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Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP) Expands Scope and Membership

ReCAP, the [Research Collections and Preservation Consortium](#), founded by Columbia University, The New York Public Library, and Princeton University in 2000 to preserve and make accessible the collections of its members, has expanded its scope and membership, transforming its original mission from serving as a shared physical repository to becoming a model for shared collection building and management.

In January 2019, Harvard University joined the consortium with the aim of implementing strategies for collaboration in building, sharing, and preserving physical and digital collections in the coming years. An associate member since 2016, Harvard has relocated over 1 million books to the Princeton facility, which is growing at the rate of 1 million volumes annually. In the two decades ReCAP has existed, its shared repository on Princeton's Forrestal Campus has grown to hold 16 million items. The consortium members annually fulfill approximately 250,000 requests from researchers and libraries around the world.

"Through this collaboration, we are giving new life to the collections each institution has invested in over centuries," said Ann Thornton, Chair of the ReCAP Board of Governors and Vice Provost and University Librarian at Columbia University. "Our respective research communities now enjoy significantly broader access to crucial resources that support their work. This collaboration increases the impact of collection building, and we are thrilled to expand that impact with Harvard as our newest member."

In 2017, with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the consortium launched its [Shared Collection Service](#), which currently enables users at Columbia, NYPL, and Princeton to experience increasingly seamless access to the extraordinary holdings accessioned over centuries. The project goals were twofold: to better manage and preserve the shared collection, and to create the technical infrastructure necessary to allow cross-partner borrowing between institutions. Upon its completion, the project enabled each organization to provide its patrons with seamless discovery and direct request of the ReCAP materials of all partners, thus empowering its users with a more diverse selection of resources than ever before. Harvard's eventual integration into this service will enable users at Columbia, Princeton,

and NYPL to access millions more volumes currently held in the Harvard Depository in Southboro, MA.

The Shared Collection Service allows users to request items directly from local catalogs of each consortium member for 24-hour delivery. Initial implementation of the service resulted in access to more than [5 million items added to the Princeton online catalog](#), more than [7 million items to the Columbia online catalog](#), and [more than 7 million items to The New York Public Library online shared collection catalog](#). Since its launch, patrons' use of the shared holdings across each partner institution has risen between 30 and 70 percent over the previous year, demonstrating the value of seamless access to distributed collections.

“Membership in ReCAP represents a new era in collaboration for Harvard and research libraries,” said Sarah Thomas, Vice President for the Harvard Library and University Librarian; Roy E. Larsen Librarian for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. “Working with our peers at Columbia, NYPL, and Princeton will enable us to break new ground in access to knowledge and the management of information for the immediate benefit of our students and scholars.”

In addition to improved access and increased efficiency already achieved through the Shared Collection Service, the ReCAP consortium is exploring collaborative collection building and joint digital initiatives to improve the user experience. Librarians at Columbia, Harvard, NYPL, and Princeton are developing shared preservation approaches and plans for enhanced electronic document delivery. In addition, the ReCAP consortium will be able to speak with one voice in national level endeavors to coordinate print repositories.

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