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Advocacy Begins at Home: Methods of Promoting Faculty Awareness of Open Access Publishing at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University

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Author Abstract

The paper reports on efforts of the Periodicals Librarian at Long Island University's Brooklyn Campus, a mid-sized urban institution, to measure the awareness of open access (OA) publishing among faculty and document methods that proved effective in raising awareness of the advent of, and debate over, OA publishing. The author reports his survey findings; interprets their implications; reports on the means available at LIU to promote OA and those that proved worthwhile; notes the departmental and committee relationships integral to the process; proposes ideas for future initiatives at LIU/Brooklyn. The findings in the paper will add to the body of literature on OA by focusing on LIU's academic culture in the context of the OA endeavor.

Introduction

As the Periodicals Librarian at the Brooklyn Campus of Long Island University I have seen the subscription costs for our journal collection typically increase a shade under ten percent per title for the last three years.[1] Given the significant percentage of LIU students enrolled in health science programs,[2] the mission statement dictating that the library support university curricula and to meet the demand for peer reviewed journals by students and faculty, the serials budget was roughly three times that of the book budget in academic year 2004/2005.[3] Like many other academic librarians, I am responsible for balancing our users' requests for peer reviewed scholarly journals with a finite budget. Concurrently, librarians, professional societies, governmental bodies and publishers are weighing in on the issue of OA publishing as an alternative to the traditional academic publishing model. Those who favor the OA model want to see digital technology enable peer-to-peer communication, with easy access to the literature as soon after publication as possible.[4] Scholars, scientists, government agencies, philanthropists and librarians have advocated this goal through efforts such as Pub-med Central, the Public Library of Science, and the Budapest OA Initiative.[5]

The paper documents recent (Spring, 2005) efforts to promote OA publishing at the Brooklyn Campus. A brief survey to measure current awareness of OA publishing and gauge the perception of whether OA influences tenure decisions was distributed. In addition to reporting the findings the paper notes the methods of delivery that proved effective and implications said methods might have on raising awareness. Campus initiatives that were promising and successful are outlined as well as those that were institutionally untenable. The study also reviews the departmental and committee infrastructure in the library that affected the process.

Literature Review

Publications exploring OA advocacy at academic institutions include “Promoting Open Access: developing new strategies for managing copyright and intellectual property,” by Case and Adler. The authors examined existing copyright laws they maintained favor publishers and restrict access by educators and researchers. They reported initiatives such as the Public Library of Science (PloS) have some librarians concerned that publishers might raise subscription rates to compensate for the loss of revenue publishers incur from OA titles. To establish alternatives they recommended that academic librarians follow a plan of action outlined by the Association of Research Libraries ad hoc task force on OA suggesting activities in the areas of education, advocacy, legal, legislative, new funding models, global alliances, and research. [6]

In a short article in the January 2005 issue of *Library Issues*, English suggested faculty and administration make use of the “Create Change” brochure published by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, SPARC at <http://www.createchange.org/resources/brochure.html>, and concentrate efforts on collective purchasing, anti-merger activity, OA, and education and advocacy.[7] California University’s Digital E-Scholarship Repository was the subject of Misek’s piece in *EContent* and indicative of literature which seeks to inform potential authors and online facilitators about digital initiatives at academic institutions. Misek confirmed that establishing a repository requires, among other things, a wide-ranging consensus among administrators and faculty at an institution where traditional publishing does not serve the faculty and students. Proactive solutions, he maintained, such as the E-Scholarship Repository, meet the needs of authors wishing to create work in a digital format.[8]

In the Winter 2004 issue of *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship* proactive solutions were cited by Nowick and Jenda, in “Libraries Stuck in the Middle: Reactive vs. Proactive Responses to the Science Journal Crisis.” The authors enumerated ways to initiate change at an institution such as cancelling

subscriptions so publishers respond with affordable pricing, described Cornell University's boycott of Elsevier titles and recommended, " archiving of journals by professional societies; seeking governmental intervention and regulation in preventing publisher monopolistic practices and empowering authors to abandon editorial and authorship roles in overpriced journals." [9]

Falk's "Digital Archive Developments" described software and digital archives available to authors and librarians who are interested in establishing digital repositories at their schools and maintained an increase in the creation of digital documents was fostered by faculty and students and the high inflation rate of scholarly journals. [10]

Methodology

Methods of promoting awareness of OA publishing at LIU's Brooklyn campus were studied by recording the author's experience managing the periodicals collection and working with library faculty and administrators, disseminating a survey to the full time faculty measuring general awareness, and perceptions of OA germane to tenure track. Efforts at working with the disciplinary faculty, the library faculty and administration on projects aimed at conveying the issues relevant to the LIU community were also documented.

