

**National, cross-sector, collaborative projects  
that worked at the  
National Library of New Zealand  
Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa**

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***Abstract:***

*In the past year the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa has facilitated successful collaborative projects across central and local government and other sectors. This paper will focus on case studies of three collaborative projects that have made an impact on New Zealand's information landscape. Each has required different approaches to collaboration. This paper will share the many highlights and lessons learned and will suggest successful strategies that have been developed for managing collaborative projects.*

## Introduction

Collaboration demands flexibility, innovation, the ability to do a lot on a limited budget and commitment to reach a common goal. It can be said that libraries are characterised by these attributes and it is not surprising that collaboration has been common in our profession for a very long time – be it national union catalogues, interlibrary loan schemes, consortia or buying clubs.

Over the last three years in New Zealand there has been a proliferation of collaborative library and information-related projects, ranging from shared library systems<sup>1</sup>, to summer reading programs<sup>2</sup> to collaborative indexing<sup>3</sup>. For the purposes of this paper collaborative projects are defined as two or more organisations working together – using project management techniques, sharing resources, ideas, expertise, and enthusiasm – towards a shared objective.

Three such collaborative projects have been facilitated by National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa: EPIC, Matapihi and AnyQuestions.co.nz. Firstly this paper will provide brief case studies of each of these initiatives. It will then use examples from each to illustrate benefits and challenges of collaboration. Each of these projects has required different approaches to collaboration and the people involved have learned lessons that can be applied to future projects. This paper will then draw from these lessons to suggest possible success factors and strategies for managing collaborative projects.

## Project Descriptions



**EPIC** ([www.epic.org.nz](http://www.epic.org.nz)) - a consortium of 170+ New Zealand libraries. In a move that is the first of its kind in New Zealand, public, education, research and special libraries have joined together to buy collective access to full-text e-resources, from Thomson Gale and EBSCO.

### Project History and Process

In 2002, the National Library surveyed libraries to determine interest in forming a self-funded consortium for the purchase of e-content and to identify the type of content required. A positive response led to the establishment of two multi-sector working groups that developed and made recommendations about possible consortium structure, funding arrangements and content.

To take these recommendations forward the National Library funded a proof of concept project to develop a cross-sector consortium to deliver at least two electronic publications for NZ libraries and their users. This was the PER:NA (Purchasing Electronic Resources: a National Approach) Proof of Concept Project which began in May 2003.

A project manager was seconded from another library and over 60 librarians from across the country were involved in the project working groups. The initial focus was on the development and running of a Request for Proposal (RFP) process that sought to identify and select possible vendors and products.

The project principles were:

- Collaboration - it was an opportunity to demonstrate that the New Zealand library sector can collaborate.
- The model must have the potential to include any New Zealand library
- There should be expanded access to e-Resources for all users
- The consortium should be financially self-sustaining after the set-up phase
- A partnering approach with e-Resource providers

Three possible outcomes that were identified and built into communications throughout the project:

- The project may demonstrate the viability of a self-sustaining model going on into the future.
- The project may deliver the some products but show that a self-sustaining model is not viable for a wider range of products.
- The New Zealand library market cannot support a national approach to site licences. This is still a positive outcome, as the outcome will be supported by a transparent process and case study.

### **The Outcome**

The project was able to negotiate affordable access to high quality information for all types of libraries. EPIC's point of difference from other consortia is that the e-resource licence was negotiated as an 'all of country' deal: every person in New Zealand can access the resources through a consortium member library – be it local library, education library, work library or the National Library of New Zealand.

The deal was put to New Zealand libraries in November 2003 and attracted an exceptional level of commitment from New Zealand libraries by December - 88% of public libraries, approximately 30% of special libraries and 95% of tertiary libraries all members of EPIC.

The Ministry of Education has also funded every New Zealand school access to EPIC for the first two years and will be approached for ensuing years.

The project became EPIC in February 2004, the resources were rolled out to libraries in April, and the new governance structure was implemented in June 2004. EPIC operations are funded through an administration component of member libraries' subscriptions.

EPIC now has 179 member libraries, as well as all New Zealand Schools. The National Library of New Zealand is the lead agency, and hosts the EPIC office. The EPIC Governance Group (EGG), comprising 9 library sector representatives, is responsible for the strategic direction of EPIC. EGG guides the operation of the consortium and works to promote and stimulate expansion of the resources to as wide a NZ library market as possible. There is one full-time EPIC Manager, responsible for supporting EGG and the operational management of EPIC.

