The Principle and the Pragmatist [1]: On Conflict and Coalescence for Librarian Engagement with Open Access Initiatives

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This article considers Open Access (OA) training and the supports and structures in place in academic libraries in the United States from the perspective of a new librarian. OA programming is contextualized by the larger project of Scholarly Communication in academic libraries, and the two share a historical focus on journal literature and a continued emphasis on public access and the economics of scholarly publishing. Challenges in preparing academic librarians for involvement with OA efforts include the evolving and potentially divergent nature of the international OA movement and the inherent tensions of a role with both principled and pragmatic components that serves a particular university community as well as a larger movement.

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INTRODUCTION

Here is the good news about being a freshly minted academic librarian engaged with Open Access (OA) in the United States: By some indicators, a sort of Golden Age of OA implementation is upon us, a crucial moment buoyed by the movement's accomplishments as well as international debates over varieties of OA. The area is new enough that libraries' approaches are not entrenched. Conversely, Scholarly Communication (SC) programs, which often host OA efforts in libraries, are established enough that librarians have experience with SC, library structures have begun to reflect its importance, and longstanding conferences and professional groups can offer orientation and instruction in the area. Three quarters of those Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries responding to a 2007 survey reported engagement with scholarly communication education efforts; another 18% indicated that planning for such initiatives was underway.[1] There is likely both enthusiasm around the idea of access and enough confusion over what OA is and isn't (i.e., not a single, unified model or the end of peer review) that new librarians will have something to sink their teeth into. With recent developments around the "Academic Spring," the defeat of the Research Work Acts, the launch of the National Institutes of Health Public Access Policy, and several university mandates established around OA faculty publications and electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs), students and faculty outside of the library are potentially aware of and interested in OA.

Other good news: recent Library/Information School (LIS)[2] graduates may have encountered a curriculum that addressed issues and competencies related to OA, copyright and authors rights, Creative Commons, electronic records, institutional repositories, and even Digital Humanities, digital curation, data management, digital publishing, and E-science.[3] They may have benefitted from the many IMLS-funded initiatives to develop curricula in these areas, or have made contacts and learned new skills at related internships.

That is the good news.

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[1] The title draws on David Lewis's comment: "Open access journals claim two advantages: the first is pragmatic and the second is principled." See David W. Lewis, "The Inevitability of Open Access," *College & Research Libraries* 73:5 (September 2012): 493–506.

The harder news is that many academic research libraries (like many LIS programs) are struggling to rationalize and redefine their place in the context of universities that are themselves confronted with shrinking support.[4] Debates over how to make MLIS students into librarians have raged long, and reforms have been implemented in the form of required internships, graduate assistantships, practicums, or research projects, shifting core curricula, a proliferation of courses aimed at building digital competencies, or, from the library side, formal mentoring and orientation programs.[5] It may be a librarian's first year in the library—or even first several years—that solidifies both a specialization and a response to librarianship, with its customs, values, and systems.

While library school may have bestowed a sense of purpose and strategy, the library itself can both moderate and strengthen positions, introducing new librarians to structures and stakeholders not always detailed in the readings. As with any workplace, libraries function and evolve according to rules that are not immediately evident. New librarians, too, bring their own experiences and expectations to bear on their positions. In a process known as "organizational socialization," a new employee "acquires the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior he or she needs to participate effectively as a member of an organization."[6] This process of acquiring organizational knowledge and skills and navigating a new environment can be bewildering. Surveyed about their acclimation, new librarians in Canada frequently mentioned difficulties around "getting things done," referencing "concerns such as when and how to take initiative, how to work around difficult supervisors, dealing with resistance to change, and getting people to listen to their ideas."[7]

This article considers OA training and the supports and structures in place in academic libraries from the perspective of a new librarian. What is OA's place in the larger project of SC? What consensus, if any, joins academic libraries' efforts in these areas, and what are the origins of this involvement? What roles might librarians play in OA? What skills might new librarians bring to this area, and what expectations are in place for those joining and managing these efforts? To this end, I consider the scopes of OA and SC, briefly examine the multiple histories of academic libraries' efforts and ambitions around OA and SC, and survey and make recommendations around the development of roles and competencies in OA for new and established librarians.

