Research Library Issues
RLI 292

2017
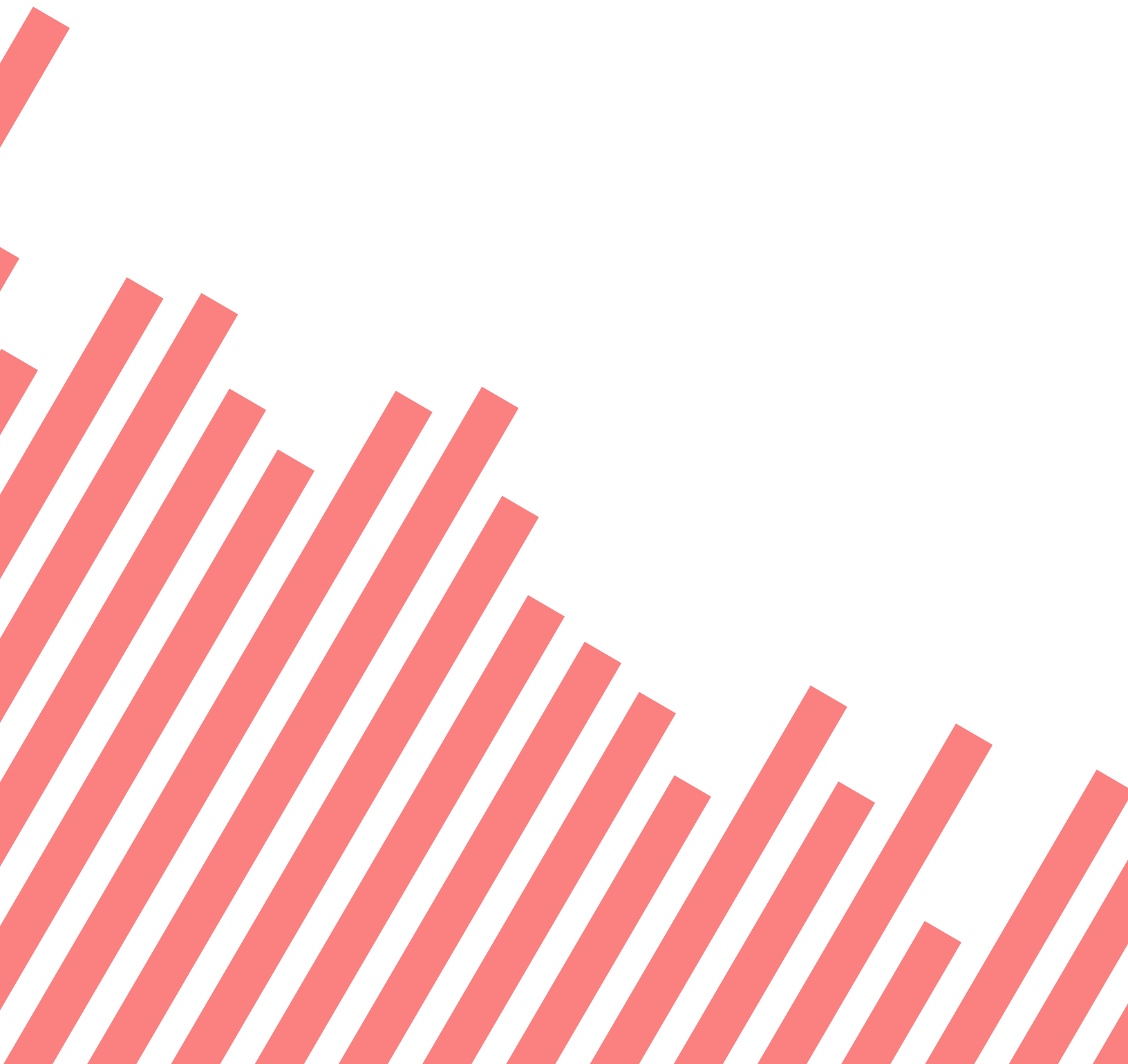
In This Issue

Editor's Note

Kaylyn Groves, ARL Senior Writer & Editor and RLI Assistant Editor

This issue of *Research Library Issues* (*RLI*) highlights the value of professional failure. The idea to explore this theme emerged from conversations with the ARL Innovation Lab Advisory Group earlier this year. We hope this issue highlights the value of failure—both its necessary role in experimentation and its key role in learning. We see this as an opportunity to help shift our community's culture away from risk aversion and toward risk-taking and innovation. The vignettes and case studies published here show that failure in many forms is a stepping stone to success.

Tom Wall, university librarian of Boston College and past chair of the ARL Innovation Lab (2016–2017), sets the stage for this issue with an essay on "Failure, Risk, and the Entrepreneurial Library."

Seven vignettes by the following authors give readers a taste of a variety of failures and lessons learned:

- Gerald Beasley, Cornell University
- Marwin Britto, University of Saskatchewan
- Holly Ann Burt, University of Southern California
- Samuel "Scott" Hall, ServiceNow (formerly with University of California, Berkeley)
- Amanda Rinehart, The Ohio State University
- Lorelei Rutledge and Lis Pankl, The University of Utah
- Catherine Soehner, The University of Utah

Four case studies explore professional failures more deeply:

- "A Quest to Survey Library and University Press Collaborations in Canada: A Case Study in Research Approach and Design" by Rosarie Coughlan, Queen's University; Geoffrey Brown, Dalhousie University; Robert Glushko, Western University; and Inba Kehoe,

University of Victoria
- "Failure Is an Orphan: Reflecting on the Fall of the University of Michigan Orphan Works Project" by Robert Glushko, Western University
- "Failure or Perseverance? A Case Study of a Legislative Initiative by the Utah Academic Library Consortium" by Peter L. Kraus, The University of Utah
- "This Is a Story about a Collections Budget" by Hannah Sommers, The George Washington University

We hope you enjoy this issue of *RLI* and take the wisdom offered by these authors into the new year. Remember writer Paulo Coelho's words: "There is only one thing that makes a dream impossible to achieve: the fear of failure."

© 2017 Kaylyn Groves

To cite this article: Kaylyn Groves. "Editor's Note." *Research Library Issues*, no. 292 (2017): 4–5, https://doi.org/10.29242/rli.292.1.

Failure, Risk, and the Entrepreneurial Library

Tom Wall, University Librarian, Boston College

This past spring, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg addressed the graduates from Harvard College and said that "the greatest successes come from having the freedom to fail."[1] Likewise, in a recent letter to shareholders, Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos made it a point to equate invention with failure, calling them "inseparable twins."[2] Arguably leading two of the most innovative companies in the world, both CEOs have essentially the same message: without a culture that accepts the inevitability of failure, and learns from it, innovation will remain elusive and/or nonexistent. Clearly with risk comes a degree of failure, but by playing it safe you get exactly what you would expect: mediocrity.

That the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has established an Innovation Lab acknowledges that many research libraries lack the wherewithal required to innovate, despite leadership that yearns to embrace change. Several reasons contribute to the entrenchment of library practice, most notably legacy staff overly comfortable with playing it safe and desiring order. Unfortunately for those who are risk-averse, entrepreneurial culture by its nature changes rapidly, tolerates risk and failure, and tends to have periods of disruption. It's not the image most have of libraries, but ironically libraries have been passive change agents for a long time. Even when we consider some of the best companies in the world, many of their services and innovations mirror long-time library practices: Facebook with personalization, Amazon with delivery, Google with search and discovery, Netflix with streaming content, and Apple with mobility. None of this is new to libraries, we just did not go out and form multinational, multibillion-dollar companies to provide these services. The irony, however, lies in the fact that we are now playing catch-up with the same companies that learned from our success.

