

LIBRARY ISSUES

BRIEFINGS FOR FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS

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Librarians as Guides to a Changing Publishing Landscape

By Barbara Fister

On any given day, faculty members at academic institutions are confronted with publishing choices. A scientist is getting ready to publish results of a grant-funded experiment and needs to comply with the funder's requirement that her article be open access within 12 months of publication. How will she know which journals will allow her to meet that requirement?

A junior faculty member gets an email from a publisher in Germany offering to publish his thesis as a book. He could use another publication credit before tenure, but he's never heard of this publisher. Is it a reputable outfit or a scam?

A third just learned that an article has been accepted for publication in a well-known journal. The acceptance letter describes an open access option. She's in favor of open access, but the price is startlingly high. Is it worth it?

The provost has just sent faculty notice that they must remove PDFs of published articles from their university-sponsored profile pages because a major publisher has sent the institution a takedown notice. A faculty member, reading the email, is annoyed. He only posts *his own articles*. What right do they have to make him take down something he wrote?

The landscape of academic publishing is changing, as any librarian could tell you. Since they deal with these changes daily, they can help faculty navigate through the turbulence.

Changing Terrain

Traditionally, faculty have made publishing choices based on well-established reputational hierarchies and news about publishing opportunities gleaned from their disciplinary networks. Today, a

number of factors complicate those choices.

There has been an increased emphasis on using publications as a proxy for quality when assessing academic programs and the people who staff them. In the U.S., academics going up for tenure or promotion or who are seeking grants are frequently evaluated on the number of publications they produce and the reputation of their publishers, with the controversial "impact factor" assigned to journals playing a significant role in determining an author's academic ranking.

In the U.K. funding for higher education institutions is partly based on highly systematized national exercises which measure the productivity and impact of publications by faculty in academic programs. This codification of prestige relies on faulty metrics and emphasizes production of published artifacts over discovery and insight. Nobel laureate Peter Higgs (of Higgs boson fame) recently told a reporter that he would not be employable in today's academic climate because he has never been productive enough to meet today's demands. "Publish or perish" has never been more brutally true.

For early-career faculty, the publishing stakes are higher than ever. Academic employment is increasingly precarious. According to *Inside Higher Ed*, a majority of faculty held tenured or tenure-track positions in 1969, occupying 78 percent of faculty positions. In 2012-13, the ratio had very nearly reversed, with 76 percent of faculty now in contingent posi-

Coming Soon —

Digital Badging
and the Library's Role

tions, which typically offer low wages, few or no benefits, and no job security. A large number of highly-qualified PhDs, many of them carrying unprecedented levels of debt, are competing for a severely limited number of tenure-track jobs. Having an impressive publication record is one means of standing out in a crowded field.

At the same time, the academic publishing world is churning with change. The shift to digital in journals is very nearly complete, with very few journals publishing only on paper and many journals publishing only online. Consolidation has led to five corporations controlling tens of thousands of journals from over forty publishers, including the publishing programs of many scholarly societies which frequently outsource their operations to the commercial sector.

University presses have lost subsidies and have had to largely support themselves through sales and licensing of rights. Academic libraries are no longer a primary market for academic books, largely because of soaring journal costs taking an increasing share of flat or depressed library budgets, and the average number of units sold per title has shrunk significantly. Though print book sales are soft, ebooks are an increasingly important segment of the book publishing market, making new demands on the already-strained staff of university presses.

The open access movement has had a banner year. The White House issued a new policy instructing federal agencies that distribute research funding to find ways to make federally funded research findings and their underlying data sets open access. The U.K. government is moving quickly toward requiring public access to publicly funded research. Last but not least, many new open-access publishing platforms are opening their doors. How publishing activities will be funded and how researchers will adapt to open-access opportunities and requirements remain hotly debated issues.

The publishing world that scholars learned about during their doctoral training is changing constantly. Librarians, who keep a finger on the pulse

of scholarly publishing across the disciplines, can help scholars keep up. The following issues sketch out some of the areas included in this domain of librarian expertise.

Contracts and Waivers

One of the steps in publishing that academics often see as last-minute paperwork is signing a publishing contract. In many cases, this step includes surrendering copyright to the publisher. Sometimes the author retains copyright but gives the publisher exclusive license to publish the work. This assignment of rights may be described in fine print as part of the electronic submission process, with rights transferred with the click of a mouse. Because authors tend to see this language after a manuscript has been accepted for publication, they may fail to read it closely or may assume they have no choice but to agree to it. It's fairly rare for authors to take into account what rights they may surrender as they decide where to submit their work because that information is not always readily available.

An extremely useful tool for getting a quick overview of journals' rights policies is the SHERPA/RoMEO database, compiled and maintained by JISC, a UK organization that supports information sharing. It includes a summary of the policies of over 22,000 academic journals. Their data on publisher policies shows that authors retain important rights in a majority of cases – though authors are often unaware of them and fail to act on them.

