

Collections in Library Space

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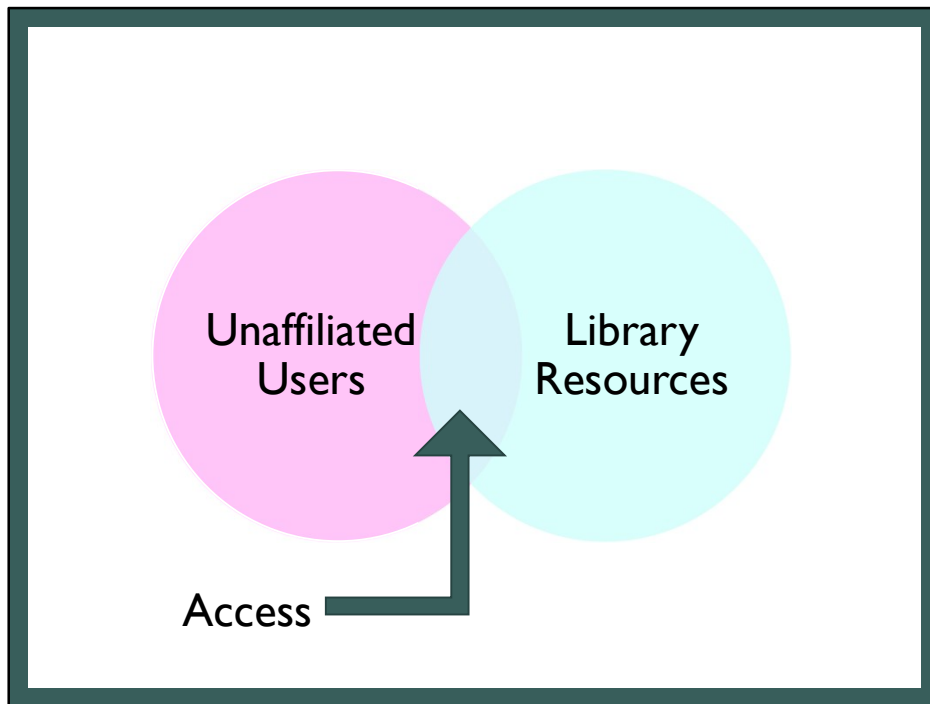
Elizabeth

Thank you for coming to our session today.

Jaclyn McLean, Electronic Resources Librarian
Elizabeth Stregger, Discovery & Access Librarian
from University Library, University of Saskatchewan

Jaclyn has an interest in negotiating progressive and inclusive license terms. Elizabeth has an interest in reducing systematic barriers to access. Together, we share an interest in how people experience license and system restrictions when they try to access library collections.

As academic library collections and spaces have changed, the barriers to access have changed as well. Electronic resources can be accessed from home, from work, and everywhere in between. Our spaces encourage collaborative learning. But these enhancements of our virtual and physical spaces have come at a cost to unaffiliated users.



In this presentation, we are focusing on the barriers unaffiliated users experience when they try to access virtual collections in our physical space.

The number of public access computers has decreased as academic library spaces are renovated to provide collaborative and comfortable learning spaces for students. Meanwhile, partnerships with community organizations and corporations mean that members of the university academic community are often working closely with individuals who do not have a formal relationship with a university. These individuals expect that they will have access to information sources when they are at the library.

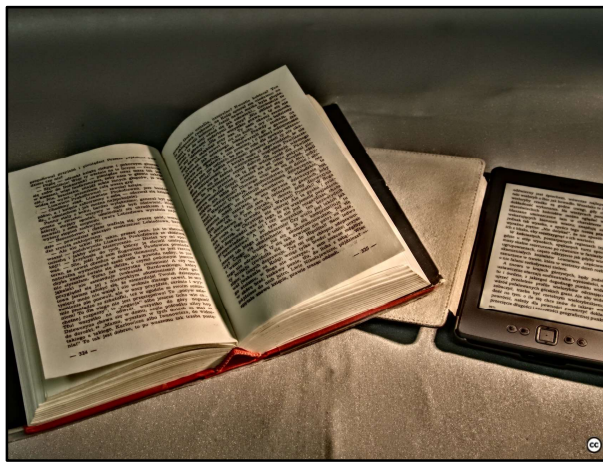
At our institution, the expectation that this access will be provided on mobile devices was communicated to us through our troubleshooting ticketing system (as were some other user experience issues with our wifi network). In our current environment, wireless access to library resources is restricted to students, staff, and faculty.