Give up the white papers and three-year plans

Instead, facilitate open-ended brainstorming discussions, where the absurd to the sublime are encouraged. Be intentional about bringing people from differing backgrounds and expertise into these discussions. Establish an expectation that they are to participate. Diversity of ideas challenges the canon. Innovation cannot happen within the canon.

At no point should budget considerations or other resource restrictions be allowed into the conversation. Nothing kills the innovative spirit like the budget officer saying, "How are we going to pay for that?" This approach has its detractors however. Some feel that without parameters innovation ideas can lose context. For me, however, it's not that resource parameters are unimportant, but that the sequencing can occur much later in the process, after the compelling idea emerges.

Similarly, the positional white paper scenario leads to wordsmithing and delays and stifles movement forward. Worse yet is the three-year planning document. Innovation happens quickly and unexpectedly. Change becomes the norm and adaptability defines the process, and over time becomes normative for the culture. Three-year plans, like white papers, lead to over-editing and unnecessary critique of the writing, and the ideas themselves become subordinate. Innovation does not follow a script.

If documentation is required, try a one-pager outlining the idea and possible benefits. Make it something like an elevator talk: intelligible, concise, and compelling. As to the three-year plan and the white paper, they may work in some organizations, but by their nature they scream "safe, predictable, and ordinary." However, as adaptions are needed from well-laid plans, the door opens for innovation, so there can be a silver lining as long as the plan undergoes continuous assessment.

Planning for perfection is the enemy of progress

Instead try a project to test the plan. The project will involve risk. It will take people away from "essential" operational duties; it may (and should) challenge existing practices; make it fun and exciting. Some other guidelines for projects include instilling a sense of urgency without panic. They should be timely and show results pretty quickly. Moreover, the evaluative process should be concerned with value and scale: does the idea provide enough value to warrant becoming a program?

Some projects may require several attempts, along with some failures while leadership begins to position the organization for the project-to-program evolution. Libraries and universities tend to change slower than say, Amazon, for a variety of good reasons. Change should always be at the forefront of good leadership and strategic thinking, but recalling the adage "good is the enemy of great," the next step creates a pervasive culture of collaboration, and creativity that embraces change, with a strong tolerance for risk.

> "If ARL libraries want to awaken from their dogmatic slumbers they need to embrace risk, and the failures that come along with risk."

Recruit the best

Any organization can only be as great as its people. Recruiting for entrepreneurial librarians requires screening that assesses potential and fit. For the most part these qualities can be summed up generally in in the four Cs: collaboration, creativity, content, and change. Hire people who see that what's good for the library/institution is good for them, not the other way around. Résumé builders tend to miss that. But people who focus on the greater good tend to be born collaborators and creativity comes naturally. Change remains pervasive, so it is important to have a comfort level with that, and of course libraries are still about content.

Final thought

If ARL libraries want to awaken from their dogmatic slumbers they need to embrace risk, and the failures that come along with risk. The interesting thing about failure is that innovative processes usually spring up after setbacks. But, if we keep doing it the way we always did, the real risk is obsolescence. Courage requires that we step out of our comfort and safe zones. Resist the path of least resistance, resist the ordinary. As Bob Dylan noted, "there's no success like failure, and... failure's no success at all."[3]

Endnotes

1. "Mark Zuckerberg's Commencement Address at Harvard," *Harvard Gazette*, May 25, 2017, https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/05/mark-zuckerbergs-speech-as-written-for-harvards-class-of-2017/.

2. Jeffrey P. Bezos, letter to Amazon shareholders, [April 5, 2016], https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1018724/000119312516530910/d168744dex991.htm.

3. Bob Dylan, "Love Minus Zero/No Limit," lyrics, 1965, http://www.bobdylan.com/songs/love-minus-zero-no-limit/.

© 2017 Tom Wall

To cite this article: Tom Wall. "Failure, Risk, and the Entrepreneurial Library." *Research Library Issues*, no. 292 (2017): 6–9, https://doi.org/10.29242/rli.292.2.

Vignettes on the Value of Failure

Gerald Beasley, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian, Cornell University

Early in my career I was encouraged to spend trust funds on rare books—never large amounts, but significant in those days, and enough to allow me to attend occasional auctions. On one occasion, under the usual time pressure, I consulted a few bibliographical resources I had to hand, including the 19th-century catalog of a nearby library, and wrongly concluded that we had just acquired at auction the only publicly accessible copy in the city of one particular printed item. I proudly reported as much to the trust. However, the head of that nearby library was one of the trust's board members. He had a suspicion, checked, and found his library did have the book after all. He telephoned me to point out my mistake and to warn me he would have to report it to the trust. He was being kind but I was mortified. Thankfully the other board members forgave my blunder. I learned not to take research lightly. Take the time. Do it properly. Report it accurately.

Marwin Britto, Social Sciences Librarian, University of Saskatchewan

Early in my higher education career, I served as the head of the Education Library at a comprehensive regional university in the United States. In my library's initial needs assessment of technology use, my team met with a small group of faculty, who suggested we offer online tutorials for faculty on how best to use a variety of educational technologies. We created the tutorials in the format suggested by the group. Unfortunately, the tutorials had limited usage. It was some

time before we realized that our choice of methodology in gathering feedback—an open focus session with a group of faculty—limited the opportunity for some to express their actual needs, preferences, and learning styles. Often, it is marginalized individuals who are the least vocal and participatory in group situations, yet they too need specific support and resources. Fortunately, this early failure was only short-term. We conducted another needs assessment and employed a methodology that was more inclusive and afforded all segments of the faculty population an equal voice. The end result was a more robust and inclusive series of tutorials that were well received and frequently used.

Holly Ann Burt, Behavioral Sciences Librarian, University of Southern California

It was to be a survey of librarians in a specific service area; an environmental scan to give new insights into the field. The primary investigator was passionate and the library institutional review board (IRB) acknowledged our proposal. Then personnel changes, the IRB response and outside workloads were among the events that first derailed, then drowned our project. This failure revealed how leadership abandonment, funding cuts, IRB recommendations, personal commitments, and even journal submission requirements could bring research to a screeching halt. Now, when asked the perennial reference question: "Why has nothing been published on my research topic?", in addition to alternative search strategies, I recommend searching the grey literature of poster abstracts, clinical trial registries and databases of research projects in progress. To ferret out additional publications of completed research, I might suggest examining the research topic from various angles, from the framing of the original question to viewing components of the topic in the

context of the research cycle(s). Our failed project opened my eyes to the complexities behind published research, allowing me insight I now offer to others.

Samuel "Scott" Hall, Solution Consultant, ServiceNow, formerly IT Manager & Architect, University of California, Berkeley

I make failure safe for my team by playing the "bad idea game." We play the bad idea game when we can't seem to solve a tough problem. To play, team members take turns describing the worst solutions they can think of. Fairly quickly someone will mention a terrible idea that has some viability to it. Others will pile on to the idea, and before long we have a great solution with which to move forward. This game provides safety for teammates who are less confident in sharing, resulting in more ideas being shared. It also re-energizes our creative problem-solving process in a fun way.

Amanda Rinehart, Data Management Services Librarian, The Ohio State University

As a data management services librarian, one of my staple workshops focuses on writing a data management plan for a grant proposal. A regular criticism of this workshop is that it is not specific enough and some researchers feel that the discussion session is dominated by our medical researchers. Therefore, I decided to customize this workshop for three sub-groups: STEM and agricultural researchers, the social sciences and humanities, and biomedical researchers. This would allow

me to dive more deeply into discipline-specific data services and allow a greater breadth of voices to be heard. However, attendees did not select the workshop specific to their area. Only 44% of the biomedical workshop registrants were from that area. The best composition was the social science and humanities workshop, where 80% of attendees were from target areas. Additionally, overall registration and attendance was remarkably low for all three workshops, ranging from 5 to 11 attendees. Not only did my customized educational material not resonate for the majority of attendees, but fewer attendees meant sparse questions and awkward discussion sessions. In fact, during one workshop, an attendee noticed my search methods when answering a data security question. I explained domain searching with Google and this became the highlight of the workshop, despite not being related to research data management at all. So what went wrong? Did attendees not identify with the discipline areas? Was it too confusing to choose? Simple bad timing? There are so many variables that it is hard to know. The lesson I learned is that researchers may think they want a particular type of educational experience, but experimentation is the only way to know if they are correct. I went back to the general data management plan workshop and our most recent one had 41 attendees that engaged in lively discussion.