### **Currently**

EPIC is now focusing on consolidation and growth including new content, funding structures, and strategic relationship building.



**AnyQuestions.co.nz** ([www.anyquestions.co.nz](http://www.anyquestions.co.nz)) - a collaboratively run service which puts librarians online to help school students find quality electronic information at the right level for their needs.

### **Project History and Process**

Anyquestions.co.nz began as a pilot project funded by Sun Microsystems Ltd and involving Auckland, Christchurch, Manukau and Wellington City Libraries, National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa, Horowhenua Library Trust, School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA), The Correspondence School, and the Ministry of Education through Te Kete Ipurangi Joint Venture.

The project began in February 2004 with a feasibility study into offering an online librarian service to all New Zealand school children.

The aim was to find out as much as possible about potential customers and tailor a service to best meet their needs, while identifying the resources required to do this. This included:

- 200 guided interviews with school students, parents and school library staff, completed and analysed
- Research into similar existing services
- Collecting input from reference group of classroom teachers and school library staff.
- Seeking advice from Steve Coffman<sup>4</sup>, and Joe Barker<sup>5</sup>
- Conducting a thorough literature search.

Using this information - a service model and business plan were developed and in May 2004 work began on implementing the pilot service. This involved selecting a hosted software solution, selecting, vetting and training 90 operators across the country, designing the web interface and putting in place an effective marketing plan.

### **The Outcome**

AnyQuestions.co.nz is a free web-based virtual reference service for all New Zealand school students, available Monday to Friday between 1pm and 6pm in English, and 1pm and 2pm in te reo Māori. The service connects trained reference librarians (operators) with students, using synchronous chat and co-browsing, to help them locate online information specific to their learning objectives.

Using a subtle information literacy approach, operators help students “unpack” their question, model good search techniques using co-browsing where possible and take them to quality sites.

Anyquestions.co.nz is unique and innovative within New Zealand for providing:

- An online reference service tailored to schoolchildren’s needs
- A bilingual service, although currently modest in scope
- A transparent, accountable and safe service resulting from a design requirement whereby transcripts are unable to be edited by either party to the transaction
- A successful collaboration in service delivery between central and local government agencies

The potential audience for AnyQuestions.co.nz is 761,755 students enrolled in New Zealand schools. This figure includes home schooled students and 268,849 secondary school students. Of these, 65,077, or 8 percent, are rural students.

Since February 2005:

- 8500+ sessions have been held with New Zealand school students
- 80% of surveyed students said they would use the service again
- 73% of surveyed students told us they would refer the service to a friend.
- The main age range of students using AnyQuestions.co.nz is the 9-13 age bracket
- The most frequently reported request from survey respondents is for more librarians.
- The next most frequently reported response was that the service met the students' needs at the time of the visit.
- Current statistics show most students are accessing the service from school and home with 5 percent coming in from Public Libraries. The low broadband penetration in New Zealand homes poses challenges for the service.
- Students from every region in the country have used the service.

## Currently

AnyQuestions.co.nz has additional sponsorship from Telecom NZ Ltd and Sun Microsystems Ltd. It is growing the number of librarians to meet the evident demand from students, has recently commissioned a research project to measure the impact on learning outcomes for students and is developing a sustainable funding model to support this successful service delivery model.



**Matapihi** ([www.matapihi.org.nz](http://www.matapihi.org.nz)) - a web-based metadata gateway service to the online digital collections of some of New Zealand's premier cultural organisations.

## Project History and Process

Matapihi, a window onto New Zealand's online cultural heritage was mooted during the inaugural 2002 National Digital Forum (NDF), an annual event for New Zealand organisations with an interest in digital cultural heritage.

A pilot based on the PictureAustralia model was proposed and in December 2002 the National Library of New Zealand took a lead development role for Matapihi. A technical team was established at the National Library in early 2003, with responsibility for aspects of project management, technical architecture, metadata standards, and quality assurance of data received.

Five organisations agreed to contribute; Alexander Turnbull Library, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland City Libraries, Christchurch City Libraries and Otago Museum. Partners provided metadata exports and evaluated the compliance costs of the project. Two system vendors, InfoSpecs and Vernon, assisted their clients with data conversion and provided the National Library with feedback on documentation and processes. A Front End Working Group with national cross-sector representation gave advice on requirements for branding (resulting in the name Matapihi), and on the design features and functionality that would be desirable for various user communities.

