Cheryl A. Middleton

Closing the divide

Subject librarians and scholarly communication librarians can work together to reach common goals

As ACRL President, I am very interested in the changes that our members and the profession are experiencing and in making connections to our goals in the ACRL Plan for Excellence.[1] Our plan enables ACRL to invest member resources in shaping policies and practices that enable us to meet the needs of our users and our institutions as they change over time. Over the past year, I've been doing a lot of thinking about scholarly communication and the role of academic librarians, particularly subject or liaison librarians.

In July 2016, I took on a new role as the associate university librarian for research and scholarly communication at Oregon State University Libraries and Press (OSU). I have been a tenured faculty member at OSU since 2000, and all of my previous positions have been in public services. I began my career as a reference librarian with subject assignments in the life sciences and over the years held a number of department head positions in the areas of reference and instruction, access services, and collections.

In 2013, I became the associate university librarian for learning and engagement. During my years in public services, I noted that scholarly communication services at our library were being developed and provided by a small number of librarians who were not in public services, and some did not have subject assignments. I often wondered why scholarly communication was being developed outside the scope of the activities a subject librarian/liaison regularly engaged in when working with faculty.

As a subject librarian/liaison, I regularly had conversations with life science faculty about the impact of their scholarship and provided them with information regarding the journals in their discipline with the highest impact factors. I taught classes to undergraduates and graduates in locating relevant research information, correct citation style, and consulted on issues of copyright. In addition, in support of the OSU land grant heritage, I worked with community members to provide them with online access to research articles that did not require them to subscribe to a journal or to be a registered OSU faculty member or student to access them.

In 2013, when OSU faculty voted to adopt an open access mandate for our institution, I oversaw the subject librarians/liaisons who promoted the new policy in the campus departments and colleges that they represented.[2]

ACRL defines scholarly communication as the "system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use."[3] Our subject librarians/liaisons already helped scholars archive and organize their research and provided physical and virtual collections for their use. We regularly

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assisted researchers in finding relevant sources and located citations to their scholarship and preserved their scholarly works in our institutional repository.

As I moved from being a library leader on the public services side of the house to the head of research and scholarly communication, I saw a natural intersection between scholarly communication and the work of subject librarians/liaisons and have embraced the idea that being involved in the conversation of scholarly communication at our institutions falls within the role of all our academic librarians who interact with the faculty and student population at our institutions.

My thinking has been heavily influenced by Karen Williams, former associate university librarian for academic programs at the University of Minnesota Libraries (UML) and her work to incorporate scholarly communication into the workflow of subject librarians/liaisons. In 2010, Kara Malenfant, ACRL senior strategist for special initiatives, detailed the collaboration and systems thinking approach that UML used to define and identify a baseline expertise in scholarly communication for their liaison librarians.[4] Successful strategies that UML deployed included an investment in training and professional development that centered on scholarly communication for their liaisons, documenting expectations related to scholarly communication in position descriptions, creating annual goals per the expectations, and assessing how well liaison librarians were meeting the goals related to scholarly communication.

Williams expanded on her work at UML in an Association of Research Libraries (ARL) report that outlined emerging trends and new roles for liaison librarians.[5] In this report, she and coauthor Janice Jaguszewski conducted a series of interviews with administrators at five ARL libraries. Using information gathered from the interviews, the authors identified six trends impacting liaison librarian roles at their institution. Among the six trends, the third trend discussed the intersections of copyright, intellectual property, and scholarly communication and the potential for subject/liaison librarians to partner and effectively participate in these activities serving as educators, consultants, and advocates.

Having checked my assumptions that scholarly communication practices should be incorporated into the work of our subject librarians, I began searching for activities and practices that we could select from and adapt to our organization. With the acknowledgment that there are numerous resources available to inform scholarly communication practices, several of the resources I have found to be helpful in thinking about these practices are the ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit,[6] ACRL Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy,[7] and the SPARC website.[8] I have found all of these resources helpful in providing a good overview of scholarly communication advocacy efforts and practices, to shape strategies to promote scholarly communication at our institutions, and shape the narrative our liaison librarians can use to document the impact of their work.