Lorelei Rutledge, Assistant Librarian, and Lis Pankl, Associate Librarian, The University of Utah

We were invited to teach a two-hour class on cultural competence in the classroom. We spoke to the coordinator of the event and prepared an interactive presentation aimed at new teaching assistants from the College of Education. Aware of the demographics at our institution and in the College of Education, we aimed many of our examples toward white teachers. We sent our presentation to the coordinator for the

event, who said it looked good. During the class, however, we received little participation from the students. Two weeks after, the coordinator came back to us and said that several students were offended by our presentation, feeling that it was too basic an introduction to cultural competence and that our examples about cultural competence in the classroom should have included learning points for students of color as well. We also learned that the students who attended that day were mostly experienced TAs, not new TAs, and that they had a background in critical cultural communication, not education. As a result of this experience, we are conducting research to learn more about how we can improve the library's services for students of color.

Catherine Soehner, Associate Dean for Research and User Services, The University of Utah

When I first became a new manager in a library, I was surprised to learn just how many difficult conversations I would need to have. People weren't doing their jobs to the stated expectations, or there weren't any stated expectations, or I needed to ask someone to do something I was pretty sure they didn't want to do, or other people showed up late (or didn't show up at all) to classes or desk shifts, and yet still others were consistently negative in their approach to the work in front of them. I knew I needed to have conversations with each of these individuals, but had no idea how to do that. Further, when I tried to have these conversations, they went badly, people were more upset and stormed out of my office, and behavior did not change. I was terrified. I hated conflict, so maybe I should reconsider by ability or desire to do this job. Maybe I should re-think my life choices and every decision I've ever made up to this point. Or, maybe I should ask for help. I did all of these things. However, it was finding someone who knew about having difficult conversations and who was willing to

mentor me that became the key to turning my failure around. It turns out that having difficult conversations is something I could learn and could get better at with practice. I have worked on this aspect of my performance so consistently that I finally wrote a book about it with co-author Ann Darling—*Effective Difficult Conversations: A Step-by-Step Guide*. Without complete failure at the beginning of my career as a leader, I would not have been so dedicated to improving and eventually sharing how I have effective difficult conversations.

A Quest to Survey Library and University Press Collaborations in Canada: A Case Study in Research Approach and Design

Rosarie Coughlan, Scholarly Publishing Librarian, Queen's University Library

Geoffrey Brown, Digital Scholarship Librarian, Dalhousie University

Robert Glushko, Associate Chief Librarian, Western University

Inba Kehoe, Copyright Officer, Scholarly Communication Librarian, University of Victoria

Introduction

This paper explores a failed research project to undertake an online survey of Canadian university presses. We begin by summarizing the project, we then offer four practical reflections on why our research project was abandoned and how we might have approached the project differently (given the benefit of hindsight) that might have afforded a more positive outcome. We hope that this reflective critique will provide valuable lessons to both the researchers and others, when considering effective research design methodologies and approaches to engage the proactive involvement of a cross-sectoral group of survey participants.

About the Project

In spring 2015, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) tasked its Open Access Working Group (OAWG)[1] with surveying Canadian university presses in order to gain insight into current publishing practices as well as publisher attitudes towards evolving business models in the face of a rapidly changing publishing landscape. The group sought to gather valuable data about current challenges facing the Canadian scholarly publishing industry, and future opportunities for ongoing collaboration between libraries and

university presses in Canada.

In order to conceptualize both the format and rationale for undertaking the survey, the overarching research questions to be addressed in the project, as well as the key variables defining the specific survey questions that would be posed to the sample population, the research group undertook a comprehensive literature review. This review focused on current research on monograph publishing, with a focus on financial and business models for dissemination, including case studies, theoretical models, and research articles. The project sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What alternative and/or open access publishing business models are currently being used for monograph publishing by Canadian university presses, and have any of these proven to be successful?
2. Of the publishing and funding models identified, which might Canadian university presses likely embrace to facilitate greater dissemination of published works that is both sustainable and economically sound?
3. How might university libraries and university presses work towards establishing new collaborative approaches to publishing scholarly monographs in Canada?

The working group designed the survey in the tradition of surveys undertaken by the American Association of University Presses (AAUP), specifically the Press and Library Collaboration survey (AAUP Library Relations Committee).[2] Our survey was administered to the sample population in spring 2015, with a two-month completion window. Each recipient received a personalized email invitation accompanied by a detailed outline of the provenance and rationale for the survey, information about the researchers (names, affiliations), the project objectives and intended methods of dissemination, as well as a link to a Consent Agreement form. The survey instrument was a standardized online questionnaire created using SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool. A link to participate was embedded in the invitation. This

approach has a number of advantages, including ease of distribution and analysis and the potential to receive more candid responses as respondents could complete the survey voluntarily and anonymously.

The Research "Failure"

The primary participant groups invited to complete the survey included Canadian university press directors and library press directors. The former group declined the invitation to participate in the survey for two reasons:

1. They felt that the survey invitation indicated a presumption on the part of the research group, towards an open access business model for monograph publishing in Canada, which implied a bias in any recommendations resulting from the project.
2. They expressed regret at not having the opportunity to contribute to the survey instrument and study design—suggesting a combined survey between CARL and press directors instead.

As a result, the research project was abandoned.

Reasons Why the Research Project Failed and Lessons Learned

The reasons stated by our participant group for opting out of the survey must be acknowledged and will now be examined through a highly reflective lens, and framed as a series of lessons learned. Each of the lessons are interrelated, however they will be explored separately in order to clearly articulate cause and effect, where possible, as well as practical approaches or things we would do differently a second time around.

Lesson # 1: Before you begin, understand the landscape and take a balanced approach.

The academic publishing and scholarly communications landscape,

both in Canada and internationally, is undergoing pervasive change driven by the ongoing impact of digital technology in streamlining research processes and dissemination workflows as well as evolving financial and access models.

Aligned to this, shortly prior to the distribution of the survey, the Association of Canadian University Presses / Association des Presses Universitaires Canadiennes (ACUP) released a report that acknowledged the near-term commitment of Canadian research funding agencies to making open access a condition of funding support.[3] Beyond this, taking a highly practical and analytical approach, the report clearly articulates a number of financial and other considerations envisaged by this group as a result, for example, switching to an open access business model for monographs, similar to those currently in place for journal articles. ACUP estimated that the impact of a one-year embargo prior to making a manuscript open access would "…reduce year 1 sales by 25% and years 2–5 sales by 50% [and] will have a minimum financial impact of at least 40% and as much as 50% of sales revenues."[4]

Academic libraries (often directly engaged in implementing services to enable compliance with funders' open access policies), are keenly aware of the issues associated with the "gold" open access business model that has evolved. Authors can opt to pay an article processing charge (APC) to provide open access to their article, while libraries continue to pay a subscription fee for the journal.

The survey instrument included quantitative and qualitative questions, including an invitation to provide financial information about revenues and other funding support. The survey also included questions about open access publishing and collaborations between libraries and presses. There was an opportunity for presses, only in opting to undertake an optional follow-up interview, to identify any concerns they had with an "open" or other alternative publishing model(s) and therein propose possible solutions to those concerns.

