

Paper #5: Evolution of Scholarly Publishing:

Authorship and the Role of Libraries in Creating Content

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Background

Over the last decade, academic libraries have begun to take on an active role as publishers of scholarly resources. This new function for libraries has been made possible by the increasing availability of relatively low-cost, relatively easy-to-use tools for creating online publications. At the same time, there has been a growing interest among academics in using the power and low-cost of the internet to experiment with new forms of scholarly publishing and communication, and an increasing awareness that libraries and librarians are well-positioned to help because of their familiarity with both scholarly processes and the technical, stylistic and legal issues involved in online publications.

Libraries as Publishers

This new role for libraries on college and university campuses is one that is being embraced by research libraries, but is also one that liberal arts college libraries are beginning to experiment with through institutional repository software (DSpace and Digital Commons, for example) and through software designed for the display of special collections materials, such as ContentDM.

There are two primary models for the library as publisher: first, the library as publisher of materials from its collections, usually special collections holdings; and second, the library as publisher of documents and data created by others on campus.

- 1) Libraries have been electronically publishing from their own holdings since the beginnings of the web. Publishing began with online versions of collection guides and overviews of holdings, quickly moved to online versions of exhibitions, and eventually turned into electronic publication of large numbers of documents, images and publications. The variety of these online documentary publications is striking, ranging from collections of campus photos, perhaps organized and served to the web through a program like ContentDM, to large, sophisticated projects like the University of North Carolina's *Documenting the American South*. These online collections may have started as online publicity for the holding libraries, but as they have grown in size and sophistication they have gradually transformed research and teaching in the humanities. Increasingly, special collections libraries see the creation of online collections as a central function in their operations, although finding the ongoing funding and staffing to support such operations, especially in liberal arts institutions, has often been difficult.

- 2) Libraries are beginning to take on the role of online publishers of journals, reports, data, and other research materials created on their campuses. The interesting potential of institutional repository software such as DSpace and Digital Commons has led many academic libraries to acquire the software to address existing needs (posting student honors theses, for example), as well as to build the infrastructure to support future institutional and faculty needs. After several years of practice, we are beginning to see larger community uses of the libraries' IR capabilities:
 - a) Many university libraries are now publishing online journals on behalf of faculty or scholarly societies associated with their universities.
 - b) Libraries are using their sites to publicize research on campus, either by posting faculty members' published papers, or theses and dissertations written by both undergraduate and graduate students.
 - c) Library sites can be a mechanism for reporting on activities and discussions on campus, through posting written reports, transcripts (or videotapes) of discussions or presentations.
 - d) Library sites are being used for new forms of scholarly publishing, such as data sets, GIS documents, or interactive teaching modules, that can only be used in an online environment.

Other Issues

1. If the trend towards on-campus publishing fulfills its promise as an important component of scholarly publishing and communication, will, and should, libraries play a central role in supporting this work? And if they do, how will they staff and fund it so that it can function as an ongoing program?
2. Libraries at research universities are playing an active role in developing online publishing operations. Do libraries at liberal arts colleges need to develop the same capability?
3. If libraries are going to play the role of publisher, should it be a passive role, e.g., responding only to requests, or an active one that promotes the potential of the capability to faculty, students and staff on campus?
4. Do publishing libraries need more legal support to ensure that copyright and licensing issues are adequately addressed?

Bibliography

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