Reaching Faculty Where They Are: Lessons Learned on Outreach

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My talk will be about my experiences with outreach for our institutional repository as well as our overall scholarly communications efforts. My goal is to share some of the insights I’ve gained as a relatively new IR manager and scholarly communications lead. I saw this conference as an opportunity to reflect on what I’ve learned as well as a chance to connect with and learn from other librarians who have similar roles.

SLIDE 2 CONSISTENCY, FLEXIBILITY, HOLISTIC
The three words that I think of related to successful scholarly communications outreach are: consistency, flexibility, and holistic.

Consistency relates to messaging and branding. It ties into repeating and spreading that message.

Flexibility is about learning from not only your users and your administrators but also from your own experiences and reflecting on one’s own presumptions and being open to questioning those presumptions.
A holistic perspective helps our users see the connection between their scholarship and our various services and resources.

SLIDE 3 CITY TECH

New York City College of Technology

My college, New York City College of Technology, nicknamed City Tech, is the technical college of the City University of New York. We’re located in downtown Brooklyn. Originally, we were a community college and then expanded to a few four-year programs. We have many specialized career programs. Now, four-year degrees dominate, and, with rising expectations, all faculty are required to publish for tenure and promotion. What makes City Tech a fascinating place to work and especially great for me is that some of the faculty come from industry or the arts and do not have Ph.Ds or may have otherwise not been mentored in scholarship. They are expected to produce content that relates to their expertise. For example, our culinary program faculty participate in international food or pastry arts competitions. And some of the longer time faculty need support as well as they jump start their
scholarship anew. In addition to supporting creation of faculty work, there are important questions around smart choices for publication and how to best evaluate faculty scholarship and other production.

CUNY was relatively late to launch its IR and City Tech was one of the last schools to do so. That was partly because of staffing transitions that included me changing positions internally where I would chiefly do instruction and manage the IR and related activities as a secondary function. The transition was challenging.

Creating a new culture for connecting the library to college-wide faculty scholarship presented and still presents many wonderful challenges. How could I be most effective with limited time and support? The question I always ask is “am I meeting my classroom faculty colleagues where they are: at their point of need? Will they make the connection with the library next time they have a scholarly publishing question or need?”

So here I am, new to my job, with a new library chair, and a new IR to get off the ground. I had a whole set of expectations and, when I think back, my expectations were reasonable. I didn’t, however, grasp the larger picture. I knew that most faculty don’t self-archive. But here’s where things got interesting and here’s my first lesson learned ...

SLIDE 5 Expectations and surprises: Allies
Importance of your chief librarian / chair / dean or other administrators.

So my library chair and I talked about setting goals and strategizing the IR and related items. Looking back, I couldn’t fully grasp her perspective at the time. She felt that with our constraints, we’d have to focus on faculty self-archiving but also focus on broader user education on scholarly communications.
And reflecting on the last few years, I see the rewards of this approach. I’ve had to learn and teach many new things and try a variety of approaches in promoting the IR. I also had this silly idea that nothing could get accomplished without a mandate from our President or our Provost. Over time, I’ve learned that getting buy-in from administrators is far more complex and having an ally in your library chair or dean or another administrator is critical.

Your library chair or dean is that person who sits in meetings with other administrators and may also be part of the college P & B. He or she knows college priorities and as well as when to time a conversation to a higher up. Your chair or dean can help get you on the agenda for those meetings of administrators. The most important thing is to be able to repeatedly speak to other administrators and, keep the presentation concise and on point. I started out talking about the IR with a strong focus on demystifying the IR and beginning to shape my message about the benefits of self-archiving. I also presented a few times on bibliometrics and publication evaluation. Naturally, the more often I presented on the IR, the more my talk became effective and succinct.

It’s been very helpful for me to return to give briefer updates reflecting the evolution of our services and resources. Chairs of departments change over from year to year and, yes, college priorities change too. I also think it’s important to ally with other administrators on campus. Our CETL (Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) director and associate provosts respectively have been instrumental in supporting our efforts to connect the library to faculty scholarship. The point is to find your allies in your college or institution and keep an open mind as you hone your message.
... before I move on, I wanted to share this imagery to promote the IR to administrators and others ... it works well. I used SHOWCASE in some other outreach including a library newsletter article.

