

# Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication

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Volume 2 | Issue 4

eP1181

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Vandegrift, M, Bolick, J. (2014). "Free to All": Library Publishing and the Challenge of Open Access. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 2(4):eP1181. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.1181>

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JLSC is a quarterly journal sponsored and published by Pacific University Library | ISSN 2162-3309 | <http://jpsc-pub.org>

## LIBRARY PUBLISHING FORUM 2014

# “Free to All”: Library Publishing and the Challenge of Open Access

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There is a significant and important responsibility as libraries move into the role of publishing to retain our heritage of “access for all.” Connecting and collaborating with colleagues in the publishing industry is essential, but should come with the understanding that the library as an organization is access-prone. This article discusses the complexities of navigating that relationship, and calls for libraries and publishers to embrace and respect the position from which we begin. Finally, the article forecasts several possible characteristics of what “publishing” might look like if libraries press the principle of access in this growing area.

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## INTRODUCTION

The distinguished legacy of libraries is connecting people with resources, at no charge: “Free to All.” As libraries increasingly assume the role of publisher, we must honor that legacy, acting as “library publishers” rather than “publishing libraries.” The core library value of access supports the great opportunity to share knowledge and push innovation, thus driving our entry into publishing. This evolution is complementary to established publishing structures. We argue herein that as libraries invest more in this space, we must uphold our values and principles of access and discoverability.

This evolution is not an indictment of traditional publishers and university presses, who will remain important in the emergent 21st century publishing environment. Publishing

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is evolving with various representative groups expressing their own motivations. The gap between libraries and certain types of publishers has lessened in recent years. University presses, for example, are working more closely with libraries, in some cases [reporting to their university library system](#) (Howard, 2013). Society and association publishers, also deeply committed to the dissemination of scholarly knowledge, echo the values of these non-profit organizations. We draw the distinction between these three groups - university presses, libraries, and society or association publishers - and commercial publishing companies, to illustrate the complexity of the system into which library publishing is entering.

Libraries must walk the line between the heritage of access and the practical considerations of the commercial enterprise of publishing. Our goal herein is to illuminate this position, and

encourage “libraries as publishers” to be deliberate and forthright in these decisions.



Jake Carlson  
@jrcarlso



Vandergrift: "Is open access a core principle of lib pub program?" In principle, probably. In practice? #LPForum



9:39 AM - 6 Mar 2014

### DISCUSSION: OPEN ACCESS BEYOND THE REPOSITORY

*Session Prompt:* Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), the

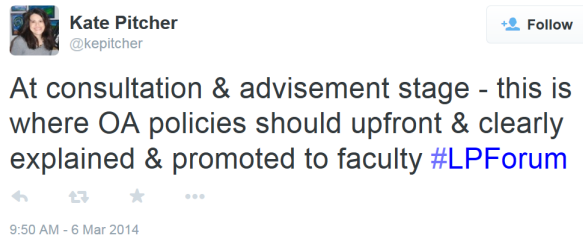
Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA), faculty resolutions and federal grant requirements: how can libraries comply with them? Should we? When such policies are in conflict with what our authors and editors want, how do we juggle our responsibilities? In this session, we will examine the ramifications for library publishing of the varied landscape of open access requirements.

The underlying precept of this session, as dictated in the prompt, was that the library’s role in publishing is reactive. Challenging that idea, this presentation offered the idea that as the library becomes involved in publishing, we have the opportunity to rewrite the rules of “open access publishing” to align with our principles. The Library Publishing Coalition (n.d.) has adopted a [definition of library publishing](#) as having a “preference for open access dissemination... [and] challenging the status quo.” This presentation began by asking why shouldn’t we define library publishing as “advocating for open access and changing the status quo.”

The [current conversation](#) (Mullins et al., 2012) about library publishing seems to focus on process, practicalities and production, especially in light of protecting and connecting with our university press colleagues. However, what has not been directly addressed are the principles that libraries hold to, and how those create a role that we carry with us into all

new ventures. The direct question with which we must wrestle is whether or not open access is a core principle of a library publishing program.

Columbia University Libraries Center for Digital Research and Scholarship (CDRS), a leader in this growing area, addressed this issue effectively by being forthright about their promotion of open access, while allowing the editorial board of their published journals to make the final decision. [Rebecca Kennison \(2011\)](#) wrote, “CDRS encourages the journals it hosts (and other journals on campus) to adopt an open access business and licensing model... Even so, CDRS is neutral in terms of the business models and licensing agreements for the journals it hosts” (p. 203). CDRS colleagues Mark Newton, Eva Cunningham and Julie Morris (2013) echo this in the *Library Publishing Toolkit*. They write, “In practice, CDRS’ approach to publishing support is business model-neutral, however, and OA is not a requirement for partnership” (p. 110).