Matapihi was completed within the baseline funding of the participating organisations. In other words, no special budget was allocated, and the project succeeded only through the National Library's underwriting of the project (in terms of staff time and providing access to

an existing technical infrastructure) and the substantial in-kind contributions from the partner organisations.

Matapihi was launched in September 2004 and in October 2004, the Telecommunications Users Association of New Zealand (TUANZ) awarded Matapihi the top Crème de la Crème Innovation prize at its (e)-vision Awards. The judges noted the innovative use of metadata, the successful collaboration, and the scalability of the distributed architecture, which will enable Matapihi to grow as more and more organisations digitise their collections.

In November 2005, the New Zealand Electronic Text Centre, the New Zealand Film Archive and Te Ara the Encyclopedia of New Zealand became contributing partners. There is also interest from a number of other organisations from across New Zealand.

### **The Outcome**

Matapihi now provides access to around 75,000 records from eight organisations and more than 30,000 visits to the site have been recorded. Users can cross-search these collections and retrieve a seamless set of search results that can be used as a 'launching pad' to visit the websites of the individual organisations.

Matapihi provided valuable data on compliance costs. While contributing to Matapihi requires no direct software/hardware costs, it does require a substantial amount of staff time (an average of 40 hours, but much more in the case of some organisations) and some costs relating to technical support (e.g. 4-8 hours at about NZ\$125-175 an hour). This information will be used by future partners to plan their contributions to Matapihi and apply for funding.

### **Currently**

Matapihi is working on governance and sustainability. The National Library, in consultation with the partners, is working on a business strategy for the next year that will cover a range of activities. The objectives for the next year include attracting new partners, consolidating a process for updating data, increasing usage through better marketing and search engine optimisation, and investigating technical enhancements.

*For more detailed descriptions of these projects please refer to the Further Reading section at the end of this paper.*

## **The Benefits of Collaborative Projects**

Why engage in collaboration? For many libraries, collaboration is no longer optional. In a recent *Library Journal* article by Liz Bishoff, the Vice-President of OCLC Digital Collection and Preservation Services. Bishoff describes collaboration not only with other libraries, but with archives and museums as an imperative, enabling libraries and their partners to build better collections and attract more users (Bishoff, 2004).

The National Library of New Zealand's focus on collaboration is evidence of a strategic shift from the provision of services for libraries to a more outwards-looking and customer-focused approach that is reflected in the Library's vision: "Connecting New Zealanders with information important to all aspects of their lives".

The Library's experience with working in partnership also means that it is well placed to deliver on the New Zealand government's Digital Strategy. This national strategy, released in 2005, consists of a vast array of activities and outcomes in the areas of Connection (broadband capacity), Content, and Capability (equipping people with the skills to make the most of information technology).

Collaboration is central to the Strategy: in his introduction to the document, the Hon. David Cunliffe, the Minister for Communications and Information Technology noted: "We will need to work together to make it happen. Think of the Strategy as a vote of confidence in the ability of local government, economic development agencies, and others to form partnerships and get active at the local level." (New Zealand Ministry for Economic Development, *The Digital Strategy*, 2005, p2). Funding under the Digital Strategy will also be closely linked to demonstrable partnership arrangements (New Zealand Ministry for Economic Development, *Community Partnership Fund: Information Sheet for Expressions of Interest*, 2005).

The benefits of collaboration identified through EPIC, AnyQuestions.co.nz and Matapihi have been wide ranging, with the most obvious being the successful implementation of three services that directly meet users' information needs. Collaboration has also provided opportunities for identifying new and innovative approaches that go beyond the boundaries and experience of each organisation involved (Ahmed & Miller, 2000, p15). There have also been many other unexpected and intangible benefits to collaboration; these may be less obvious but are no less important (e.g. staff development, and the raised profile of the organisation with users and funders).

Collaborative projects need to overcome many obstacles, including lack of a common terminology, different standards (e.g. for metadata) and tensions between organisational cultures. But while barriers to collaboration do exist, the projects discussed below have proven that libraries and their partners can collectively develop processes and strategies for successfully achieving mutual goals.

### **"Discovery first, institution second"**

Collaboration between different professional groupings can break down unnecessary professional boundaries because all parties are aiming for the same outcome – a successful product or service for end users. Chris Batt, from the Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) in the UK has identified "Discovery first, institution second" as one of the basic principles for heritage organisations to succeed in the digital domain.