Most traditionally published journals today give authors the right to post a version of their research online for anyone to read. Publishers have so far been willing to make this concession to authors because most authors don't take advantage of that right. Depending on the publisher, authors may be allowed to post online a copy of the manuscript before changes based on peer reviewer comments were made (a *pre-print*) or the final manuscript copy after peer review (a *post-print*.) Often publishers require that their copyright be prominently displayed and that a link to the published article on their website be included in the posted document. In

some cases, publishers allow authors to publicly post the final PDF copy, but may impose an embargo period. Because these terms and conditions vary from journal to journal and are not always easy to locate, the SHERPA/RoMEO database (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>) is invaluable as authors decide where to submit their articles. That said, not all journals are included in the database. If information about authors' rights can't be found there, the best course of action is to contact the journal's editor.

Authors need not accept publishers' policies without question. Often authors successfully negotiate rights that the standard publishing agreement doesn't include. Two handy automated waiver-generators are available online. <http://scholars.sciencecommons.org/> <http://www.sparc.arl.org/resources/authors/addendum-2007>

Permissions for Copyrighted Material

Frequently, faculty authors need to reproduce portions of texts, song lyrics, film clips, music, performances, images, or archival materials that are integral to their research and are needed to illustrate an argument. This may require seeking (and often paying for) permission, a difficult kind of detective work. Though libraries do not typically have sufficient staff to conduct this work on behalf of faculty, they may be able to provide leads to useful resources for determining whether a work is under copyright and, if so, from whom permission must be sought.

Librarians may also recommend resources about how to evaluate whether or not fair use may apply in a particular situation, though the final call is usually made by the publisher, who is on the hook for copyright violation and so may take a cautious position. Some libraries have compiled resources on seeking permissions, such as the following guide from the University of Texas Libraries.

<http://copyright.lib.utexas.edu/permissions.html>

Journal and Article Metrics

Faculty are often intimately familiar with the relative social capital journals

in their field hold. Some journals are well established and highly respected and others have less prestige. Some may be considered a bit stodgy and others edgy and innovative. When deciding where to publish their research, academic authors choose journals that will reach a wide audience through a medium that has a reputation for rigorous peer review. Many journals with the strong reputation also have high rejection rates, so getting an article accepted by a journal that rejects a large percentage of submissions is considered a professional coup. However, this intimate disciplinary knowledge has its limits. Word-of-mouth and tradition are not always persuasive to tenure and promotion committees or evaluators of grant proposals.

One measure, originally developed to help librarians make strategic use of limited funds, has become a standard, if widely misused, measure of academic credibility. Impact factor is a measure of how often, on average, articles in a journal are cited within two years of publication. These rankings are published in *Journal Citation Reports*, produced by Thomson Reuters and is based on journals indexed in their *Web of Knowledge* citation database. Its originator, Eugene Garfield, warned that it was not a valuable measure of any one article's significance.

A handful of highly cited articles can overshadow articles that receive no citations, which makes it impossible to determine the value of any one article. Since his warning, many journal editors have found ways to enhance their ranking by gaming the system. Though widely considered statistically indefensible, impact factors continue to be used when evaluating the work of individuals for career advancement and the awarding of grants.

Alternatives to the impact factor include the Eigenfactor journal ranking system, which ranks journals using a longer timeframe and adjusts for disciplinary differences in citation patterns as well as including a cost-effectiveness measure. As with impact factors, the focus is on journals, not individual articles. To calculate the impact of individual authors' work,

the H-index, available in Thomson Reuters' Web of Knowledge database and in Google Scholar's user profiles, provides a value based on the number of papers published and the number of times each is cited.

A proposed alternative to journal impact factors and other citation-based measures is "altmetrics" – a combination of factors for measuring the reach of a particular work which includes citations but adds views, downloads, comments, and mentions in traditional and social media. These metrics can be used not only for journal articles, but for books, websites, datasets, presentations, and other forms of scholarship. Several companies have developed programs that collect such metrics, including Plum Analytics, Impact Story, and Altmetric.com. Platforms for storing and sharing academic papers such as Mendeley and Academia.edu also provide metrics for members who upload their papers.

Some publishers are now providing authors with article-level metrics for works published in their journals, including *PLOS* and *Nature*. Institutional and disciplinary open access repositories also offer opportunities for authors to see how often their papers are being viewed and downloaded.

The use of metrics of all kinds, however, is not without controversy. In 2013, at a meeting of the American Society for Cell Biology, scientists, journal editors, and publishers developed a Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) that argues for a more inclusive set of measures to be used in evaluating research, but emphasizing that the content of the work itself should weigh most heavily. Whether this statement or other critiques will check the increasing reliance on publishing metrics for measuring a scholar's worth remains to be seen.

Librarians can help faculty explore various alternative ways of discovering and documenting the impact their work is having, including making faculty work available to the public in an institutional repository. Librarians can also provide a platform for critical discussion of the use of impact factors and other measures as a proxy for scholarly

accomplishment.