SLIDE 6 Expectations and surprises: Allies
Persistence and repetition pay off

Persistence and repetition DO pay off. Unfortunately, we couldn’t brand the IR ourselves and CUNY had the Academic Commons before launching Academic Works. Although there is occasional confusion, the majority of faculty know CUNY Academic Works, our IR, exists to increase dissemination of their work. Whether or not they take the time to self-archive, naturally, is always a challenge. But, more importantly, the library is respected and valued as a resource related to scholarly publishing.
So I talked a bit about buy-in from administrators. But to be visible, you need to be in a variety of places. Another outreach strategy was to do departmental visits. Some were more successful than others. I think, more importantly, is that even if the visit didn’t result in deposits, more classroom faculty learned about the IR and learned who we are and accordingly that the library is a resource for their scholarship. I switched up my presentations according to the discipline and would touch on Open Access according to the disciplinary culture. Ideally, I would co-present with the subject bibliographer for that department.

And what I’ve observed is that most faculty don’t care about Open Access. If they do, they’re already self-archiving. What they care about is increasing their visibility as scholars. So that’s how I market the IR. I show a chart documenting the open access citation advantage. But otherwise, I just focus on the IR as a tool for increasing their readership, and, more importantly their citation rate, and the discovery of their work in Google Scholar. I just keep the message simple and focus on the benefits of the IR to faculty. And I always connect citation metrics as evidence of scholarly impact that we currently use on our annual evaluation reports.

SLIDE 8 Strategies HAVE YOUR CAKE
I frame the IR (and all green open access) as a win-win and use this slide to discuss green open access as HAVING YOUR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO: being able to pick the best publisher for your work but also being able to share it via the IR.

SLIDE 9 Strategies: BALANCE INVESTMENT AND RETURN
Be nimble! Another important lesson I’ve learned is to recognize that time invested isn’t often returned. I’ll talk a little more about this when I discuss FAILS but the goal is to do a lot of outreach but don’t invest too much time. My Google Scholar alerts for every new publication: I have learned to keep those messages brief since a) faculty have no patience for long emails and b) why bother investigating policies if the faculty member isn’t interested. But these are not generic messages: these are individualized outreach and I always offer to meet in person, by phone or work by email. Same for some of the workshops. Although there’s always time preparing the workshop initially, repeating them regularly requires minimal effort. It’s also strategic to have campus
partners to co-brand your efforts, especially workshops, and who might help you with important tasks like ... design work!

SLIDE 10 Strategies PRINT PROMOTION AND OUTREACH
My very smart library chair suggested we have a poster created to promote the IR. On reflection, all the varied communication channels including blog posts, tweets, emails and other electronic outreach are nice but this poster ...

SLIDE 11 ACADEMIC WORKS POSTER

AW POSTER has been far more successful. This is our most recent outreach campaign. I came up with the wording and the concept and with a future designer, hope for a more professional poster that looks similar but better. I used the AMPLIFY messaging in some earlier presentations and plan to continue using it. In general, we go for action language: AMPLIFY, BOOST, IMPACT.

Next you’ll see some earlier creations.
This is a physical poster I created and drag out for our college’s poster session day and otherwise keep on display in my office.
Print handouts are pretty awesome too. Keep them simple and as graphic as possible.

SLIDE 15 STRATEGIES: CONNECT THE PIECES

SLIDE 16 SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING CLINIC
Scholarly Publishing Clinic hasn’t launched yet but this visual helps represent how the pieces work together as part of the scholarly lifecycle. It’s important to interconnect the pieces including the IR. We do a variety of workshops to promote the IR and teach faculty about author rights, copyright, and other related topics. We market regular workshops for our IR as Posting Parties because we want to keep it light and informal.

I also promote the IR and self-archiving within a series of workshops I give to an annual mid-career faculty publishing cohort as well as every semester’s new faculty panel. Any event on campus celebrating faculty scholarship, I’ll either present or provide flyers.