Nancy Courtney's seminal 2001 article "Barbarian at the Gates" raised the concern that unaffiliated, community, or guest users would lose access to academic collections as a result of the digital shift. The primary user group of academic libraries is affiliated users – students, faculty, and staff. The secondary user group has been accommodated to a lesser or greater degree over the years.

An increasing proportion of our library collections are paid, third-party online resources to which access is negotiated through licensing agreements.

The methods of access or use are mediated by library systems like authentication services.

Therefore e-resource and systems librarians are uniquely positioned to influence the limitations imposed on unaffiliated users' access to library resources.



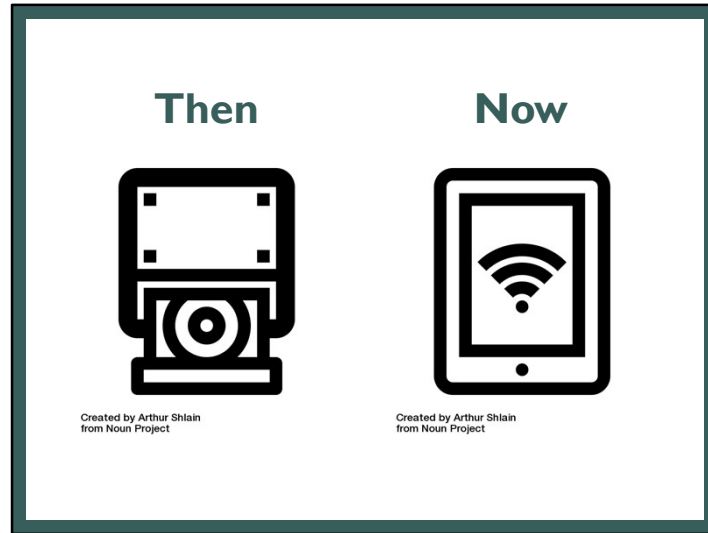
You are likely painfully aware of not just the shifting formats in library collection building, but of the impacts felt the last couple of years as the Canadian dollar weakened in the global economy. Library collections have changed substantially in the last 30 years - from physical, print or other hard copy format like microfilm that is owned explicitly and outright, and available only from inside the library, to online collections available from anywhere with an Internet connection or data coverage for mobile, that are leased and may have less dependable access.

From just in case to just in time, the focus of collections in many libraries has shifted. While the physical, hard copy resources are still very important in many disciplines, there has been a shift online. And this shift has opened up the academic library collection and services in ways that weren't expected. Unaffiliated users of yore would come in, possibly have a quick reference inquiry to find some printed journal or monograph material, and settle in to read, or photocopy. Now, an affiliated user can email an academic library, can chat with them in real time, and some expect a high level of service that is unprecedented.

The availability of online collections also changes the demand - and the level of staff intervention that may be required, meaning that unaffiliated users may be getting service and taking up staff time that could have gone toward supporting students and faculty of the institution. There was a survey done at UBC in 1975 that examined reference desk inquiries at 3 Canadian universities. 14.8% of questions asked were from unaffiliated users. Of those visiting users, 38.1% were from other academic institutions including high schools. One wonders how this has changed with technology – we are no longer limited to phone and in-person – how many chat or email requests are from unaffiliated users?

In the context of the most recent survey of college libraries in the United States in 2001, where almost no libraries had clearly stated policies about unaffiliated use, but almost every survey respondent felt an obligation or desire to serve them, the current state of library collections, especially the leased and licensed considerations, becomes important. And I know at our library last year, about 85% of the collections budget went towards online subscriptions or purchases, this question and the associated concerns aren't going away. Given the complex nature of managing these collections in the first place, just keeping them in good order for our actual affiliated users is a tough task. If we also need to consider unaffiliated users, the task will be require more ongoing development and

definition of the available services, and negotiation of a wider definition for authorized user.



