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Charleston Library Conference

SelfPub 2.0

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Presenter Information

Mitchell Davis, John Sherer, Charles Watkinson, William Kane, Cyril Oberlander, Bob Nardini, Michael Levine-Clark, Matt Nauman, Joyce Skokut, Deb Hoadley, Robert P. Holley, Eleanor Cook, Leslie Lees, Bill Gladstone, and Kelly E. Leonard

SelfPub 2.0

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Matt Nauman, Academic Digital Content Product Manager, YBP Library Services
Joyce Skokut, Director of Collection Development, Ingram Library Services
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Robert P. Holley, Professor of Library and Information Science, Wayne State University
Eleanor I. Cook, Assistant Director for Discovery and Technology Services, East Carolina University
Leslie Lees, Vice President of Content for E-Books, ebrary
Bill Gladstone, Founder, Waterside Productions
Reported by Kelly Leonard, BiblioLabs

Abstract

The self-publishing revolution has created a drastic increase in the number or works being published in the social sciences and humanities. This windfall of content has created an abundance that can be overwhelming, but it ultimately presents an opportunity for libraries to develop deeper and more unique collections. The preconference at the 2013 Charleston Conference focused on several interrelated topics in the self-publishing world: navigating the abundance of self-published material, libraries' adoption of the role of publisher, vendor perspectives on self-published content and plans for the future, issues in humanities and social science acquisitions of self-published works, and an agent's perspective on how self-publishing fits into the traditional publishing world. Speakers include librarians, publishers, vendors, and academics involved with a number of projects and efforts to pioneer this emerging field.

Managing Abundance

Mark Sandler of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) opened up the discussion at SelfPub 2.0 with his keynote speech, "Managing Abundance." Employing a metaphorical comparison between libraries, publishing, and the grocery store, Sandler discussed how libraries could adopt the tactics used by specialty grocery stores versus national chains, such as Kroger, to produce quality products and add value to their brand.

Where Kroger's national brands—think Big 5 content—add value to the Kroger name, some stores such as Whole Foods add value by putting

their own stamp of quality via a store brand on the specialty items—content published by the library. Sandler advocated that libraries should take the Whole Foods approach when it comes to publishing and take control of the means of production. Rather than relying on the Big 5 to produce "national brand quality" publications to add to the collection, an institution could put the library "brand" on the content, particularly self-published or untraditionally published materials, and that value from the library's name will transfer to the product. The "Library Vetted and Approved" seal of approval would serve as a review tool in and of itself. Of course, this begs the question of how the library would determine

what sort of production rules and restrictions they would put on library publishing (Who? Why? How? How much? How to differentiate self-published versus peer reviewed versus alumni contributions?).

Library as Publisher (Moderated by Mitchell Davis)

The audience heard from members of academic institutions, libraries, and publishing bodies in the first panel, "Library as Publisher," including John Sherer of UNC Press, Charles Watkinson of Purdue University Press, Bill Kane of Wake Forest University, and Cyril Oberlander of SUNY College at Geneseo. The speakers all offered unique models, demonstrating how each institution had handled embracing the publishing culture in their libraries.

UNC Press, an independent not-for-profit institution, took on a project aligned with their "Digital First" initiative. Originally funded by a grant from the Mellon Foundation, the Long Civil Rights Movement project later became fully sustainable. To accomplish this feat, the Press created a team from employees of the Wilson Library, University Press, and the Southern Oral History Program. John Sherer accredited the successes of these projects to small pilots rather than large institutional merges. The 18-book project created a five-figure stream of revenue.

At Purdue University Press (PUP), Charles Watkinson described the two imprints created by the University Press. PUP offers peer-reviewed, branded, discipline-focused journals and monographs that align with the Purdue mission; Scholarly Publishing Services (SPS) produces a "white labeled" and less formal series of publications, such as technical reports (which can number around 30 per year), conference proceedings, and institution-focused material. For Purdue, the digitized versions of the texts are open access (and also added to the institutional repository), but users can obtain a paper copy via print on demand (POD) through Lightning Source (LSI).

Bill Kane, the Digital Publisher at Wake Forest University (WFU), offered up his take on the new

publishing standard: $1 is the new free. WFU supports digital publication through its wakExpress service for alumni and others, while also assisting the Wake Forest University Press with some digital editions. The digital publishing platform costs around $10,000 a year, and Kane reasoned that by allowing considerable self-publishing opportunities through the platform, WFU hoped to publish around 10,000 pages per year. If charging merely $1 per page to host the published content via the library, the 10,000 pages would cover the cost of the platform while presenting opportunities for alumni and others to publish their materials.

Cyril Oberlander of SUNY College at Geneseo described how their venture into publishing began with reprints of special collections as the open access digital, print via POD model. They are also the proud producer of the successful *Library Publishing Toolkit.* SUNY Geneseo began to further integrate the publishing unit into the Milne Library, recruiting help from Special Collections and hiring a copywriter for added value and assistance with the publications. Alumni began approaching and looking for publishing opportunities, and eventually Oberlander found himself as the principal investigator for an open access textbook initiative, another grand-funded venture that afforded additional assistance such as a copyeditor and peer reviewer for the textbooks.

Vendor Services and Self-Publishing (Moderated by Bob Nardini)

After hearing from those who had already begun dabbling in the world of library publishing, the vendors took the stage in a panel to explain strategies for dealing with the additional 235,000 self-published titles (as reported by Bowker) that had cropped up in 2012. Michael Levine-Clark of the University of Denver spoke to the challenges associated with applying the peer-review process to self-published materials, both digital and print.

