

Advancement in communication and information technology hastens the knowledge cycle, resulting in a proliferation of publications in recent years which is both a blessing and a challenge. New titles available in various formats flood into the publishing market at an accelerating rate. No library is able to acquire them all. The effect is compounded by price inflation which mercilessly reduces the purchasing power of libraries.

While both monographs and journals (both print and electronic) have become dearer, increases in journal subscription prices have skyrocketed. Shrinking budgets in recent years have simply left university libraries stranded, because they rely very much on their journal collections to support research activities. Their remedial strategy is to re-prioritize the budget to acquire journals, especially electronic ones, at the expense of monographs. Electronic journals now share an increasingly higher percentage of the library budget while the number of new print monographs added into the collection, especially English-language ones which are usually more expensive compared to their Chinese-language counterparts, decreases steadily. The tables and charts below provide quick snapshots on the situation now facing university libraries in Hong Kong.

Table 1: New Volumes Added to Library Collections in Selected Libraries in Hong Kong
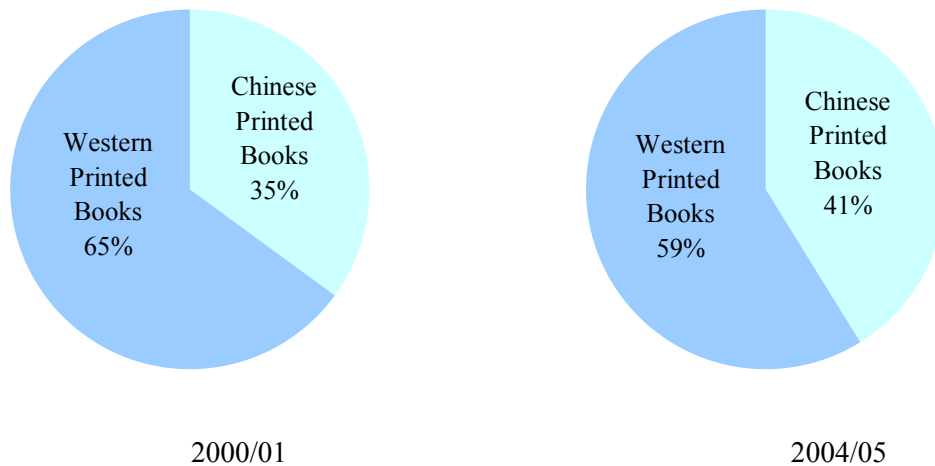
Year	Library 1	Library 2	Library 3	Library 4	Library 5	Library 6	Library 7
2000	87,000	47,800	55,800	117,300	37,700	26,700	51,100
2004	39,600	41,000	32,600	98,100	17,600	16,200	47,800
% change	-54%	-14%	-42%	-16%	-53%	-39%	-6%

Remarks: Since one or two libraries calculate their figures in a rather different way, direct comparison is not possible. Therefore, only libraries that ensure a fair comparison will be shown in Table 1, Table 2 and Chart 1.

Table 2: Number of e-Journals in Selected Libraries in Hong Kong

Year	Library A	Library B	Library C	Library D	Library E	Library F	Library G
2000	20,429	13,637	9,968	14,556	4,955	15,048	18,756
2004	32,595	19,930	15,038	26,778	12,368	23,429	35,481
% change	+60%	+46%	+51%	+84%	+150%	+56%	+89%

Chart 1: Combined Percentage of New Monographs Added to six Selected Libraries in Hong Kong, 2000/01 versus 2004/05

2000/01 — Western Printed Books 65%, Chinese Printed Books 35%

2004/05 — Western Printed Books 59%, Chinese Printed Books 41%

For institutions in Hong Kong where the teaching medium is English, English-language monographs are important resources for the students. Allowing our English-language monograph collection to shrink continuously is detrimental to the teaching and learning of our users and contradicts our fundamental role of supporting research.

Interlibrary loan - not the whole solution

From traditional staff-mediated interlibrary loans to user-initiated HKALL borrowing services (thanks to the HK$10M funding from UGC), reciprocal lending and borrowing of books physically between libraries have been and are usefully underpinning libraries' ability to acquire enough to satisfy all the needs of all their users. While HKALL has streamlined many of the intermediary processes of traditional interlibrary loan thus reducing the unit cost for processing each request and improving efficiency, it draws in a larger clientele since the service is extended to almost all staff and students. This contrasts to traditional interlibrary loan that is offered to privileged groups of users only, such as, academic staff and postgraduate students. A larger clientele means more transactions; the efficiency of HKALL also attracts for itself more requests.

