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CLC: A Brief History, 2003-2015

CLC was founded on July 1, 2003, the result of the merger of four regional Cooperating Library Service Units (CLSUs): Capitol Region Library Council, Eastern Connecticut Libraries, Southern Connecticut Library Council, and Western Connecticut Library Council.

The creation of CLSUs was authorized in 1975 by the Connecticut General Assembly, which then funded CLSUs in 1981. "Cooperating Library Service Unit" is defined in Sec. 11-9e of Connecticut State statutes as "an organization of different types of libraries situated in a stipulated area of the state whose purpose is to improve library service through coordinated planning, resource sharing, and the development of programs too costly or impractical for a single library to maintain."

In July 2003, CLC opened at the former SCLC office in Hamden with transition staff and a state grant of just \$150,000 for FY2003-2004. Once the hiring of four full-time staff was completed, CLC offered discounts, media circuits, ILL, roundtables, public programming, a website, and a monthly print newsletter.

In 2005, CLC relocated to its present location in Middletown above the Russell Library administrative offices, launched the online version of the Programming Catalog, and launched a partnership with BookExpo America that continues to this day. This year also featured CLC's first Trendspotting symposium, and the launch of a pilot virtual reference project called "InfoAnytime."

CLC began hosting vendor showcases in 2006. InfoAnytime became a significant project, with 24 academic and 128 public library participants and a major media blitz. The following year, the Connecticut General Assembly allocated \$150,000 for InfoAnytime, and CLC continued to expand continuing education offerings. Trendspotting became a signature annual event.

CLC's discount opportunities continued to expand, through CLC's contracts for books, media, and supplies, and partnerships with WALDO and OCLC that made online resources available at discounted rates.

Summer 2009 was spent fighting for CLC's very existence, as the Governor's proposed budget zeroed out CLC and most other statewide library programs. Library staff across the state advocated as never before, and all of the programs slated for elimination had their funding reinstated. Unfortunately, "holdbacks" resulted in the loss of a quarter of CLC's operating grant, and virtually all of the funding for InfoAnytime, which was quickly shut down. The newsletter also shifted to an online format.

CLC began a major migration to an online content and member management system, Affiniscape, which transformed the way the organization managed its website, communications, member database, and billing. In December 2009, Executive Director Christine Bradley announced her resignation to become Assistant Director at the Norwalk Public Library. In 2010, on the same day that CLC's new CMS was launched, Jill Dugas Hughes became CLC's second Executive Director, bringing her expertise in both libraries and fundraising to an organization in need of funding diversity.

In April 2011, CLC and Darien Library hosted the biggest Trendspotting symposium yet: "eBooks: Collections at the Crossroads," which received national press and attention. 150 librarians from around the state heard from

prestigious speakers, panelists, and industry leaders who discussed the latest eBook trends, products and issues influencing the library profession.

Throughout 2011, CLC and its board and strategic planning committee underwent a far-reaching strategic planning process, resulting in an ambitious plan for July 2012 through June 2015. The plan's strategic imperatives were clear: Leverage and expand on economies of scale; enable members to stay current with emerging practices and trends in the field; market the value of libraries and the Consortium; and ensure long-range sustainability for the Consortium. CLC's mission was also revised to its current version.

In the spring of 2012, Jill Dugas Hughes announced her resignation to become the Director of the Edgartown Public Library on Martha's Vineyard. In August, Jennifer Keohane, formerly Business Outreach Librarian at Simsbury Public Library and an expert in marketing, was hired as CLC's third Executive Director. Jennifer quickly put her expertise to work, improving CLC's communications and marketing throughout all platforms. CLC also ramped up its continuing education offerings, with programs on topics from "Bed Bugs at your Library" to "Communicating in the Face of Crisis."

In 2013-14, CLC saved members over 7.1 million dollars on critical products and services; offered 46 special discounts on products like Ancestry.com, Mango Languages, and Scholastic's ScienceFlix; launched a *Maker Market*, featuring thousands of products to help library users indulge their creative side; demystified "making" tools and techniques through our *Trendspotting: Makerspaces for Everyone* symposium, followed by two *Technologies of the Maker Movement* labs; and helped members navigate the Affordable Care Act through partnerships, training, and resources. In July 2014, CLC finalized a migration from their Affiniscape CMS to a new system hosted by YourMembership, which included a new, mobile-friendly website.

2015, like 2009, was another year focused on advocacy, as librarians across the state rallied to help save CLC and ConnectiCard from the budget axe. Although CLC's final funding amount was 43% less than FY 14-15, the case was made to restore critical funding in order to ensure that important library services like CLC continue across the state. Advocacy will continue to be a priority as CLC enters into another strategic planning process, certain to be a major part of the 2015-2016 year.