



SPEC Kit 299

Scholarly Communication Education Initiatives

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SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The survey was distributed to the 123 ARL member libraries in May 2007. Respondents were asked to provide information about the nature of library-initiated education activities about scholarly communication (SC) issues that had taken place in their institutions in the past three years or that were expected to take place soon. Seventy-three libraries (59%) responded to the survey. Of those, 55 (75%) indicated that the library has engaged in educational activities on scholarly communication (SC) issues; 13 (18%) have not but indicated that planning is underway. Only three libraries indicated that they had not engaged in this activity; another two responded that this is the responsibility of another, non-library unit of the institution.

Leadership of SC Education Initiatives

The majority of respondents indicated that the leadership for these education initiatives comes from within the library. Only 11 (17%) indicated that a group outside of the library plays a leadership role. In 25 cases (39%), leadership is shared by some combination of library SC committee, SC librarian, other library staff member, and outside group or is otherwise distributed across the organization. In most of the remaining cases there is a single leader. Twenty-one institutions reported that this is a library committee, eight that it is a chief SC librarian, three another library staff member, and two a committee outside the library.

Chief Scholarly Communication Librarian

Twenty-one respondents (32%) identified a “Chief SC Librarian” who has primary responsibility for education initiatives. About half of these are at the Assistant/Associate Librarian level. Only three of these librarians (14%) devote 100% of their time to SC initiatives. Most of the chief SC librarians have split appointments and all but a few devote less than 30% of their time to this work. Judging from their titles, they frequently also have responsibility for collections. A few have information resources, technical services, or publishing in their title. In two cases, they are a science librarian, probably due to the intense interest that science librarians have in the issue of the escalating costs of serials.

Another Library Staff Member

It was anticipated that many institutions would not have a chief SC librarian yet would have another librarian who was shouldering the primary SC responsibility. Eighteen respondents (28%) indicated this was the case and 12 identified the position. The survey results showed that, again, this responsibility most frequently is assumed by a collections or science librarian. In other cases it is combined with the role of copyright specialist, head of the institutional repository (IR), manager of the journals program, or whomever happened to be Chair of the SC task force. As anticipated, these librarians devote even less time to SC activities; none more than half

of their time and the majority devote less than 20% of their time to SC education initiatives.

Library SC Task Force

Within the library, the SC educational effort is most frequently lead by a group, committee, or task force (35 responses or 54%). The number of task force members ranges from very small (2 members) to large (18 members) with an average size of seven. The task force chairperson is most frequently a librarian whose title suggests responsibilities in science (9 of 37 responses), collections (7), or e-resources (4). In over half of the task forces described, the chair is a member of the library administration, including several cases where the University Librarian chairs the group.

All of the task forces have librarians as members but only a few have members from other parts of the institution. Five task forces (14%) have academic faculty as members, including one case where the chair is a member of the science faculty. Institutional administrators are members of four task forces (11%) and students are members of only one.

When solicited for comments about the nature of their SC task force, several respondents revealed that the task force is, at best, just a couple of librarians who are interested in SC; or is a group that gets together to plan the annual SC symposium or seminar. Other task forces appear to be focused on institutional repository or copyright concerns. Another respondent commented, "This group has a somewhat broader mandate than Scholarly Communication as defined by ARL. For instance, group members are expected to advise faculty to publish in Elsevier journals when that is in the best interest of the faculty member, the discipline, and the University."

Outside SC Task Force

Only a few institutions (11 or 17%) indicated that their campuses have a SC task force that reports outside the library that includes library staff.

About half of these groups are sponsored by and report to the Faculty Senate. Several report directly to the President or Chancellor. One reports to the University Librarian.

These committees tend to be rather large (between 8 and 21 members with the exception of one 872-member academic senate) and are usually chaired by a member of the faculty. In all cases, teaching faculty and at least one librarian are members; nearly half have student members, too. Three include institution administrators. This is in stark contrast to the library-run SC tasks forces which seldom include members of the faculty or students. From the comments it is apparent that in several instances "scholarly communication issues" are not the sole interest of these groups.

Scholarly Communication Education Activities

The survey asked respondents to indicate the SC topics the library has addressed during their education activities to the various categories of campus affiliate—faculty, non-faculty researcher, administrators, graduate students, undergraduate students, and librarians and other library staff—and whether they had targeted the topic to particular disciplines or to all regardless of discipline. [N.B. "Faculty" refers to non-library faculty as distinct from librarians with faculty status. The SC education initiatives targeted to librarians, regardless of whether they have faculty status, are covered in the section "Librarians and Other Library Staff."] It also asked them to rank the modes of delivery they had used on a scale of 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective).

