

A Team- and Project-Based Approach to Advancing Scholarly Communication Initiatives across the Library

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Scholarly communication can be defined as “the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use.”¹ Put this way, scholarly communication has the potential to touch the majority of library operations and services, and not surprisingly, libraries vary greatly in how they organize support for scholarly communication.² A holistic approach to engaging staff from across the library in this work has the potential to cut across functional silos, solicit a more diverse range of perspectives, and encourage staff who might not be designated scholarly communication specialists to engage with those issues.

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Cornell University Library’s (CUL) approach to scholarly communication is highly decentralized, with scholarly communication embedded in multiple job descriptions (usually those of subject and functional liaisons), and a scholarly communication librarian based in Digital Scholarship & Preservation Services. The director of collection development also manages a fund that supports the Cornell Open Access Publication fund,³ and selected strategic initiatives related to scholarly communication. This highly distributed arrangement can make it challenging to advance specific scholarly communication goals, and library liaisons in

particular often have multiple and competing priorities that make it difficult to engage deeply on individual topics. We discuss here a successful strategy employed for a full calendar year, and present feedback from team members on the efficacy of this approach.

Origin of the Scholarly Communication Working Group (SCWG)

In an effort to identify, select, and advance new initiatives, the scholarly communication librarian, Gail Steinhart, suggested the formation of a Scholarly Communication Working Group (SCWG). With the support of library leadership, she convened an open meeting to solicit ideas and input on how such a group might function and topics it might address, and issued a library-wide call for volunteers to serve on a steering committee. All library staff, library liaisons, and others were welcome to volunteer for the steering committee. We strove to balance representation on the steering committee across libraries and functional areas and asked that volunteers commit to participating in one or more SCWG projects. The group launched in 2016 with the following charge:

The Scholarly Communication Working Group (SCWG) leads and/or participates in selected initiatives that support the creation, dissemination, evaluation, and preservation of Cornell scholarship. Focusing its work on points of friction at the intersection of technology and scholarly practice, the SCWG raises awareness of issues, tools, methods, and services for scholarly communication, facilitating communication and coordination among stakeholders in order to maximize the library's investments in this area.

The group's intention was to be nimble, and to accomplish its work by selecting from one to three projects for a calendar year and recruiting additional volunteers beyond the steering committee to work on those projects. Once projects were launched, the steering committee met infrequently, as the bulk of the work was accomplished by the project teams.

First-Year (2016) Projects

Project ideas for the first year were taken from the suggestions made at the open meeting (referenced above). Project team members were recruited from the library at large. The SCWG undertook two projects for 2016: promote ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) adoption, use, and integration on the Cornell campus; and promote effective author rights management.

ORCID@Cornell

ORCID iDs are unique identifiers for researchers, and provide a simple and standardized way to unambiguously link authors to their publications.⁴ The library has a natural and long-standing interest in supporting authority control as well as facilitating the flow of information about Cornell scholarship between Scholars@Cornell⁵ (a Cornell-developed web application, with a core built upon VIVO,⁶ that pulls together work by Cornell faculty and researchers) and other systems, such as those used for faculty reporting. The project's two primary goals were to promote adoption of ORCID iDs by Cornell researchers, and to provide staff with the skills they would need to support new ORCID users. The team did this by hosting multiple in-person and online training sessions, presenting in various staff forums (such as the library-wide Reference and Outreach forum), publishing a blog post⁷ that explained the value of ORCID, hosting an open question-and-answer “brown bag,” and developing information and outreach resources (a library guide⁸ and print materials for distribution by liaisons and at service points). As of March 31, 2017, the library guide had close to 1,500 views, documenting impressive use within a span of several months. Library liaisons presented on ORCID in faculty meetings, helped faculty and staff with their ORCID records one-on-one, shared information about ORCID with their departments via e-mail, and included ORCID as a topic in various workshop and instruction sessions aimed primarily at graduate students.

The ORCID team also aimed to facilitate authorization of Cornell as a “trusted party” by researchers, and investigated opportunities for

integrating ORCID into library and campus systems. By the end of the year, there were more than 2,000 ORCID iDs associated with Cornell e-mail addresses, as well as a plan in place to include ORCID iDs as public information in Cornell's identity-provision services. At the time of writing, the latter has been fully implemented. Integration with the library's institutional repositories was less successful, primarily due to limitations of the platforms in use at CUL.