Open Access Survey

The survey questions were based on the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing.[11] This definition appeared at the top of the survey because I deemed it a clear and comprehensive explanation of OA. Each survey was comprised of the Bethesda Statement, six straight-forward questions and space for comments. Aware that "survey fatigue" can sets in during the academic year, the survey was kept brief so that respondents weren't deterred at first glance. The questions were designed to measure faculty's general awareness of the issue at hand:

1. Are you familiar with the concept of OA publishing as it is defined above? (Y, N, No Opinion)
2. Have you published in OA journal before? (Y, N, No Opinion)
3. Do you believe that publishing your work in an OA journal and depositing it in an online repository is viewed by your faculty personnel committee as a valid format for peer reviewed research? (Y, N, No Opinion)
4. Do you believe that publishing your work in an OA journal and depositing it an online repository is viewed by university and departmental administrators as a

valid format for peer reviewed research? (Y, N, No Opinion)

5. If given the opportunity to publish your work in either a peer reviewed open access journal or a peer reviewed hard copy subscription journal you are more likely to publish in (OA Journal, Hard Copy Subscription Journal)

6. Please indicate who you think benefits the most from OA publishing: (Authors, Publishers of OA Journals, Academic Libraries)

Please describe any experience you've had with OA publishing or opinions you hold. Thank you. [12]

Distribution

The survey was distributed by two methods, an all-faculty email and inter-office mail. The survey was forwarded to the Information Technology Department and in turn was sent to the full time faculty members (266) at the Brooklyn campus. At the same time, envelopes were sent to each school or program within the campus, addressed to the chair or Program director. The number of surveys delivered per envelope was based on the number of full time faculty members listed on departmental web pages.

Initially I worked with the Electronic Services Coordinator who created an online survey form that would reside on the Brooklyn Library server. The hyper-link to the survey was to be sent out using the all-faculty email and perhaps uploaded to the library's homepage. However, it was decided by the Dean of the Library that placing the survey on the library's server would create a perception that the survey was a Brooklyn Library study rather than a faculty member's, and the author complied by using the distribution methods previously mentioned. This experience evokes the related contention by Misek cited above that in order to effectively create a repository for OA literature, a wide-ranging consensus among administrators and faculty at an institution where traditional publishing does not serve the faculty and students." [13] Similarly, such a consensus is called for when proceeding with individual research that will ultimately benefit the library or institution as a whole.

Results

Forty-three professors responded by inter-office mail to the survey and ten responded via email, for a total of twenty percent of the full time faculty. Faculty received one month to respond by either format. The number of responses by inter-office mail indicated this is the preferred method of delivery for future advocacy.

One can conclude that the generally low response rate to the survey via email and the higher response rate for paper surveys indicate future efforts may succeed by targeting each program director and department chair using interoffice mail. This would be particularly effective in requesting time for an OA presentation during faculty meetings. The email responses were disappointing given the perceived ease with which one could respond and return the survey, but the all-faculty email option should be employed to supplement future efforts at promoting OA.

Faculty Responses

Faculty Responses	Yes	No
Familiar with OA Publishing?	48%	52%
Published in an OA Journal?	4%	96%

Faculty Responses	Yes	No	No Opinion
Is OA viewed as a valid format by your personnel committee?	27%	40%	33%
Is OA viewed as valid format by your administrators?	21%	42%	37%

Faculty Responses	OA Journal	Hard copy subscription
More likely to publish in OA or hard copy subscription?	12%	88%

Faculty Responses	Authors	OA Publishers	Libraries
Who benefits most from OA publishing?*	13%	25%	39%

* Thirteen respondents wrote in “users” for this question, and in hindsight this option should have been included in the survey. The remaining ten percent left this question blank.

Survey Findings

As indicated from the answers to the first question, the faculty is almost evenly divided in their familiarity with OA publishing. A twenty percent response to the survey is too low to assume that the near-even split applies to the entire full time faculty, but one can assume that those who took the time to complete the survey with knowledge of OA did so with a degree of interest in the new publishing model. As such, the task of educating the community at LIU appears not to be as daunting as it might if the familiarity percentile was ten percent or lower. Interestingly, whether faculty were familiar with OA or not, it was close to unanimous that they didn't publish in OA journals. There is ample opportunity, therefore, for the library to target the faculty with specific information on OA publishing opportunities in their respective disciplines.

