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**The Crisis in Scholarly Communication, Part II:
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Abstract:

This article, the second in a two-part series, focuses on the roles that various library departments can and should play in the development of a robust scholarly communication program. It discusses how the crisis in scholarly communication affects different work areas and groups of staff. A whole-library approach to addressing the crisis can reveal how each department's responsibilities require management of different scholarly communication issues. The article also addresses the ways in which technical services is particularly impacted by the crisis in scholarly communication in order to provide a more in-depth analysis of how a discrete work area within the library experiences the crisis.

Keywords:

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Author's footnote:

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The Crisis in Scholarly Communication, Part II: Internal Impacts on the Library, With a Focus on Technical Services

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The first article in this two-part series addressed the basic issues of the crisis in scholarly communication and provided advice for librarians on how best to engage their faculty and develop outreach programs on their campuses. The library is frequently viewed by campus administrators as the logical center of research-related activities; thus librarians find themselves called upon to quickly familiarize themselves with the issues and take leadership roles in education and advocacy programs. This second article focuses on the roles that various library departments can and should play in the development of a robust scholarly communication program. Although some libraries might appoint a “scholarly communication librarian” or convene a committee to address the topic, it is important for those leaders to keep in mind the varying involvements that all staff members have with scholarly communication issues.¹ This article will then address the ways in which technical services is particularly impacted by the crisis in scholarly communication in order to provide a more in-depth analysis of how a discrete work area within the library experiences the crisis, keeping in mind that a similar analysis could be performed on any area of the library.

Assessing Departmental Involvement with Scholarly Communication

The concept of using a “whole-library” approach to program development is not new. At Northeastern’s Snell Library, staff who work in traditionally back-office departments such as

technical services are involved in customer-service training programs, and library-wide committees involve staff members at all levels and from all departments in functions as broad-ranging as public relations, wiki development, and federated search product selection. Nor is Northeastern alone in such whole-library involvement. Joyce Saricks wrote in her September 2007 *Booklist* column about developing a whole-library readers' advisory program at her library, in which everyone from the board of directors to the maintenance staff was invited and encouraged to participate in informal booktalking with other staff members as well as with library users.² Of course, several steps are needed in order to ensure that such whole-library programs are successful. Adequate training and support for involved staff members is obviously crucial. Also, where possible, staff members who are enthusiastic about the program or who have talents that can be used to the library's advantage must be identified. In an academic setting, library staff may be taking advantage of the institution's tuition-remission or reimbursement program to advance their education in non-library related fields, and they may constitute an invaluable and untapped resource of many different skill sets.

When considering how different areas of the library affect and are affected by the crisis in scholarly communication, it is important to first identify both the departmental responsibilities of each work area and the day-to-day workflows and interactions of staff members. Librarians who are not administrators may not be fully familiar with the official responsibilities or the complete list of functions of departments other than their own, so they should take time to obtain and analyze this information. Speaking with department heads as well as other librarians and support staff will provide an understanding of how departments and staff members intersect with different aspects of scholarly communication and various constituencies on campus. Gauging staff awareness of and interest in scholarly communication issues is also important. In a small

library setting, this work may take very little time, but in a mid-sized or large university library, such an assessment will naturally take longer.

There are several overlapping categories of library staff whose education and inclusion are central to supporting a successful scholarly communication program. The first and most obvious group is comprised of those library staff who work directly with faculty. The majority of this group will be the departmental liaisons most commonly found in the reference department. As panel discussion speakers at the 2007 Charleston Conference emphasized, subject liaisons are always looking for something new to talk about with their faculty. They may be aware of scholarly communication issues through their professional reading, but unsure of how to approach the topic with their faculty or know how the library can support faculty authors.³ Other library staff who work directly with faculty but who are not departmental liaisons include those who work at the circulation desk or in reserves and those who may staff the reference desk but do not have liaison responsibilities. The former group will likely be largely made up of support staff; the latter is most likely professional staff. Although none of these staff members may have occasion to meet formally with faculty members, they interact with them on a day-to-day basis and should therefore be knowledgeable of scholarly communication issues and be familiar with the library's scholarly communication program.