All of the partners in Matapihi make their individual collections freely available online through their own websites, using a wide range of metadata schema and descriptive practices, some of them highly specialised and domain-specific. However, many users do not know (or care) whether an item of interest is held in an archive, gallery, library or museum: they just want to find it!

Collaborative projects that promote the use of cross-domain standards like Dublin Core help break down institutional barrier for users, but they also enhance the development of these standards by enabling input from the widest possible range of organisations. Working with Otago Museum brought to light issues regarding the use of the W3C Date-Time Format (W3CDTF) for museum metadata, which can contain approximate dates, BCE dates, open-ended date ranges and non-Gregorian dates. The National Library is now engaging with the

Dublin Core Metadata Initiative Date Working Group, which is investigating “options to provide for the interoperable representation of commonly-recorded dates which cannot be satisfactorily represented using ISO 8601.” This is an important outcome that could only emerge through collaboration between different types of organisations.

### **Benchmarking**

Ahmed & Miller (2000, p9) also suggest that some parties to collaboration end up increasing their confidence and profile in order to reach the benchmarks of other partners in the initiative. Some partners in Matapihi found that when their records and metadata were incorporated into the database it became clear that their metadata and digitisation standards needed to be improved. The work on the project provided the insight into other organisations’ practices, and also gave them an opportunity, and justification, to develop their practices to international standards.

### **Professional development**

A related benefit is professional development. Team members of all three projects reported increased confidence and up-skilling as a result of being involved in the collaboration.

AnyQuestions.co.nz operators from across all of the partners underwent extensive training in information fluency, reference interview skills, Internet searching, online curriculum resources, and in the use of AnyQuestions.co.nz software. The majority of the operators have since reported improved search skills, increased knowledge of Internet resources and satisfaction and enjoyment from working with students using interactive chat. Needless to say, these additional skills and improved confidence have been of great benefit to their parent organisations.

Similarly, staff at Otago Museum have gained a greater awareness of database construction and the benefits of good metadata through collaborating on Matapihi, and these skills have since been applied in local digitisation projects.

### **Expanded profile**

Successful collaborative projects are good for raising profile, marketing and funding opportunities (Bishoff, 2004). All three projects have received national media coverage; some international recognition and the project managers have even given presentations to New Zealand’s Prime Minister. All three have also won awards from outside of the library and information sphere. As mentioned above, Matapihi won the TUANZ Crème de la Crème Innovation prize and recently, EPIC was awarded the ‘Delivery Despite Adversity’ Buzzy - a peer recognition award from the Government Information Systems Managers Forum (GOVIS). AnyQuestions.co.nz also won a Buzzy Award for Technology and Society, as well as the New Zealand Post Management Excellence Award for Process Management, and the 3M Award for Innovation in Libraries for 2005.

Matapihi aimed to increase awareness of the partner’s sites and early indications are that this is happening. More than 50% of Auckland Art Gallery’s external referrals come from Matapihi. For the Alexander Turnbull Library, the referral rate is much lower, however Matapihi is still the fourth largest referrer after three large commercial search engines including Google.

In terms of funding opportunities, Matapihi's focus on standards and collaboration will stand contributors in good stead if they wish to access funding sources like the Community Partnership Fund, a \$NZ20.7 million contestable fund established as part of the aforementioned Digital Strategy. It is also important to remember that not all funders are external to participating organisations. The potential to contribute to a high-profile project can also be an important factor in internal funding processes. Because of the need to export high quality metadata for Matapihi, Otago Museum allocated its collections staff full-time use of a new PC for digitisation work, which was unlikely to happen without the impetus of the larger collaboration.

## **Strategies for Managing Collaborative Projects**

### **Shared understanding and trust**

Collaboration requires a shared vision and an understanding of why each party is involved, what you're trying to achieve, understanding of what each person's role is in achieving the goal, and trust in each other. Sir Neil Cossans, Chairman of English Heritage (2005) has recently suggested that partnerships [and collaborations] are about people and intimate relationships – they will only work if the people involved like and trust each other, come together as equals, bring commitment and can identify tangible benefits and have a clear objective. Differing agendas, unvoiced assumptions and varying definitions of success do not engender collaboration (Davidson et al, 2000, p30).