Beyond this, the wording of our survey invitation framed the study as follows:

> The [Canadian Association of Research Libraries' (CARL)](#) Open Access Working Group…is interested in investigating possible **new** [emphasis added] publishing models for Canadian University Presses and Joint University/Library Presses at Canadian academic institutions….

Words carry weight and meaning; the use of the word "new" implies that the existing or "old" publishing models are in need of review and/or replacement by an alternative. For many university presses, their existing business models have served and continue to serve them well. They may have also felt implied pressure to engage with a model that was not currently viable.

What we might do differently next time:

- In seeking to address seminal issues and ask "hard" questions, take a much more balanced approach and ask those questions of all stakeholders in a structured way in the survey.
- Avoid misplaced use of the word "new." This carelessly chosen word may have rendered the survey null and void in the minds of some of the intended participants even before they clicked on the link to participate. In this way, position the survey more neutrally.
- Timing is everything! Align the investigation and the questions posed in the survey more closely to the issues identified in the 2015 ACUP report, released immediately prior to the survey.
- Invite the association to draft and/or review the questions (see lesson 2, below), fostering an opportunity for collaboration and potentially leveraging uptake.

Lesson # 2: If you want to achieve a shared vision, you should take a collaborative /partnership approach from the outset.

One of the reasons Canadian university press directors were reluctant to participate in the survey was that they had not been involved as partners in the creation of the survey.

Building on lesson 1, a second lesson that may be drawn from this is that we could have taken a collaborative approach with our core stakeholders by designing the research study as a balanced partnership, including proportional representation from each core segment, including university presses and library presses. The original research group was made up principally of academic librarians. As a result we failed to give those who justifiably claim an overarching stake in this industry—university press directors—an equal and proportional voice in determining the tenets of any future-scape study.

Affirming this, in a recent statement in response to the Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group Final Report, ACUP's support in principle to the working group's recommendation to "establish a shared vision, principles and goals that can act as a framework for advanced, robust, sustainable, collaborative models for the widest dissemination of the Canadian scholarly record."[5] They also state that:

> a move towards increased openness for monograph publishing requires a full recognition of the status of publishers as necessary scholarly infrastructure fulfilling a public mandate, which will require substantive, continuing investment to support high quality publishing.[6]

What we might do differently next time:

- Develop the research project as a thoroughly joint and proportionally representative undertaking between academic libraries and university presses.

Lesson # 3: Communicate your study objectives clearly to your intended survey participants.

The research group defined the following project objectives:

1. Gather practical feedback from university presses on current publishing models, processes, and practices.
2. Learn more about the types of "open access" publishing models currently available to Canadian authors via both university presses as well as joint university press and library collaborations.
3. Establish the most effective business models and practices that could potentially be successfully implemented by other Canadian presses and/or universities, supporting a comprehensive and economically **viable transition to open access publishing in Canada** [emphasis added].
4. Produce a set of practical and workable recommendations towards the development of new and ongoing collaboration between libraries and university presses supporting viable economic models, shared goals and practices for the effective dissemination of knowledge and scholarship in a changing and increasingly open scholarly ecosystem.

These objectives were embedded in the survey invite as a link labeled "About the Study" and located near the bottom of the body of the email text, which included important, but perhaps administrative details such as the names of the researchers and information about anonymity and confidentiality.

What we might do differently next time:

*   Re-frame the objectives of the study in a way that enables us to learn about existing models, processes, and practices (objective 1 and 2) and establish their relative effectiveness to inform recommendations going forward (objectives 3 and 4) while not specifically seeking recourse towards a "viable transition to open

access publishing in Canada." This misplaced emphasis towards "open" will be explored further in lesson 4, below.

- Details matter: communicate the objectives to the participant group in a much more prominent way, perhaps in the body of the email invitation text rather than via an embedded link located at the bottom of the invitation.

Lesson # 4: Don't make assumptions.

Operating under the auspices of the publicly funded university, academic libraries and librarians are directly accountable to institutional goals to maximize research dissemination and reach of outputs funded by the public purse. The principle of "openness" in the delivery of and access to the research literature and outputs, in all their forms, where possible, remains intrinsic to the mission of academic libraries. However, the notion of open-ness has been supplanted by "open access," which, as an evolving model of publishing, has become increasingly synonymous with the APC business model (see above). This model may be unviable and unsustainable both for libraries (who continue to pay for journals on behalf of authors) and for many smaller publishers (who feel their revenue streams have become increasingly vulnerable to market forces, and competition from a small number of very large commercial publishers). Both the survey invitation and the study objectives reference the term "open access."

> **While the original research project "failed," it offers invaluable lessons, both for the project group and others considering effective research design methodologies...**

What we might do differently next time:

- Avoid misplaced assumptions towards "open-ness," often synonymous with "open access" so as to remove any possible bias towards a particular business model and align the survey questions to explore all potential models as a way to legitimately

identify opportunities for the future.

- While this geographically dispersed research group invested significant hours collaboratively drafting the mechanics of the study, such as the literature review and the survey questions, we could have paid closer attention to the nuances of capturing the perspectives of a diverse and cross-sectoral group of stakeholders in a transparent and objective manner.

Conclusion

While the original research project "failed," it offers invaluable lessons, both for the project group and others considering effective research design methodologies, including the importance of clear communication and an unbiased approach.

Perhaps more critically, this experience highlights the importance of partnerships and/or effective engagement and outreach—depending on the project objectives and the nature (demographics, perspectives, etc.) of the participant group(s)—as a means to ensure the proactive involvement of all players when designing survey research. While this more collaborative approach to the project goals, methodology, and design may have extended the original scope and timeline for the project, doing so would have enabled all stakeholders to meaningfully forge a shared vision and values in building resources and infrastructure to support publishing initiatives.

To this end, in July 2016 CARL convened a multi-stakeholder Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group (CSPWG)[7] with representatives from university presses, research libraries, publishers, education and industry groups, a federal funding agency, and several researchers. The group was charged with developing a framework for "robust, sustainable, collaborative models" for dissemination of research outputs and released its final report in July 2017.

Further Reading

Andres, Lesley. *Designing & Doing Survey Research*. London: SAGE Publications, 2012. doi: 10.4135/9781526402202.

Whitehead, Martha, and Brian Owen. *Canadian Universities and Sustainable Publishing (CUSP): A White Paper*. Canadian Association of Research Libraries. February 22, 2016. http://www.carl-abrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Can_Univ_Sustainable_Publishing_2016.pdf.

Endnotes

1. The CARL Open Access Working Group members were: K. Jane Burpee, associate librarian, research enterprise and scholarly communication, University of Guelph; Bobby Glushko, scholarly communications and copyright librarian, University of Toronto; Inba Kehoe, copyright and scholarly communication librarian, University of Victoria; Pierre Lasou, spécialiste en ressources documentaires, Université Laval; Louise McGillis, associate university librarian, Grenfell and Harlow Campuses, Memorial University; Pat Moore, system librarian–digital projects and technologies, Carleton University; Diane Sauvé, directrice, soutien à la réussite, à la recherche, et à l'enseignement, Université de Montréal; Michael Shires, collection development and liaison librarian, Dr. John Archer Library, University of Regina; Ann Smith, university librarian (acting), Vaughan Memorial Library, Acadia University; Victoria Volkanova, responsable du dossier du libre accès à la recherche, Université de Moncton; and Elizabeth Yates, liaison/scholarly communication librarian, James A. Gibson Library, Brock University.