Two work areas in the library are likely to employ a large percentage of support staff – technical services and what at the Snell Library is called Access Services.⁴ In each of these areas, a hierarchy generally exists in which leadership positions are filled by professional librarians, who in turn oversee a group of support staff with various backgrounds and a large corps of student workers. The support staff most familiar with issues of copyright and open access are probably those who deal with resource sharing, reserves, and licensing of electronic

resources. However, when the categorization of “scholarly communication” is removed from these topics, more staff may identify themselves as familiar with the issues as they have been addressed in the media, such as digital downloading and anti-piracy concerns, for example. It is important to keep in mind that support staff may not think about these subjects using the language of professional library literature. Removing some of the library jargon from the conversation will also be essential in communicating effectively with faculty, students, and campus administrators, so it is beneficial to hone this practice with library support staff.

The third group of people in the library may be more difficult to identify: staff members who have a strong professional and/or personal interest in scholarly communication issues, specifically as they intersect with the message and goals of the library’s scholarly communication program. Although some of these staff may already have been included in one of the first two groups, their interest in the issues may not have been positively identified. Some may not discover their own interest until they have been formally introduced to the issues through an internal education program. Unlike the first two groups, whose memberships are determined by staff roles in the library, this third group may change in composition over time and is thus in need of closer tracking by the librarian(s) who oversee the scholarly communication program.

Conversely, some library staff will not fall into any of these three groups. However, they should not be ignored. They may need additional support to become engaged with the issues, or they may interact with constituencies on campus who have roles to play in the scholarly communication program. For example, at the Snell Library, librarians and support staff in the library’s Systems Department have strong relationships with the university’s Information Services (IS) department and the campus administrator responsible for information security.

Both of these entities certainly have important roles to play in a scholarly communication program. It is also crucial to identify library staff who may have experience working with the university's legal counsel, who oversees contracts signed by the library and provides copyright support to faculty researchers. Thus, as part of a staff and workflow analysis, interactions with groups outside the library must also be considered.

Ensuring the approval of library administrators is central to the success of the scholarly communication program. Library administrators will be sensitive to aspects of the program that seem to challenge the campus political climate or that they feel may jeopardize the library's relationships with campus administrators or faculty. The library administration may contain one or more members who are very well-informed about scholarly communication issues. However, some or all may have a limited knowledge of the issues, which may in turn inform their early position on a scholarly communication program. Including administrators in any internal education for library staff is important in order to make sure they are well-informed about the issues and to increase the likelihood of their approval of plans for the scholarly communication program. Library administrators are also excellent resources for suggesting potential partners on campus and for helping to make connections with these stakeholders.

When discussing scholarly communication with other work areas in the library, the scholarly communication librarian should consider how the issues of scholarly communication intersect with these departments. Unless this librarian is an administrator who is intimately familiar with all areas of the library, it is likely that he or she will only be familiar in an abstract sense with the work processes and departmental objectives of other areas. Getting some concrete examples of how each department is impacted by the crisis in scholarly communication will help determine how these departments, in turn, can help the library make an impact on the crisis with

its scholarly communication program. Following are some informal observations about how the various work areas at the Snell Library connect with scholarly communication issues:

- **Accounts.** The staff members in this area are in daily contact with publishers and vendors regarding the library's purchases and licensing payments. They are very familiar with the rising costs of scholarly publishing and the attendant need to balance the library budget through cancellations.
- **Administration.** All members of the administrative staff must deal with scholarly communication issues that affect the work areas for which they are responsible. The Acting Dean has convened a Scholarly Communication Committee, composed of six librarians from various departments, to develop and education and outreach program.⁵
- **Archives and Special Collections.** Issues of copyright, privacy, and the public domain are central in this field. The Head of Archives has also been a leader in the development and maintenance of the institutional repository, which requires a significant background in issues of copyright and open access.
- **Collection Development.** This function is performed by one full-time staff member whose external contacts are mostly with content vendors and publishers. She deals with licensing issues and price negotiations, both of which are strongly impacted by the crisis in scholarly communication.
- **Digital Media Design Studio.** This department, created in the past year, provides equipment for library users to create and edit media presentations and productions. Its staff deal with issues of copyright, digital rights management, and piracy as part of their work.