There is a perception by the majority of respondents that faculty personnel committees and administrators will not view OA publishing as a valid format for their work. The responses for both personnel committees and administrators, coupled with a high percentage of "No Opinion" answers—perhaps indicating ambivalence—for both indicates there is a need for departmental personnel committees, administrators and authors to agree on the validity of the OA format. A few professors wrote in the margins of their survey, "depends on the journal," meaning the format should be secondary to the academic integrity of the journal. Without question, with over seventy percent of respondent answering "No" or "No Opinion" to questions three and four there should be an effort spearheaded on the departmental level for the encouragement of research and publication in OA journals and efforts to validate the journals meet the standards of academic rigor that are required of traditional publishing venues. In the near future, the faculty at LIU should work with the university and departmental administrators to ensure that there is agreement on the academic validity of the OA model.

Although in the minority, an average of twenty-four percent of professors believed that OA journals are viewed by personnel committees and administrators as legitimate repositories, and forty-eight percent reported awareness of OA publishing before reading the Bethesda Statement. Yet only twelve percent said they were more likely to publish in OA journals than hard copy subscription journals. It's not possible to conclude the reluctance to publish is due to the perception that OA isn't a legitimate forum from this survey, although it is likely a provable assumption. Given that only four percent of professors reported publishing in OA journals and that fifty-two percent weren't aware of their existence before taking the survey, one can conclude the lack of enthusiasm is caused by wariness and uncertainty. At least fifty-two professors read the Bethesda statement as a result of the distribution of the survey and two of those inquired via email to the author about OA publishing information. This underscores the knowledge vacuum that could easily be filled by the Brooklyn Library through direct mailing and electronic bulletins.

The benefits to authors of publishing in OA journals—increased citation frequency, helping to defray the cost of subscription content, opportunity for copyright control, making publicly funded research available to the public [14]—were not apparent to the sixty-four percent of the respondents who said academic libraries or online publishers benefit more than authors from the OA model. Again, the library can take the lead in educating the faculty at large about the advantages of free access to their research. It is encouraging from a librarians standpoint to see that the majority of those who took the survey cited “Academic Libraries” as the primary beneficiaries of OA publishing since this indicates an a sensitivity to the costliness of subscription titles. Coupled with a forty-eight percent awareness of OA publishing before receiving the survey and a lack of interest in publishing in OA journals, one can conclude that some respondents think the model is a positive, though not practical one. As noted above, there was a fair amount of sentiment that “users” or “students” would be the group to stand to benefit the most from the OA, and indeed they would be greatly aided as in the areas of access and convenience by an increase in free web-based research.

There were a number of interesting responses to the request to describe experiences/thoughts on the topic.

One professor termed OA from an author’s point of view, “absurd” and likened it to blogging. The same professor, however, wrote that there were advantages to OA for users, and that hard copy vs. OA, related to personnel committees and administrators, were not only perceived as not valid but “entirely different,” indicating a lack of understanding on the respondents part of the prevalence of peer review processes in OA journals. Another faculty member, from the Chemistry Department, took the time to attach a note with a list of articles appearing in electronic databases which he indicated were all subscription based and fell outside the OA definition. He said that “the above is the only game in town for publishing work in chemistry. Publishing in other venues would not be given much weight in ARPT process of my department.” Another professor who expressed interest in publishing in an OA journal and asked if OA journals were peer reviewed, contended that the Bethesda Statement is in fact not a statement of principle but instead instructions for procedure and an explanation of rights. His answer indicated that some faculty shy away from OA due to a belief they aren’t peer reviewed. An English professor wrote this informed comment, “In my field, Medieval Studies, where journals are expensive and scholars are poor, OA has been a democratizing force. My hope also is that it will dilute the emphasis on publication of books for tenure and promotion.” The same professor felt publishing in an OA journal and depositing it in an online repository would be evaluated as a valid format by personnel committees if it was peer reviewed. One professor wrote that a regular assignment for students entailed but wasn’t sure if these would be considered an OA journal. This answer is also demonstrates the need for the library

to educate faculty on the difference between subscription journals available through the World Wide Web and OA titles, and to be prepared to offer specific information on OA journals in specific fields. For instance, because there is a large School of Pharmacy at the Brooklyn Campus free information on clinical trials by the drug company Roche available on the World Wide Web would be of significant interest. [15]

