An Examination of Library and Information Studies Faculty Experience with and Attitudes toward Open Access Scholarly Publishing

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Abstract
Open access (OA) scholarly publishing has grown steadily in academia for the past few decades as an alternative to traditional subscription-based journal publishing, particularly as concerns mount over the affordability of periodicals. This poster presents an initial analysis of a systematic survey of North American Library and Information Science (LIS) faculty attitudes towards and experiences with OA publishing. This work demonstrates that a majority of LIS faculty do agree that major changes need to be made to the current state of scholarly communication and that a majority of LIS faculty see OA journals as comparable to traditional, subscription based peer-reviewed journals. However, OA publication behaviors are not equal across faculty rank and tenure track faculty are not publishing in OA journals at the same rate as their tenured colleagues. Tenure-track faculty also have higher rates of indicating they believe promotion/tenure committees will evaluate OA journal publications as less favorable than those in traditional, subscription based peer-reviewed journals. The findings from this study raise important questions about overcoming barriers to participation in OA.

1   Introduction

Open access (OA) scholarly publishing has grown steadily in academia as an alternative to traditional subscription-based journal publishing for the past few decades, particularly as concerns have mounted over affordability of periodicals and dwindling library budgets (Sample, 2012). While many librarians have been strong advocates of open access (Suber, 2003), and the attitudes and opinions of librarians have been studied in some detail (Carter, Snyder, & Imre, 2007), no studies have systematically approached LIS faculty attitudes and experiences with OA publishing. LIS faculty attitudes and experiences are important to understand, not just because these individuals are members of universities that may be facing their own respective financial challenges, but also because they are often training the next generation of librarians and information professionals that will be confronting this issue.

2   Method

In order to respond to this need to better understand LIS faculty attitudes toward and experiences with open access, we collected data from LIS faculty using a self-administered web survey. The survey instrument was adapted from a survey developed and executed by Alma Swan and Sheridan Brown in 2004 in the United Kingdom (Swan & Brown, 2004). We developed the participant pool by drawing on the American Library Association's database of all accredited LIS programs in North America. We consulted the public websites of each school (excluding University of Puerto Rico) to obtain the email addresses of all tenured and tenure-track faculty members to be included. Since most adjunct faculty are not required to publish as part of their position, these faculty members were not included.

A final list of 1,017 faculty member emails was compiled and these individuals were invited to complete the survey. This population was comprised of 316 assistant professors, 304 associate professors, 262 full professors, 134 professors emeriti, and 1 professional faculty member whose rank was unspecified. The survey was open for a total of six weeks, and reminder emails were sent twice, at 2-week intervals. A total of 276 members of the population completed the survey, which represents a response rate of over 27%.

3　Key Findings

3.1　**Overall Demographics of Sample**

Of the 276 participants that completed the survey, 35.1% indicated they are assistant professors, 34.4% indicated they are associate professors, 25.4% indicated they are professors, 4.7% indicated they are "other" (which includes emeritus status), and .4% provided no rank information. 85.5% of the participants indicated that they are at U.S. institutions, 14.1% are at Canadian institutions, and .4% did not indicate their location.

3.2　**Opinions about the Current State of Scholarly Communication**

Participants were asked how they would characterize the current state of scholarly communication environment. Of those who responded to this question (n = 272), 60.3% indicated that they felt substantial changes need to be made, 26.1% felt some minor changes need to be made, 2.9% indicated that no changes need to be made, and 10.7% indicated they had no opinion. Opinions about the current state of scholarly communication were fairly evenly distributed among assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors, with over half of each respective group indicating that they felt substantial changes need to be made.

3.3　**Opinions about OA Publishing**

Participants were asked how they personally would evaluate a publication in an OA peer-reviewed journal compared to a traditional, subscription-based peer-reviewed journal. Of those who answered this question (n = 269), 62.5% indicated that they would evaluate a publication in an OA peer-reviewed journal as at least comparable to a subscription-based peer-reviewed journal, 24.5% indicated that they would evaluate a publication in the OA peer-reviewed journal as unfavorable or of lesser quality, and 13.0% indicated they would be unsure. This distribution was fairly consistent across assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors, with over half of each respective group indicating that they would evaluate a publication in an OA peer-reviewed journal as at least comparable to a subscription-based peer-reviewed journal.

3.4　**Opinions about OA Publishing Evaluation by Promotion and Tenure Committees**

Despite the fairly consistent distribution of opinions of OA publishing across faculty rank, a very different picture emerged when respondents were asked how a promotion/tenure committee at their institution would evaluate a publication in an open access peer-reviewed journal as compared to a traditional, subscription-based peer-reviewed journal. Among those who answered this question (n = 271), 36.5% indicated that the OA publication would be seen as at least comparable to a subscription-based peer-reviewed journal, 45.0% indicated a promotion/tenure committee at their institution would evaluate a publication in an open access peer-reviewed journal as unfavorable or of lesser quality, and 18.5% indicated they would be unsure.

