

The Evolving Landscape of Scholarly Communications at Queen's

Report of a forum held May 17, 2016

Background

The scholarly communications landscape is on the cusp of transformative change. The convergence of multiple factors including the opportunities of digital technology, an oligopoly of international academic publishers, new open access policies of research funding agencies, and the financial constraints of university budgets has prompted the need for discussion concerning sustainable approaches to publication and dissemination of research. In this period, in Canada and worldwide, our common goal in universities is to enable research results to be as widely distributed and accessible as possible, internationally, in high quality publishing venues at the lowest possible costs.

Given the central role played by academic libraries in providing access to information and in utilizing and supporting collaborative technology-based initiatives, the Library wishes to engage the Queen's academic community in discussion of the pressing issues and opportunities of this evolving landscape, in our local context. In discussions with the Senate Library Committee in the 2015-16 academic year, it was agreed that the Library and the Senate Library Committee would host an invitational forum on this topic.

The Chair of the Senate Library Committee and the Vice-Provost and University Librarian jointly issued invitations to the Dean of each faculty/school, the School of Graduate Studies, the Society of Graduate and Professional Students, the Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), and the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research) to identify representatives to attend a forum on May 17, 2016, at the Donald Gordon Centre.

Purpose

The meeting on May 17 aimed to engage representatives of academic stakeholder groups, provide an overview of the issues at the international, national and local level, highlight the local collections decisions to be made in 2016-17, and seek input and support for a path forward. There would be background information that could be shared widely and the program would encourage the exchange of ideas. By the end of the meeting, participants would have a solid understanding of the issues to take back to their faculties, and the Library would have a good foundation upon which to build further engagement with the academic community in the fall. As well, there would be follow-up documentation summarizing the discussion and key takeaways to inform that engagement.

Discussion

Shelley King, Professor and Head of the Department of English Language and Literature, and Chair, Senate Library Committee, welcomed participants and set the context. She described the forum as focusing on academic matters crucial to Queen's academic programs and research. She noted that the Senate Library Committee had discussed the issues in its meetings in 2015-16, and had also been immersed in these matters in the past. In February 2001 the committee had provided a report to Senate titled "Towards Scholarly Publishing That Meets Academic Needs and Changing Conditions."

Martha Whitehead, Vice-Provost and University Librarian, spoke about local scholarly communications issues in the national and international context, and gave a presentation on behalf of Heather McMullen, Associate University Librarian, on the need to analyze "the big deal," a predominant

approach to acquisitions. These presentations referred to suggested background reading:

- Larivière Vincent, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon. “The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era.” *PLoS ONE* 10(6), 2015.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127502>
- Whitehead, Martha and Brian Owen. “Canadian University and Sustainable Publishing (CUSP).” Canadian Association of Research Libraries, 2016.
http://www.carl-abrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Can_Univ_Sustainable_Publishing_2016.pdf

Following the presentations, participants engaged in discussions guided by four questions and provided a range of comments summarized below:

1. *Questions/thoughts on presentations?*

- Eye-opening to think about these issues in an aggregate way, beyond individual priorities
- Had no idea about the size of the ‘big five’ and their share of the market and their power
- Effective to hear that a 1 cent drop in Canadian dollar requires a \$100,000 reduction in spending
- Important to think of the Canadian dollar only as an impetus for this conversation, but not the problem to be fixed
- Research funders are missing from the conversation – what is their role?
- Consider expanding the negotiating networks (i.e. beyond Canada)
- Ease of use is important – library access is cumbersome, interlibrary loan is too slow, will access instead through my society membership or purchase the article

2. *What do you see as the impact of the issues of the current model on your disciplines?*