2. The AAUP conducted two recent surveys directly related to this project: *Press and Library Collaboration Survey: Final Report*, Association of American University Presses, February 13, 2013, http://www.aaupnet.org/resources/for-members/data-collection-and-analysis/library-press-collaboration-survey; and *Sustaining Scholarly Publishing: New Business Models for University Presses: A Report of*

the AAUP Task Force on Economic Models for Scholarly Publishing, Association of American University Presses, March 2011, http://www.aaupnet.org/policy-areas/future-of-scholarly-communications/task-force-on-economic-models-report.

3. *Monograph Publishing in an Open Access Context*, Association of Canadian University Presses, January 2014, http://www.acup.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ACUP-report-open-access.pdf.

4. *Monograph Publishing in an Open Access Context*, 23.

5. "ACUP / APUC Statement in Response to the Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group Final Report," Association of Canadian University Presses, July 4, 2017, http://www.acup.ca/2017/07/04/acup-apuc-statement-in-response-to-the-canadian-scholarly-publishing-working-group-final-report/.

6. Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group, *Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group: Final Report*, July 2017, 2, at http://www.carl-abrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CSPWG_final_report_EN.pdf.

7. *Canadian Scholarly Publishing Working Group: Final Report*.

Failure Is an Orphan: Reflecting on the Fall of the University of Michigan Orphan Works Project

Robert Glushko, Associate Chief Librarian, Western University

Introduction

On May 16, 2011, the University of Michigan (U-M) announced that the U-M Library's Copyright Office was "launching the first serious effort to identify orphan works among the in-copyright holdings of the HathiTrust Digital Library."[1] HathiTrust, a partnership of libraries and major research institutions, has long worked to hold, preserve, and make available digital content to contribute to the common good. In conversation with this mission, the Orphan Works Project built on the earlier research of then executive director of HathiTrust John Wilkin. In his paper, "Bibliographic Indeterminacy and the Scale of Problems and Opportunities of 'Rights' in Digital Collection Building,"[2] Wilkin first identified the potential of the orphan works issue using, in part, data generated by the Copyright Review Management System (CRMS) grant project managed by the U-M Library and funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services.

The CRMS grant, which ran from 2008 to 2011, sought to reliably determine the copyright status of works published in the United States between 1923 and 1963. By determining whether a work complied with historical aspects of US copyright law, the CRMS project identified nearly 87,000 volumes that were previously unknown in any meaningful sense to be in the public domain.[3] Building upon the work of this previous grant, the Orphan Works Project sought to identify and publicly surface books that were determined to lack identifiable rights holders after being subjected to an investigation. The project was initially met with a good deal of optimism and there was significant buy-in from the U-M Library, the university, and the academic community at large.

On September 13, 2011, the Authors Guild, joined by several international partners and eight individual authors filed a lawsuit claiming that the Orphan Works Project was "an upsetting and outrageous attempt to dismiss authors' rights," and going on to say "[t]hese aren't orphaned books, they're abducted books."[4] The lawsuit arose after a series of revelations by the Authors Guild that several books on "Orphan Row" had identifiable, authors, publishers, or estates.[5] Shortly after, the University of Michigan suspended the Orphan Works Project, "pledg[ing] to re-examine its procedures and create a 'more robust, transparent, and fully documented process' and continue the project."[6]

> **This essay is an attempt for me to make sense of what happened, to see my role in what transpired, and to provide potential lessons for other librarians who desire a little audacity for themselves.**

What happened in the five months between the inception of this bold, ambitious, even audacious, project and its untimely end? As a staff member and contributor to the Orphan Works Project I have done a good deal of thinking on the subject. During the time of the project I was a member of the University of Michigan Library Copyright Office, working as a relatively newly minted copyright librarian. I was one of several staff members responsible for the idea, one of many staff members responsible for the design and implementation, and one of many staff members ultimately responsible for the failure of the project. This essay is an attempt for me to make sense of what happened, to see my role in what transpired, and to provide potential lessons for other librarians who desire a little audacity for themselves.

Idea, Inception, Execution

At the core, the Orphan Works Project (OWP) was a big and bold idea that grew from a very reasonable set of assumptions. The data derived from the CRMS project seemed to suggest that a good number of works in the HathiTrust Digital Library were orphaned: of the

170,174 volumes reviewed during the granting period, approximately 87,000 of them either had not complied with copyright formalities or had not renewed their registration with the US Copyright Office, something which was required during the period of time the grant was investigating.[7] Logic would seem to suggest that some proportion of authors who did comply with the requirements would no longer be extant or available, since such a high rate of attrition exists in the first place. That is, if nearly half of rights holders chose not to or neglected to exercise a simple renewal of their rights during the first 50 or so years of their term, a significant portion of those rights holders would no longer have any material investment in the remaining works.

Furthermore, the orphan works issue had already attained national salience, with the United States Register of Copyrights issuing a report in January 2006, which concluded, among other things, that "the orphan works problem is real" and that "the orphan works problem is elusive to quantify and describe comprehensively."[8] There had been some attempts to address the issue, with the Orphan Works Act of 2006[9] and the more robust Shawn Bentley Orphan Works Act of 2008,[10] which sought to provide a regime where reasonable uses of possible orphan works would be allowed under the US Copyright Act. However, due to the complexity of the issue, the lack of evidence on the actual scope of the problem, and the tangled vested interests of influential stakeholders, these efforts ultimately went nowhere.

So, faced with a real and elusive problem to tackle, the University of Michigan Copyright Office got to work, drafting memos for discussion in the fall of 2010, engaging senior library leadership, the office of the general counsel, and senior university leadership. This consultation was thorough and long. It involved a great deal of documentation, refinement, and input from the necessary stakeholders. It was this extensive communication and consultation that enabled the project to get off the ground, and, as discussed below, it was the discontinuation of this communication that helped contribute to the collapse of the project.

From the outset, the idea behind the OWP was to create a process that was accurate and scalable, and which would reduce the uncertainty about a work's orphan status to a sufficiently reasonable degree as to allow us to announce the work as a potential orphan. Core to this process was the idea that multiple individuals would review every book, checking first to see if it was in print and/or for sale, and then checking various sites to see if any contact information on the author, publisher, or estate could be located. Following documented workflows, the investigators would reasonably exhaust the avenues available to them, searching to what we believed was a sufficiently diligent point such that a reasonable user might feel comfortable using the work without permission from a rights holder. After achieving this level of confidence, the investigator reports were checked against each other via automation, and the results were used to generate a list of potential orphan works. This list would be made public with the idea that presumptive rights holders could identify books that were mischaracterized as orphans by the process. Even though the process was ostensibly designed to respond to errors in the investigation process, it was ultimately the scope of some of these mischaracterizations that led to the end of the OWP.

Failure to Communicate

The OWP was a large and complicated endeavor, involving many library staff at many levels of the organization. It is beyond the scope of this essay to engage with the mechanics of how things ended up going awry, and while there were many points of failure in the process I only feel competent to focus upon my own.

For my part, I never fully expressed the agency I needed to express to successfully complete my role. I was both over- and under-responsible for certain decisions. I allowed my belief in the established process to override issues I saw in the implementation of the process. For example, it became clear to me that different on-the-ground investigators had varying levels of commitment to and expertise in

tracking down possible rights holders. As someone responsible for the day-to-day supervision of these workers I did insufficient work to hold them accountable to the process and to the documentation. Furthermore, and this is a lesson I have learned well and deeply, I was too invested in my personal relationships with the people with and for whom I was working. My desire for a collegial and supportive working environment, both with those who were accountable to me and to whom I was accountable, overlapped my judgement and critical insight about how the project was starting to come apart.