The goal is to open conversation: In those one-on-one conversations, it’s easy to promote the use of SPARC Addendum. Individual relationships are key and I’ve become much more aware of my colleagues’ research and their needs and interests.

SLIDE 17 BOOST YOUR SCHOLARLY PROFILE

This education
and outreach effort is very popular. It is a summer long self-guided series of weekly tasks that are unveiled every Monday via a libguide. I got the idea from an article in College and Research Libraries News and got permission from the creators of this series and then modified the series to fit our local environment. The obvious benefit of this series is that once set up, it can be repeated every summer. What is also nice about this series is that it harmonizes with the messaging related to the IR as a means to AMPLIFY your scholarship.

SLIDE 18 MID-CAREER SERIES

Here’s the libguide for this workshop series ... the focus has been on either faculty who haven’t been publishing or faculty without Ph.Ds. My part comes at the beginning of each semester related to the literature review and choosing the journal and other items that correlate to publishing and dissemination. Then I do one-on-ones with each of the participants every end of semester. The majority of the workshop conveners are other colleagues who are editors or experts in research methodologies. The one-on-ones were suggested by my co-conveners (the associate
provost and the CETL director) and as always, they are great for everyone including me.

Next, I’ll talk a little about things that surprised me and my fails.

*Presenter notes will shift to outline form*

**SLIDE 19 SURPRISES**

- Unpredictable who responds to emails and other outreach
- New faculty sometimes / David Sanchez
- Faculty enthusiasm and confusion related to ResearchGate and Academia.edu = learning moment ... I actually address this in an article I wrote for the college newsletter
- Faculty confusion about preprint services vs. IR
  - Message self-archiving in IR for post-publication

**SLIDE 20 STORIES ARE GOOD**

Stories
• Nucleus article(s)

SLIDE 21 STORIES

Separate short pieces written by faculty who love the IR

• Photo of the faculty taken with me for article

• Pull quotes!
SLIDE 22 OA week profiles of faculty … Interview format good

SLIDE 23: FAILS

• Bad APC stories = OA is bad from faculty. Now I know how to respond but initially not

• If faculty member says “NO” outright, ask why … Time/benefit analysis: Viviana, astronomer = too many authors, user of arXiv

• I wasted too much time exploring journal policies for messages to faculty before buy-in

• OA Week talk on social justice and OA with Jessie Daniels (Hunter College)
  • Too much work /Audience only so aware of OA
  • Most workshops don’t bring in faculty
  • Librarian / classroom faculty conversations at liaison level require librarian schol comm interest and knowledge
• Yet another new role for librarians!
• Tip sheets for colleagues fail?
• Difficulty of subject liaison role for librarians … challenging to get invite to non-library departmental meetings. Easier for me to talk 5-20 minutes on IR (or other schol comm topic) at a dept. meeting = FOCUS
• Confusion with AMPLIFY poster
  • Student designer, made faculty member look too young
  • Added word “FACULTY” to revised version, added suit and pearls
• Posting parties
  • Low attendance
  • Effort in outreach … perhaps just further reinforcing the message

SLIDE 24 TIMING
• OA week is a pain: mid-term grades coincide
  • Schedule workshops and events afterwards
• Summer (and winter intersession) as best time to reach some faculty at point of need
  • Schedule IR outreach emails for follow up
  • Boost Your Scholarly Profile
• Flexibility and drop-in hours with SPC … will explain further in a moment

SLIDE 25 MEET THEM WHERE THEY ARE
DACS workshop, all day last January for each school at my college

• Not just bibliometrics / altmetrics

• Publication quality / content quality if non-publication very complex, very fraught, Due diligence issue, Explain no outside reviewers

• Discuss SPC pilot

• One-on-one … always an opportunity to discuss choices incl. SPARC Addendum

SLIDE 26 REFLECTIONS AND WRAP UP

• Listen well and when you hear something you don’t like, don’t run away from it

• Print is powerful

• Get outside (non-librarian) eyeballs on outreach materials

• Repetition is powerful

• Keep it simple when appropriate

• Stay passionate: it shows

• Connect the pieces, the IR as centerpiece via branding, holistic

• Find allies including colleagues, your boss, administrators

• One-on-one is super powerful = conversations, positivity