Respondents' answers to this question were significantly related with their faculty rank, X^2 (6, N = 271) = 13.844, p < .05. Figure 1 shows that a majority of assistant professors (48.4%) indicated that a publication in an OA peer-reviewed journal compared to a traditional, subscription-based peer-reviewed journal would be seen as unfavorable or of lesser quality by a promotion/tenure committee at their institution. Among associate professors, this number drops slightly to 46.3%, and among full professors, it drops to 33.8%. A majority of full professors (50.0%) indicate that a publication in an open-access peer-reviewed journal would be seen as comparable by a promotion/tenure committee at their institution compared to a traditional, subscription-based peer-reviewed journal.
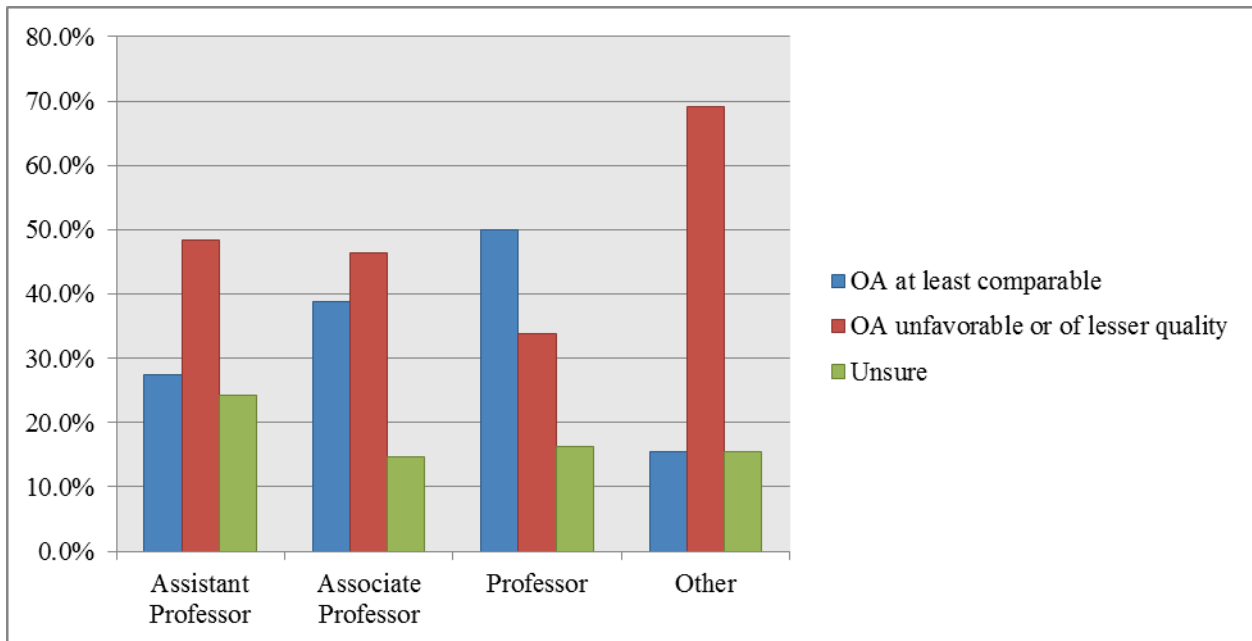
Figure 1: Perception of how a promotion/tenure committee would evaluate an OA publication by faculty rank