Fundamentally I believe that the broader failure of the OWP was a failure of communication. The work of the OWP was undertaken by library staff ranging from casual graduate students, who did the actual on-the-ground research, to the dean of libraries, who represented the OWP on the national and international stage, in addition to several layers of management and accountability between them. When the normal and necessary adjustments to the workflow and administration of a complicated process occurred, there weren't formal and clear mechanisms to communicate those changes. All staff involved in the project were hard working, diligent, and well intentioned, but as pieces, processes, and priorities shifted, cracks began to open in the process, which became increasingly attenuated from the original planning. When the decision was made to go ahead with the process and make public the first batch of orphan works candidates, this drift became apparent. Conversations that needed to happen did not happen. Processes that needed to be evaluated at various points in the accountability chain were not evaluated. Brakes were not put on elements of the project that had become increasingly out of control. And when the lawsuit was filed and the initial shock hit the project, there weren't sufficient communication channels between the staff on the ground and the broader leadership who were responsible for the decision to halt the project.

The failure of communication was not limited to internal staff and stakeholders. In retrospect it seems obvious that we should have

engaged more deeply with groups like the Authors Guild and other potential interests. While we were to some degree responding to the absolute inability of previous attempts to reach a consensus on process, a lack of involvement with possible rights holders made nearly certain that we would come into conflict at some point. Additionally, we did not adequately communicate to external observers, the media, and our community at large that we expected, even intended, to make mistakes. The entire purpose of the waiting period between identifying a prospective orphan and making said orphan available was to identify areas where we made mistakes. While the scope of some of our mistakes was fairly significant, the process was operating as designed. Finally, and this may seem to be a minor point but it is a lesson well learned by me, "optics" matter. I can only assume that if we had named this project the Rights Holder Identification project we may have met with different attitudes from external stakeholders.

Snatching Victory from Failure's Grasp

The details of the lawsuit that brought the OWP to a premature end are readily available and have been commented on extensively elsewhere. That said, while certainly not welcome, the eventual lawsuit was never really unexpected by the university. Engaging in the creation of HathiTrust alone was a high-risk activity; taking the further step of the OWP, particularly without significant rights holder buy-in, was so bold as to almost guarantee a legal response. While the time and initial facts of the lawsuit might not have been the ones we would have chosen for ourselves, we were always prepared for the eventuality.

This strategy ended up proving effective in the long run. While the OWP has remained in stasis, the underlying issue—the legality of the digitizing of library books done by Google and the subsequent hosting and making available of those copies by HathiTrust—has been ruled in several venues to be a fair use, culminating with the Second Court of Appeals whose ruling is summarized below:

On June 10, 2014, the Second Circuit ruled in favor of HathiTrust on most issues. The Court's opinion was a major victory for fair use. The Court upheld HathiTrust's right to maintain a full-text database to search for books, stating that "the creation of a full-text searchable database is a quintessentially transformative use." The Court also approved, as fair use, HathiTrust's service to make text available in formats accessible to print-disabled people. Finally, the Court remanded the case to the district court regarding the long-term preservation of books.[11]

While the missteps of the OWP provoked the initial suit, the subsequent litigation revealed the soundness of the underlying assumptions. We believed that what we were doing was fair, reasonable, and responsible in theory. While practice slipped, the foundation was always strong.

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

The OWP was one of the most important projects I undertook in the early stages of my career. It was bold, ambitious, and it failed spectacularly and publicly. This is far from my only professional failure, but it is, to the best of my knowledge, the only one which may have near-permanently ended any possibility for work in the area. In his post, "HathiTrust Single-Handedly Sinks Orphan Works Reform," noted legal scholar James Grimmelmann laid out very persuasively that our process had failed, stating that "once is a mistake, twice is bad luck, and three times is a broken process."[12] He was right, but the fact that this one project went bad wasn't the end of the world, or much less crucially, my career. I, and every other member of the OWP team, have gone on to do new and interesting work, some of which we have failed at, some

> **Failure, even truly spectacular failure, is just that. It's a failure, you lick your wounds, you dust yourself off, you look back at what you could have done differently, and you get back to work.**

of which we have succeeded at. Beyond the more particular lessons of engaging stakeholders and developing and preserving internal lines of communication and reporting, the broader lesson I hope that we as a community take is that failure, even truly spectacular failure, is just that. It's a failure, you lick your wounds, you dust yourself off, you look back at what you could have done differently, and you get back to work.

Special thanks to Jennifer Robinson, associate chief librarian at Western University, for her keen insights and framing of the issues in this essay.

Endnotes

1. Greg Grossmeier, "MLibrary Launches Project to Identify Orphan Works," University of Michigan Library news release, May 16, 2011, https://www.publishing.umich.edu/2011/05/16/orphan-works/.

2. John P. Wilkin, "Bibliographic Indeterminacy and the Scale of Problems and Opportunities of 'Rights' in Digital Collection Building," *Ruminations* (web series), Council on Library and Information Resources, February 2011, https://www.clir.org/pubs/ruminations/01wilkin/wilkin.html.

3. "Copyright Review Management System - IMLS National Leadership Grant," University of Michigan Library, last modified May 10, 2016, http://wayback.archive-it.org/5871/20171110030439/https:/www.lib.umich.edu/copyright-review-management-system-imls-national-leadership-grant.

4. Authors Guild, "Authors Guild, Australian Society of Authors, Quebec Writers Union Sue Five US Universities," news release, September 12, 2011, https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/authors-guild-australian-society-of-authors-quebec-writers-union-sue-five-u-s-universities-2/.

5. Authors Guild, "Orphan Row Update: Another Living Author, Two Books in Print, Literary Estates Held by Charities, Etc.," news release, September 15, 2011, https://www.authorsguild.org/

industry-advocacy/orphan-row-update-another-living-author-two-books-in-print-literary-estates-held-by-charities-etc/.

6. Authors Guild, "University of Michigan Suspends HathiTrust Orphan Works Project," news release, September 16, 2011, https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/university-of-michigan-suspends-hathitrust-orphan-works-project-claims-proposed-uses-of-orphan-works-are-lawful-and-promises-a-reboot/.

7. "Copyright Review Management System - IMLS National Leadership Grant," University of Michigan Library.

8. United States Copyright Office, *Report on Orphan Works: A Report of the Register of Copyrights* (Washington, DC: US Copyright Office, January 2006), https://www.copyright.gov/orphan/orphan-report-full.pdf.

9. Orphan Works Act of 2006, H.R. 5439, 109th Cong. (2006), https://www.congress.gov/bill/109th-congress/house-bill/05439.

10. Shawn Bentley Orphan Works Act of 2008, S. 2913, 110th Cong. (2008), https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/senate-bill/2913.

11. Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Authors Guild v. HathiTrust," accessed November 30, 2017, https://www.eff.org/cases/authors-guild-v-hathitrust.

12. James Grimmelmann, "HathiTrust Single-Handedly Sinks Orphan Works Reform," *The Laboratorium* (blog), September 15, 2011, http://laboratorium.net/archive/2011/09/15/hathitrust_single-handedly_sinks_orphan_works_refo.

creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/.

Failure or Perseverance? A Case Study of a Legislative Initiative by the Utah Academic Library Consortium

Peter L. Kraus, Associate Librarian, J. Willard Marriott Library, The University of Utah, and Legislative Advisor, Utah Academic Library Consortium

Introduction

In 2015, I was asked to help organize a legislative initiative for the Utah Academic Library Consortium (UALC). UALC was established in 1971 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that consists of all public and private academic libraries in accredited institutions of higher education in the state of Utah. Although the two private institutional members of UALC do not receive public money for database purchases, they do qualify for price breaks on consortium purchases. The UALC board is composed of the deans and directors of each of these institutions. As the consortium notes, "UALC members work together to enhance resources provided to Utah's higher education communities."[1]

The proposed initiative was, and still is, to increase the budget allocation that all public colleges and universities in UALC receive from the state of Utah. The state legislature finalizes the budget appropriations during a six-week legislative session in late winter each year. I was asked to participate and take the lead to plan this initiative because of my involvement in local politics over the last decade. In 2014, I ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the Utah State House and I am familiar with the political players and political culture of the state.