Faculty

Fifty-eight survey respondents indicated that faculty are targeted for education about scholarly communication issues. For the most part, the faculty are treated as a whole—only five respondents (9%) indicated they only made an effort to target a particular discipline—though 18 respondents targeted specific disciplines depending on the topic. Not

surprisingly, nearly all the responding institutions addressed faculty on the topics of the economics of scholarly publishing, author rights management, contributing to digital repositories, the benefits of open access journals, and the implications for teaching of giving away copyright. Other prevalent issues include public access initiatives such as the Federal Public Access Act of 2006, the impact of the new SC models on peer review and promotion and tenure issues, and author activism (refusal to publish in expensive journals), followed by editor activism (working within scholarly societies to improve open access to articles) and concerns about the future of scholarly society publishing. Other topics respondents have addressed include copyright, fair use, and the importance of depositing into the local institutional repository.

Although none of the respondents have rigorously gathered information concerning the efficacy of their efforts with faculty, they were able to rank which methods of delivery they thought worked well with this group. The most commonly used and most effective means of delivering the SC message to faculty is one-on-one conversations; 69% of the respondents indicating that it was somewhat or most effective. The next most effective methods are informal (52%) and formal (41%) group discussions. Although nearly every responding institution now has a SC Web site, these were judged as somewhat or very effective by just 18%—slightly less effective than brochures and e-mail messages (22%). Newsletter articles were the least used and least effective means of communication. One respondent commented that their, “lunch series was highly attended by faculty. In fact, we are repeating a couple of the sessions to accommodate those who were not able to attend due to demand. Our most effective communications have come where faculty talk with knowledgeable experts (library and campus counsel) and with other faculty. The lunch series is one example of that.” So, it appears that talking to the faculty in small groups or one-on-one—and feeding them—may be the way to go.

Non-faculty Researchers

Only 14 respondents (28%) indicated that they had targeted programs toward non-faculty researchers. The SC topics discussed with this group are essentially the same as those targeted to faculty, primarily author rights management, contributing to digital repositories, the economics of scholarly publishing, and author activism. As with faculty, the best way to reach this constituency is by means of one-on-one conversations or informal group discussions. Other channels were rated only moderately effective. Due to the small sample size, it is probably unwarranted to draw other conclusions about this category.

Institutional Administrators

All but a few respondents (49 or 85%) have targeted scholarly communication education messages to institutional administrators; the majority (34 or 59%) have targeted a specific administrator such as the Provost, Chancellor, or a particular Dean. Once again, the most effective mode of communication is one-on-one conversation, followed by informal and formal group discussions. The topic most frequently discussed with administrators is the economics of scholarly publishing. Other commonly addressed topics include author rights management, contributing to digital repositories, and the implications for teaching of giving away copyright. The least frequently discussed topics are author activism and editor activism. Respondents report that they have also spoken of the “Importance to the university for retaining its intellectual property” and the “Prestige and grant-application value of IR.” Other respondents added these comments: “It’s most effective when its addressed in the context of something the university is trying to accomplish.” “What we are trying to do is to offer sound and practical advice and not to come off as a group who believe that they have ‘special knowledge’ about an admittedly complex situation or an idealistic ‘agenda’ like open access, etc., but to provide all options as existing and changing realities.”

Graduate Students

As the future faculty of tomorrow, graduate students have been the focus of SC education initiatives by nearly half of the respondents (26 or 47%). They are usually taught as a whole, without regard to their discipline. The primary topics of discussion include author rights management, the implication for teaching of giving away copyright, the economics of scholarly publishing, and the benefits of open access journals. Other popular topics include national public access developments, contributing to digital repositories, author activism, and the future of scholarly society publishing.

As with previous groups, the most effective means of relaying these messages is one-on-one conversations; 82% rated this delivery option as somewhat or most effective. Perhaps because graduate student audiences are often available in the classroom setting, informal and formal group presentations also work well for this group. Other methods used to reach graduate students include training sessions for teaching assistants, graduate school packets concerning electronic submission of their theses, and a "Responsible Conduct of Research" bioethics program. One library indicated that they planned to start a "Graduate Scholarly Publishing advisement service next year." Some comments, though, indicate that libraries are not focusing their efforts on this population so much as welcoming them to campus-wide activities.