Author Rights Outreach

Author rights management was a topic of great interest to potential SCWG volunteers, as well as library directors at Cornell. After the steering group identified several resources in need of development that would support author rights education on campus, staff across the library were invited to participate in an intensive, one-day working meeting to collectively create these resources. During the meeting, participants developed a public-facing library guide on author rights,⁹ created a slide deck for a presentation on the topic, and drafted a sample correspondence for library liaisons to use in their work with members of the Cornell community. The team introduced these resources to all interested library staff in the library's Reference and Outreach forum, and finally, described in a blog post the results of the work as well as the process.¹⁰ Library staff report making good use of the resources developed—sharing the library guide with faculty, staff, and students, and using it in teaching and presentations. Usage statistics for the guide show 571 views over the life of the guide, as of March 31, 2017.

Staff Feedback on the SCWG Work Model

In March of 2017, we distributed a survey to all participants in the two SCWG first-year projects, ORCID@Cornell and author rights outreach. (See Appendix for the survey questionnaire.) We excluded ourselves from the survey, though we all were participants in one or both projects; this left nine potential respondents, with no crossover

between those who worked on ORCID@Cornell and those who worked on author rights outreach.

We received seven responses, with three of four of the ORCID@Cornell participants responding and four of five author rights outreach participants. Of those seven, two respondents identified themselves as library staff, and five as librarians (with one of the latter also identifying as a functional liaison). While none of the respondents identified themselves as either a subject liaison or an archivist, one of us is a subject liaison, and two of us are functional liaisons. All three of us are librarians.

The varied expertise of participants in both the SCWG and the project teams themselves was reflected positively in the survey responses. Six of the seven respondents reported forging collaborative partnerships across units, with three indicating that this objective had been fully achieved, and three reporting that it had been somewhat achieved.

Respondents' testimony regarding other outcomes of their participation was also positive. All seven reported that the process resulted in a tangible product that they have since used in their jobs, with five of those seven indicating that this objective had been fully met, and two indicating that it had been somewhat met.

Given the opportunity to expand on these responses, participants indicated that their participation in SCWG projects allowed them to learn more, not only about the relevant scholarly communication content—ORCID and author rights—but also about the process of creating and utilizing outreach tools such as LibGuides and other promotional materials. One respondent even noted that working on the project allowed them to more fully understand how best to work with CUL's director of copyright on issues surrounding author rights.

The survey results imply that SCWG is well positioned for future task-oriented projects. Six of the seven respondents indicated that

they would volunteer for a SCWG project in the future, stating that they appreciated the way in which the working group conducted its work, and that the methods were effective. While the SCWG formed teams for its second-year projects before this feedback was received, the group will use the feedback to guide its future work.

Second-Year (2017) Projects

With so many project ideas gleaned from the initial open meeting, the SCWG had to defer several to the second year. The following projects are currently in progress.

Open Access Policy Investigation

Cornell University does not currently have an open access policy, although the Faculty Senate approved a resolution in 2005 encouraging faculty to refrain from submitting papers to or refereeing for journals with exorbitant subscriptions fees, to publish in open access (or at least reasonably priced) journals, to negotiate in order to retain copyright in their works, and to deposit preprints or postprints to disciplinary repositories or to an institutional repository. More recently (2014) the University Assembly passed a resolution to establish a committee to investigate the feasibility of an open access policy for Cornell, and the work of that committee is ongoing.¹¹ While no members of the SCWG currently serve on this committee, recent changes to the administration of both Cornell University and the Cornell University Library presented an opportunity for SCWG to inform the next stages of this discussion. This project team is investigating the feasibility of providing library support for the kinds of open access policies currently implemented at peer institutions, with the intention of presenting library administrators with recommendations on a sustainable path forward.

Open Access Week Programming

In the past, various library groups have hosted a speaker on the topic of open access, and the SCWG has also hosted speakers when an opportunity arises. To date, there has been little to no organized activity on the Cornell campus during Open Access Week, a global celebration during the last full week of October each year, and there is significant interest among library staff in presenting one or more programs. The team is currently working in partnership with other library groups to bring an outside speaker to campus for one or more days this fall.