- **Research and Instruction.** Librarians in this department staff the reference desk as well as perform subject-liaison duties and provide library instruction. They regularly interact with faculty members and speak with them about their research activities.
- **Reserves.** Staff members must be very aware of copyright issues relating to the reproduction of materials to be placed on reserve (at present the library does not offer electronic reserves). They educate faculty about obtaining permission to reproduce materials for classroom use.
- **Resource Sharing.** Staff members deal with issues of copyright everyday. They should also be familiar with the concept of open access, as they may receive interlibrary loan requests for articles that are freely available online; however, they may not be aware of such availability.
- **Systems.** This department maintains the integrated library system, public-access computers and printers, and the library Web site; they also work on the development of new services such as the staff wiki. Staff members work closely with the university's information-services department. Some staff members are involved with the institutional repository and the maintenance of its software.
- **Technical Services.** Staff members are responsible for, among other things, licensing of electronic resources, management of print subscriptions, acquiring public performance rights for audiovisual resources, and providing metadata for items in the institutional repository. They are well aware of the rising costs for print and electronic journals and how the library must balance its budget through yearly cancellations.

Naturally, these work areas collaborate with other departments in the library in order to accomplish some tasks, and overlaps and specializations occur. This very basic analysis also

does not take into account the personal interest that staff members may have in scholarly communication issues regardless of their job duties.

Technical Services and the Crisis in Scholarly Communication

Although technical services staff may not be on the front lines of interacting with faculty in most libraries, they certainly work with issues affecting faculty researchers every day. Most technical services departments will probably deal at least with the basic issues described above in the informal review of the Snell Library's work areas; depending on how technical services is organized at various libraries, they may manage additional scholarly communication-related functions.⁶

Several recent articles have studied the impact of the open-access movement on technical services. Although much has been written in recent years about how technical services departments can manage electronic resources, it is important to consider open-access resources separately, as they present unique challenges. Amy Koehler's 2006 article, "Some Thoughts on the Meaning of Open Access for University Library Technical Services," considers questions such as, "How ... do collection development librarians identify and select material in [open access] formats? How do acquisitions librarians purchase, license, or otherwise gain access to the materials? ... How do catalogers organize and provide users with access? And finally, how are these materials to be maintained and preserved?" She emphasizes that collection development (often a part of technical services or at least a collaborator with that area) must use open access-specific selection tools in order to find open-access materials, and that the staff responsible for licensing and electronic resources management must continue to apply the principles of copyright and fair use to open-access materials. Catalogers must determine which

version of an item to catalog, choosing among preprint, postprint, published version, and so on. Koehler also points out that in an open-access environment, the role of the vendor is largely transferred to libraries. With open-access materials, technical services staff must perform functions such as negotiation with publishers and resolution of access problems that are traditionally the realm of vendors and subscription agents. As open-access materials increase in quantity and popularity, this may force a restructuring of job responsibilities in technical services.⁷

Andrew Waller of the University of Calgary agrees with Koehler, stating that “purchasing gives libraries (some) power.... Libraries purchase a product and, accordingly, have the ability to call upon the publisher or vendor when there is a problem.... If there is no subscription and no license, what sort of leverage does a library have when the OA content has become difficult to access or has disappeared altogether?”⁸ However, rather than suggesting that technical services staff take on the added responsibility of resolving access problems, he proposes that funding for open-access publishing might come from libraries and that “guarantees of access and the solving of problems” be included in the conditions of payment. Waller also encourages open-access publishers to make sure that their journals are listed in the Directory of Open-Access Journals (DOAJ) and in subject-specific indexes where appropriate, in order to facilitate collection development by librarians, as journals that are “unconnected” make collection development difficult.⁹

Technical services staff are also likely to be involved in serials reviews and cancellation projects, unpleasant and ongoing results of the crisis in scholarly communication. Academic libraries began to experience a budget crisis brought on by reductions in university spending during the 1970s. In the intervening years, dramatic publisher price increases and the

introduction of the so-called “big deal” (in which the most prominent or well-respected commercial journals are made available only when bundled with journals of lesser importance or value), coupled with further funding reductions, have resulted in large-scale cancellation projects, most heavily concentrated in the past ten years or so.¹⁰ Kenneth Frazier, director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, made the decision to refuse commercial publishers’ big deals in order to retain fiscal independence, but he acknowledges, “Life outside the Big Deal means *always* having to say you are sorry to faculty members and researchers.”¹¹ If libraries cancel their big-deal subscriptions out of choice or necessity, their faculty researchers may be negatively impacted. Frazier notes that “many UW science librarians believe that our shrinking collection of scientific journals has begun to undermine the research capability of the university.”¹²

Cancellations and unbundling of subscriptions also negatively impact technical services staff, who must devote significant time to straightening out subscription details in the integrated library system, ensuring that online access is not lost nor issues missed when switching between bundled and stand-alone subscriptions, and following up with vendors to tie up the loose ends of billing for these subscriptions. Because most libraries rely on faculty input for cancellations, waiting for this input can derail the annual renewal process, causing further disruptions in the technical services workflow. And when this kind of “drop everything” crisis occurs every year, staff morale is also affected.