Undergraduate Students

Only seven survey respondents (13%) indicated that they had scholarly communication activities that were intended for undergraduate students. Due to the small sample size, it is difficult to draw many conclusions. However, it appears that one-on-one conversations and both formal and informal group presentations work well for reaching this group. The most popular topic to "Wow" them with is a discussion of the economics of publishing, though author rights management, the benefits of open access journals, and the future of scholarly publishing are also frequently discussed.

Librarians and Other Library Staff

Before librarians can effectively educate the rest of the academic community about the issues of scholarly communication, they must bring their colleagues and staff on board. Educational activities for librarians and staff have been held at 95% of the responding institutions. In some cases, activities have been developed specifically for subject liaisons or coordinators so they will feel more comfortable when they approach their faculty about SC issues.

Unlike the results with other audiences, the most effective means of reaching out to librarians and library staff is formal presentations; 67% of the respondents rate this as somewhat or most effective. This may be because the culture and practice within libraries tends to lean toward formal group presentations to peers. It must be noted that one-on-one conversations (64%) and informal group discussions (56%) were also perceived as effective.

Again mimicking their efforts with faculty, librarians are educating their peers about issues having to do with contributing to IRs, author rights management, the benefits of open access journals, and the implications for teaching of giving away copyright. Not surprisingly, another hot topic is the economics of scholarly publishing. Since one of the goals of educating librarians about SC issues is to enable them to engage the faculty (and others) on these issues, it is appropriate that the topics are the same as those addressed to other audiences. One institution whose librarians are members of the research faculty talk to the library faculty "about THEIR opportunities, when they publish their research. This was done to increase their comfort/knowledge of the publishing opportunities so they might speak to their clients more comfortably about it."

Other Audience

Only nine respondents indicated that they had engaged another type of audience in the SC conversation. Other audiences that were noted in the comments include consortia to which the library belongs

and regional library groups. From the comments, it appears that in some cases libraries are banding together with others in their region to tackle SC issues. This is probably an effective tack as faculty often collaborate with other faculty at nearby institutions. Due to the small size of the sample and the diversity of the audiences that were identified, it is not advisable to draw many conclusions from the data for this group. Topics and methods of delivery to these audiences were consistent with delivery to other groups. Due to the nature of the audience, formal presentations were judged the most effective means of communicating, though one-on-one conversations were also effective.

Collaborative Activities

The majority of responding institutions have made presentations (62%) or given reports (49%) to the faculty governance body on their campus regarding scholarly communication issues. (It would be interesting to determine how many of these have been about topics other than those driven by the “serials crisis.”) Many campuses have developed and proposed SC resolutions and 38% of the campuses have passed resolutions at this point.

Most Effective Activities

The respondents were invited to describe up to three SC education activities that, in their estimation, were particularly effective. Forty-five institutions provided one or more descriptions for a total of 113 activities.

The most frequently mentioned effective means to deliver the SC message were one-on-one conversations and presentations. One-on-one interactions, in person or via personal e-mails, were good for reaching individuals such as faculty editors, department heads, or regular faculty members. Presentations were an effective means to reach groups such as graduate students, librarians, and the Faculty Senate Committee on the Library. Many also reported that symposia are effective; several reported that their campuses hold annual symposia. Several listed Web sites as effective tools, without

much explanation. Other activities that were mentioned multiple times were marketing campaigns, passage of Senate SC resolutions, and newsletter items. Workshops—both library-sponsored and campus-sponsored—were also an effective means to reach the campus. A number of institutions have found it effective to work through their Faculty Senate Committee on the Library.

Challenges

Survey respondents were invited to relate significant challenges their library has faced in educating library users and staff about SC issues. They were provided three open-ended text boxes for their responses. Fifty institutions listed one or more challenges for a total of 126 challenges.

Not surprisingly, the biggest obstacle in getting the faculty to care about scholarly communication issues is concerns about promotion and tenure. Some faculty show a “reluctance ... to accept that OA journals can be every bit as scholarly as non-OA journals.” Of course they also do not want to hear of any restrictions on where they should or should not publish. Some are fearful that, if they attempt to use copyright addenda, their articles will be refused by prestigious scholarly publishers such as the ACS. As one person put it, “Faculty are hesitant to do anything that will disadvantage them in the promotion and tenure process.”

Two other huge challenges to reaching the faculty are that they either show a lack of interest in the issues or are satisfied with the status quo and that they are too busy to focus on what many apparently feel is a “library problem.” Quite a few respondents said their problem was coming up with a clear message with which to reach the faculty and mobilize them into action.

