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JLSC Board Editorial 2018

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JLSC Board Editorial 2018

Gail Clement, Nicky Agate, Sam Searle, Dr. Danny Kingsley, & Micah Vandegrift

The current scholarly communication landscape is populated by a variety of actors and powered by an ever-increasing array of complementary and competitive systems for the production, publication, and distribution of scholarship. Recent years have also seen increasing numbers of proposals to recast these systems in ways that better align with the needs and values of the academy and its scholars. In this editorial, members of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication consider the present environment and contemplate the future of academy-owned and -supported scholarly communication, as well as the role of libraries in that future.



AN OPEN LETTER TO SCHOLARLY PUBLISHERS ON BEHALF OF OUR AUTHORS

Gail Clement, Caltech Library

I am a library administrator at a top-tier research institution, and my office regularly fields queries from publisher representatives on myriad topics, from sales pitches for their latest offerings to invitations to “partner” on new initiatives to help our campus researchers. As publishers compete for our shrinking budgets the former are expected (though not necessarily welcomed). The latter, more recent, development raises concerns that have spurred this JLSC contribution. My key message to publishers is that research libraries are equal agents and experts when it comes to authorship and publishing. Invitations to “partner” need to start with the presumption of our expertise and efficacy in working with our campus authors. Moreover, our publisher-neutral position is a precious asset for our stakeholders that we steward with great care. If publishers really want a partnership with a library, then they need to learn more about what we offer in the way of authorship support, consider carefully our experience and expertise, and honor the unique values a library brings to the scholarly communication ecosystem.

A publisher recently wrote to ask for our library’s assistance in promoting to Caltech researchers a new product—“<Redacted publisher name> Researcher Academy—an online training course consisting of 14 self-paced learning modules that teach the user all the nuts and bolts of the scientific publishing process.” The publisher asked, “Would you be willing to help us gather together a group of relevant and interested people for a short meeting where we could gather some feedback on this?”

Requests for logistical/organizational assistance to support outreach to our campus authors are not appealing to my library. At all. This approach reflects a tone-deafness regarding the central role that research libraries play in the research communication ecosystem generally, and in our campus environments specifically. Libraries are leading campus initiatives around research authorship and publishing; our successful programs cover quality training on open access publishing, data/software authorship, data management-citation-publication, legal and ethical issues concerning data and software outputs, and a lot more! We are well positioned to educate our scholars about the nuts and bolts of the scientific publishing process.

If publishers want to partner with libraries on authorship training, here are suggested approaches for a mutually rewarding experience, one that will be beneficial to authors and the global scholarly communication community:

- Recognize and communicate respect for the expertise and experience that research libraries and their staff bring to supporting authorship and publishing practices within their institutions and communities.
- Reflect on a publisher's potential conflict of interest in offering author support and training.
- Commit to authorship training by and for the commons. Support teaching and training initiatives that place significant value on sustainability, open access to our authors' outputs, open source tools, and best practices. Recognize authors' intellectual freedom to author for a variety of publications to achieve their research communication goals.
- Recognize that your treatment of libraries as customers (paying consumers of your products) is intrinsically connected to your treatment of us—and our authors—as the providers of the content you publish. We see our relationship with publishers on a continuum and expect fair dealing, transparency, openness, and mutual respect in every area of our relationship.
- Recognize and respect that our only job is to serve the knowledge management needs and visions of our institutions, to whom we are accountable. We work on our campuses and engage with our authors 24/7, 52 weeks a year, gaining data about their information needs, preferences, and frustrations that publishers will never collect from their data-driven platforms. The data publishers collect about our researchers is incomplete and sometimes inaccurate.

Does a library administrator at a top-tier research institution see promise in partnering with publishers to advance the authorship and publishing practices of our campus researchers? Absolutely, in the sense that authentic partnership represents equal participation and mutually beneficial engagement. Anything else represents merely a supplier-consumer relationship, where libraries and the authors we serve exercise our votes with our pens, our pocketbooks, and our feet.

