

Why libraries aren't dead: open access and the evolving liaison role

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Abstract: This is the second in a series of commentaries from members of the Open Access Interest Group of Canadian Health Libraries Association / Association des bibliothèques (CHLA / ABSC). Devon Greyson's inaugural contribution "Open access and health librarians in 2011" concluded with a timely discussion of open access (OA) opportunities for health librarians. Where Greyson concluded is exactly where this article begins by exploring the liaison role that the international OA movement presents. Also to be discussed are the quintessential resources for the Canadian health librarian's OA knowledgebase or toolbox.

Progress

The 1990s were an influential time for open access (OA) and witnessed The British Medical Journal (BMJ) take on pioneer status in biomedical OA publishing [1]. It was in 1998 that The BMJ established itself as "the first major general medical journal to provide free full text online access to its research articles, to deposit the full text in PubMed Central, and to allow authors to retain the copyright of their articles" [2]. This changed journal publishing in the medical world forever. Most recently in August 2010, The BMJ implemented author fees for peer-reviewed research articles, with the fees intentionally targeting research funding agencies [3]. This, in addition to the growth of OA titles and archiving in repositories, is becoming increasingly common.

The continuing impact of the international OA publishing movement remains significant. Of the 7070 journals in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), 760 are in the health sciences, representing one tenth of all OA journals [4]. Impossible to ignore is that these titles are growing on a regular basis. Similarly, of the 2085 repositories listed in the Directory of Open Access Repositories (OpenDOAR), 162 are in health and medicine [5]. These numbers are just one indication of OA's continuing relevance and are evidence for why health librarians need to proactively provide continued OA support to health researchers.

Liaison opportunities

In JCHLA's last issue, Devon Greyson contributed a timely OA piece and the commentary concluded by acknowledging OA generated opportunities [6]. The OA

movement represents many things to health librarians, with information liberation, public access, and author rights being foundational elements. I believe that, of all things, the OA movement presents an incredible liaison opportunity for health librarians to network with researchers in a variety of library environments given OA's wide ranging relevance. This article will explore existing liaison opportunities and present some of the practical resources that form the essential OA toolbox for Canadian health librarians.

Ho and Lee's 2010 article "Recognizing opportunities: Conversational openings to promote positive scholarly communication change" is incredibly practical and should be required reading for all librarians in a liaison position. One of their recommendations is to "Begin by asking your faculty and graduate students where they publish, how they raise the profile of their works, and what problems they are having in this realm. When they start telling you about their own experiences and what they would like to be different, you can help them reach their own scholarly publishing goals. . ." [7]. A plethora of conversational opportunities exist as ways to promote your library's available OA support and initiatives. Topics like restricted journal access, research dissemination, author copyright, and research funding requirements serve as red flags for triggering OA discussion. Opportunities already exist to promote OA, and it is up to us to take advantage of them.

This makes me think of my own work at Memorial University's Health Sciences Library, where I recently took on a formal role promoting our OA initiatives to teaching faculty, graduate students, and other researchers. In September 2011, I spoke at a Faculty of Medicine meeting to promote our recently launched [OA Author's Fund](#). This fund, like the many others across Canada

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Table 1. Open access (OA) resources worth promoting.

Resource	What it is	Why use it
Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) www.doaj.org	Directory of ~7070 scientific and scholarly OA journals. All are quality controlled (via peer-review or editorial quality control). ~760 alone are in the Health Sciences.	Ideal for discovering OA titles in a specific subject area. For example: Dentistry, Medicine (General), Nursing, and Public Health.
SHERPA JULIET www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet	Database of research funding agency OA policies, guidelines, and archiving mandates. Canada currently has 18. ~80 currently exist around the world.	Discover OA policy details for specific research granting agencies. Especially useful for quickly seeing what policies exist in a specific country.
SHERPA ROMEO www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo	Database of publisher copyright and self-archiving policies. Indexes policies for ~1000 publishers and ~18 000 journals.	Search by journal, ISSN or publisher to access policies for a specific title.

and international, provides financial assistance for author processing fees which often run \$1500–\$3000 and are commonly encountered. Being on the meeting's agenda provided an opportunity to announce this initiative, answer questions, gain insight into journals of interest, and address other OA questions. Response and feedback from this meeting and other promotion surrounding this initiative have been extremely positive. In the next month, I am attending similar meetings with the School of Nursing and School of Pharmacy. It will be interesting to see what connections and responses emerge as a result.

Situations like these put the library on the radar of key stakeholders by capturing how the library remains a very relevant resource in 2011. A natural fit, the library's role with journal publishing, whether through hosting local OA journals or by providing financial assistance to publish in OA journals, means that the library remains a key hub for supporting research dissemination. Ultimately, this unveils evolving liaison opportunities that are just waiting to be tackled.

The toolbox

Successful liaison encounters require comfort with, and knowledge of, OA information and resources. However, the reality is that, as with the worlds of library and information science, and the health sciences, the world of OA information is jargon filled and changing rapidly. New research funding policies emerge, new titles are born, copyright restrictions change, and author processing fees may be new elements to consider. To meet the challenge presented by information overload, Table 1 overviews key OA resources worth taking the time to know. If a researcher is unsure which journals are openly available, the DOAJ is the ideal resource to consult and promote. Likewise, a researcher may be uncertain about what research funding agencies actually require of them, which would be the perfect opportunity to introduce the usefulness of SHERPA JULIET. Likewise, contribute to your OA knowledge base by subscribing to the many available RSS feeds. Websites on the topic are endless, and Table 2 provides an overview of some of my favourite OA resources specifically targeting librarians.

Table 2. Open access (OA) resources for librarians.

ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit http://scholcomm.acrl.ala.org/
Bibliography of Open Access http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Bibliography_of_open_access
CARL Open Access http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/open_access/open_access-e.html
E-prints in Library and Information Science http://eprints.rclis.org/
Open Access Archivangelism http://openaccess.eprints.org/
Open Access Directory http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Main_Page
OA Librarian: Open access resources by and for librarians http://oalibrarian.blogspot.com/
Open Access Week http://www.openaccessweek.org/
OASPA News and Commentary http://oaspa.org/blog/
SPARC http://www.arl.org/sparc/index.shtml
Writings on Open Access http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/oawritings.htm

The fight

Regardless of subject area, open access philosophically challenges traditional scholarly publishing and hurdles remain. Greyson argues, "While the potential for universal access to online information is great, the transition does carry risks for some stakeholders and confusion for many" [8]. This confusion is precisely where the "demystifying" ability of librarians is critical. We have the responsibility and ability to educate authors and researchers about their publishing options. This is where the practical challenges enter the scene: the motivation for authors to self-archive their work in a repository, the actual process of applying to an OA author fund in addition to the time-consuming application process for research grants, and the overall perception shift required to make OA a continuing long-term success. Given the central role that libraries play in supporting OA initiatives, the success of OA can be

attributed to how well we have served and continue to serve in the OA context. OA advocate John Willinsky argues that “While it is still too early in this digital era to identify the full extent of this transformation of business models for scholarly communication, what can be concluded at this point is that the academic community will continue to exploit the Internet as the latest in a long series of technical developments that have been employed to advance the circulation of knowledge as a public good” [9]. Libraries aren’t dead, I believe they are just getting started as we embrace new services and roles. The era of OA support opens up a new world of opportunity and can only thrive with the expertise of librarians.

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