The EPIC Project learned this the hard way. In an early Steering Committee meeting it became clear that different members had varying ideas about their role, the decision making process and the expectations for the project. It was obvious that all felt passionate about the project and really wanted it to work, but the group needed to revisit their expectations, voice their concerns and share their assumptions. Once all of these issues were aired and a decision-making protocol agreed, the team developed a sense of trust and was able to move beyond the conflict into a constructive and well functioning project team. However, life would have been much easier if the project team had taken the time at the beginning of the project to discuss expectations and agree on the way of working.

One way of doing this is to develop a partnering agreement. This was pivotal to the success of the AnyQuestions.co.nz project. A partnering workshop was held at the first project meeting. This is where all of the partners agreed their vision and expectations for the project and established an agreed and trusted way of working. This was documented in a partnering agreement that was signed by all parties and includes communications protocols, agreed behaviours and decision making strategies. It is the process of establishing this shared vision and buying into these agreements that is critical, rather than the documented partnering agreement. Simply adopting a partnering agreement will not work on its own. The fact that this partnering agreement was not invoked during the entire AnyQuestions.co.nz project was testament to the partners' commitment to the shared vision, their level of trust and the effectiveness of this strategy.

Learning from the AnyQuestions.co.nz experience, the EPIC Governance Group (EGG) that now has oversight of EPIC, has developed a partnering agreement that is integral to the way they work together. Part of the agreement is a regular health check. This is an agenda item in

meetings where each EGG member discusses any issues or concerns and the group commits to resolving them.

AnyQuestions.co.nz and EPIC have also developed a partnering approach with vendors. Any contracts include a schedule on an agreed way of working. This supports a contractual relationship that promotes prompt, constructive communication and a problem solving approach and includes agreed performance measures and development goals. It requires the delivery of agreed development goals and service levels and it also enables the setting of future goals and targets.

## **Communication**

As with all projects, it is important to develop a full and thorough communications plan that identifies stakeholders, key messages, risks and appropriate communication channels. Communicating the benefits of a collaborative project widely can help with gaining buy-in from stakeholders. Some examples of key messages and/or objectives are:

- [This project will] demonstrate the benefits to public libraries, the National Library and all New Zealand school children, of a whole-of-country approach to online support for their information needs.
- If the [project] is successful, it will be solid proof that libraries in New Zealand can collaborate and cooperate for the benefit of all New Zealanders. It will be a benchmark example of how librarians can support the Knowledge Economy.
- A number of organisations, including vendors, are involved (note: all participants should be named in all communications) and it will not succeed without support and commitment from further organisations.

## **Project team communication**

Communication between project partners must be frequent and complete in order to ensure there will be no surprises (Beckett, 2005, p332). However, managing communications over distance can be challenging – particularly when members of the project team also have regular day jobs to deal with.

The AnyQuestions.co.nz project was achieved remotely through email and voice conference. The entire project team met at the partnering workshop and again at the launch party. The project used a structured project team approach, with each team being very clear about their area of contribution, deliverables, milestones, regular meeting times and rigorous documentation of agreement and actions. Each partner organisation contributed to the project teams according to best fit of skills. This meant that not every organisation was represented in every project team, although all were represented on the Project Overview Group.

The project manager facilitated and took notes at all team teleconferences and provided the ‘bridge’ between all project teams. The project teams also decided to actively read the minutes of each of the other teams, to gain the pan-project overview, with the result that ‘silos’ between teams were avoided.

A large amount of project communication will be by email. Dealing with hundreds of emails a day, many demanding fast turn around, can lead to confusion and gaps in understanding. EPIC uses the following strategy for managing project related email.

- Always use a common subject line in emails and indicate the response time required. Response times should be reasonable and a standard can be agreed in the partnering agreement.

For example: ***EPIC: Meeting date response req'd 1 June 2005, 4 pm***

- If a decision is required in the email state it clearly at the end of the email and restate the deadline.

For example: ***Decision required: Does the project team agree that this letter can be sent to this person? Please respond by 1 June 2005, 4pm.***

- In the EGG partnering agreement we have agreed that if you don't respond then it is assumed that you agree with the decision. This helps cut down on the number of emails project members need to respond to and means that the decision isn't delayed. It is important to use judgement here. For some decisions it may be important to get responses from all members – or to delay the decision until members can meet face to face.

For example: ***As per our agreed decision making protocol, if I don't hear from you I will assume that you have agreed with this decision.***

- After the deadline has past send a summary of the responses and state the action that will be taken from the decision.