TOWARD AN ETHICS OF EVALUATION

Nicky Agate, Columbia University

As some “free” platforms seek to monetize (Bond, 2017) and other “friendly” players are swallowed up by conglomerates intent on owning the entirety of the scholarly communications ecosystem (Schonfeld, 2017), many scholars are beginning to see *where* we choose to share our scholarly materials as an ethical question. But *how* we choose to measure their influence (a term I see as better describing the long-tail effects of scholarly production than

impact, with its connotations of flash-in-the-pan immediacy and violence) is an ethical matter too.

Publishing companies—including those now rebranded as “global information analytics business[es]” (Elsevier, 2018)— and “academic” start-ups are competing to offer quantitative information to individuals, journals, upper-level administrators, institutions, and, sometimes, anyone who will pay. It has been almost 30 years since Boyer (1990) argued for a richer understanding of scholarship that would include discovery, integration, application, and teaching. Current metrics, however, reduce the remit of scholarly activity to journal articles and books. Furthermore, such metrics have in common, even in their alt-form, the flattening of influence into an algorithmically determined combination of downloads, views, mentions, likes, and decontextualized citations.

What if, instead of encouraging other scholars (and ourselves) to reach for some random score that’s more reminiscent of *Black Mirror* than any ideal academy, we reflected instead on the values that would make our libraries, institutions, and selves more open, more collegial, more inclusive—in short, better places and people to be? What if the potential influence of *all* our work—from the conferences that we organize to the syllabi that we create to the book chapters that we write—was evaluated in terms of its attention to an ethical framework that focused on, for example, collegiality, openness, social justice, community, or public good—a framework that allowed us to tell more textured stories about our professional trajectories and their place in the institutions in which we work? This is the driving question behind the HuMetricsHSS (2018) initiative (full disclosure: I am a co-PI on this project), whose mission is to rethink “humane indicators of excellence in the humanities and social sciences”—where *excellence* as defined by our current metrics systems encourages competitiveness, incivility, and haste (Moore et al., 2017). This initiative proposes that we reverse-engineer the process, starting with the shared values we as a community of thinkers, scholars, and administrators strive to uphold, and working outward from those to find tangible indicators that might encourage and incentivize the practice of such values in our careers.

PRAGMATIC PARTNERSHIPS: ON CONSORTIA, COST-SHARING, AND COMMERCIAL OPEN SOURCE HOSTING AND SUPPORT

Sam Searle, Griffith University

For many academic libraries, locally hosting, supporting, and enhancing open source software is not a viable option. Skill gaps, decreasing budgets, and lack of institutional IT support are common barriers. In some organizations with a strong enterprise IT focus,

cloud-first and buy-before-build principles can also make open source a challenge. Is this a bad thing? I would argue not necessarily. As the manager of a portfolio of library applications used by a community of over 50,000 academic staff and students, I find enterprise IT drivers such as financial sustainability, security, and architectural fitness for purpose as important as library profession goals around fairness and openness.

The maturing of the market in commercial hosting and support services for open source scholarly communication infrastructure can be positive. My organization's deployment of an in-house open source repository started with good intentions over ten years ago. Unfortunately our repository degraded over time as complex integrations and customizations led to technical debt and as staff involved in the initial project moved on. Our decision in 2016 to move to a cloud-hosted, vendor-supported installation of the same product means we can now concentrate on the thing that we care about most: sourcing and making available as much open access content from our researchers as we can. Our membership in Duraspace and service agreement with a Duraspace-registered provider who contributes financially and in-kind to ongoing software development (and therefore can be said to share our values and goals) allows us to achieve far more than we could have through local efforts. We are also starting conversations with other local clients of the same company to investigate sharing the costs of enhancement development and the porting of code back into the core repository codebase. Success with this model will potentially help us to mount a successful business case in the future to move to other (commercially supported) open source products, such as those that could emerge from the FOLIO initiative.¹