Beyond the choice of business model, however, it is stated often around the scholarly communication world that “open access is not a business model.” Kevin Smith (2012), Duke University’s Scholarly Communications Officer, in a blog post titled *Three Things Open Access is Not* says,

Open access is not just one thing... and it is not just a business model. Open access is also a statement about the values of scholarship; an attempt to introduce more transparency into the process of research and to encourage greater participation in its creation, financing, and evaluation.

When discussing libraries’ shifting role in publishing, thinking about open access solely in terms of business models and policies is too narrow; our heritage of “access for all” must be accounted for as well.

One opportunity for libraries in the evolution of publishing is how we talk and write about it. For example, there is a fine line between “library publishing services” and “library as publisher;” the former a pivot to meet changing needs of users, the latter a deliberate recasting of the role of the library, stressing the primary function as an access agent. Challenging the premise that publishing happens “out there” and that libraries need to respond to it, Karla Hahn (2008), in *Research Library Publishing Services: New Options for*

*University Publishing* writes, “In the near future it should be possible for research libraries to collectively define the core publishing services, particularly for journals, in a 21st century network-based publishing and dissemination system” (p. 29). Alignment with open access policies, then, need not be a compliance issue for libraries, but a corrective opportunity. Libraries can build publishing programs, services, and organizational models to realign the norms, to include and promote openness.

Mike Furlough (2010), former Associate Dean for Research and Scholarly Communications at Penn State University, [framed early library publishing efforts writing](#), “Much of the early emphasis on library publishing services drew energy from advocacy efforts that sought to counterbalance the control of research by commercial scholarly publishers. But the success of these services will depend not on advocacy, but on identifying significant needs and promising trends in research and scholarship and creating services to meet them” (p. 1). Furlough underscores the ever-apparent fact that open access in libraries was a reactive movement since the beginning, forced to that end by the “serials crisis.” Recently, libraries moved upstream in the production and dissemination of research, identifying needs, forecasting trends, and creating programs to address them, substantially changing the conversation.

Responding to Furlough, the establishment of the Library Publishing Coalition seems to have defined the needs and trends, and the service models are outlined in recent publications like the *Library Publishing Toolkit* and [Library Publishing Directory](#) (LPC, 2014). To that end, we’ve returned to the place of advocacy, but from a better vantage point, one where the scope of our influence is not a serials crisis, but as a partner, arbiter, and service provider in the production of scholarship. Approaching library publishing with the understanding that we can shape the future of this field should free librarians to be progressive, innovative, and experimental.

Rather than addressing the panel’s defined parameters, this presentation proposed a different set of questions: How will publishing be structured in five to ten years, and what role does open access play there? As libraries simultaneously grow into the areas of publishing and open access, how can or should we shape each in practice? In what ways can we be more proactive than reactive? The “library as publisher” should address these questions through the formation and establishment of on-the-ground services, guided by advocacy organizations like SPARC and/or the Library Publishing Coalition.

It is likely that the next decade will see the further development of library publishing activities, alongside the continued work of university presses, scholarly societies, as well as traditional, for-profit publishing companies. Each of these players brings perspective and

can remain relevant by promoting our strengths and honoring our values. In many cases, particularly between libraries and our counterparts at university presses and societies, the opportunities for mutual support and collaboration are ripe. If libraries, university presses, and academic societies can get on the same page, we are well suited to being able to define



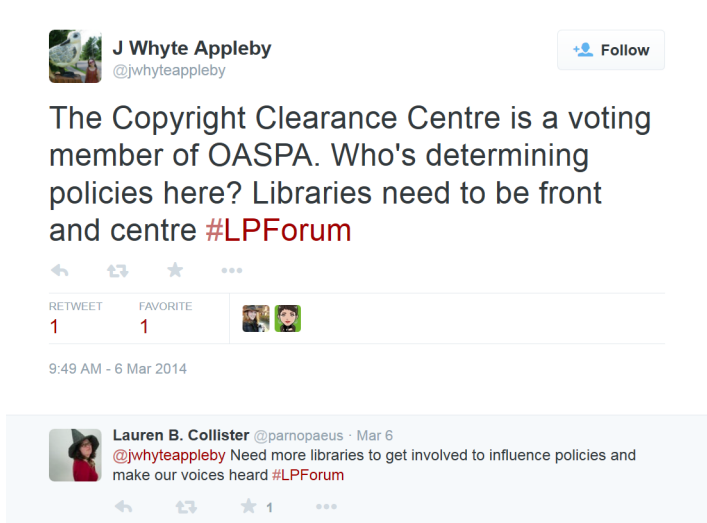
and realize our values as opposed to the market/profit first imperative nature of traditional publishing. Open access fits into this future by providing a more equitable avenue for the publication and spread of great ideas that might struggle in traditional marketplaces. Already we see examples of this proposed in KN Consulting's *Scalable and Sustainable Approach to Open Access Publishing and Archiving for Humanities and Social Sciences* (Kennison & Norberg, 2014) and more recently the Association of American Universities and Association of Research Libraries' (2014) *Prospectus for an Institutionally Funded First-book Subvention*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Rebecca Kennison, of Columbia University Libraries, is a founding partner in KN Consulting, a 501(c)(3) organization.

