Chapter 6
A Statewide Collaborative Storage and Print Repository Model:
The Florida Academic Repository (FLARE)

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ABSTRACT

As space pressures increase across college campuses, libraries are forced to make difficult decisions about their collections. The Florida Academic Repository (FLARE) is a centralized, collaborative storage facility managed by the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries for the twelve public Florida universities and the University of Miami. This project has been in planning since 2007, but began operating a medium-density storage facility for partners in 2012. Although full funding for a true high-density facility has not been received, significant strides and lessons have been learned through the process. Included in this chapter are examples of policies, equipment used, governance structure, and past and future projects.

INTRODUCTION

As space pressures increase across college campuses, libraries are forced to make difficult decisions about their collections. Trying to find room for new material, as well as meet the ever increasing demand for student/patron space, is a challenge that many libraries are facing. One solution to these problems is off-site storage. The Florida Academic Repository (FLARE) is a centralized, collaborative storage facility managed by the University of Florida's George A. Smathers Libraries for the State University System of Florida (SUS), which consists of the 12 public Florida universities and the University of Miami (UM). A high-density storage facility has been in planning since 2007, and while full funding

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for that facility has not been received, significant planning has been ongoing since that time. Additionally, FLARE has been operating as a medium-density facility with donations from UM and others since 2012. This has provided a significant body of evidence that supports the need for a future building, but also has provided valuable time practicing, improving, and problem-solving for an understandably large and complex cooperative. This chapter will discuss the importance of an offsite, high-density shared storage facility like the Florida Academic Repository (FLARE), a statewide shared collection, in relieving such pressures by offering efficiencies in space to all participating institutions. It will also outline the governance structure of FLARE, while also discussing significant policies and projects. A history of the project is also included. In addition to the overall importance of FLARE, the concept of high-density facilities will also be explored through an overview of related literature. A review of the FLARE partnership, detailing how the collaboration began, where it is now, and where it is headed, is also provided. Finally, the discussion will conclude with details about how things work at FLARE and the ways in which it differs from other consortiums of this nature.

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will attempt to provide an overview of what has previously been written regarding high-density storage. By definition, high-density storage consists of shelving items by size, utilizing special cardboard trays, on specially designed shelving units (Leighton & Weber, 1999). These are sometimes called "Harvard" type facilities, because the concept was initiated at Harvard University in 1984 (Graham, 2001). Typically, "Harvard" style facilities also maintain tight temperature and humidity controls (50 degrees Fahrenheit and 35 percent relative humidity), and utilize some form of inventory control software as a means of locating items in the facility (Lane & Dill, 2001). This is necessary because items are no longer in subject classification, and a tray might contain a variety of materials, from a single volume from a series to monographs with multiple subject classifications. Without some means of tracking those items, they would be nearly impossible to locate again. The key to the efficiency of these facilities is the lack of dead space between shelving. On a typical library shelf, there are books of varying heights. That requires the shelf to be set for the tallest book, but creates gaps between the height of the shorter books and the shelf above. In a high-density facility, these gaps are removed because only books of similar height are stored on a shelf. This method, combined with shelves that are 35 feet high, results in significant increases in capacity, estimated at 3.5 times that of a typical library (Lane & Dill, 2001). This allows high-density storage to maximize volumetric efficiency, taking advantage of both the additional height of the shelving and the increase in shelving capacity from storing by height and utilizing the unique properties of the shelving (Lane & Dill, 2001).

In FLARE's case, the SUS Libraries decided to build a static high-density, "Harvard" style facility. This is a decidedly low-tech option, but the SUS Libraries purposely pursued this option because of a desire to avoid more complex moveable shelving systems or automated storage retrieval systems. Early discussions took into account the idea that more material could be stored in the same footprint by utilizing mobile shelving. However, there is expansion capacity on the existing site to accommodate more than 20 million volumes. To put that into perspective, currently the SUS Libraries in total have less than 18 million titles, which includes substantial duplication across the system. The additional cost and complexity was deemed unnecessary given this growth capacity. Long-term maintenance concerns, especially given UF's (and others) experience with compact shelving, certainly influenced these discussions. Automated