What is less positive is academic libraries' seeming lack of interest in extending our consortial management and strategic procurement capabilities to the technologies underpinning scholarly communication. The Library Consortium of New Zealand ran the Institutional Research Repository Project for a number of years beginning in 2006, enabling three universities and one institute of technology to share repository infrastructure and staff expertise. The White Rose Consortium, consisting of the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield, and York, has shared not only underlying infrastructure but a single repository instance for over ten years. While not without challenges, repository managers involved in these not-for-profit initiatives have identified a number of advantages (Brown, Lockett, Murdoch, Nixon, & Schweer, 2002; Proudfoot, 2005), which makes it surprising that this sort of consortial effort is so uncommon. Consortial arrangements with commercial providers of open source solutions have yet to be fully explored too; could aggregating institutional demand lead to reduced costs and improved services?

¹ <https://www.folio.org/>

These activities may work best within a limited geographic region or legal jurisdiction and could be complementary to other work on the sustainability of key components global infrastructure, such as the subscription model proposed by the Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS).

“ACADEMY OWNED” IS A LONG WAY OFF

Dr. Danny Kingsley, Cambridge University Library

The concept of “academy-owned and -supported scholarly communication” looks rather utopian in 2018. We appear to be moving in the opposite direction. While academic publishing continues to be an extraordinarily lucrative business, at least for the “big five” (Larivière, Haustein, & Mongeon, 2015), changes in the policy landscapes across Europe, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere are pushing the industry toward a potentially uncertain future. The United Kingdom has experimented for the last five years with adding extra funds into the ecosystem to pay for hybrid open access to allow time for publishers to adjust to a more open business model (Research Councils UK, 2013). This, I have argued (Kingsley, 2017), has failed. The Springer Compact (Springer, 2018) has been a notable outcome of this period, which means a single payment covers subscriptions and open access for all outputs of an institution, drastically reducing article processing charges and eliminating a significant administrative burden.

However, this has been an outlier. On the whole, there has been a redirection of business strategy by some academic publishing companies to develop portfolios that address the entire research process. Rather than adjusting workflows and internal processes, several companies are moving away from publishing into scholarly infrastructure: the tools and services that underpin the scholarly research life cycle, many of which are geared toward data analytics. This has been effected through an aggressive acquisition program in the case of Elsevier (Bosman & Kramer, 2015), and through the development of new products in the case of Digital Science, which shares an owner with Springer/Nature (although there is strong denial of any intended merger) (Hook, 2017). In both cases, the individual products across the portfolio retain their own distinctive branding.

There are instances where institutions have deliberately chosen to work with Elsevier, such as the University of Florida in 2016 (Elsevier, 2016) and Manchester University, which in 2017 “partnered” with Mendeley Data (University of Manchester Library, n.d.) and migrated their repository to an Elsevier product—Pure². However, not all institu-

² See Researcher Explorer, <https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/>

tions approach procurement holistically. Often purchasing processes within a research organization are managed at an administrative level. Many of these research support products are marketed to different targets within an institution. Symplectic Elements, for example, is a research information system that is usually managed by the research office. Figshare, on the other hand, is a repository that would usually be managed by the library. In addition, it would be an unusual researcher who is aware of the parent company of any particular free online product they are using on an individual level, and the potential implications for their organization or for scholarly communication.

It is easy to project that an institution could find itself unintentionally in a situation where crucial organizational data is managed by multiple products owned by a single organization. This, it might be said, is simply good business strategy. However, Elsevier as both a publisher of, and the supplier of data about, research for university rankings poses a strong conflict of interest, and yet it is this very combination that makes it a go-to choice for university administrations interested in rankings (Posada & Chen, 2017).

So what of the Open agenda? Academic research is collaborative. It crosses borders and utilizes shared knowledge regardless of where it was generated, and this is acknowledged by funders who see the benefits of collaboration. Yet, the strategic goals of funders are often focused on the national level when it comes to relevance and importance (Cadwalader, 2017). Funders do not necessarily fund ongoing infrastructure that is in competition with new requests to fund new ideas. There is a mismatch between a reliance on certain resources on the one hand, and a reluctance to fund for long-term sustainability on the other.