3.5   OA Publishing Practices

Participants were asked whether or not they have ever published their own work in an open access journal. Among those who responded to this question (*n* = 256), 53.3% indicated that they have published on an OA journal, whereas 42.6% have not. Response to this question was found to be significantly related with respondents faculty rank, X^2 (3, N = 256) = 20.485, p < .05. As Figure 2 shows, full professors have the highest rate of publication in open access journals, with 73.0% having published in OA, associate professors have the second highest rate of OA publication at 62.6%, assistant professors have the third highest rate of OA publication at 47.2%, and those who indicated their rank as "other" have the lowest rate of OA publication at 15.4%.
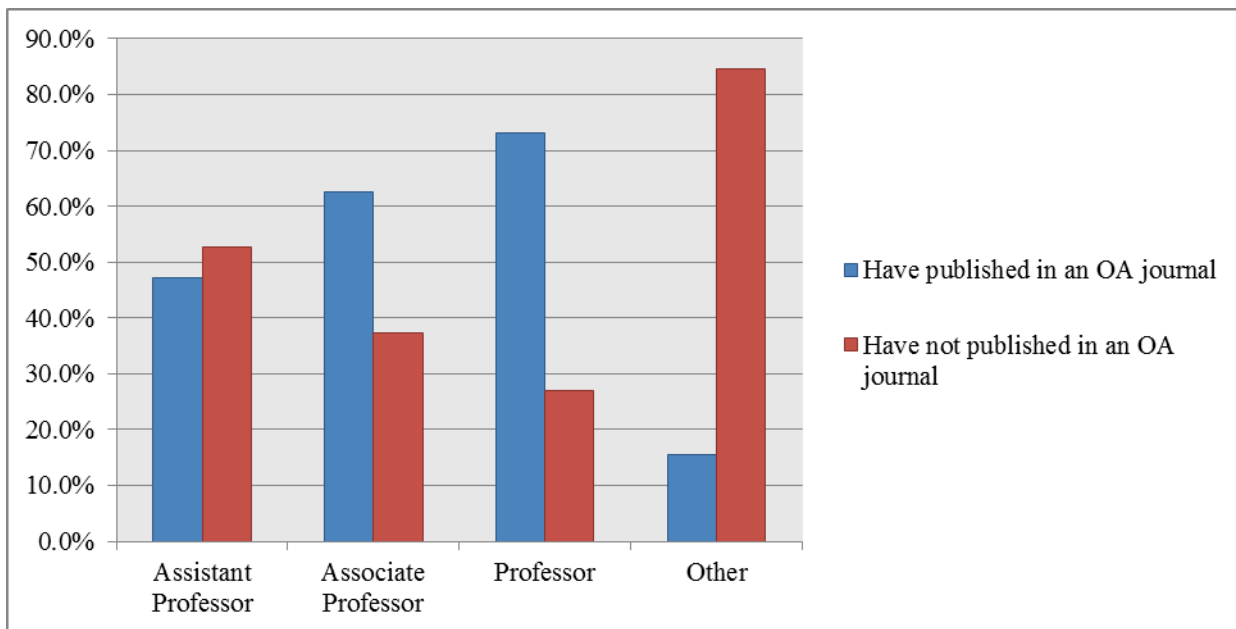

Figure 2: Previous OA publication by faculty rank

3.6   Future Plans for OA Publication

Participants were asked how likely they are to publish at least one article in an open access journal in the next 12 months. Of the 272 responses to this question, 56.9% indicated that were likely to publish at least one articles in an OA journal in the next 12 months, 34.1% indicated they were unlikely, and 7.7% indicated they were unsure.

Plans to publish in OA journals in the next 12 months were not found to be significantly related with faculty rank, X^2 (6, N = 272) = 11.636, p = .071. As Figure 3 shows, with the exception of the "other" category, there is a fairly even distribution of plans to publish in OA in the next 12 months among the ranks.
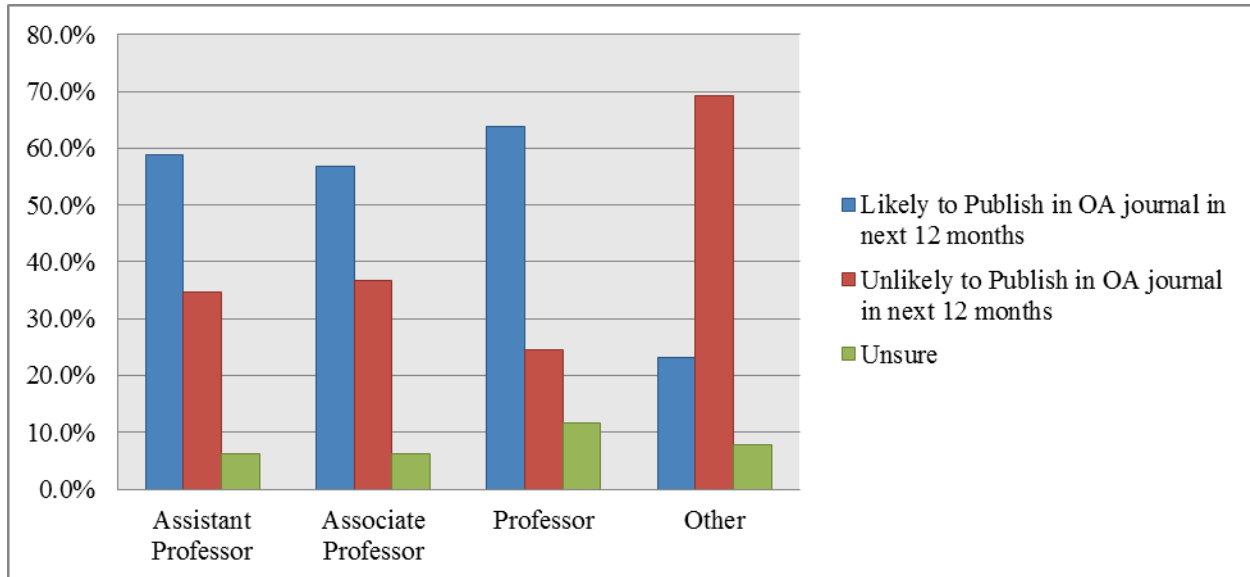