Some hope, as Frazier does, that the bundled subscription model will become untenable for publishers. As a result, we may see movement towards a pay-per-use model, in which libraries pay only for articles that their users choose to view online. This model, based on the idea of the long tail, is currently employed successfully in an individual-as-payer format by

online vendors such as iTunes. The long tail concept states that if 80 percent of consumers purchase 20 percent of available products (in other words, the most popular items), then the remaining 20 percent of consumers will purchase the other 80 percent of less-popular products. Previously, product suppliers could only profit by making that most popular 20 percent of products available, but in a digital environment with extremely low overhead, they can now afford to make that long tail—the other 80 percent of products—available as well for very little additional cost, thus increasing their total revenue.

If commercial journal publishers are already making all of the articles in all of their journals available online to subscribers, then why must the big deal continue? There is an increasing call for these publishers to adopt a long-tail pricing model in which libraries might pay only for those articles that their users view, in place of the outdated subscription-based model that gives them access to the entire body of content, much of which is of interest to few users. This pay-per-use model is more cost-effective for libraries because they will pay primarily for the 20 percent of materials in the short end of the tail that are used by 80 percent of their users, while still making available the 80 percent of lower-demand materials in the long end of the tail for the 20 percent of their users who want them. In his keynote address at the 2006 Charleston Conference, noted open-access scholar Ray English decried the bloated profit motive of commercial publishers, arguing that if the pay-per-use model benefits researchers and libraries, it is inappropriate for publishers to continue overcharging for big-deal subscriptions.¹³ In a recent *Library Journal* article about pay-per-use resources, Gail Golderman and Bruce Connolly note that “for service-oriented but cost-conscious librarians, quickly and efficiently providing access to the contents of an expensive but little-used journal title on behalf of the one

or two people within your institution who need it strikes us as an elegant solution to a concern that has long nagged the profession.”¹⁴

Technical services staff would likely also argue that pay-per-use is an “elegant” alternative to the mess that is usually created by serials reviews and cancellation projects. Moving from bundled subscriptions to pay-per-use can be a seamless transition for users if all the same titles are kept, and faculty will be pleased that cancellations are not necessary. Money freed up by the transition can also be reallocated to the purchase or licensing of other resources. Although some commercial publishers already offer pay-per-use options, they are mainly aimed at individual users who do not have institutional subscription-based access. Change in the industry is needed in order to move pay-per-use towards an institution-as-payer model, which has the potential to alleviate some of the financial burden of the crisis in scholarly communication.¹⁵

Conclusion

Although many articles have examined the effects of the crisis in scholarly communication on faculty research and its impacts on the library in a general sense, little has been written that focuses specifically on the crisis as it affects staff in each of the library’s departments. Similarly, some research has been published on the impact of open access on technical services, but not on the full effects on that work area of the crisis in scholarly communication. This article illustrates that a whole-library approach to addressing the crisis can reveal how each department’s responsibilities require management of different scholarly communication issues. It also highlights overlapping categories of staff – those who deal directly with library users; support staff; and those who have a strong personal or professional

interest in scholarly communication issues – that should be identified in order to ensure that the library provides an effective scholarly communication program. A more in-depth analysis of technical services emphasizes that individual work areas within the library deal with the crisis in scholarly communication far beyond the surface level, and that the crisis has the potential to seriously impact workflow and staff morale. Further research on its internal effects on libraries can only help librarians better understand how their organizations can effect positive change and end the crisis in scholarly communication.

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1. Throughout this article I use the phrase “scholarly communication librarian” to facilitate ease of reading, but this title should be taken to represent the wide range of individuals or groups who may be charged with developing a library’s scholarly communication program.
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3. Sara Fuchs et al., "Developing Effective Scholarly Communication Advocates: The Experiences of Three University Librarians in Developing Scholarly Communication Programs," *XXXVII Charleston Conference* (Charleston, SC: 2007).
4. This department includes circulation services, interlibrary loan/resource sharing, reserves, stacks maintenance, and building and security services.
5. The author is the chair of this committee.
6. At many libraries, the technical services department may consist of traditional Acquisitions/Cataloging/Serials divisions, or it may be organized along different lines. At the Snell Library, technical services is divided into Print Management and Non-Print Management.
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