For example: ***6 responses were received agreeing to the decision. Some minor edits have been incorporated. I will assume that the rest of the project team agrees with the decision. Therefore, I will send the letter to this person today.***

Different types of communication can be investigated for different collaborations. A project evaluation of Matapihi revealed that partners wanted to be able to communicate with each other more often and more directly, without the intervention of the project manager. The Library responded to this by implementing a closed listserv moderated by the project manager. This enables partners to learn and exchange information in a peer-to-peer environment and over time may reduce some of the burden of one-to-many communications that currently falls on a project manager. Use of a wiki might also facilitate these kinds of communication strategies.

### **Time management and communication**

Collaboration takes time and this can affect project timeframes and deadlines. It is important in planning projects that the team does not underestimate the effort required in terms of the collaborative aspects of the project.

Most of the EPIC project team were part-time and carrying out the project role in addition to their usual library roles. This meant that it was often difficult for them to provide the level of input required at the time it was needed. The EPIC project took three months longer to complete than initially planned. The original project timeframe was ambitious, but setting this target generated a level of urgency in participants that helped keep momentum high. At the

end of the project evaluation the team agreed that it is worth taking time to make sure that everybody is on board and the decisions made with the best information available.

However, it became important to address the length of time the project was taking in communications with libraries. The EPIC project provided regular updates on the process and explained the steps that were being taken. This helped dissipate negativity about perceived slowness.

### **Collaborative decision-making**

Collaboration requires both co-operation and compromise and a useful way to manage this is an agreed decision-making protocol. A partnering agreement provides an opportunity to agree on both a decision-making process and decision-making behaviours. Different people come to collaboration for different reasons and this needs to be acknowledged in order to engender ownership and commitment. The following example attempts to exemplify the importance of having all points of view heard but also encourages compromise for the benefit of the project objective:

#### **1.1. We agree**

- 1.1.1. There will be a consensus approach to all meetings
- 1.1.2. To reach an agreement by having everyone buy into and support the outcome
- 1.1.3. That all pros and cons will be discussed and all view points heard
- 1.1.4. That all EGG members are committed and willing to consider a shift in point of view
- 1.1.5. That a qualified consensus will be reached by a vote
- 1.1.6. To trust the decisions made in our absence

### **Project management and resourcing**

Collaborative project management requires well-honed communications and people skills as well as an understanding of technology and management practices. It is imperative for a project manager to understand the varying perspectives of the stakeholders and to be able to effectively communicate the objectives, values and key messages appropriately. The workload should not be underestimated. Communication management is very time intensive and it can be very difficult to manage administrative duties on top of this. There are added demands if project team members are carrying out the project role in addition to their usual jobs. The EPIC end-of-project review recommended that future collaborative projects should allocate additional funding for administrative support during peaks in the project workload.

EPIC and AnyQuestions.co.nz each had dedicated project managers. The EPIC and AnyQuestions.co.nz project managers were seconded to National Library from other organisations. Their parent organisations saw this as a way of showing their support and commitment to the project, as well as offering their staff additional challenge and professional development.

Matapihi has maintained continuity with a project contact person available to partners. However the role was not a dedicated one and competing priorities have been an issue. Recently responsibility for managing the collaborative aspects of Matapihi has been formally written into the job description of a staff member: this demonstrates to current and potential partners the Library's level of support for Matapihi, and ensures that the project is given an appropriate amount of dedicated time as part of someone's role.

## **The leadership role of the National Library of New Zealand**

The National Library has taken a leadership role in initiating each of these projects. However, the Library has been careful to provide leadership but not direct other organisations in what to do. This role has been important for the success of each project and has been managed in different ways.

For EPIC it has been important to emphasise that with out the commitment of all of the member libraries, the consortium would not exist. As lead agency for EPIC the Library hosts the EPIC office and holds the contracts with the vendors and with each member library. However, EPIC operations are funded by the subscriptions of the 179 consortium members. The EPIC Governance Group (EGG) is responsible for the decision making about the strategic direction and management of the consortium. The ten members represent every library sector in EPIC, including National Library, so the breadth of viewpoints can be expressed and decision-making is representative of the members. The group makes all decisions collaboratively. This governance structure is reviewed annually.

AnyQuestions.co.nz was made possible by a grant from Sun Microsystems Ltd, made to the National Library. So, the National Library role was that of enabler and major contributor of operator time for the live service. However, the project then developed levels of collaborative membership in its business plan for the pilot service; these included service delivery and associate members, but did not include a nominated lead agency. Member contributions and decision-making rights are attributed to levels of membership.