As members of the academy, we have the tools in place: creators, reviewers, editors, technologists. We are the creators, curators, and consumers of our knowledge. Research already indicates a [tipping point](#) (European Commission, 2013) in the amount of scholarly literature being made open access, and other studies suggest that the overwhelming majority of that literature will be openly accessible by 2020. The shift to a more open academic publishing industry could come to fruition only if we are proactive in making it so. Otherwise we leave the conversation to be dictated to us by other parties, usually to the betterment of their bottom line and the depletion of our budgets.

We can start by loudly and unabashedly supporting the principle of open access. Our goal as library publisher should be to produce high-quality scholarship which can be accessed by anyone, “free to all.” Doing so will help us identify our natural partners within our institutions. Increasingly, we are more deeply collaborating with academics; libraries set up, host and promote their journals; we collaborate and produce open educational resources that other publishers might overlook; and we explore new innovative models of dissemination. Library publishers are in the best position to recognize and develop a publishing environment that is flexible to the needs of scholars. Our proactivity is being responsive to our partners, rather than reactive to the publishing industry, and responsible to the promotion of our values.

Publishing in its current state is rightly defined by the publishers, be they small academic societies and associations, university presses, or commercial publishing companies. Because open access involves the dissemination of scholarly products, it has been subsumed into what we refer to as “publishing.” To that end, groups like the Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association (OASPA) include members such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, SAGE, and a voting member, the Copyright Clearance Center. These four organizations support open access in name, but are also working to maintain their financial stake in the system, as clearly outlined in their lawsuit against faculty at Georgia State University. Additionally, open access archiving, the deposit of scholarly works in repositories,



is entirely dependent on the publishers imposing their constrictions, such as which arbitrary version of the work is allowed to be deposited when. If libraries are truly investing in publishing, and are carrying certain values, ethics and principles into this space, flexing our collective muscle to define where open access occurs in the research process and under what terms becomes ever more necessary. One clear example of this would be the Library Publishing Coalition becoming a member of OASPA and representing the community there.

## IN APPLICATION:

We envision the following: applying open access as a core publishing principle, Libraries will rewrite how we understand shared knowledge in the academy and beyond. This departure may include some of the following characteristics:



1) Allegiances shift: By nature of business model, publishers have self interest in the production of quality work. Libraries, however, due to the heritage of “access,” have a public interest. Publishing then will evolve to focus on the consumers’ needs rather than the producers investments; perhaps a user-centered publishing evolution will occur.

2) Organizational categories dissolve: The distinctions between organizations are already changing as university presses and libraries fold together. The more apparent divisions in the near future will be the motivation behind the action, for example the for-profit venture vs. the non-profit initiative.

3) Policy influence: Open access/publishing won’t be dependent on the publisher lobby directing public policy or tangential organizations structuring open access to fit their programs. The default will be reset, and determined, by library publishers as producers, disseminators, and consumers of academic works. We will have a more decisive role in shaping policies as they benefit the broadening scope of what we do.

4) Community growth: The best possible outcome of libraries investing in publishing is creating deeper effective connections among publishers and harnessing strengths of both organizations to push academic work into society in new and meaningful ways. The crossover and shared mission of libraries and publishers, especially university presses, will increase the impact of both.



“Library as Publisher as Open Access Advocate” then becomes a question of alliance rather than compliance. It is not advantageous to approach this shift in terms of aligning with, or conforming to, or complying with open access politics (and policies). Rather let’s mold, create and shape publishing to include, embrace, and uphold open access, especially when it is a product of the shared labor of libraries. Open access in publishing is an agility, a freedom, not a requirement or restriction. The consummate Library Publisher is a change-agent, loud and clear, affirming and announcing its agenda as access-prone.

## RELATED DATA SET

Vandegrift, M. & Bolick, J. (2014). Free to all: Library publishing and the challenge of open access—tweet archive. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1088459>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to my co-panelist Tim Deliyannides for beginning the session with a clear example of a library publishing program illustrating the points herein. Thanks also to my co-author and colleague Josh Bolick for challenging and refining the ideas presented at the conference into this work. All improvements on it are his, shortcomings mine.

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