In fact, if the number of new English-language monographs added to each library is decreasing, it may well be that, in the long term, the aggregated number of new English-language monographs available in the mega collection for circulation among

HKALL libraries will diminish. What Hong Kong libraries need is a further building block that can substantially increase the English-language monograph collection in a cost-effective manner.

Objectives

1. To strengthen the English-language monograph collections of participating libraries. To extend the range and depth of our collections.

2. To make use of our collective purchasing power of ERALL to acquire for participating libraries the maximum number of English-language ebooks at the lowest unit cost for shared access on perpetual basis, thus achieving value for money.

3. To make use of the ERALL collective consortium environment to achieve coordinated acquisitions whereby duplication is kept to a minimum (except for titles in high demand). This ensures that the maximum number of unique titles is available to cover a wide range of subjects to support UGC programmes, thus achieving value for money.

4. To offer another resource sharing alternative that involves no physical transportation of materials thus resulting in substantial savings in terms of time and manpower.

5. To free stack and storage space through provision of E-books instead of physical print books, thus achieving better space management and utilization.

6. To offer E-books as another electronic resources apart from electronic journals to support e-learning.
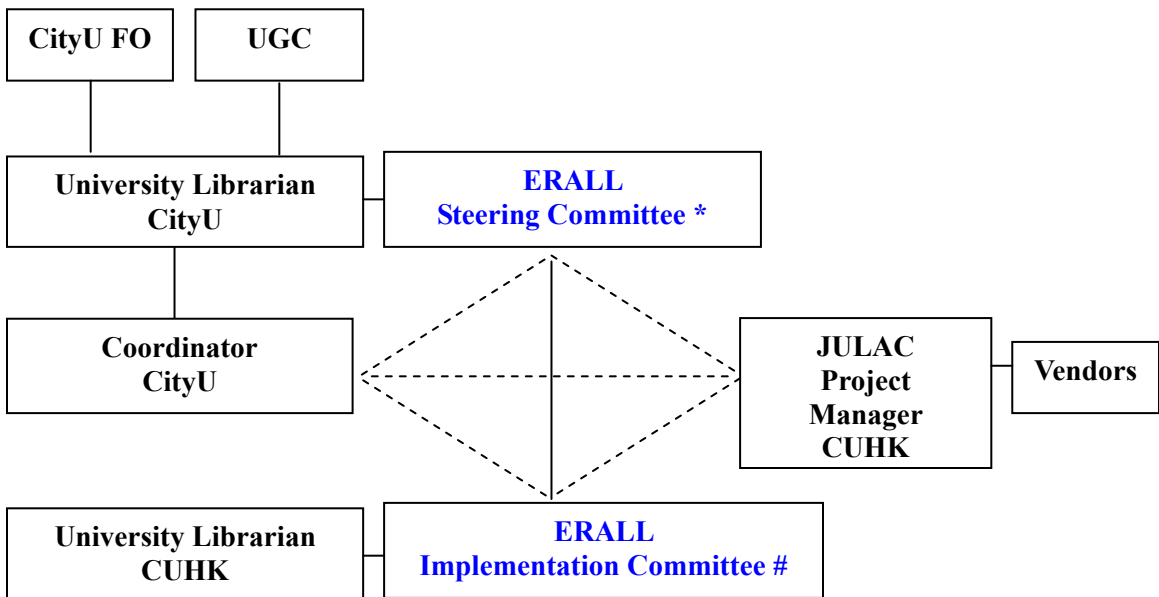
Key Features

ERALL aims to secure the maximum number of <u>English-language E-books</u> with the minimum duplication for <u>shared access</u> among the eight UGC-funded university libraries through <u>consortial purchase</u> to achieve a truly "virtual" library.

