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What Collaboration Means to Us

Sharing Stories to Drive Open Scholarship

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Introduction

Research abounds on the potential for storytelling to drive action.¹ Much of it suggests that those who listen to or read stories can derive sense and meaning from the cause and effect relationships revealed in the sequencing of narrative events, rendering stories capable of empowering social change.² People need not derive the same meaning from stories in order for the narratives to prompt a collective response; rather, stories can motivate people to act even if they are doing so for different purposes. While not all stories are necessarily dialogic, the act of storytelling often presents opportunities for meaningful, multi-directional engagement with shared experiences. Yet, despite stories' potential for fueling conversation and building communities of practice, many library-related professional collaborations and events continue to rely on panel presentations as a way to convey information. For problems that require community response, there are other effective but less utilized ways to interact.

Within the University of California (UC) libraries, we identified an opportunity to foster collective action through narrative discourse in the particular context of open scholarship. Advancing universal open access (OA) to scholarly literature seemed an especially fertile testing ground for the benefits of storytelling, given the diversity of publishing stakeholders with differing viewpoints and degrees of power, and the need for all of these stakeholders to understand each others' motivations. The scholarly publishing community has been trying to achieve OA for nearly twenty years with limited success. To date, less than fifteen percent of peer-reviewed journal articles are published OA at inception.³ At this rate, freeing the remaining paywalled literature completely and lawfully could take decades. If we are going to accelerate progress toward free readership for all, we – as libraries, scholarly societies, and authors – must collectively make critical choices about how we spend our money.

To generate collaborative opportunities to advance OA, the UC libraries sought to facilitate



active dialogue through a working forum entitled Choosing Pathways to Open Access (CP2OA) on October 16-17, 2018.⁴ The forum emerged from the analysis of a UC libraries working group formed in 2017, and on which the authors served. Our working group was tasked with identifying and considering the panoply of open-access funding models and their viability. On March 21, 2018, we shared the results of our exploration in a toolkit titled *Pathways to OA*.⁵ Many of the next steps for UC action we recommended in the *Pathways to OA* document are now being implemented by the UC libraries. These include (among other things): investing in open source publishing infrastructure and services; entering into transitional transformative agreements,⁶ in which current subscription spends help cover open access article processing charges; and declining licensing deals with publishers who do not agree to make progress toward OA publishing through sustainable mechanisms.

As the *Pathways to OA* toolkit authors began sharing UC's decision-making journey with others, it seemed that other North American libraries and institutions craved dialogue about each other's experiences with OA investment strategies. Thus, the idea for the CP2OA forum was born, and the concept of storytelling emerged as an intriguing approach for convening the exchange.

Storytelling yields action

To structure the forum, the CP2OA planners settled on using design thinking – a methodology for innovative problem solving reliant on discourse – so that participants could develop bespoke action plans for pursuing OA transitions.⁷ Storytelling is an essential component of the design thinking methodology, taking place primarily in the first sequenced phase called “*empathizing*,” during which stakeholders gain an understanding of the core problems to be solved

through hearing others' stories.⁸ Operationalizing design thinking also necessitated exploring meeting structures that could support empathizing at scale. We identified so-called “Liberating Structures” as a good fit to accommodate storytelling across a large group (we had 125 participants). Liberating Structures are described as “easy-to-learn microstructures that ... quickly foster lively participation in groups of any size, making it possible to truly include and unleash everyone.”⁹ By mapping the Liberating Structure exercises to the sequence of design thinking, we were able to provide various opportunities and formats for participants to connect with others and share their own stories.

We modeled the forum sequentially on the five steps of the design-thinking framework. The *empathizing* and *defining* phases were achieved through “fishbowl storytelling” sessions¹⁰ involving groups of “facilitators” (storytellers who also facilitated conversation) who each represented one or more OA funding strategies (e.g., collective models, read and publish agreements, preprint servers) throughout the two-day event. Facilitators started first, stationed at a circular table in the center of the room where they described their OA strategy and reflected on their personal experiences with the strategy. They then responded to and asked questions of each other before taking questions from the broader group of forum participants. This experiential sharing allowed for the exploration of the breadth of strategies for achieving OA, and opened up opportunities for people to connect with others with similar interests or goals.

For the *ideating* phase, participants circulated amongst “strategy stations,” a set of nine tables representing the OA funding strategies, and each led by one or two facilitators. The goal of this process was for participants to explore strategies in more depth to determine potential pathways to pursue for transitioning library expenditures to open access. Breakout rooms were provided for those who wanted to delve into niche



topics related to a strategy, and an evening reception using the 25/10 Crowd Sourcing structure¹¹ provided additional opportunity to generate and share ideas. For *prototyping* on day two, participants mapped their own action plans for achieving OA transitions and shared them with neighbors. Volunteers also spoke about their plans during the plenary closing celebration. This allowed for the *testing* of these prototype action plans after the forum ended, at participants' respective locations.