But the future needn't be all doom and gloom. The time has come to move into serious discussions about the problem of how scholarly infrastructure is funded. This does need to be something that is looked at on a global level. There are strong arguments that this issue is both political and economic (Neylon, 2017). There are some promising indicators, including a 2017 meeting between several major funding organizations who came to a strong consensus that core data resources for the life sciences should be supported through a coordinated international effort to both ensure long-term sustainability and appropriately align funding with scientific impact (Anderson et al., 2017). A project is underway called ELIXIR Core Data Resources (Durinx et al., 2017), defined as a set of European data resources that are of fundamental importance to the wider life-science community and the long-term preservation of biological data. The Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS)³ is an international group of leading aca-

³ <http://www.scoss.org/>

demic and advocacy organizations that came together in 2016 to help secure the vital infrastructure underpinning Open Access and Open Science, for which SPARC Europe is a founding member. And the 2.5% commitment (Lewis, 2017) is a call that “every academic library should commit to contribute 2.5% of its total budget to support the common infrastructure needed to create the open scholarly commons.”

Who knows how this will play out? Watch this space.

NUKE THE WHALES: REDESIGNING A SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION ECOLOGY

Micah Vandegrift, North Carolina State University

Lately we’ve been seeing lots of talk about infrastructure for scholarly communication and digital scholarship. Cameron Neylon has blogged about it. Roger Schonfeld instigated a discussion about it from the ITHAKA platform. The Confederation of Open Access Repositories issued a report and abstract recommendations to that end. Barbara Fister framed it as part of the “New Roles for the Road Ahead.” The “2.5% Commitment” was a topic of discussion at CNI’s December meeting, etc. etc. And yet, the library isn’t listed as one of the 101 Innovations in Scholarly Publishing (Kramer & Bosman, 2015). Since I’m not one to mince words, I’ll say that it’s clear that Elsevier’s acquisition of bepress, and subsequent rebranding as a data analytics company, has created a shitstorm for libraries who are deeply invested in open access and open discovery of scholarly assets. An eternal optimist and scholcomm activist, I think this is our opportunity to claim territory, advance our agenda, and position the library “as important to the knowledge-creating task of the university in different ways” (Pinfield, Cox, & Rutter, 2017).

We all know *why* this might be necessary (see shitstorm above). I’d like to propose a frame that might be helpful for dealing with the *how*.

Alongside all this chatter about infrastructure have come words like *ecology* and *ecosystem* (Wolski & Richardson, 2014; Scherer, Villadsen, & Webster, 2017). Thinking about the future of/for scholarly communication as an ecology offers a few things. A ScholComm ecology is

1. a living system where **adaptation** is key;
2. less about rigid platforms, tools, and technologies, and more about people, policies, and purpose.

Digital scholarship and scholarly communication, as played out in your local research library, is the enactment of the (r)evolutionary impulses on the fringe of librarianship. This style of librarianship is entering a cycle of what I'd like to call "generative librarianship": purposefully, ethically, strategically, and systematically creating new things (workflows, systems, tools/technologies, programs, skill sets, etc.) to solve the challenges of a networked, global, human-focused, information-rich, academic enterprise (Vandegrift, 2018).

Library publishing has shown great promise. Digital humanities has shown great promise. Research data management has shown great promise. The 2.5% commitment is a good idea. What we have in front of us is the opportunity to position the library as indispensable to the *creation* of research and scholarship at the local level, which would allow us to take back the means of production. Rather than trying to insert ourselves at the end of a research process (green OA), what would it look like to be central and essential to the beginning, middle, *and* dissemination of scholarly works? It's time for the nuclear option. Let Elsevier shill their workflow analytics to the office of research, and let's replace them with an open, interoperable, flexible, ethically sound, discovery-rich, "loosely-coupled" ecosystem for scholarly assets to move to and fro (Wolski & Richardson, 2014). Nuke the whales.

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