Some respondents commented on challenges that involve the campus, such as lack of administrative support and the decentralized nature of the campus, which also make it difficult to reach the faculty.

The biggest challenge for librarians revolved around having adequate staff, time, and funding to

devote to a SC campaign. As was noted earlier, most librarians who are tasked with developing an SC education initiative have added this to an already full plate of responsibilities. Several respondents seemed to feel their SC education initiatives would fail until their library administration made SC education a real priority, providing money to fund a position that would be primarily or solely devoted to SC issues. Another major stumbling block that many mentioned is the difficulty of “educating librarians so they are equipped to engage faculty in discussions of issue.” It was acknowledged that SC is made up of many complex issues about which it is difficult to keep up-to-date.

Assessments of Success

Only 5 respondents (9%) indicated that they had made any evaluation of the success of their library’s SC education activities. In several instances these were just the quick “what did you learn” evaluations that are often requested after a class, workshop, or symposium. In one case, the evaluation was a part of the yearly evaluation of the SC librarian. Another mentioned that they believe slow but steady growth in the deposit and usage statistics of their IR is a measure of their success. Only one responding institution appears to have done a comprehensive evaluation, saying that their “Office of Scholarly Communication has done surveys of faculty across all the campuses on scholarly communication issues in both 2004 and 2006.” The content of these surveys was not provided.

Demonstrable Outcomes

The respondents were invited to relate any demonstrable outcomes (such as statements from faculty governance bodies, changes in promotion and tenure criteria, author’s switching to open access journals, etc.) related to the library’s SC education activities. Twenty-three institutions listed one or more outcomes for a total of 37 examples. The most frequently mentioned outcome (9 responses) was the passage of a Faculty Senate Resolution on SC. The focus of the resolutions varied. Several focused

on bringing down the cost of journals, including one that supported “increased funding for library acquisitions.” Others encouraged their faculty to “use open access publications whenever possible;” another was endorsing the Tempe Principles to work toward transforming scholarly communication; and others were endorsing the use of copyright addenda by their researchers. Whether part of a SC Faculty Senate resolution or not, increased support for using copyright addenda to retain the rights to one’s published materials was mentioned as a significant outcome by at least 6 of the 23 respondents.

At least five institutions mentioned that their faculty are developing open access (OA) journals using online journal publishing platforms supported by the library. The support and increased usage of local institutional repositories was also cited by at least five respondents as evidence that the SC message is reaching the faculty and administration.

One respondent is clearly frustrated with the seeming glacial speed with which real outcomes are discernible: “We have some general resolutions and statements, etc., but many of us have stacks of these stuck away in our bottom drawers. What I’d like to see is more OA journals & books based in IRs and action from funding agencies that require OA reporting of results.” But another was pleasantly surprised that, “The [local] editors and board members are genuinely pleased the library is taking an active role.”

Final Comments from the Respondents

In their additional comments, quite a few of the respondents indicated that they felt they were “early in the process” of scholarly communication education efforts. Several have just hired a SC librarian or are just setting up institutional repositories or digital presses. They expect to be making serious strides in their SC education efforts in the near future, though. As one explained, “We have been engaging in SC activities for some years but only in 2007 have we begun formalizing these activities in

a coherent SC program with a committee dedicated to coordinating the activities and the communications to support them.” Another commented that they would like all of their librarians to add SC components to their bibliographic instruction efforts.

None of the respondents indicated directly that they had success on the biggest challenge—alleviating faculty concerns about the effects of open access publishing on promotion and tenure. However, at least one institution has passed a resolution encouraging it’s faculty to publish OA when feasible and several respondents noted that there is increased support for OA publishing. Both of these outcomes suggest that there are some subtle changes going on in the long-standing scholarly communication paradigms. To be sure, the researchers are concerned about the future of their scholarly societies, but several respondents noted success in getting the editors of scholarly journals to consider going OA with their journals.

Conclusion

Clearly, scholarly communication education is a changing and growing area of activity for ARL member libraries. Ten years ago, SC education mostly focused on fair use and copyright restrictions. Now, open access, authors rights management, institutional repositories, and the economics of scholarly publishing are the topics of these education initiatives. As many survey respondents feel they are still early in the process of developing their programs, the coming years will likely see many further initiatives in this arena. However, unlike other library initiatives, the library alone does not have control over the outcomes of scholarly communication education efforts. The economic engine that is scholarly communication has many players in addition to libraries—faculty, researchers, commercial publishers, and scholarly societies—and is also influenced by government regulations. The efforts of libraries to affect change are only one of many factors at work.