The aforementioned professor also said OA journals would be viewed as valid by the personnel committee if it proved to be peer reviewed. A Biology professor wrote, "It is obvious that in the future all publishing will be OA. It greatly facilitates communication. You didn't ask if we read OA journals. Everyone does because the data is easy to get to. This is a transition period, but OA is the future." Another respondent who answered Yes to questions three and four, and preferred to publish in a OA journals rather subscription wrote, "Since most of the academic research is supported by public money, it is only fair that the results of such research be made free accessible to the public." In light of this commentary librarians at LIU and elsewhere should take it upon themselves to provide information regarding the National Institute of Health's recent announcement to provide research funded by that body available for free twelve months after publication. [16]

Methods of Promotion Library Planning and Assessment Committee

The Library Planning and Assessment Committee (LPAC) was reconvened in 2004 after completing a five year plan which served as the blueprint for significant positive changes at the LIU Brooklyn Campus. Vast improvements, in technology especially, were evident once the last incarnation of the committee completed its work. In the Fall of 2004 all the department heads were asked to contribute goals for the next five year plan. Among those activities submitted by the Periodicals Department was a plan to "Promote the concept of "Open Access" of journals to teaching faculty." Subsequently the new LAPC committee met and agreed to the language in the LAPC planning document.

OA Web Page

The next step was to seek the entire library faculty's approval in the effort to raise awareness on the Brooklyn Campus. This was initiated by sending an email to the library faculty which read, in part:

Open Access Journals (free) are sustainable only if increasing numbers of researchers publish in them. It is the hope of OA advocates that eventually enough quality, peer review content will be available so journal publishers will need to make adjustments in their pricing based on market demand.

Needless to say, the implications are many and profound for academic libraries like ours. Moreover, there are a number of OA titles that are indexed in Serials Solutions, meaning on occasion users will find full text, peer reviewed content the library does not pay for. I think it is the library's responsibility to inform the faculty about these publishing opportunities so that, in a sense, charity begins at home and we are participants rather than simply beneficiaries of OA Publishing. [17]

I also noted my intention to ask the Dean of the Library for permission to upload a web page to the library's site which would provide links to sites advocating open access such as SPAC, the Budapest Open Access Initiative, Public Library of Science, and some examples of open access journals, notably the Directory of Open Access and Biomed Central. After my presentation to the Senate Faculty, (see below) I amended the page to include links to sites where one or both sides of the OA debate resided, the pros and cons so to speak, thus modifying the web page's tone from advocacy to informational.

The faculty unanimously endorsed both the web page and my plan to create an open access policy for the library. Subsequently, I created a web page which I presented to the Library's Web and Public Relations Committees. I made the request of both Committees that the web page be hyper-linked on the library's homepage and a link placed in the continuous scroll at the bottom of the page the Brooklyn Library utilizes to announce newsletters, electronic products, exhibits and other news. A final decision is the purview of the Public Relations Committee. I requested the Web Committee consider linking the OA page to the library homepage and to the Periodicals Department page. The Chair of the PR Committee told me that it was the committee's opinion that though OA was an important issue for academic libraries and likely to be so for the foreseeable future, it was only appropriate to link the web page to the Periodicals Department page because of relevancy. The Chair of the committee asked me to submit a copy of my modified web page to the Dean of the Library, and I did so.

The decision by the PR Committee to only link to the Periodicals page was disappointing because, though desirable to have the page somewhere on the site, it would be seen, if at all, by those seeking information about the Periodicals Department.

I asked the Web Committee Chair that the page I created for OA be linked under the "WWW Resources" heading on the library's homepage. Though a final decision as to where the page is linked hasn't been rendered, I am confident that the faculty and administration will ultimately support a prominent link on the web site. In my

last exchange of emails with the Chair of the Web Committee the idea of creating a “Hot Issues” link under the “WWW Resources Heading” was bandied, and I am hopeful this comes to fruition. [18]

Librarians at other institutions who attempt use their library’s web site to advance knowledge of the state of OA publishing may have more autonomy and find the process from creation to uploading more direct than was my experience. While the rigorously democratic process at the LIU Brooklyn Campus Library ensures that the web site can’t be used as a venue for editorializing or to advance an agenda that is not in keeping with the mission statement or collection policies, librarians should be aware that faculty committees in their libraries should be given as much written notice as possible about the creation of web pages or any other public documents, lest efforts like the OA web page described here become mired in committees or buried within the site itself.