- Commercial profits don’t benefit the university
- The focus on publishing in top tier journals is bad for research
- Publishing in a high impact journal doesn’t mean it’s a good paper
- Explosion/proliferation of journals is a key issue
- Generally “quantity over quality” has become the norm – whereas in the past top researchers had few, but top quality, publications, today they might not get tenure with so few
- Faculty often have individual memberships in societies – they are already getting the major journals from these societies through their memberships – could this be factored into the negotiations with these societies?
- Need to recognize that societies, journals, institutions are generating revenue from journal publishing
- We should not lose sight of the fact that there is value in access, ie. where once Humanities scholars had to travel to the British Library or some other place to use specialized journals and other resources that is no longer necessary if we have electronic access to databases like EEBO, London Times, etc. Access facilitates scholarship
- Some disciplines have a general rule, ie. the Humanities “do not pay” to publish, therefore, would not pay to publish in an open access journal
- Article Processing Charges are too expensive, period
- Renewal, tenure and promotion evaluations need to be done differently
- People are fundamentally conflicted – they’re working hard to publish in these places

3. *Taking the three elements of “ways that universities can influence the system,” discuss the feasibility and potential impact of each.*

- The academy needs to own the problem we created
- The key is to build incentives/requirements, e.g. as General Research Ethics Board (GREB) does
- Consider university processes where there could be engagement/opportunities and get in the normal workflows, e.g. faculty annual reporting mechanisms, cyclical program reviews
- Requires a change in culture in the academy which you cannot expect to happen quickly
- What is needed is open access plus change in promotion and tenure requirements and process; changes must come from the top and peers
- Get to the point where it is a point of honour to say “my career will be made when I’m publishing in open access”
- Promote information about questionable publisher practices (think of the audiences, including taxpayers) and the high impact of open access journals
- Get a baseline of where we are publishing now
- Have a policy at Queen’s to put material in the institutional repository
- Some universities like Harvard have an open access policy but many people opt out
- Institutional repositories don’t address the issue of high journal prices, and it’s often cumbersome and inaccurate to replicate what has been published
- Consider a national repository mandated by the Tri-Council funding agencies
- Publishers provide good services, we just need to pay them less
- If faculty say they can’t do without the journal, implement a process of having them check the abstract and then pay for their individual access
- Act collectively, with other libraries – if only Queen’s is cancelling titles people might be upset but if many libraries make a fuss then we’d be supporting changing the status quo
- Explore various categories of metrics and their use in: peer promotion/tenure analysis, research funding, university rankings
- Could libraries pitch a set of university rankings based on their open access practices?
- Use a multiplicity of tactics, and different ones for different disciplines: negotiate price, manage for currency, put major effort into disrupting the system and creative projects
- We’re dealing with both the local and global in all these issues

4. *What advice do you have regarding processes for seeking input and conveying decisions about cancellation decisions and “unbundling the big deal”? What is the level of awareness of the broad issues amongst your faculty and how might they be engaged at a high level as well as with regard to specific title needs?*

- Library should be more specific in informing people of the costs
- Queen’s community needs to be more aware of the costs of individual journals, packages, etc; faculty do not know the costs; they would appreciate why we don’t have everything or why we have to cancel things if they knew the costs
- Make a presentation at Faculty Boards – a shorter version of today’s presentations
- Visit individual department meetings and talk more specifically about the plan to unbundle – state the problem and specifically tell faculty “here is how you can help”
- Follow up with a survey to identify top needed journals and include graduate students

- Combine with data on which journals faculty publish in and cite and what resources graduate students are using in their Ph.D. dissertations
- Need to recognize that there are differences in journal use according to stage of career – grad students, non-tenured, post-tenure – all have different needs and patterns of use
- See what is included in courses as mandatory readings
- Develop a set of principles
- Provide a quick fact sheet – include egregious and discipline-specific details
- Raise awareness about copyright – rights to deposit in repositories
- Facilitate ways for academics in multiple disciplines to influence their own disciplines, e.g. at conferences
- Recognize that individual researchers decide where to volunteer their time (on editorial boards) or where to publish

Outcomes and next steps

The forum raised participants' awareness of the issues and provided initial insights into the range of perspectives across the university. There was surprise at journal costs, the number of journal subscriptions, and the large and increasing share of the acquisitions budget going to big deals. There was concern that scholarly publishing is controlled by commercial interests. There was also recognition that there is a dependence on the current value system of high impact journals and many researchers are pleased with their experiences with those journal publishers. Overall, there was a sense of responsibility: "the Academy needs to own the problem we created."