These inquiries will be met with complexity and considerable uncertainty. Certainly, OA has been championed on a larger scale by such organizations as ARL (in a recent editorial, ARL Executive Director Charles Lowry remarked: "Advocacy for OA is expected from ARL…"[8]). However, "OA" itself is an evolving, multifaceted effort, and research libraries, functioning within the ecosystems of larger universities, have developed and staffed initiatives in SC that may define and prioritize OA differently. MLIS programs have likely done the same. Unfortunately, no data was forthcoming on whether and how LIS programs are introducing OA into their curricula or how systematically academic libraries have defined, incorporated, and embraced OA.[9]

What is Open Access?

In recent remarks to the 158th ARL Membership Meeting, Dieter Stein, convener of the Berlin 6 OA conference, observed: "Now, what is Open Access? And this is where the politics start already."[10]

"Open Access" evokes multifaceted and, at times, disputed description. To many, it is a business model for scholarly publishing, with the particulars of Gold, Hybrid, and Green forms debated and dissected.[11] On a larger scale, it is a question of national policy, international trends and declarations, funding mandates, and compliance. It is inextricable from digital scholarship, a movement that hinges on the potential to electronically deliver and preserve research. Some describe OA as "inevitable"[12]; others as "unsustainable."[13]

OA can also form an ethics of access or publication, of obtainment or dissemination. It is "a kind of access, not a kind of business model, license, or content."[14] Because materials are freely available online, OA can dredge up fears of plagiarized, misattributed, or resold material or signal a commitment to making high quality research freely available to scholars and the general public worldwide, with an emphasis on developing countries.

OA incurs different emphases surrounding pricing and permissions, or "gratis" or "libre" forms. Separately defined by the seminal Budapest (2002),[15] Bethesda (2003),[16] and Berlin (2003)[17] statements, OA's common definition, Peter Suber argues, incurs both "free online access" and the granting of "user permission for all legitimate scholarly uses."[18] Suber's definition, with its provisions for both pricing and permissions, is held to be on the "libre" spectrum of OA; while Stevan Harnad's, with its focus on pricing rather than permissions, is inclined towards "gratis." Harnad stresses the type of materials and availability, defining OA as "immediate, permanent, free online access to the full text of *all refereed research journal articles*."[19] A user guide developed with sponsorship from the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) presents the "Open Access Spectrum" to help users determine openness by considering "Reader Rights," "Reuse Rights," "Copyrights," "Author Posting Rights," "Automatic Posting," and "Machine Readability" as defining components of OA.[20]

OA has diffused into institutions and across scholarship in uneven patches; in so doing, it has changed the makeup of stakeholders. Recent OA-related mandates and policies, encompassing works other than refereed journal articles, such as monographs, student works, and gray literature, have disrupted some of the more closely defined parameters of the early OA movement and have changed the focus that libraries initially advocated on serials pricing solutions. OA policies have also altered practices for those disciplines and researchers tied to federal funding. For faculty in universities with faculty-elected institutional OA mandates or guidelines, such policies have introduced new workflows and compliance measures. Graduate students have found themselves subject to OA publishing requirements for their theses and dissertations, which has sometimes sparked debates over impact, the ownership of student work, and the need for discipline- or genre-specific rules.[21] OA options or requirements have incurred broader, international exposure to scholarship deposited in institutional or disciplinary repositories or other digital platforms.[22] However, implementation has at times veered from voluntary or author/faculty-driven initiatives into the realm of potential coercion.[23]

OA constitutes a global movement. But the development, implementation, and support of OA-friendly policies or mandates on campuses require localized, focused outreach and services. In educating and encouraging faculty and students to adopt OA approaches, librarians must integrate skills and functions related to SC and publishing, including marketing, rights clearance and author rights outreach, and running and supporting software or platforms for distribution. Different models within academic libraries may employ a single librarian or small unit charged with campus outreach around OA, undertake a "mainstreaming" approach through liaison, subject, and reference librarians, or employ a hybrid model.[24] By their nature, these models require engagement beyond the library, with stakeholders throughout the university.

A Brief History of OA and SC

The history of OA efforts in libraries is entwined with SC. The OA movement in academic libraries has gained momentum recently through faculty-adopted mandates and policy changes such as the NIH requirement. In its broadest sense, SC encompasses all scholarly publishing and exchange and could thus be seen as central to the activity of research libraries since their inception. More recently, SC has emerged as a rapidly evolving specialization and dedicated librarian position, encompassing a range of programming. As one recent article noted: "Scholarly communication programs are nearly