Responses to a follow-up survey several months after the forum were overwhelmingly positive concerning the format of the event and its effectiveness in inspiring collaboration and action. We received many responses similar to this statement from a participant:

I feel energized and motivated following this meeting, which I certainly can't say for many of the conferences I've attended! I look forward to continuing the spirit of collaboration, and working with you all in the months ahead.¹²

More than 75% of respondents reported having taken action in the form of either furthering local conversations about OA investments, or a concrete action such as starting a pilot, undertaking data analyses, or negotiating with publishers. In its report¹³ to the UC Council of University Librarians (CoUL) on CP2OA and its outcomes, the planning committee recommended several OA strategies for the UC libraries to pursue, several of which are well underway as of this writing.

Collaborative Storytelling Promotes Downstream Collaboration

One joy of collaborative storytelling is that it can reward both storytellers and participants with unexpected downstream innovations and collaborations — a phenomenon that CP2OA brought to bear. For instance, during the forum's *defining*

and *ideating* sessions, many librarians congregated at the "Subscribe to Open¹⁴ table," at which *Annual Reviews'* then-Director of Partnerships and Initiatives, Kamran Naim, spent several hours sharing narrative perspective on how they developed the Subscribe to Open transition model. The experiences that CP2OA participants discussed during those conversations prompted a collective desire to extend OA funding and support to trusted learned society publishers, in recognition of the uncertainty these publishers are facing under the current scholarly communications climate. Some participants expressed a desire to help societies better understand their OA publishing options and to share experiences and provide support in OA transition and outreach strategies. Others wanted to undertake OA advocacy within professional societies to generate society-based OA principles or set standards for professional evaluation within various disciplines. What united us as forum participants through those communications was a desire to act — our intention to leverage our collective experience and expertise to yield a more open society journal universe.

As a result, Transitioning Society Publications to Open Access, or TSPOA, was born.¹⁵ We are a group of like-minded scholarly communication workers from libraries, academic institutions, publishers, societies, and consortia that has organized to provide support, advocacy, and referral services within scholarly society publishing.¹⁶ Our work necessarily involves concerted efforts with numerous publishing stakeholders to understand areas of need. In our first year, we have already cooperated with consortia and society collectives to explore how libraries, societies, consortia, and editors can work together to reimagine society publishing within an OA framework. We undertook this in part through a three-part webinar series co-sponsored with Society Publishers' Coalition (SocPC), which, like TSPOA, seeks a sustainable transition to open scholarship and to improve the efficiency of the



scholarly communication ecosystem for the benefit of researchers and society at large.¹⁷ The group of us who founded TSPOA and began working with SocPC may never have coalesced were it not for the cooperative in-roads carved by storytelling at CP2OA.

Narrative Connections Promote Community & Innovation

Another conversation that began at CP2OA had to do with a possible multi-institutional collaboration for an open access publishing agreement with the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). ACM, a learned society that publishes over fifty journals and thousands of conference proceedings, was already in talks with several library-negotiating teams about migrating their agreements from subscription-based access to deals that included OA publishing for institutional authors. Yet financial projections based on the author pays or article processing charge (APC) model were proving untenable for the research-intensive institutions, even at ACM's reasonable APC rate. The parties at CP2OA decided to meet again soon after the forum, along with another library partner actively pursuing OA publishing deals, in order to brainstorm solutions that might make an ACM OA deal a possibility for interested academic institutions.

In early 2019, the library group approached ACM with their ideas, and thereby opened up a months-long collaborative process with the publisher. The final result is a tiered payment model based on institutional article output that the negotiating parties felt accommodated institutions of all sizes, and that covered OA publication without needing to charge authors APCs. Four institutions signed a joint agreement with ACM for its inaugural ACM OPEN¹⁸ deal at the end of 2019, thus opening up thousands of publications every year by authors from Carnegie Mellon University, Iowa State University, MIT, and the

University of California. As Chris Bourg, Director of Libraries at MIT and one of the ACM OPEN signatories explained:

This agreement with ACM is a model for new kinds of collaborations between research libraries and scholarly societies. When scholarly societies and libraries work together, we can forge sustainable paths to achieving immediate open access to scholarly research.¹⁹