The National Digital Forum and all Matapihi partners have agreed in principle to a business model that will see the National Library host and manage the service, and a governance structure is currently being developed that will ensure representation from a wide range of stakeholder groups. Relationships between the partners will be formalised, possibly using a Memorandum of Understanding.

The National Library is continuing to underwrite the cost of managing the service. Matapihi partners have not been required to make a direct financial contribution: early discussions noted the need to encourage participation and a risk that even a small financial contribution would be a disincentive for many New Zealand organizations. Partners underwrite costs associated with contributing their data, and will also be asked to contribute to strategic development, marketing and other tasks as resources allow.

## **Fun**

Fun needs to be integrated into collaborative projects. Sir Neil Cossons (2005) has purported that a rule of thumb to measure successful collaboration is whether a group will go straight home after a meeting or head off for a drink at the local. AnyQuestions.co.nz has embraced this – they made sure the end of project celebration was in the project plan and budget at the outset. This should become best practice!

## **Conclusion**

Collaborative projects are challenging, but the benefits and opportunities make the effort worthwhile. This paper has shared the lessons and successes of three projects and suggested some possible strategies for other organisations to use when planning their own collaborative projects. Most of these strategies are aimed at fostering trust, co-operation and compromise -

which are all integral elements to successful collaboration. Not all of these strategies will be transferable to every type of collaborative project, but it is hoped that they will provide some ideas for those planning collaborative projects in the future.

## Further Reading

### Matapihi

#### Website:

[www.matapihi.org.nz](http://www.matapihi.org.nz)

#### Papers:

Reeves, S & Searle, S 2004, *Matapihi... Open the Window: A case study in collaboration for online access to New Zealand's cultural heritage*, LIANZA Conference 2004 Retrieved 30 October 2005, from <http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2004/papers/reeves.pdf>

### AnyQuestions.co.nz

#### Website:

[www.anyquestions.co.nz](http://www.anyquestions.co.nz)

#### Papers:

O'Donovan, M 2005, *AnyQuestions.co.nz – from trepidation to exhilaration*, LIANZA Conference, September 2005, Retrieved 30 October 2005, from

[http://www.lianza.org.nz/library/files/store\\_009/LIANZA\\_Conf\\_2005\\_odonovan.pdf](http://www.lianza.org.nz/library/files/store_009/LIANZA_Conf_2005_odonovan.pdf)

O'Donovan, M 2004, *AnyQuestions.co.nz – Online help for school students*, LIANZA Conference, September 2004, Retrieved 30 October 2005, from

<http://www.lianza.org.nz/events/conference2004/papers/odonovan.pdf>

### EPIC

#### Website:

[www.epic.org.nz](http://www.epic.org.nz)

#### Paper:

Rigby, F 2005, *EPIC – A shared initiative of New Zealand Libraries*, Retrieved 30 October 2005, from <http://www.epic.org.nz/xtra/epicdescription.pdf>

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>**eLGAR – Libraries for a Greater Auckland Region,**

<http://www.elgar.govt.nz/>

Smarter Systems - a joint project of eLGAR - Libraries for a Greater Auckland Region, comprising Auckland City, Manukau, North Shore, Rodney and Waitakere Libraries. For the past 2 years the Libraries have been working together to investigate the joint purchase, implementation and operation of replacement library system software.

<sup>2</sup>**Eastern and Central Reading and Encouragement Network (E.C.READ'N)**

<http://ecreading.gen.nz/>

The aim of the project is to interest, encourage and stimulate children to enjoy reading. The Summer Reading Programme was launched in 1997/1998 and targets children from 2 to 11 years in isolated areas of New Zealand.

### <sup>3</sup>**The Collaborative Indexing Project**

Christchurch City Libraries, Dunedin Public Libraries, Landcare Research NZ Limited and the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa are participating in the pilot phase of the Collaborative Indexing Project to examine the feasibility and usefulness of collaborative indexing within New Zealand.

<sup>4</sup>Steve Coffman is the author of *Going Live: Starting & Running a Virtual Reference Service*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association. 2003.

<sup>5</sup>Joe Barker as Chair, SOPAG Digital Reference CIG compiled the report *Inventory of Features of Digital Reference Systems*. March 21, 2003, available at <http://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/hops/digref/features.pdf>.

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