

## FOREWORD

# Closing the Gap between Information Literacy and Scholarly Communication

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Two cornerstone programs of the academic library are poised to bring new life to each other as librarians look to close the gap between information literacy and scholarly communication. It has been easy for these two library-based programs, designed and created along different paths and for different purposes and audiences, each with highly specialized skills and knowledge, to develop without intersecting. Now, however, the connections are starting to be explored by librarians, as demonstrated in the essays in this volume.

The time is right to make these connections. The early part of the twenty-first century has been characterized as both the Information Age and the Digital Age, its economy as both the creative economy and the knowledge economy. Whatever label one prefers, clearly creativity has become highly valued for its economic, educational, personal, and communal benefits. It is encouraged by an expanding array of tools readily available to everyone, not just the privileged, as are the channels and venues for sharing creative outpourings. Moreover, the lines between the acts of creation and use are now quite blurry and permeable. Use can be a form of creation, creation can be an act of destruction and remaking, and rapid and open sharing and transformative use of information can lead to amazing new works and insights. Moreover, design thinking is employed as a catalyst for innovation within and across disciplines; the network economy is energized by social media that connects people, regardless of location, and that both encourages existing and potential new relationships; the marketplace of ideas is a valued component of the public sphere, as well as the commercial sector; and many academic institutions are employing interdisciplinary approaches to research, teaching, performance, and practice.

Perhaps more troubling, present-day practices and interpretations regarding intellectual property are tipping copyright law's delicate balance toward authors and producers. Due to restrictive licensing terms, increases in the length of copyright protection, and the problem

of orphan works, much of the knowledge of the twentieth century is difficult for researchers and students to access and simultaneously use legally and technologically. Fortunately, many libraries and such entities as *Wikipedia*, the Internet Archive, HathiTrust, and the Digital Public Library of America are working to make readily available the vast knowledge encapsulated in books and other media and in the heads of experts. In the process these organizations are exposing and preserving the world's best thinking and ideas.

The current burst of creativity is producing an abundance of new information. Although the natural world has always been replete with information, what is new is that humans are generating, discovering, gathering, analyzing, translating, and repurposing an enormous amount of information at great speed. Indeed, often those who aspire to be contributors and those who plan to be utilizers of information are the same people—and it seems the more information we find, the more new information we make.

In addition to its bounty, the current information environment is increasingly global in its extent and confounding in its contradictions and complexity. Each of us consumers/creators is swimming in a fast-flowing stream of information in various stages of formulation and codification while confronting shifting educational and social expectations, increasing ethical dilemmas, and legal quicksand. We must think critically about the expectations, obligations, rights, values, privileges, and standards of evidence and quality in this environment and must assess each of these against our individual motivations and assumptions. The creative age, with all of its fine attributes and troublesome faults, presents enormous opportunities to (re)generate, (re)use, and (re)distribute work to make a better world.

Librarians, researchers, teachers, and students alike must learn to cope with this dynamic environment. Let's begin with the librarians.

Academic libraries are being reinvented as their institutions' knowledge commons that encompasses much of the information world's variation and permutations. Librarians are embracing their roles in the entire cycle of knowledge creation, dissemination, access, use, and preservation. They are plunging headfirst into the generation of knowledge by developing many new printed and online works; becoming formal publishers, in some cases by assuming responsibility for the university press; launching services and partnerships that underpin other kinds of publishing and dissemination of locally produced scholarly content; and partnering in creating, managing, and preserving various forms of digital scholarship. Today's librarians are seeking to become deeply immersed in the creative processes on their campuses.

As for faculty, they have been generating new research, inventions, and cultural products for some time, largely through traditional means

and practices. They may not be aware of all the possibilities available to them and how these possibilities compare with the limitations (and strengths) of traditional approaches. Faculty are often unaware of the impact their individual decisions on where and how to publish their work can have on a larger system of scholarly exchange. They may desire to experiment with new approaches but may not know how to get started. The reinvented library has become a natural place for advice, exploration, and implementation of the new ideas.

Students now face expectations to perform more research, utilize more tools and technology, embed media in their work, create posters and graphic material, assemble attractive portfolios, and publish while still engaged in their studies. These expectations have precipitated a need for higher-order skills equal to the task of higher-level research and problem solving. Beyond academic expectations, students are choosing to create more media and share, swap, and reuse each other's work and that of others. They are exercising their creative impulses through informal social channels as well as formal educational and scholarly outlets. As new forms of information and exchange gain prominence, it is essential for students to understand why these forms are useful and how to use them to good effect. Students are also expected to prepare to be informed global citizens who are ready to participate in or lead the processes of policy formation and decision making that will shape the future. This will require great facility with producing and evaluating information and knowledge of many kinds and from many origins.

Much of student learning now occurs apart from the formal classroom and faculty oversight, thus presenting librarians with enormous opportunities to influence the student experience. Beyond the services and attributes traditionally associated with libraries, librarians are accelerating student success by designing flexible, high-quality, and diverse physical environments that encourage learning and social interaction; making available sophisticated technology and software for creative expression, learning, and leisure; offering internships and other experiential learning opportunities; collaborating with and hosting companion services such as academic advising and writing centers; and providing access to food and everyday supplies to keep students on task without leaving the library. Much like the developing service model for faculty, the library is an amalgam of services tailored to new definitions of student success.

Library instruction programs that impart skills for navigating and evaluating the convoluted information environment have long been essential to the library's integration with student learning. One of the critical approaches to engaging the faculty has been to increase awareness about the system enveloping the creation and sharing of knowl-

edge and to promote changes. These two traditionally separate efforts can come together by arming individual librarians or teams with knowledge of both information literacy and scholarly communication. To do so requires learning how to teach students and faculty to be informed and able authors—and users—who understand the array of choices that confront them. It requires adding knowledge of copyright law and other intellectual property issues—complicated to understand, convey, and apply under the most straightforward of circumstances—to the current repertoire of literacies. It requires expecting librarians to provide guidance to their users in engaging with the myriad aspects of information and scholarship at different stages and roles in their life and work. It also requires teaching the user how to assemble the right resources and assimilate the right knowledge at the right time. Each requirement on its own constitutes a formidable challenge; dealing with all of them will require a herculean effort, but librarians are up to the task.

Ironically, the sweeping changes in scholarship, heightened librarian aspirations, and the integration of disparate library programs may be returning academia to its roots in the Republic of Letters. The desire of the early humanists was “to bring new public worlds into existence” (Grafton 2009, 1) through their conversations and letter writing. The inspirations and insights of their scholarly life were achieved through their material, social, and intellectual networks that interwove the creation, teaching, collecting, organizing, discussing, sharing, and publishing of knowledge. The attempt to unite information literacy with scholarly communication—designed to foster a comprehensive and inclusive system—reflects back to these earlier times.

Ultimately, librarians are committed to promoting the exchange of ideas and increasing understanding in the world. In so doing they celebrate the discovery and propagation of high-quality, imaginative, life-affirming, and life-changing knowledge. This book won't provide all the answers to the challenges and possibilities I have posed, but it is a strong beginning in the journey to expose and exploit the intersections between the creative impulse and the need to access and use information wisely. As you read these informative chapters, I hope that you will be inspired by the tremendous and exciting prospects that lie ahead for all of us.

### Reference

Grafton, Anthon. 2009. *Worlds Made by Words: Scholarship and Community in the Modern West*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.