So, as we've already identified, the changing nature of library collections raises several questions and issues regarding unaffiliated user access to academic library collections. From the print, to early computer-based indices or cd-rom databases, the unaffiliated user needed to speak to staff to get started or find what they were looking for. On the early computerized resources, unaffiliated users would need significant assistance from staff, from a guest logon, to orientation to the different available products. This higher level of intervention also exists in an environment where unaffiliated users need to use wired, installed machines located in the library. These computers also often require a guest logon access, and users may also need orientation and more information on how to use the resources.

With a subtle shift in licensing language to define authorized users to mean “people physically present in the library”, rather than someone using a wired internet access machine, the possibilities have expanded. While academic libraries are often still limited by clauses that limit use of the online collections to non-commercial, personal, or research use, there is also a wide understanding of “best effort” by a library to ensure a user is aware of the requirement, but also that individual users aren't signing the license with a commercial vendor, and therefore a library can only enforce things to a certain point.

With this further shift in technology, there is the potential to open up access to scholarly research in a new way - an unaffiliated user could wander into the space, settle into one of the cozy reading chairs we've all been purchasing, navigate to the library discovery service or a-z list on their phone, tablet, or laptop, and access licensed content. All with zero input or instruction from staff.

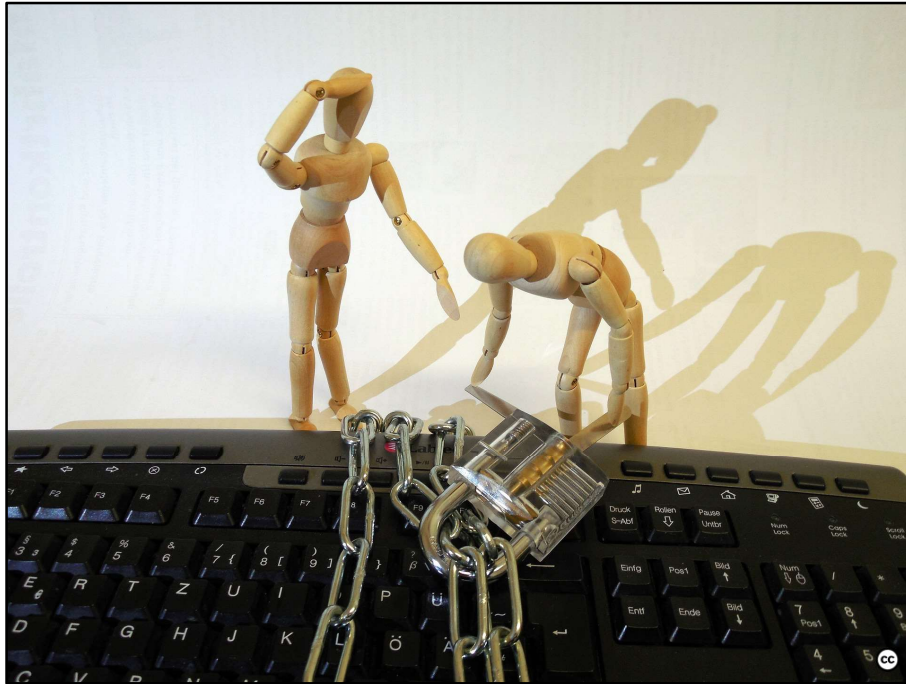


So in 2001, 95.4% of respondents answered yes to the question “can unaffiliated users use computers in your library building to access library resources (e.g., online catalogue, abstracts and indexes, electronic journals). At the time, it was also still common for library computers to be completely open to unaffiliated users – no passwords needed. It was seen as being forced on libraries to lock down access from the IT departments. There was still a feeling that libraries just MIGHT have to bow to the pressure to change the access model to requiring some kind of authentication. Also from that survey in 2001, only 13.5% of respondents required users to authenticate on the library computers. Most of the respondents wanted to extend service to unaffiliated users to foster good community relations.