For more face-to-face conversation and professional development in this area, members might want to consider inviting the ACRL Roadshow "Two Paths Converge: Designing Educational Opportunities on the Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy" to their instuition.[9]

In closing, I want to emphasize that not every academic library is able to replicate one system or methodology to participate in the scholarly communication efforts of researchers at their institutions. Each institution is unique in size, the number of librarians, and the willingness of researchers to partner with librarians in scholarly communication. Equally important is the perception of relations between scholarly communication and the liaison role. Liaison librarians have the ability to successfully engage in the scholarly communication practices at their institutions.[10]

Scholarly communication will continue to evolve and will require all academic librarians in all types of libraries to have a certain level of competency in scholarly communication to serve the information needs of the faculty, students, and other researchers at their institutions. The intersection of ACRL's goals for research and scholarship, and new roles and changing landscapes of higher education, are fertile ground

and more advanced (e.g., storing and managing data)."

• "Additionally, online students reported lower confidence levels than on-campus students in foundational skills related to accessing materials needed for research."

"The qualitative findings suggest that on-campus as well as online students are open to learning research skills through online formats. This is backed up by the survey findings, with the two most preferred formats overall being videos that can be watched when needed and websites with text and images."

Some additional findings include:

• "The live online workshop format was rated at or near the bottom by both online and on-campus students and by both master's and doctoral students. . . . The fact that "a video that I could watch when needed" was rated the highest overall . . . suggests that it is the synchronous nature of the live online workshop that graduate students do not like . . ."

• "Unlike their online cousin, in-person workshops were ranked as one of the more highly preferred formats by graduate students. Given the low attendance at workshops offered by Ohio University, the researchers found this result particularly surprising . . ."

• "By contrast, in-class presentations were one of the least preferred formats . . . these results suggest that graduate students want to be able to choose when and where they learn the skills they need for their research." ✄

for this conversation to continue to influence the thinking and direction of the future of subject/liaison librarians in academic libraries. I am confident that through conversation with our membership, ACRL will continue to provide our profession with the resources and tools to keep us informed about scholarly communication, meet the needs of our users, and help us shape the future of scholarly communication.

Notes

1. "ACRL Plan for Excellence," http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/strategicplan/stratplan.

2. "Oregon State University Open Access Policy," Oregon State University, June 2013, http://cdss.library.oregonstate.edu/open-access.

3. Maria Carpenter, Jolie Greybill, Jerome Offord Jr., and Mary Piorun, "Envisioning the Library's Role in Scholarly Communication in the Year 2025," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 11, no. 2 (2011): 659–81.

4. Kara Malenfant, "Leading Change in the System of Scholarly Communication: A Case Study of Engaging Liaison Librarians for Outreach to Faculty," *College & Research Libraries* 71, no. 1 (2010): 63–76.

5. Janice Jaguszewski and Karen Williams, "New Roles for New Times: Transforming Liaison Roles in Research Libraries," Report prepared for the Association of Research Libraries (2013), www.arl.org/component/content/article/6/2893.

6. ACRL Research and Scholarly Environment Committee, "American Library Association, ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit," 2016, http://acrl.libguides.com/scholcomm/toolkit/.

7. ACRL Working Group on Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy, "Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy: Creating Strategic Collaborations for a Changing Academic Environment," ACRL white paper, 2013.

8. SPARC: Advancing Open Access, Open Data, Open Education, https://sparcopen.org/.

9. "Two Paths Converge: Designing Educational Opportunities on the Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy," ACRL workshop, www.ala.org/acrl/intersections.

10. Liat Klain-Gabbay and Shoham, Snunith, "Scholarly Communication and Academic Librarians," *Library & Information Science Research* 38, no. 2 (2016): 170–79, doi:10.1016/j.lisr.2016.04.004. ✄