

What is in a Name? Introducing the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*

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What is in a Name?

Introducing the *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*

In 2011, the editor of *Learned Publishing* posed a question to academic librarians: “So, ‘scholarly communication — can we have our name back?’”¹ This request conveyed a belief that academic libraries, in our focus on open access and the serials crisis, have co-opted the term ‘scholarly communication’ and conflated it with a limited set of practices that fail to describe the breadth of the system.

This belief is not without merit. To the casual observer, ‘scholarly communication’ in many academic libraries would appear to be synonymous with ‘open access’. However, there is good reason for this: the struggle to evolve (or, more appropriately, *return*) scholarly publishing from a commercially-controlled, for-profit endeavor to a scholar-controlled, not-for-profit exchange of knowledge requires intense focus and advocacy. Accordingly, for the past 30 years,² academic libraries’ most visible engagement with scholarly communication has centered on transforming the economics of scholarly publishing.

Nonetheless, librarians do recognize that there is more to scholarly communication than formal publishing. As scholar-practitioners ourselves, we know the significance of informal exchanges. We also know that there is value in publication beyond peer-review: academic librarians champion the [formal acknowledgement of new modes of communication in the tenure and promotion process](#).³

These informal modes of scholarly communication that both librarians and other scholars depend upon are already open, flexible and responsive to the needs of those who use them. Wikis enable [collaborative research](#)⁴ and

information exchange; blogs hum with intellectual [call-and-response](#);⁵ conferences become [un-conferences](#)⁶ to be responsive to participants’ interests. Short of providing the technology and training on how to use it, there is little need for academic libraries to become involved as vocal advocates for openness in this realm. Informal communication is, by its nature, driven by individual scholars who choose how and when and why they wish to communicate.

To a certain extent, formal scholarly communication has also become more accessible and responsive. It is cheaper and easier than ever to acquire the infrastructure necessary to publish an online scholarly journal, and of course we know that the all-important labor (editors and reviewers) has always been free. Unfortunately, commercial publishers have little incentive to return this form of scholarly communication to its not-for-profit roots. As a result, academic libraries—which have always been economically tied to scholarly publishing—have entered the publishing arena. Under the banner of ‘scholarly communication’ programs, libraries now offer skills and publishing services to fill this singular need within the larger scholarly communication system.

Though the core of many library scholarly communication programs *are* focused on economic alternatives to traditional publishing—and though the casual observer may bemoan that focus—academic libraries are doing much more to support and improve scholarly communication. From [research data management](#),⁷ to [intellectual property rights](#),⁸ to the development of [alternative metrics](#),⁹ and beyond, academic libraries



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and library professionals are working daily to improve the channels and reduce the noise to allow productive scholarly communications—in many forms—to occur.

The *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* (JLSC) was founded to both recognize and embody this increasingly prominent role of libraries in shaping the future of scholarly communication. *Recognize*, in that we believe that scholarly communication librarianship has become a core service area for academic libraries, and is deserving of an intellectual home. The increase in seminars, articles and dedicated conferences—like the notable IMLS-funded [Library Publishing Services: Strategies for Success](#)¹⁰ project—all demonstrate the growing interest in library scholarly communication initiatives, and the need for a dedicated venue for exchange. *Embody*, in that this is a journal published by an academic library, with an editorial board of library scholar-practitioners, devoted to open, free and flexible communication of knowledge in our field. And in the interest of keeping the channels of communication as open as possible, we also recognize that there are other stakeholders, such as publishers, technologists, and research funders, who play an integral role in determining the future of scholarly communication. Our profession is best served by engaging in honest dialogue with them, and we hope that the work we publish will reflect these types of discussions and collaborations.

We are proud to present the inaugural issue of JLSC, which is organized around “defining scholarly communication.” As our video introduction to the issue demonstrates, librarians and related professionals are thinking about, and engaging in, scholarly communication from a variety of angles. Scholarly communication is ultimately about scholars finding meaningful ways to connect, share and credit one another. The importance of these relationships is reflected in articles by Casey and Reinsfelder; the role of proper citation in creating connections and giving credit is seen in the article by Mooney & Newton. And of course, any effort to transform the current system of scholarly communication is dependent on—what else?—clear communication. A new metric by Willmott, Dunn & Duranceau and new approach by Bell provide tools for that communication. The issue is rounded out by innovative abstracts from the SPARC Open Access 2012 meeting, thoughtful commentaries by Ogburn, Graf & Thatcher, and Marchionini, and useful evaluations of print and online resources from Bakker, Triumph,

and Wyngard. If anything is clear to readers of our first issue, we hope it is this: the definition of scholarly communication is evolving, and libraries are at the core of the (r)evolution.

This is the first of many issues and the start of many conversations. We encourage you to share your work with us—and, more importantly, with your peers. The knowledge you share through JLSC will inform practices that strengthen librarianship, evolve modes of scholarly communication, and ultimately increase our “[common Stock of Knowledge](#).”¹¹

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IN-TEXT LINKS & NOTES

¹ <http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/20110101>

² <http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/644427451>

(*The Report of the National Enquiry* seems an appropriate point from which to assess recent library involvement in scholarly communication)

³ <http://ericschnell.blogspot.com/2006/05/is-blogging-scholarly-communication.html>

⁴ http://openwetware.org/wiki/Main_Page

⁵ http://el-prod.baylor.edu/certain_doubts/

⁶ <http://www.creativeweek.com/unconference/>

⁷ <http://d2c2.lib.purdue.edu/about>

⁸ <http://www.arl.org/pp/ppcopyright/codefairuse/code/index.shtml>

⁹ <http://altmetrics.org/manifesto/>

¹⁰ http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/purduepress_ebooks/24/

¹¹ <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/bf0046p1s.jpg>

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