Also common amongst the participants was a strong interest in the issues discussed, which bodes well for further engagement with faculties. Several key observations will inform that engagement going forward:

- The issues are important ones, integral to research and learning. They involve researchers, administrators and funders. They involve value systems of tenure and promotion, grant funding and university rankings. They are local, national and international matters.
- Changes are needed to address the issues. There are varying views on whether we just need to achieve lower prices or fundamentally change how we publish. It is clear that we want scholars to control their scholarly output and to have access to information.
- The Library's goal is to provide access to the scholarly record and we will continue to get researchers the information they need. Providing access may involve making adjustments to current subscription practices to allow the selection of journals for Queen's researchers at reasonable costs. Decisions will be based on multiple sources of evidence including a survey of researchers.

Building on the ideas generated in the forum, the Library will engage faculties in further consultations in 2016-17. The Senate Library Committee agenda topics for this year will include input on the Library's comprehensive information resources strategy, including initiatives to modify acquisitions practices to address the issues of current publishing models, foreign currency exchange fluctuations, and new and continuing teaching, learning and research needs.

The Evolving Landscape of Scholarly Communications at Queen's

Tuesday, May 17, 2016

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Conference Room B, Donald Gordon Centre, Queen's University

1:00-1:10 Welcome

Shelley King, Professor and Head of the Department of English Language & Literature,
and Chair, Senate Library Committee

1:10-2:15 Background

Martha Whitehead, Vice-Provost and University Librarian
Local scholarly communications issues in the national and international context

Heather McMullen, Associate University Librarian
Analyzing the big deal

2:15-2:30 Break

2:30-3:50 Discussion

Participants will engage in small group discussions of key questions.

3:50-4:00 Wrap-up and next steps

Suggested Reading

- Larivière Vincent, Stefanie Haustein, and Philippe Mongeon. "The Oligopoly of Academic Publishers in the Digital Era." *PLoS ONE* 10(6), 2015.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0127502>
- Whitehead, Martha and Brian Owen. "Canadian University and Sustainable Publishing (CUSP)." Canadian Association of Research Libraries, 2016.
http://www.carl-abrc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Can_Univ_Sustainable_Publishing_2016.pdf



Scholarly Communications Forum, May 17, 2016

Participants

Arts and Science

Pamela Dickey-Young, Professor, School of Religion

P. Andrew Evans, Professor, Department of Chemistry

Josh Mozersky Associate Professor and Department Head, Department of Philosophy

Vicky Remenda, Associate Dean (Acting) (Teaching and Learning)

Business

Jay Handelman, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Research

Education

Liyang Cheng, Professor

*Don Klinger, Associate Dean Graduate Studies and Research

Engineering and Applied Science

Amir Fam, Professor and Donald and Sarah Munro Chair in Engineering and Applied Science

Health Sciences

John Fisher, Director of Research and Associate Vice-Principal of Research

David Hurlbut, Associate Professor, Department of Pathology and Molecular Medicine

Law

*Michael Pratt, Associate Professor

School of Graduate Studies

Kim McAuley, Professor and Associate Dean

Society of Graduate and Professional Students

*Anastasiya Boika, VP Campaigns and Community Affairs

Office of the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

Jill Scott, Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning

Office of the Vice-Principal (Research)

Karina McInnis, Executive Director, University Research Services

Senate Library Committee: all member were invited and those able to attend were:

Shelley King

Kathleen Norman

Michael White

Library

Jackie Druery, Head, Humanities and Social Sciences

*Paola Durando and *Sandra Halliday, Acting Co-Heads, Health Sciences

*Amy Kaufman, Head, Law

Heather McMullen, Associate University Librarian

Brenda Reed, Acting Head, Education

Nasser Saleh, Head, Engineering Science

Anne Smithers, Head, Collection Development and Assessment

Michael Vandenburg, Associate University Librarian

Martha Whitehead, Vice-Provost and University Librarian

*unable to attend