

Interview with Oya Rieger:

“We need to be much more nuanced to talk about what is it that we need to collaborate on”

COAR Annual Meeting 2016 in Vienna, April 12th–13th, 2016

Interviewee: Oya Rieger (Cornell University Library, Ithaca/NY, USA)

Interviewer: Anna-Maria Finta (Vienna University Library)

Transcriber: Brigitte Semanek (*transcriber’s notes are set in brackets and italics*)

Anna-Maria Finta: Welcome to our first day from COAR annual meeting 2016. Next to me is Oya Rieger. Welcome. University of Vienna is welcoming you.

Oya Rieger: Thank you very much.

AF: Could you tell us: Where are you coming from and why did you join COAR?

Oya Rieger: Sure. So, I am Oya Rieger, and I am from Cornell University Library, which is in New York State, in the U.S. I am one of the associate university librarians at the library, and my position involves two related responsibilities. One of them is I am the program director for arXiv, which is a repository for physics, maths, computer science, etc. Then I also oversee a program area that involves our university’s institutional repository in addition to several specialized repositories that focus on, for instance, images or audio, video – or materials of certain formats. And I joined COAR, or I should say I facilitated Cornell joining COAR very early on. And I believe I heard first about COAR when it was just a concept from Norbert (*i.e. Norbert Lossau*). Norbert wanted to talk with me, and he was so excited about this idea of establishing a network for allowing professionals involved in this program area to have regular exchange about their programs. And I am just so impressed how he took this idea and turned it into a very strong organization.

AF: You were mentioning earlier about archiving. So let me ask you how do you see the further developments of your archiving infrastructure and your library in relation with Open Access?

OR: Oh, excellent question. I am going to actually differentiate between archiving and archives. Institutional repositories are online archives of content, often created with our own institutional contexts. Institutional repositories depending on local policies or more governmental procedures may have different goals. Some, for instance, are national and they aim to showcase the scholarship of an institution or a country. Some institutional repositories do have very strong Open Access mandates, they see repositories as a vehicle to promote and support Open Access, and some organizations do see institutional repositories as archives, to ensure long-term access to scholarly record. So although these are all related, I wanted to, in a way, differentiate archiving from archives. Institutional repositories are archives, but not all of them do have preservation/archiving as one of their goals. So, as I mentioned, at Cornell we are maintaining a number of repositories, physics archive (arXiv) being one of the most prominent ones. Based on my more recent experiences, if I were to generalize, what I am seeing in the institutional repository, or generally speaking, scholar information repository world, is that there is this constant, in a way, effort to balance technologies, innovation, policies, budgets, workflows, and that it’s not easy to align them. Some organizations have

from a technological perspective very successful institutional repositories, but maybe their outreach or acceptance by their scientists is weak. Some organizations, they do have a very much committed audience, user group, but their technologies might be suffering, they may not have a sustainable infrastructure. So what's happening at Cornell is that we really are, just like any other organization, trying to balance technological innovation, technological stability of these repositories with realities, practical realities. Which is how we fund, how we make sure that these repositories are sustainable, and how we reach out to users. In other words, how we frame these initiatives as user-based as much as possible. So, just in a nutshell, I think we are on the same boat I would say with many other countries in our effort to align socio-cultural and technical issues.

AF: The topic of this year's meeting in Vienna is the role of collaboration in building a global knowledge commons. First question from this I would like to ask you: What is your role in COAR and why is this collaboration so crucial for Open Access activities?

OR: I have been a member of COAR since its inception, and this is my first year as a member of the COAR executive board. It is a great pleasure to participate in COAR at that capacity, with little deeper involvement. Collaboration is important. And especially among librarians. We very often hear about collaboration, it's just a magic word, you know, joining forces. And collaboration is very difficult, it has so many complications. It is a very desired, you know, mission, but it's not very easy. So I am very happy that COAR is trying to tackle this problem, especially with their focus on repositories. Because of course it's ideal to collaborate, but I think we need to be much more nuanced to talk about what is it that we need to collaborate on. This morning, one of the speakers', Herbert van de Sompel's talk was actually very important, highlighting that institutional repositories, if you look at the history, they were very much institutional focused, and the goal was really to capture the local academic products, whether it's to showcase scholarly world or to take strong part in preserving your own scholars' content. But as Herbert noted, the world has changed. When repository architectures and repositories as a service model was conceptualized fifteen years ago, we didn't realize how networked and how collaborative the web would be, how web would be like a spider-web and that it wouldn't really matter how big your node is, the important thing would be to be on that spider-web and nicely connected. So, just to kind of sum up, I think collaboration is extremely important. If we are going to change our perspective from being too focused on our own institutional repositories to understand how we can push and share content to support global science.

AF: One last question, if I may ask, is: What is the added value of your participation in COAR?

OR: Added value – for me, it's really a support group. It's a matter of being in the network. Face-time is extremely important. I have met several colleagues, and I truly still believe that from time to time it is very good to come physically together, and to carry personal conversations, maybe with a glass of beer. Our job has a personal aspect, so I love that networking aspects of it.

AF: Thank you very much for your time, and we wish you a pleasant time here in Vienna at the COAR meeting.

OR: Thank you very much.