Faculty Senate

On April 7th, 2005 I appeared before the Brooklyn Campus Faculty Senate, a body that addresses academic issues, with thirty-eight members of the full time faculty in attendance to speak about OA publishing and the implications for the faculty and library. I handed out a list of OA sources from the Library Association of City University of New York for those present to peruse if so inclined, talked about the ever-escalating cost of scholarly journals from the publishers the Library contracts with and the annual ten percent inflation rate the library absorbed in the material budget. I emphasized that many OA journals subject manuscripts to the peer review process, that students will find OA journals linked in our subscription databases and indices because the library includes the Directory of Open Access Journals in the list of sources submitted to Serials Solutions, and that publicly funded research should rightly be available for free on the World Wide Web. I also mentioned some of the initiatives such as PLOS, Budapest and Biomed Central, and also brought up one of the most controversial aspects of OA, the burden of publishing cost being paid by authors. The majority of my remarks centered on issues of administration and faculty review committees’ view of the legitimacy of OA journals. I asked those present if they believed this question was one the Senate Faculty wanted to formally present to the university administration and then opened the floor for questions.

One biology professor said he thought it was “dangerous” for the library to promote OA journals because of the fee structure. He thought it outrageous that authors in his field are required to pay as much as \$1,500 or more for their research to be published in OA journals. Such a publishing model, he maintained, would ultimately shift the financial onus from the university, under the budgetary

auspices of the library, to the teaching faculty. Only one other professor present spoke and expressed a general lack of understanding of the OA model. I agreed to speak with the professor in a one-on-one session to explain it further. I asked the President of the Senate Faculty if there was sufficient interest for the issue to be revisited in the Fall 2005 after an ad hoc committee was formed, met and reported its findings. The President agreed and I was invited back in the Fall, 2005 to give a more detailed report on the pros and cons of the OA publishing model.

The appearance in the Senate Faculty was a success because those present were given an overview of an issue that unquestionably transcends librarianship and has financial, academic and tenure implications for all faculty members. By taking the initiative to bring the basic facts of OA to this body, the author was invited to appear again and present more detail on the arguments for and against OA publishing and this could realistically result in a formal appeal to the university academic administration and personnel committees to recognize peer reviewed OA journals as legitimate scholarship venues.

Conclusions

Sending out a survey that included a definition of OA served the dual purposes of gauging awareness of the model and informing the uninitiated of the concept. It was surprising but undeniable that more professors responded to the survey via interoffice mail than email. Given the ratio of responses received back in hard copy interoffice mail should be used as the primary conduit for further written efforts, though email can still be used as a supplemental mode of delivery. The overall low response rate (20%) coupled with a higher paper response leads to one to believe that requesting time for an OA presentation during faculty meetings should be requested with a written (hard copy) letter.

The findings of the survey can certainly be framed in terms of the classic glass is half full or empty scenario; it was encouraging and somewhat surprising to find that nearly half the faculty was familiar with OA and this certainly bodes well for enlisting support for the goal of encouraging faculty to publish in OA journals. The very low percentage of faculty who published in OA journals demonstrates that there is a long way to go towards promoting the model at the Brooklyn Campus. Since the majority of faculty who responded to the survey marked "Academic Libraries" as the main beneficiaries of OA publishing and given the significant number who wrote in "Users" its clear there is a general understanding of the financial burden of subscription journals and the importance of free peer reviewed research on the Internet for students. The answers to the questions related to promotion and tenure support the idea that in the future, the faculty at LIU should work with the university and departmental administrators to ensure there is

agreement on the academic validity of the OA model. There is an engaged and informed segment of the faculty, as evidenced by some of the write-in comments, that should be encouraged to publish in OA journals by librarians who can forward contact information specific to departments or programs such as the free drug trials available from Roche for the School of Pharmacy.

Planning documents and collection policies where the OA publishing initiative can be incorporated will lend credence and tangible assessments to any project such as the one outlined in this paper. At the LIU Brooklyn the OA awareness initiative and goal of creating an informational web page is included in the current LPAC document.

Because of the committee structure in place to grant approval for any new links on the web page, cooperation of one's fellow faculty and library administrators, preferably well in advance of any target date, is highly advisable. As the benefits of OA publishing to the library and the institution are myriad, it is likely the OA web page will be linked prominently on the library site.

The initial steps taken at LIU Brooklyn to present the faculty with the important arguments for and against the OA publishing model indicate that the effort to raise awareness will require a great deal more work. However, inroads have been established for reaching faculty members who either were unfamiliar with OA or possessed a vague sense. Professors such as those who took the time to write comments in their surveys and expressed strong opinions will continue to be responsive to library efforts to inform the faculty of current trends in OA publishing.

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