COMING FULL CIRCLE: SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION AND THE ROLE OF LIAISON LIBRARIANS

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ABSTRACT: Liaison activities in academic institutions have traditionally focused on library instruction and collection development. With changes in scholarly communication, we are presented with new opportunities for educating our communities about Open Access, scholarly publishing, author rights and digital repositories. I will highlight some of my recent activities with the UBC Fisheries Centre to illustrate how librarians can be involved at different stages in the scholarly communication cycle.

Keywords: scholarly communications, Open Access, institutional repositories, digital repositories, liaison librarians

Introduction

Liaison activities in university libraries have traditionally focused on library instruction and collection development. With changes in scholarly communications, a new role is emerging as librarians engage their communities in discussions of Open Access, author rights and digital repositories. In this paper, I present an example from my own liaison work with the Fisheries Centre at the University of British Columbia to illustrate how librarians can incorporate scholarly communications into their outreach activities.

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is located in Vancouver on the west coast of Canada. The Library has been slower than some in developing its scholarly communications program but we are now on track with a Scholarly Communications Steering Committee, an Open Access journal hosting service, and an institutional repository (IR). cIRcle is the name of our IR and was selected in a naming contest with library staff. A library assistant submitted the name to reflect the scholarly communication cycle, and how an institutional repository closes the circle by making publicly funded research freely available to the public who funded it.

> "IRs are an excellent way to illustrate universities' contributions to the public - who, after all, offer invaluable support to our institutions. As universities use IRs to control and share their output, scholarly communication and publishing are truly coming full circle." (UBC Library 2007)

The Fisheries Centre is a research unit at UBC with about 10 full time faculty, 65 graduate students, and another 50 individuals affiliated with the centre (e.g. research associates, post-docs, adjunct faculty). Their research is interdisciplinary, incorporating not only science but also anthropology, economics, law and policy, and is both local and global in nature.

The Presentation
Every few years, I give a presentation to the Fisheries Centre as part of their weekly seminar series, "Issues in Fisheries Research". Typically these presentations include a demonstration of online resources of interest such as ASFA or Web of Science but in the fall of 2007, I decided to include information about Open Access (OA), self archiving, author rights and digital repositories.

Despite my taste for snappy titles such as "Flounder no more: reeling in the fisheries information you need", this time the title needed to convey everything I wanted to talk about because there would be no description included with the advert. Given that I was going to talk about searching resources, managing citations with RefWorks, and scholarly communications issues, I went for "Research, write, publish: tips & tools to get you through" (Taylor 2007).

Having never done a presentation like this before, I had a fair amount of preparation to do. I decided to frame the scholarly communications issues as factors to consider when submitting an article for publication, i.e. in addition to subject and audience, you may consider journal impact and access to the publication. For journal impact, I identified the top ten journals in fisheries using both Journal Citation Reports and Eigenfactor. For access, I presented Open Access as a way to increase the readership of their publications.

One of the most interesting things I stumbled upon while searching the web for open access and fisheries was the following definition for Open Access in a fisheries context.

> "Open access is the condition where access to the fishery (for the purpose of harvesting fish) is unrestricted, i.e. the right to catch fish is free and open to all" (OECD 2001).

I was able to compare this definition to Peter Suber's definition of Open Access literature, and comment that while unrestricted fishing will deplete the resource, you can access an OA article repeatedly with no negative impact!

> "Open Access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions" (Suber 2007)

I examined the two roads to Open Access, and surmised that although there are good OA publications in fisheries such as Fishery Bulletin and the UBC Fisheries Centre Research Reports, there are not many, and thus self archiving of post-prints in a repository may be a more promising route. Using Web of Science, I identified the top ten journals where

UBC fisheries researchers publish, and determined the publishers' policies around self archiving using the SHERPA RoMEO web site. In preparation for speaking about author rights and Copyright Transfer Agreements, I listened to an excellent ACRL webcast on author rights (Blixrud and Davis 2007) and reviewed the SPARC Canadian Author Addendum. Finally, I included examples of digital repositories appropriate to fisheries, namely cIRcle for UBC research, and the new subject repository Aquatic Commons.

The Experience
Incorporating scholarly communications into the presentation to the fisheries researchers was a challenging experience because it was new territory and thus required more preparation; however, it was also an opportunity to learn about the publishing practices in the discipline, and to add a bit of creativity to my work.

As it turned out, the audience was mostly graduate students, so at the very least it was a chance to encourage them to submit their thesis online to cIRcle and to introduce them to author rights. There were a few faculty members in the audience, and perhaps the most rewarding conversation was with one faculty member who had been looking forward to the talk since he had seen the title! He expressed an interest in Open Journal Systems (OJS) and is now exploring the idea of using OJS for managing the behind-the-scenes work of a journal he edits. I've also had preliminary discussions with a research associate interested in creating an OA journal related to traditional fisheries, and a graduate student about archiving research data in cIRcle.

In reflecting on my experience, I suggest that there are three factors to consider as you engage your communities in discussions about scholarly communications: audience, content and delivery. Who is receptive to hearing about Open Access? The Fisheries Centre does global research and wants their research widely disseminated. In addition, their graduate students come from all over the world and are well aware that access to information is not equitable. Graduate students are an obvious audience as they are the future researchers but the topic is also of great interest to faculty members who are key players in the publishing world and whose perspectives may vary in their roles as reader, author and even editor.

In terms of content, what does your community want to know about? Author rights appear to be of great interest and can serve as a route to promoting your institutional repository. Mandates from funding agencies to make research publicly available is an area of concern in the health sciences, and it is likely only a matter of time before this issue becomes important in other scientific disciplines.

Finally, what method of delivery should you use? If you get an opportunity to give a presentation, you can decide to include a lot or a little about scholarly communications issues. More than half of my presentation to the fisheries researchers was about scholarly publishing but I can imagine introducing ideas in smaller ways, for example, in giving a Google Scholar workshop, addressing why some articles are freely available while others are not. Of course, what can be the most effective are one-on-one conversations where

you share what you know but also hear the other person's perspective.

Changing Roles

Does one presentation mean that my role as a liaison librarian has changed? As I think about other activities I'm involved in, including our Scholarly Communications Steering Committee, organizing workshops for librarians, recruiting content for cIRcle, and most recently planning a session for journal editors on campus, I feel that my focus has shifted from information literacy and eresources to scholarly communication issues.

Although the literature isn't inundated with articles about the changing role of liaison librarians in academia, there are a few noteworthy examples. In the area of institutional repositories, a number of articles emphasize that reference librarians be actively involved in recruiting content, given their connections to the researchers (Bell *et al.* 2005; Chan *et al.* 2005; Jenkins & Breakstone 2005). Turtle & Courtois (2007) look at the bigger picture and outline strategies for science librarians to be advocates of change, including educating faculty and students about author rights, Open Access and repositories. They advise liaison librarians to include some aspect of scholarly communication in their annual goals, i.e. "Make it part of your job". Rodwell & Fairbairn (2008) take a broader view still by providing a condensed history of liaison from the 1970's to the present, and by describing the new roles that have emerged, scholarly communication being just one of them. They indicate that roles are still fluid as librarians respond to changes in their internal and external environments. They also comment on new skills that are required, and ask how these new roles can be sustained, i.e. the frequently asked question "what can we stop doing?"

If our roles are evolving, I welcome the change; not only for professional growth but also because of the rich conversations we can have with researchers. We know that scholarly communication is a key issue for them, and by engaging in discussions now, we'll be better prepared for the changes ahead.

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