Many of these challenges were echoed by Matt Nauman, a representative from YBP Library Services, as he described the challenges associated with a traditionally academic vendor attempting to aggregate and filter through self-

published materials. When dealing with academic titles, Nauman listed four questions pertaining to self-publishing that vendors must ask themselves:

1. Are "good" academic books being self-published?

2. How do we find them?

3. Is there a viable economic model?

4. And, most importantly, what do the customers want?

Nauman also reported that YBP planned to "wait and listen" to customers' needs before delving into the issues in discovery and profiling.

Joyce Skokut of Ingram's Coutts described how self-published versus traditionally published material was often more of a discussion of what is professional versus unprofessional publishing. Skokut also stressed the importance of acquiring what the readers want. Four hundred and seventeen self-published titles have made it onto Ingram's approval selector plans. By integrating self-published titles onto approval plans, collection development and acquisitions librarians get a sampling of the self-published materials and have opted to purchase some of these titles for their libraries, indicating that self-published does not necessarily carry its old connotation of "low quality" or "vanity press."

Skokut also gave a number of relevant suggestions for librarians in her parting comments: Let go of reviews and authoritative evaluation. Talk to vendors about new criteria for selection. Look for relevant, exciting, and informative titles and marry the metadata. Without reliable, present, and accurate metadata, publications cannot be integrated, accessed, and discovered successfully in libraries.

Deb Hoadley, head of the Massachusetts E-Book Project, spoke regarding some of the challenges faced by librarians as they grapple with different vendors and begin to examine self-published content as viable additions to library collections. Hoadley discussed licensing and copyright issues, vetting and approval processes, and the future models that will be embraced by publishing and

libraries on a global level. By offering a broader spectrum of licensed content in libraries, vendors would provide patrons with the ability to browse a more comprehensive catalog of materials rather than a curated selection.

Finding Balance in Humanities and Social Science Acquisitions (Moderated by Robert P. Holley)

As a professor of Library and Information Science at Wayne State University, Bob Holley has studied the world of self-publishing. His presentation gave an overview of the pros and cons associated primarily with academic self-published materials. Holley cited an NPR program that estimated that 750,000 of 1,000,000 titles were self-published last year, and, in 2015, it is predicted that 600,000 will be self-published. Holley cited a number of advantages to self-publishing for academics. Self-publishing allows increased control and freedom over the finished product, whether dealing with including more datasets and graphics or allowing more extensive documentation. Some academic publications are not suitable for print, and self-publishing via a digital platform circumvents this problem. Materials can be distributed at no cost with some publishing platforms, with the potential for profit if selling the product is an option. As far as disadvantages are concerned, Holley primarily centered on issues of tenure and open access. Open access materials give authors more opportunities for citations and dissemination of their work, but self-publishing open access materials cuts the potential for profit. When self-publishing, works of academia are more than likely not considered in the tenure system. Holley, along with several other members of the preconference, agreed that the current tenure and vetting system would need some rethinking in the future world of academic publishing.

Eleanor Cook flipped the conversation to a librarian's point of view, describing her role in a library whose collection development policy does not collect self-published works outside of the Special Collections department. Self-published materials present a problem for librarians now crafting collection development policies. Cook

described a situation where the line between vetted and self-published materials has been blurred in her library at East Carolina University. Each year, the library hosts an Annual Faculty Book Author recognition event honoring published faculty members. However, self-published materials are not included in this event, so an author who produces a notable academic publication but chooses a self-publishing platform rather than traditional publishing would not receive recognition. Many accomplished authors have already chosen to self-publish, especially in the interest of open access material, so will those efforts become part of the event, or should they remain isolated?

Finally, Leslie Lees of ebrary spoke about the various important ways self-publishing worked its way into the dialogue of academia. Several forms of "self-published" materials have been important in the history of literature and library collections. For example, local history accounts and volumes will always add value to a public library or Special Collections department that collects local history. Also, first person memoirs and religious perspectives, especially those that offer controversial views, have a place in the humanities literature and collections as primary-source documents. As a vendor, Lees commented on the fact that making self-published works available in a scalable and effective way has its challenges: the same issues of academic acceptance and vetting that others had mentioned, metadata quality issues, and the fact that the majority of self-published work is comprised of fiction rather than those important

humanities materials. Lees' company, ebrary, has also explored options to integrate more open access support into their platform.

Managing Abundance in Publishing: An Agent's Perspective

In conclusion, Bill Gladstone of Waterside Productions provided a perspective not often considered by librarians: the view of an agent. As a representative of successful authors, environmental activists, spiritual teachers, radio talk show hosts, and more, Gladstone has been involved in publishing for more than 30 years. He has also authored his own book, *The Twelve*. Gladstone's perception of the shift in publishing since the advent of self-published dealt a great deal with the idea of branding. Whereas in more traditional days, one of the Big 5 (formerly 6) publishers would need to add their seal of approval to insure a publication would be sold and have commercial success. However, the multiple venues and options for libraries and those wishing to publish have opened up the industry to more innovative and less involved ways to get one's work into the world. Works such as *50 Shades of Grey* have enjoyed commercial success, their origins outside of a Macmillan or Penguin Random House deal. Tying back into the original comments voiced by Mark Sandler, the library's brand could be a viable way to avoid the intensive vetting and approval process normally used in academic publishing. All in all, the democratization of publishing has opened up endless possibilities for libraries, publishers, and a combination of the two.