So are we approaching the utopian ideal that some librarians hold dear? Where anyone can access scholarly research, and that access expands beyond the privileged folks who are affiliated with post-secondary institutions? Not quite. This shift for on campus access possibilities only really helps the unaffiliated user who lives close enough to a campus and has the will and the time to conduct their research on the premises. For everyone else, access is still limited, by public library collections, or by open access availability.

Given the significant changes in technology, and the way access is managed, we wonder if a survey similar to Nancy Courteney’s was conducted again today, how the responses would differ. Unaffiliated user access concerns seem to be largely absent from contemporary literature, with the most significant work done over a decade ago. Has our concern for our communities lessened, is there a general belief that you can find anything on Google, so our users aren't clamoring the same way for service? Are our power users needs mostly met, through means like SciHub, #icanhazpdf, or pirate bay? With a new generation of librarians in the profession, have attitudes towards democratization of access become more conservative? Do librarians still believe that wide, open access to information is a

public good? The ALA Code of Ethics doesn't distinguish between affiliated or unaffiliated users when it discusses responses to inquiries.



As librarians, we need to be clear about our values when we talk to campus IT and our publishers / vendors to ensure that we are protecting our users' rights – whether those users have a direct affiliation with the institution or not.

While from a systems perspective it is appealing to imagine a single lock on all resources, which can be opened with a single key, this technological dream has not been borne out by reality. Single sign-on through an identity management system is not seamless when the infrastructure of vendor platforms is as varied as license terms. Since we will be operating in a mixed authentication environment (EZProxy with Shibboleth, for example) in the foreseeable future, we should unlock as many resources as possible. This will provide increased transparency of scholarly communication issues to our users as they navigate the spectrum of open access to heavily restricted resources.

The key question is: do we really need to know the identities of the individuals using the resources in our library? This is where IT values of security and librarian values of privacy are in conflict. When the licenses only specify that the individual has to be physically located in the library, we (the systems librarians!) are imposing unnecessary restrictions on access to if we force authentication on our local wifi network. This barrier to access for both affiliated and unaffiliated users is a compelling argument for providing access without authentication whenever possible.



How we're addressing this concern (a happy benefit of addressing an issue of forcing our authorized users to authenticate twice when they're on campus - the authenticated wifi uses their NSID, so they are verified users through the wifi network, but we have been also forcing authentication through ezproxy even though we have set up ip authenticated access with our vendors.

Out of a total of 516 currently subscribed electronic resources, 37 had uncertainty when it came to allowing unaffiliated access. Of the licenses that have been reviewed so far, we have found that 10 are very explicit in not allowing unaffiliated access at all, or limited explicitly to a wired terminal in the library, 5 explicitly allow walk-ins on newer, updated licenses, but our A-Z list still had older, legacy information, and others have required either follow-up with a vendor or a consortia for clarification of the permissions, or to find a current copy of the license.

Learning: sometimes this kind of access permission can be difficult to ascertain from vendor's standard boilerplate agreements. This has helped identify priority candidates for re-negotiation, as a project to update our agreements and licenses is planned for the next academic year. We are also making sure our policy for unaffiliated users is clear, and easy for staff to follow – in that our system will be configured to provide access to visitors on campus on our public wifi only to those licensed materials that allow it. This will hopefully avoid confrontations at service points, or concerns filtering into our access support and IT departments about on-campus access for unaffiliated users.

Jaclyn's analysis of the licenses has given the LS&IT team useful information to keep in mind as we develop a roadmap for authentication services at the library. Our literature review highlighted the competing values of librarians and campus IT departments. Awareness of our values and local legal context will help us make informed decisions that are in the best interest of our whole community.

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QUESTIONS?

Big thank-you to Steve Breker, our Programmer-Analyst who first identified the wider issue, and supported the systems work for this project.

We'll be sharing our slides after the conference on the CAPAL site, and also on SlideShare. Or contact us anytime if you'd like to discuss it further.

Further Reading

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