Figure 3: Plans to publish in an OA journal in the next 12 months by faculty rank

Plans to publish in OA journals in the next 12 months are, however, significantly related with whether or not the respondent has previously published in an OA journal, X^2 (2, N = 255) = 85.091, p < .05. As Figure 4 shows, those who indicate that they are likely to publish in an OA journal in the next 12 months have a much higher rate of also indicating that they have previously published in OA (80.4%) than of those whose who indicated they are unlikely to published in OA in the next 12 months (19.6%).
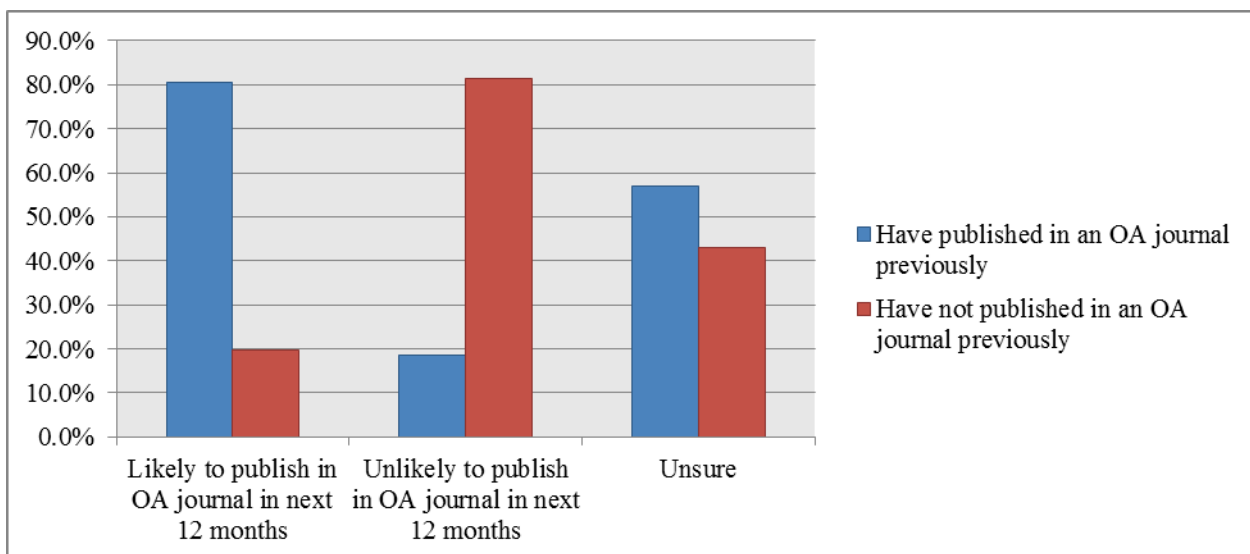

Figure 4: Previous OA publishing experience within groups that plan/are not planning/unsure if they will publish in OA journals in the next 12 months

4   Conclusions

In addition to being the first systemic study of LIS faculty attitudes toward and experiences with OA, these findings highlight a number of serious structural issues that may impact the possibility for OA publishing to alleviate the problems currently associated with scholarly publishing. First, a majority of LIS faculty do seem to agree that major changes need to be made to the current state of scholarly communication and a majority of LIS faculty also indicate that they see peer-reviewed OA journals as at least comparable to traditional, subscription based peer-reviewed journals. However, OA publication behaviors are not even across faculty rank and tenure-track faculty are not publishing in OA journals at the same rate as their tenured colleagues. Further, tenure-track faculty have higher rates of indicating that they believe promotion/tenure committees will evaluate OA journal publications as less favorable than traditional, subscription based peer-reviewed journals. Despite this fear, assistant professors, associate professors and full professors all indicated similar rates of planning to publish in OA journals in the next 12 months. This analysis also shows that having previously published in OA is significantly correlated with being likely to publish in OA journals again in the next 12 months. These findings raise important questions for OA advocates about how to overcome both the structural issues around evaluation of scholarly output as part of tenure decisions and how to attract those who have not previously published in OA journals to OA publication.

5   References

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