A Framework for Further Professional Collaboration

In the year-and-a-half since CP2OA, we have seen the storytelling model replicated within other professional gatherings intended to elicit change, such as the Open Access Tipping Point Workshop (OATIP).²⁰ OATIP, organized by the University of California Academic Senate and libraries, invited applications from other North American universities seeking an OA transformation. The invitations to attend as institutional representatives extended to stakeholder pairs in recognition of the importance of collaboration between faculty, administration, and libraries for achieving OA. While not entirely structured around design thinking, OATIP included storytelling sessions enabling invitees to talk about their journeys, both good and bad, with transformative publisher agreements. An accompanying public forum immediately following OATIP used a similar format for panelists to engage with each other and the audience.²¹

We believe these formats were essential for collaboration, and that using a storytelling framework was an effective way to demonstrate empathy and build trust across institutions, thus driving change. Indeed, following OATIP, nearly all participants signed a public affirmation to “advocate broadly, and work with our stakeholders both locally and in existing consortia, to advance these common goals.”²² We are excited to follow where these journeys will lead.



¹ See, e.g., Francesca Polletta *et al.*, "The Sociology of Storytelling," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 37 (2011): 109-30, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-081309-150106>; and Andres D. Brown *et al.*, "Storytelling and Change: An Unfolding Story," *Organization* 16, no. 3 (2009): 323-333, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508409102298>.

² Caty Borum Chattoo and Lauren Feldman, "Storytelling for Social Change: Leveraging Documentary and Comedy for Public Engagement in Global Poverty," *Journal of Communication* 67, no. 5 (2017): 678-701, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12318>.

³ Heather Piwowar *et al.*, "The State of OA: A Large-Scale Analysis of the Prevalence and Impact of Open Access Articles," *PeerJ* 6:e4375 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.4375>.

⁴ "About Choosing Pathways to OA," <https://cp2oa18.com/about/>.

⁵ University of California Libraries, Scholarly Communication, Pathways to OA documents, <https://libraries.universityofcalifornia.edu/about/initiatives/scholarly-communication>.

⁶ University of California Office of Scholarly Communication, "An introductory guide to the UC model transformative agreement," <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/uc-publisher-relationships/negotiating-with-scholarly-journal-publishers-a-toolkit/an-introductory-guide-to-the-uc-model-transformative-agreement>.

⁷ Tim Brown and Barry Katz, "Change by Design," *The Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 28 (2011): 381-383, <https://rdcu.be/b1tGq>.

⁸ Stanford University d.school, "An Introduction to Design Thinking: Process Guide,

<https://dschool-old.stanford.edu/sandbox/groups/designresources/wiki/36873/attachments/74b3d/ModeGuide-BOOTCAMP2010L.pdf>.

⁹ Liberating Structures, "Introduction," <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/>.

¹⁰ Liberating Structures, "User Experience Fishbowl," <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/18-users-experience-fishbowl/>.

¹¹ Liberating Structures, "25/10 Crowd Sourcing," <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/12-2510-crowd-sourcing/>.

¹² University of California Libraries, "Forum Planning Committee's Report to UC Council of University Librarians on Choosing Pathways to Open Access (CP2OA)," <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9190j56c>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ For an explanation of the Subscribe to Open Model, see: Raym Crow, Richard Gallagher, and Kamran Naim. "Subscribe to Open: A Practical Approach for Converting Subscription Journals to Open Access," *Learned Publishing*, Early View (October 1, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1002/leap.1262>.

¹⁵ Kamran Naim, Rachael Samberg, and Curtis Brundy, "Transitioning Society Publications to Open Access," *In the Open*, (February 11, 2019) <https://intheopen.net/2019/02/transitioning-society-publications-to-open-access/>.

¹⁶ Transitioning Society Publications to OA, <https://tspoa.org/>.

¹⁷ The Society Publishers' Coalition, <https://socpc.org/>.

¹⁸ Association for Computing Machinery, "ACM OPEN (ACM's Transformative Model for Open



Access Publication),” <https://libraries.acm.org/subscriptions-access/acmopen>.

¹⁹ University of California Office of Scholarly Communication, “ACM Signs Open Access Agreement with Four Leading Universities.” <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2020/01/acm-open/>

²⁰ University of California Office of Scholarly Communication, “Announcing the Open Access Tipping Point Workshop,” <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2019/06/announcing-the-open-access-tipping-point-workshop/>

²¹ University of California Office of Scholarly Communication, “You’re Invited to the Open Access Tipping Point Open Forum!” <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/2019/06/youre-invited-to-the-open-access-tipping-point-public-forum/>

²² University of California Office of Scholarly Communication, “Open Access Tipping Point (OATIP) Public Affirmation.” <https://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/uc-publisher-relationships/open-access-tipping-point-public-affirmation/>