<http://www.sparc.arl.org/sites/default/files/sparc-alm-primer.pdf>
<http://am.ascb.org/dora/>

Open Access Publishing Options

The Open Access movement has encouraged researchers to share their work more widely, either by self-archiving their work publicly or by submitting their manuscripts to publishers that will make it available to anyone with an Internet connection. The shift to open access is most fully developed in the sciences, where rapid dissemination of results is a pressing concern and the volume and cost of published information is becoming an obstacle to scientists who need access to the literature.

New models for making work open in the humanities and social sciences are developing, though under different circumstances. One of the reasons the cost of journals have outpaced inflation in the sciences is that billions of dollars, both public and private, are invested in scientific research annually. With little funding available in other disciplines, different models need to be developed that respond to scholars' needs and funding realities. Librarians must keep abreast of these developments, both to enhance discovery of freely available scholarly information and to participate in determining how libraries will support the development, distribution, and preservation of open knowledge.

Though a majority of open access publishers don't ask authors to underwrite their operations, a number of high-profile publishers follow the lead of *PLOS* and charge article processing fees (APCs). Traditional publishers which have launched open access journals typically fund these operations with APCs. Additionally, many journals that are not open access will allow authors to make their articles open access for a fee that can be hundreds or even thousands of dollars. (For example, as of this writing, *Nature* charges authors \$5,200 for the right to make their article open access and licensed under a liberal Creative Commons license.) Like the page charges collected by many

traditional science journal publishers, these costs are often built into grant proposals or other funding mechanisms rather than paid out of pocket by scientists. Many journals reduce fees for authors who lack funding. Some libraries, particularly at research-intensive institutions, are allocating some of their budget to support APC costs.

The *Directory of Open Access Journals*, long an important guide to peer-reviewed journals that make their content available to all, has recently tightened its requirements for inclusion in order to make it a useful tool for scholars seeking high-quality publishing opportunities. Recently, a *Directory of Open Access Books* has been launched.

<http://www.doaj.org/>

<http://www.doabooks.org/>

<http://www.oacompat.org/>

Avoiding Predatory Publishers

In April 2013, *The New York Times* published a front-page story about “predatory publishers,” web-based companies that purport to be publishers, but are primarily a vehicle for collecting APCs from unsuspecting academics. Faculty frequently are emailed invitations to submit to these “journals” or to attend expensive conferences which promise participants a chance to add a line to their CVs – for a price. (Examples of these sometimes incoherent emails are collected on the *Distraction Watch* Tumblr.) Jeffrey Beale, a librarian at the University of Colorado at Denver, maintains a list of these pseudo-publishers. Though his list is widely consulted and valuable, his outspoken opposition to the open access movement, which he characterizes as “anti-corporatist”

and “oppressive” has made him a controversial figure.

Not all dubious publishing operations are open access. Some companies specialize in acquiring theses and dissertations, often already available online, and packaging them as books, though providing no editorial work or marketing. Librarians routinely evaluate journals and book publishers and can advise faculty whether a publisher is legitimate or not.

<http://distractionwatch.tumblr.com/>

<http://scholarlyoa.com/>

Repositories and Data Archiving

For many years, libraries at many institutions have been providing free access to faculty members’ research by uploading it to institutional repositories where articles, conference papers, presentations, and other materials can be made accessible online. Recently, libraries have been exploring the best ways to provide access to data sets that many funders now require to be made publicly available.

In addition to institution-based repositories, many disciplines maintain repositories where authors can post the versions of their work allowed by their publishing agreements. Librarians can let faculty know what their options are and, if no institutional repository or data archiving service is available, point out free alternatives, such as Open Depot, Zenodo, and Figshare.

<http://opendepot.org/>

<http://zenodo.org/>

<http://figshare.com/>

Library-Supported Publishing

Many libraries offer a variety of publishing services. These may be

as well-established as university presses that are organizationally tied to a university’s libraries, or may be as small-scale as providing advice about web-based platforms for publishing activities. Libraries frequently host and provide technical support for open access journals using platforms such as OJS (an open source package from the Public Knowledge Project) or Digital Commons from bepress, a company that offers hosting and technical support for digital publishing with well-integrated article-level metrics. Librarians can also offer advice and, in some cases, support for publishing conference proceedings, collections of essays, and other projects.

<http://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs/>

<http://www.bepress.com/>

<http://www.librarypublishing.org/>

New Roles for Librarians

Librarians have taken on new roles and developed new skillsets in recent decades. As publishing evolves and open access takes hold, it’s incumbent on library organizations to support faculty needs – and to support, within the ranks of librarians, the cultivation of new knowledge and skills. It is no longer feasible to charge one or two librarians with responsibility for keeping up with scholarly communication. It has to be a library-wide commitment.

As faculty turn to librarians for guidance in navigating this turbulent but opportunity-rich publishing environment, library organizations will have to provide staff development opportunities that will give all librarians – and the communities they support – the tools and know-how to participate in and shape the new knowledge landscape.
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