Supporting the Collecting Efforts of Unit Libraries

Initially conceived as an outreach campaign to promote the use of CUL's institutional repositories, the SCWG adjusted the purpose of this project to explore the current archiving practices and repository workflows for staff across campus. This change in scope occurred for two reasons. First, some colleges are served by dedicated repositories that have dedicated staff to collect and deposit publications on behalf of their faculty, and the managers of these repositories saw no particular need for an outreach campaign. Second, the working group realized that some library staff (including liaison librarians) actively collect the digital outputs of the colleges, departments, and centers they serve, or other materials of interest to their communities, and already deposit them to CUL's general purpose institutional repository, eCommons.¹² Because that work proceeds on a fairly *ad hoc* basis, this group aims to understand what works well (and could work better) for the staff and units that are doing this. For those that do not deposit outputs to eCommons, the team hopes to understand why that is and whether anything can or should be done to facilitate greater use of eCommons. The group will also document and share best practices for individuals and units doing this work, so that deposits to eCommons can be increased without creating an unsustainable workload for eCommons staff.

Lessons Learned

The 2016 projects employed different work models and had different goals. The primary objectives of the author rights outreach project were relatively finite, with tangible deliverables expected following an intensive one-day working meeting. Although minimal planning and coordination were required in advance, and outreach by way of a public presentation followed the meeting, the bulk of the work was contained within one working day. We will utilize this agile development process again when appropriate, to quickly and efficiently produce collaborative work products from a diverse representation of the library. We will also promote our use of this process more heavily when recruiting future project volunteers, as several participants indicated that their involvement was due largely to the anticipated high impact from a relatively low time commitment.

The ORCID@Cornell project was considerably more complex, requiring communication with and training for library staff, public-facing resources, and the outreach campaign, as well as technical work in collaboration with Cornell IT. The team accomplished everything it set out to, but assessing some components of the project was a challenge. In particular, we do not know how effective the outreach campaign was. We do know there were far more Cornell-associated ORCID iDs at the end of the project than when we began, but we do not know if that was a direct result of coordinated outreach, or independent uptake by faculty. A specific assessment plan could have helped us measure the efficacy of our outreach efforts, but we chose to balance the effort required of researchers to obtain an ORCID iD with the likely effort involved in responding to a follow-up survey about their use of ORCID. Similarly, explicit support and buy-in from library directors and other administrators could have helped us track outreach activities more closely. Integration of ORCID iDs into campus systems remains a challenge as researchers are under no obligation to make public their Cornell affiliation, or to authorize Cornell as a trusted party.

We learned from our 2016 projects the importance of specifying concrete outcomes, and methods and assessment strategies prior to a project's initiation. This is valuable both in terms of doing the best possible work and in securing pools of engaged

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volunteers. With 2017 projects underway now, we anticipate identifying 2018 projects in the near future. We have several ideas suggested by former volunteers. We also anticipate mining ideas from recent faculty and graduate student surveys (where several issues pertaining to scholarly communication were identified) and issuing an open call for project ideas and volunteers.

Going forward, the future for the Scholarly Communication Working Group's holistic, project-based approach to work looks strong. Participants appreciate that the projects have produced tangible results within a prescribed timeframe, and interest from volunteers has remained steady from year one to year two. Learning from what we have achieved so far, we will continue to employ methods appropriate to the tasks at hand. The SCWG has turned Cornell University's decentralized structure to its advantage, building connections across units and staff, and continuing to make real improvements to the scholarly communication support provided by the Cornell University Library.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

1. Which SCWG project did you work on?
 - a. ORCID
 - b. Author rights resources

2. What was your position at the time of your participation?
(check all that apply)
 - a. Librarian
 - b. Archivist
 - c. Staff
 - d. Subject liaison
 - e. Functional liaison
 - f. Other

3. As part of this project...
 - a. ...I formed collaborative partnerships across units.
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. Somewhat
 - iii. Fully
 - b. ...a tangible product was produced that I have since used in the context of my job.
 - i. Not at all
 - ii. Somewhat
 - iii. Fully

4. As part of this project, I learned more about (optional) [*free text*]

5. Are there any other outcomes from this project that you found notable? (optional) [*free text*]

6. Would you volunteer again for an SCWG project?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

7. Why or why not? (optional) [*free text*]
8. Do you have suggestions to improve the experience for colleagues that volunteer for future SCWG project teams? (optional) [*free text*]
9. Do you have suggestions on how to increase the number of staff that volunteer to participate in SCWG projects? (optional) [*free text*]
10. Do you have suggestions on how to increase the user impact of future SCWG projects? (optional) [*free text*]
11. Do you have additional comments or suggestions for the SCWG Steering Group? (optional) [*free text*]

Endnotes

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