In the past, legislative initiatives by UALC were mostly informal public relations campaigns. During the late 1990s and up to the recession of 2008, these initiatives were moderately successful in educating state lawmakers as to the importance of purchasing electronic resources for academic libraries via a consortium.

Mirroring national trends,[2] in the recent past Utah public and academic libraries have not been at the forefront of activism on either federal or state legislation related to libraries. When there have been movements to educate elected officials at the state and federal level, it has often been too little, too late. Although activism is often discussed within the Utah Library Association, it is rarely pursued, and the results of these few efforts of library advocacy have been negligible, at best.

> **Although activism is often discussed within the Utah Library Association, it is rarely pursued, and the results of these few efforts of library advocacy have been negligible, at best.**

2016 and 2017

Beginning with the 2016 session of the Utah Legislature and continuing with the 2017 session, UALC leadership pursued an active effort to advocate for funding increases. In 2016, the first initiative for a funding increase received positive feedback from the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee of the Utah Legislature, but the request failed to pass the Executive Appropriations Committee in the legislature. The UALC appropriations request conflicted with other higher education funding requests from individual state colleges and universities. We learned from this experience that academic library deans and directors must be more politically savvy with their university administrations as well as their own representatives in the state legislature.

Immediately after the 2016 legislative session ended, UALC devised a plan with input from the government relations staffs at the consortium's public member institutions. In the fall of 2016, a majority of the library deans and directors met with their respective elected state representatives to discuss the UALC funding initiatives concentrating on the following issues:

- A request for an additional $1.5 million to fund consortium

database purchases for Utah's academic libraries

- Education of elected officials that STEM journals increase in cost 7–9% annually; the cost of maintaining the current collection of UALC journals is currently increasing by $55,000 a year.
- Reminders that UALC's last budget increase was in 2008, before the onset of the Great Recession, and the consortium sustained budget reductions in 2010, 2011, and 2012. Without an increase in funding in 2016, there would be a reduction in subscriptions that would affect the smaller institutions in rural areas the most.

In addition, the leadership of UALC and its legislative advisor met with representatives of the Governor's Budget Office to advocate for an increase in the governor's budget, although the governor's budget is advisory in nature and mostly symbolic. It is the legislature that can add and omit items from the governor's budget and ultimately approves the final state budget, which is then signed or vetoed by the governor. In 2016, the appropriation increases sought by UALC did not make the governor's budget because revenue forecasts predicted that there would be little new money in the state budget; these forecasts would later prove wrong.

The 2016 election brought forth new membership in the Utah Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, as well as new leadership within the Utah Legislature. The new committee membership included representatives who were employed at higher education institutions in Utah, including an adjunct instructor of political science, a tenured associate professor of sociology, a retired university president, and a senior development officer. At no point in the conversation for a funding increase for UALC did library deans and directors ever assume that pursuing a funding increase for UALC would be easier because of the new composition of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Rather the new makeup of the committee was looked upon as an opportunity to work with elected officials who understood firsthand the challenges libraries face when it comes to funding in higher education.

Beginning in the fall of 2016 and immediately up to the commencement of the 2017 Utah Legislature, UALC leadership held meetings with the provosts at various member institutions. The primary purpose of these meetings was to assure college and university administrators that the UALC did not mean to undermine any direct asks to the legislature by individual institutions.

As the 2017 session of the Utah Legislature began, hopes were high for a budget increase for libraries, because a majority of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee members who agreed to meet with the UALC representatives supported the increase. State revenue estimates posted midway through the legislative session forecasted an increase in additional revenue brought in by sales tax. In the end, however, for the second year in a row, the request was forwarded to the Executive Appropriations Committee only to be set aside to fund athletic scholarships at small colleges and universities in the state.

> **The question now stands, Does this count as failure?... the bigger picture of this legislative initiative is that more elected representatives with an interest in higher education are aware of the critical funding issues that UALC faces.**

Conclusion

The question now stands, Does this count as failure? Although one of the definitions of the term "failure" in the Oxford English Dictionary is, "The fact of failing to effect one's purpose; want of success; an instance of this,"[3] the bigger picture of this legislative initiative is that more elected representatives with an interest in higher education are aware of the critical funding issues that UALC faces.

A majority of the academic library deans and directors have been advocating for increases in the UALC budget with their respective presidents and provosts in 2017. Other members of the leadership of UALC will meet with representatives of the Governor's Budget Office. This includes two new library deans and directors who began

their respective posts during the summer of 2017. At the same time, the support of industry groups in the state of Utah who advocate for increases in STEM education funding has been achieved and meetings with members of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and select members of the Executive Appropriations Committee have been held—and there is now commitment to fund UALC. The consortium is optimistic that the consistency of the message for increased funding will bring success in the 2018 legislative session.

Endnotes

1. Utah Academic Library Consortium (UALC), "About UALC," accessed September 6, 2017, https://ualc.net/about/.

2. John N. Berry III, "Fix Library Advocacy," *Library Journal* 137, no. 14 (September 1, 2012): 8.

3. *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online*, s.v. "failure (n.)," accessed July 15, 2017, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/67663.

© 2017 Peter L. Kraus

This Is a Story about a Collections Budget

Hannah Sommers, Associate University Librarian, The George Washington University

Part I

Never mind that our senior leadership team spent months puzzling through how to live with a leaner operating budget. We scrutinized the organization from every angle, challenging ourselves to run difficult scenarios, to disagree, and then to commit to a plan. There were trying moments, but together we resolved to lead from a place of courage and optimism. The fiscal climate challenged us to be as imaginative as possible even though reductions were unavoidable.

> **One might assume this is a story of success, a happy story. It's not. Or at least it wasn't in the beginning.**

But this is not a story about laying people off. This is a story about one piece of the overall budget pie. A portion that was exempted from cuts: a special, protected slice. Given that, one might assume this is a story of success, a happy story. It's not.

Or at least it wasn't in the beginning.

This is a story about a collections budget.

Part II

At first the exemption from cuts to collections brought measured relief. It was good to know that the message about runaway inflation had been understood by university administration. We planned renewals spending using cost-per-use metrics and other data. In the interest of stronger fiscal stewardship we worked hard to integrate decisions about areas of library collections that had often been treated separately. Breaking down communication silos was a goal, so we experimented with several modes

of teamwork. We worked toward this and other aims with diligence early in the budget cycle. This year, we knew we had to spend every penny in every line.

In the past, endowed funds allocated to support the collection had routinely rolled over from year to year. We identified this as something to change in the interest of good fiscal stewardship and accountability to our donors. We were ready to effect change although we were aware, generally, of previous challenges exhausting the full budgeted allocation. This knowledge might have cast a longer shadow than it did. Perhaps we put too much stock in the power of our good intention.

As an associate university librarian in my first months at the university, I sought every opportunity to communicate about the need to meet the spending deadline. The message included these ideas: "In the past, budgeting and spending everything wasn't a high priority, but now it is. Our budget is a reflection of our priorities and need. If we don't exhaust our allocation, it might seem that our collection has everything necessary, but we know that's far from true."

Our collections strategist and research services directors did the same. We heard the question, "Why?" often. "Even endowment payouts?" librarians asked. "Yes. It's a new day," we replied. "Our budget climate creates a different moment: It's imperative that we spend our drawdown. Not to do so reflects a lack of need. These funds are protected from cuts. We explained the inflation situation and we were heard. We succeeded! Now we get to work."

Once the spending plan was in place, I and other leaders turned our attentions to the burning issues—thinking and rethinking how we would serve the needs of the university with an overall reduced compensation and operations budget.

