

Librarians' Competencies Profile for Scholarly Communication and Open Access

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Definition

The Association of Research libraries describes scholarly communication as “the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use. The system includes both formal means of communication, such as publication in peer-reviewed journals, and informal channels, such as electronic listservs” (<http://www.arl.org/focus-areas/scholarly-communication>). Other informal scholarly communication channels include posts in social media: blogs, tweets, etc.

As with all aspects of research, new technologies are transforming the way research is disseminated. The traditional system, in which researchers publish their results in subscription-based academic journals (or monographs), still prevails, in large part due to the continued use of the impact and prestige factor of the publishing venue as a major assessment measure of research quality and impact. However, there are also numerous initiatives and projects that are challenging the conventional models. These activities are being driven by technologies, policies, and a more expansive notion of how research should be communicated.

One large component of this transformation is the move towards open access and open science. The Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2001 was a seminal moment for OA and defined open access as follows:

By “open access” to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. – *Budapest Open Access Initiative*

Libraries have been involved in issues around open access (OA) and scholarly communication in a number of ways:

- Offering OA journal and/or book publishing services and other value-added services to scholars on their campus (work with the university press if there is any)

- Running an institutional repository to provide access to the articles and other types of research outputs produced by scholars
- Providing consultation and guidance on copyright and OA options to scholars
- Providing access to services and resources that help assess quality and impact of scholarship, from traditional bibliometrics to emerging altmetrics
- Developing library initiatives that encourage and enable faculty to manage their own copyright and improve the economics of and access to published research
- Marketing and promoting OA scholarship on campus and beyond
- Working with the acquisition department to develop and maintain a publication fund, OA memberships and OA clauses in licenses
- Support and training of researchers around the issues of scholarly communication.

Roles involved

Library activities in scholarly communication and open access typically fall into one of four categories: scholarly publishing services; open access repository services; for copyright and open access advice; and assessment of scholarly resources.

1. Scholarly publishing services

- Providing publishing services via local or hosted digital publishing platforms for journals, books, conference proceedings, working papers and other works of original scholarship from faculty and students.
- Working with digital repository and other professionals to provide for storage, description, access and preservation of this content.

2. Open access repository services

- Collecting, managing and disseminating the digital materials created by the institution and its community members.

3. Copyright and open access advice

- Providing consultation and education to faculty and students on copyright and open access policies, services and resources, as well as open access licenses and publishing alternatives.

4. Assessment of scholarly resources

- Providing expertise, consultation and outreach to the campus community around scholarly resource assessment and metrics, including traditional bibliometrics as well as new and emerging metrics.

Competencies and Skills

Some level of subject knowledge is required in most of the roles described above. In particular, librarians will need to have a broad perspective and understanding of the traditional (commercial, society) and open access models of publishing, intellectual property issues, and economics of scholarly publishing.

Other core competencies for these positions are in the following areas:

1. Scholarly publishing services

Knowledge of:

- Commercial and open access publishing platforms
- Publishing workflows and operational models
- Editorial processes
- Standards: Digital Object Identifiers (DOI), International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN), International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN), persistent URL and citation options, such as OpenURL and CNRI Handle
- Funder mandates and requirements
- Metadata standards, and discovery tools

Understanding of:

- Current trends and issues in open access and scholarly communication
- Data curation and preservation practices
- Licensing issues pertaining to open access

Ability to:

- Manage OA publishing software services, such as Public Knowledge Project's Open Journal System (OJS) and Open Monograph Press (OMP)
- Work with local IT to develop capacity and infrastructure

2. Open access repository services

Knowledge of:

- Open access policies and requirements
- Repository software, metadata standards, and discovery tools
- Data formats, database design, data management, data manipulation tools

Ability to:

- Manage repository platform and update software over time
- Work with researchers on deposit of research outputs into the repository
- Liaise with publishers on issues relating to archiving policies including embargo periods and where applicable article processing charges

Understanding of:

- Current trends and issues in open access and scholarly communication
- Copyright and licensing issues pertaining to scholarly content
- Data curation and preservation practices

3. Copyright and open access advice

Knowledge of:

- Copyright and licensing issues pertaining to scholarly content, including traditional copyright as well as creative commons and other OA licenses
- Open access policies and requirements
- Current trends and issues in open access and scholarly communication

Understanding of:

- Traditional scholarly publishing system

Ability to:

- Raise awareness of OA, including practical questions such as financing and policy adherence
- Provide advice to faculty and graduate students on alternatives to transferring copyright to their original scholarly works

4. Assessment of scholarly resources

Knowledge of:

- Assessment criteria for journals and other resources
- Bibliometrics and altmetrics theory and practice

Understanding of:

- Faculty promotion and tenure policies and procedures
- Institutional assessment/planning interests in scholarly output

Ability to:

- Provide support to faculty in assessing journals and other scholarly resources
- Provide advice to library acquisition departments on quality indicators

Representative Job Titles

1. Scholarly publishing services

Scholarly Communication Librarian, Scholarly Publications Librarian, Electronic Acquisitions & Serials Librarian, Metadata and Scholarly Publishing Librarian

2. Open access repository services

Institutional Repository Librarian, Digital Repository Librarian, Digital Scholarship Services Librarian, Research Services Librarian

3. Copyright and open access advocacy and outreach

Scholarly Communication Librarian, Copyright Librarian

4. Scholarly resource assessment

Assessment Librarian, Scholarly Communication Librarian

Related service areas & roles

Related services include: research data management, collection development, technical services, advisory services (copyright, policies, etc.), information literacy

To work with: Subject or Liaison Librarian, Digital Initiatives Librarian, Digital Humanities Librarian, Technical Services Librarian, Acquisition Librarians, Data Librarian

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About the Task Force

This document was prepared by the members of the Joint Task Force on Librarians' Competencies in Support of E-Research and Scholarly Communication

The joint Task Force on Librarians' Competencies in Support of E-Research and Scholarly Communication has representation from the [Association of Research Libraries](#) (ARL), the [Canadian Association of Research Libraries](#) (CARL), the [Association of European Research Libraries](#) (LIBER), and the [Confederation of Open Access Repositories](#) (COAR).

The aim of the task force is to outline the competencies needed by librarians in this evolving environment. The first step will be to identify the various avenues of service for libraries within the context of e-research, repository management, and scholarly communication. These services and roles will then be mapped to the competencies required by librarians and library professionals. The task force will also make note of the array of organizational models evolving to support new services.

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