

HISTORY

The Linn County Library Consortium can trace its origins to the summer of 1969. That summer librarians from the Cedar Rapids Public Library and Coe College proposed a policy for cooperative library use in the metropolitan area. The policy stated that an approved borrower from any participating library could obtain library material from any other participating library. The materials could be acquired either directly by the patron with a librarian's referral or through traditional inter-library loan. Libraries initially participating in this experimental agreement included the Cedar Rapids Public Library, the Cedar Rapids Community Schools, Coe College, Collins Radio, Cornell College, the Iowa Masonic Library, Kirkwood Community College, Mercy Hospital, Mount Mercy College, and St. Luke's Hospital. Librarians evaluating the project at the end of the trial period voted to renew the cooperative use policy and the referral system today remains a vital part of the Linn County Library Consortium's activities.

The libraries participating in the referral project became known as the Cedar Rapids Area Cooperating Libraries. Regis and LaSalle High Schools joined this group in 1972. Also in 1972 the Cooperating Libraries voted to expand their cooperative efforts to include the publication of a Cedar Rapids Union List of Serials. The first edition of the annual union list, which was published later that year, included approximately one thousand titles. The seventeenth edition of the union list is now in preparation.

The union list of serials and the referral project were the major activities of the Cedar Rapids Area Cooperating Libraries in the 1970s. By 1979 the group had expanded to include the Cedar Rapids Art Center Library, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, and the College Community Schools. By the end of the decade the cooperating libraries were discussing legal incorporation. Many of the libraries believed that a more formal governing structure was necessary if the group wanted to secure grant money for cooperative projects.

The Linn County Library Consortium was incorporated in late 1980. The seven charter members were Cedar Rapids Public Library, Coe College, Cornell College, Kirkwood Community College, Mercy Hospital, Mount Mercy College, and St. Luke's Hospital.

In 1982 the Consortium was awarded a Medical Library Resource Grant from the National Library of Medicine. The four libraries that participated in the grant (Kirkwood, Mercy Hospital, Mount Mercy, and St. Luke's Hospital) identified medical areas requiring additional library resources in the community and developed plans for sharing those new resources. Other projects from the early years of the Consortium included an unfunded grant proposal to share library resources via an OCLC network and a group contract for BRS database services. In 1984 the Linn County Library Consortium co-sponsored the annual convention of the Midwest Chapter of the Medical Library Association.

Cedar Rapids Public Library's acquisition of a DEC VAX computer prompted two new Consortium projects in 1985. Consortium members developed procedures to utilize the VAX's electronic mail capability. Consortium members with access to computers and modems use the electronic mail system to transmit interlibrary loan requests and other messages to one another. The Consortium also transferred the Cedar Rapids Union List of Serials to the VAX. Approximately 3,600 full MARC serial records are maintained online on the VAX.

Since 1980 the membership of the Consortium has increased from seven libraries to nineteen. Joining the charter members were the East Central Regional Library (1982); the Grant Wood Area Education Agency (1983); Rockwell International - Collins Division (1983); Marion Carnegie Library (1983); the Cedar Rapids Community Schools (1985); the Gazette Company (1985); Linn Mar Community Schools (1985); Marion Independent School District (1985); College Community Schools (1985); Creswell, Munsell, Fultz, & Zirbel, Inc. (1987); Norand Corporation (1989); and the Hamilton Business College (1989).