

Collaborative Technical Services: Conditions that foster Collaboration

Looking at collaborative projects in the aggregate is interesting because patterns emerge that identify conditions that are common among successful collaborative projects versus unsuccessful collaborative projects. Here are conditions that appear to facilitate successful collaborations:

- They have strong support from the top or from strong local advocates.
- Often they have pressing economic reasons to really gear-up.
- If the institutions involved are not geographically proximate, they at least had good delivery systems.
- Someone on staff has had at least some previous experience creating memoranda of understanding and other workflow agreements.
- They exhibit similar work cultures and collections.
- They have experience cooperating with each other.
- They hire a consultant and utilize good project planning and management practices.
- They utilize grant money to provide structure, accountability and cash.
- They manage communications and staff buy-in well.
- They have a shared backend on their library automation system.
- Their collaboration is of a manageable size for them in terms of the number of institutions involved.
- They have found a way to neutralize territoriality, particularly for already-existing workflows.
- They trust each other.

These conditions did not all have to be present to guarantee a successful collaboration, but some of them did, and successful projects exhibited a synergistic balance among factors. It all has to add up in a positive way, but how they get there is always unique. Several projects were initiated using grant money. It might seem obvious that the structure, accountability and cash provided by the grants process would foster success. The researchers found that for two of the projects this was true. However, for one project, other factors overcame the initial boost provided by the grant.