And so, in the end, when the rate of spending didn't keep pace with the plan, and when invoicing lagged in the final month of the fiscal year, it

was all the more painful to see that we were not going to exhaust the full allocation. On a scale of one to ten, it was tempting to feel like zero.

But how had we failed exactly? It wasn't a clear picture, because as it turns out, the same thing had happened the year before. And the year before that. It might have been tempting to chalk it up to a retirement in the finance office. But we knew that wasn't the truth. The truth was much more complicated.

> **But how had we failed exactly? It wasn't a clear picture, because as it turns out, the same thing had happened the year before. And the year before that.**

We could see that good intention and force of message do not clear invoices on their own. They don't move licenses through an approval process. They definitely don't resolve bugs in the integrated library system or create visibility between that system and the enterprise finance system. We were going to have to do some real work to understand why our plan to spend everything did not come to fruition. What happened next, for us, was game-changing.

Part III

At this point in a case study, a reader might pause, reflect, and suggest a course of action. So I'll ask, if this were your budget, what would you do? Would you "recall" unspent allocations from individuals at a designated deadline? Would you take more of the process into your own hands? Cross your fingers and hope it all didn't happen again? Would you delegate to a few smart people, frame some goals together, and then take a step back? How would you build confidence that things could be different?

We knew that success in the coming year would require doing something no one could remember doing before—spending all of our allocated funding within the fiscal year. We had some hypotheses about why this wasn't easy, and what was holding us back, but those hunches

needed to be tested. To do this, our collections strategist proposed the formation of five teams to test and iteratively develop complementary facets of a solution.[1] The mantra we came up with was inspired by the simplicity of Michael Pollan's guidance presented in *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2008). Pollan opens with the line: "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants." Our framing of our goals was less elegant, but hit the essentials: **Spend all the money, on resources of highest value, on schedule, as a team.**

The last part is where we started on our path to do better than before.

Working collaboratively, the directors in our Research and User Services department and our collections strategist identified five individuals to lead the teams and develop project charters. The leaders surveyed librarians with collection development responsibilities and (this turned out to be key) other librarians and staff to solicit interest in the teamwork, and to identify places where people without technical or subject matter expertise could nonetheless be assets to teams. The teams ranged in size from three members (Serials Acquisition Workflow) to six (Negotiation). Additional teams formed to focus on Serials Budget Planning, Communication & Data Visualization, and forecasting Demand-Driven Acquisition.

Because we desired to be responsive to emerging information in the course of moving toward our goal, our project management approach reflected "agile" principles. These included values of showing work in progress regularly to the relevant stakeholders and incorporating that feedback into forthcoming stages of the work. We agreed that we would try things that would be experimental and would "feel weird" at first. We agreed we might fail here and there along the way. And we agreed that none of those feelings or small failures would get in the way of our meeting our goal. We would be honest about what we learned and use that knowledge to be better stewards of university resources. We agreed we would think of ourselves foremost as university trustees.[2]

So, after an afternoon of training on the agile project approach—creating a workplan and roles of project leads, stakeholders, and team members; modeling formation of team agreements; and some practice with the Trello team-productivity app as a tool to capture it all—we were off.[3]

Each team developed its own character and its own cadence. Each delivered increments of work that could be reviewed and shared among the teams. Very quickly these small pieces of work began to provide us with insight into why the work of collections had proven so challenging.

There were unexpected twists and turns. Each team needed data—cleaner data than we had at first. The teams realized they needed many of the same data elements, and they discovered this fairly early in the process. Although data scrubbing was time-consuming, there was a larger group available to support the effort than otherwise would have been the case inside of siloed functional areas. Crucially, the Communication & Data Visualization team reprioritized their work to jump in, reduce duplicative efforts, and help prepare important data.

Not everything about our effort to improve collection development outcomes by working in teams was easy. Some teams clicked immediately, but others needed more time to hit their stride. We also surfaced some uncomfortable truths that we can now do the difficult work of confronting. The difference is that today we hold those truths in common, across the boundaries of departmental function. We are working to become less conflict avoidant, to share feedback more openly and directly, and to take collective ownership of all the work we do. In that work, there can be no "us" or "them."

Did it work?

I eyed the spending burndown report nervously as we moved into the last quarter. I mentioned to our finance director that the remainder

left to be spent seemed higher than I was expecting. She laughed, "I've been moving things around to make sure we have enough to cover what's in the pipeline. We're good!"

It took a little while to sink in, but eventually it did. We had done it. The teams had focused effort on the right things and it made the difference.

Part IV

We staged two reflection sessions for all team members.[4] The first, at the midpoint, was a chance to affirm what was working in the approach and to identify ways to modify the process. The second, at the end, provided a moment to identify which lessons we would incorporate into future work, and to celebrate both meeting our goals and the adventure of working differently.

> **Given the right structure and support, we can solve exceptionally difficult challenges when we work together across boundaries.**

At the second reflection, teams sat together at round tables. Individual members wrote timed responses to three questions in a round-robin fashion meant to elicit deeper insight into the lessons learned about the teamwork itself. The three writing prompts were:

- What did I learn about being a team member?
- What did I learn about team leadership?
- How will I apply what I learned to future work?

The comments left me with hope for the future of libraries. The exercise was a safe space to reflect on the problem-solving process and the teamwork. The remarks were nuanced and insightful. The comments suggested that, given the right structure and support, we can solve exceptionally difficult challenges when we work together across boundaries. The obvious boundaries we bridged included departmental

affiliation and expertise. But other boundaries were less obvious and no less important—leadership style, orientation toward change, tolerances for ambiguity and risk.

We may not know what major challenge we'll be tackling next. What we do know is we can do hard things when we work together, and when we recognize that leadership lives throughout our organization, not only in certain boxes on the organizational chart. In the words of my colleagues:

> [Leadership is] a shared responsibility. We all help lead from different places.

> Leadership is not one thing. Good leaders must constantly adapt.

We worked hard to solve a problem, and we changed ourselves for the better. So maybe this isn't a story about a collections budget. Maybe it's a story about a group of people who decided the story could have a different ending and led the way there.

The author wishes to recognize team leads David Killian, Deborah Bezanson, Dolsy Smith, Cathy Zeljak, and Amanda Hanoosh Steinberg for their efforts overall, and specifically their willingness to try on the role of "product owner."

Endnotes

1. The collections leadership recognized that working differently would be part of our overall objective and would take time. We cultivated staff willingness to re-prioritize the work of collections in order to create capacity to solve this fiscal stewardship challenge. Collections strategist Dolsy Smith designed the overall approach. Peter Cohn, director of research services, gave direction to the process of prioritizing and coordinating decision-making around a "wish list." The wish list process was a companion to the work described here

and is deserving of its own paper covering the development of a new decision-making structure.

2. Credit to Dolsy Smith for developing talking points around this idea.

3. Matt Mihalik, director of scholarly technology & library IT, facilitated a retrospective to help identify desired process changes, and developed the initial training for the teams. Matt is a certified scrum master (CSM), a facilitator who ensures that the agile project team has the knowledge and tools they need to complete a project successfully.

4. Morgan Stoddard (CSM) facilitated the first retrospective, and was joined by Bill Gillis for the second. Both are directors of research and user services.

© 2017 Hannah Sommers

Research Library Issues

Research Library Issues (*RLI*) focuses on current and emerging topics that are strategically important to research libraries. The articles explore issues, share information, pose critical questions, and provide examples. Ideas for articles are welcomed. Please send ideas to Sue Baughman, ARL deputy executive director, sue@arl.org.

Current and back issues are available on the ARL Digital Publications website, publications.arl.org/rli. The website is also where you may sign up for alerts to new releases of *Research Library Issues*.