English-language E-books	- Statistics show that the English-language monograph collections of the eight university libraries in Hong Kong are shrinking since a higher percentage of the book budget has been relocated to acquire electronic journals in order to cope with the price inflation. - The business of English-language publishers is more mature and well-developed, their offerings are very expensive for individual libraries to afford on their own. Money from UGC will therefore help the eight university libraries as a whole to leverage their purchasing power and enhance the comprehensiveness of their English-language E-book collections within the shortest period of time.

Shared access	• E-books are an ideal format for collaborative collection development within a consortial environment. The sharing of E-books among libraries is simple and seamless as E-books do not need to be physically delivered through interlibrary loans or any intermediary requesting mechanisms. E-books are at once everywhere and nowhere, as no library "physically" owns them but access to them is equally available to readers of all the member libraries. This makes resource sharing through a mega "virtual" library collection possible.
Consortial purchase	• Shared access means that a single copy of E-book can be used by all member libraries. This reduces the necessity to acquire duplicate copies unless the item concerned is in high demand. Purchase through a consortium provides the environment for better co-ordination and thus de-duplication opportunities. Funding from UGC can then be used to acquire the maximum number of *unique* titles that will in turn benefit all users in the UGC Sector.
	• Big purchase through a consortium as a monopsony (single buyer) can secure big discounts and greater negotiating power to influence the terms offered by the suppliers.

Organization

* ERALL Steering Committee is being established to oversee the implementation and development of the Project and to prepare progress reports/final report to be submitted to UGC.

\# ERALL Implementation Committee is being established to implement and execute the charges of the Committee which include E-resources selection, collection development and usage evaluation.

Highlights

Timeframe on ERALL Purchase

Date	Activity
Oct 2006	15 E-book packages out of 63 were identified for ERALL project
Nov 2006	Selection criteria were confirmed and 5 vendors were selected for further negotiation
Jan 2007	Blackwell (BRO+BEOS), Springer E-books and Wiley eMRWs were selected
Sep 2007	Ebrary E-books were selected
Mar 2008	Oxford (OSO+DRS) was selected

Selection Criteria

The following criteria on selecting E-books have been discussed in meetings among the ERALL Implementation Committee members and subsequently approved by the Steering Committee.

Purpose – support teaching & research

Usage – heavily in-demand items

Access – multiple access with perpetual ownership

Language – English title is preferred

Cost – cheaper than print, achieve critical mass of low cost

Subject relevance – all subjects

Format – core reference materials and core textbooks

Copyright – copyrighted materials

Reputation of the publisher/vendor

Currency – content outdated/updated fast

Interface – user-friendly with value-added service

Number of Titles/Volumes Acquired

Vendors	Users Access	Publication Year	Titles	Volumes
Ebrary - Blackwell	3 users	2006-2007	236	708
Ebrary - Taylor & Francis	2 users	2006-2008	2,089	4,178
Ebrary - Others	1 user	2006-2007	2,070	2,070
Blackwell	Unlimited	1993-2007	278	288
Oxford	Unlimited	1963-2008	1,838	1,838
Springer	Unlimited	2005-2007	8,952	8,952
Wiley	Unlimited	1999-2006	9	219
Total			15,472	18,253

Title Analysis – Subject Breakdown by Vendors

Subject	Springer	Blackwell	Wiley	Ebrary	Oxford	Total	Percent
Business, Economics & Finance	577	34	1	379	308	1,299	9%
Humanities, Social Sciences & Art	811	244	1	2,852	1,397	5,305	34%
Science & Technology	6,739	0	7	563	131	7,440	48%
Medicine	825	0	0	425	0	1,250	8%
Miscellaneous	0	0	0	176	2	178	1%
Total	8,952	278	9	4,395	1,838	15,472	100%

Meetings of ERALL Implementation Committee

Meeting	Date and Time	Venue	Meeting	Date and Time	Venue
1st	12 Oct 2006, 2:30pm	CUHK	6th	13 Aug 2007, 2:30pm	CUHK
2nd	13 Nov 2006, 2:30pm	CUHK	7th	17 Sept 2007, 2:00pm	CUHK
3rd	22 Jan 2007, 2:30pm	CUHK	8th	6 Nov 2007, 10:00am	CUHK
4th	22 Mar 2007, 2:30pm	CUHK	9th	28 Feb 2008, 2:00pm	CUHK
5th	9 May 2007, 2:30pm	CUHK	10th	27 May 2008, 2:30pm	CityU