Evidence Based Library and Information Practice

Using Evidence in Practice

Evaluating Open Access Day 2009 at Ohio State University

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Setting

Ohio State University (OSU) is a large, land-grant university in the United States with a total enrollment of about 63,000 and with about 55,000 students at the main campus in Columbus, Ohio. The University Libraries have fifteen locations across the main campus.

Librarians working in the areas of health sciences, mathematics, chemistry, and biology began planning for OSU's first Open Access Day programming in January, 2009. The group chose October 19, 2009 to hold the program because it was during the week when universities and other organizations would be holding Open Access Week events across the world (SPARC The Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition, 2010). The planning group employed a wide variety of approaches to advertise and publicize the event, including messages on social media sites, submissions to campus media outlets, radio spots, posters, and others.

The program for Open Access Day 2009 was a panel discussion about open access publishing that featured faculty members who publish in open access journals, editors of open access journals, and commercial and society publishers' representatives. A vice president from OSU's Office of Research set the stage with opening remarks that gave a background and overview of current issues in the open access movement. All the speakers gave substantive talks that held the audience's attention. Debate was lively but remained civil. Some speakers showed a high level of advocacy toward open access, while others were more skeptical. Video of the program was streamed live over the internet to OSU's regional campuses and to other remote viewers. A spirited question and answer session followed the speakers' presentations. The Open Access Day planning group also held a lunch after the program in order for invited participants to discuss open access day issues in greater detail. Although engaging

conversation continued, attendance was sparse at this event.

Problem

Interest in open access publishing was high on campus because state budget cuts had prompted the Ohio Library and Information Network (OhioLINK) to discontinue funding for Ohio universities' authors' fees for some open access publications (L. Hartel, personal communication, October 25, 2008). As a result, a number of researchers at OSU had become more aware of how these fees had been assessed and paid, and of the amount of money involved. Nevertheless, there was a sense that more awareness was needed, and the planning group hoped that the Open Access Day 2009 program would broaden the discussion about open access publishing, both within the libraries on campus and throughout the university community.

For the first Open Access Day program, the planning group wanted a balanced presentation, one that described both the promise and the challenges of open access publishing and allowed for healthy debate and a variety of viewpoints without acrimony. The group also wanted balance in the disciplines represented, including the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Because the budget was limited, the format was a panel of local speakers and publishers' representatives. The planning group hoped the audience for the program would come from all over campus, not only from the libraries, and believed that a panel of their peers would most appeal to faculty members on campus.

The intended audience was faculty, staff, and students from both the health sciences side of campus and from the main campus community. Goals for the program included making faculty, staff, and students aware of choices in publishing, increasing awareness of scholarly communications issues, and providing information on the mechanisms and costs of open access publishing. In addition, there was a desire to open up a dialogue about

scholarly publishing between librarians and other faculty, staff, and students.

A few weeks after the program, the planning

group gathered to discuss survey results and their own reactions and to begin discussing what kind of programming would be appropriate for 2010.

Evidence

Between 45 and 50 people attended the program (the number varied because people entered and left the room during the event). The planning group gave each attendee a survey to complete, but only 11 surveys were returned. Most respondents rated the panelists and moderator highly, appreciated the physical facility where the program was held, and felt that open access would be an important subject for the university in the coming year. Anecdotal evidence suggested that many attendees were from one of the libraries on campus, and so it is likely that most of the survey responders were affiliated with one of the libraries as well, though the survey did not ask for that information.

Many of the responders to the survey commented extensively. Responders were particularly interested in the panelists' remarks about how open access might change the way universities use and evaluate impact factors and how open access publishing might change decision-making for promotion and tenure. There was also interest in information about available green (self-archiving) open access options.

In the months after the program, the author conducted interviews with a variety of stakeholders to learn their perceptions of the last year's program and to discuss what might be offered in the future. These stakeholders included the five librarians and a library staff member who had been members of the Open Access Day 2009 planning group, a librarian who works with Ohio State University's institutional repository and chairs the University Libraries Lecture Committee, the

Head of Outreach at the Prior Health Sciences Library, and staff members associated with the Center for Clinical and Translational Science at Ohio State University.

The author used the following questions in interviews with the core Open Access Day planning group:

- o What went well this year?
- o What should we change next year?
- o What topics or formats make sense to try for 2010?
- o Are you interested in being involved with planning for 2010?

The planning group members generally agreed that the program had been successful and that many library staff members had increased their understanding of the issues of open access publishing as a result. At the same time the group was also aware that very few people from outside the libraries had attended the program and that the best way to engage the wider university community was still an open question.

The group discussed holding meetings focused on individual departments in 2010, but rejected the idea because several group members believed that these meetings would be poorly attended. For a larger program, planning group members suggested the following subjects: SCOAP3, a new model for publishing in high energy physics; open access journal "failures" (journals that were not sustainable); the importance of open access in patient information and education; and the importance of open access publishing for the use of researchers in developing countries. The subject of the effect of open access on promotion and tenure and impact factors had been of high interest to 2009 attendees, particularly because OSU's president had called for an overhaul of the promotion and tenure system ("Gordon Gee," 2010). Nevertheless, the planning group concluded that any in-depth discussion of promotion and tenure on campus was beyond the group's scope. Given the low turnout in 2009, the

group had a lack of interest in sponsoring another lunch with invited guests.

The author interviewed a library faculty member involved with the libraries' lecture series and the institutional repository using the same questions used in the planning group's interviews. This individual indicated an interest in being more closely involved with Open Access Week planning for 2010 in order to provide a tie to other library programming and to contribute more specific information on the university's self-archiving options. The author also conducted an interview with the Prior Health Sciences Library Head of Outreach, which centered on the likelihood of receiving grant funding and the logistics of applying for it. During this meeting and in subsequent ones, several additional sources of grant funding were identified.

The final interview was with staff from the Center for Clinical and Translational Studies in order to assess the Center's interest in scholarly communications issues and programming in 2010. The interviewer started by describing the 2009 program and then asked about what sort of interest the Center staff or their researchers had in open access publishing and what sort of programming would be effective. This interview was less fruitful. Beyond making sure researchers comply with the NIH Public Access Policy when required, the Center staff did not have a pressing interest in authors' rights or open access. They were, however, willing to publicize programs about open access devised by others.

Implementation

All planning group members have continued to work on programming for Open Access Week 2010, and the group has added several new members. Based on the survey and interview results, 2010 programming will expand to a full week and will include three keynote speakers' programs and two smaller seminars. One keynote speaker will be a professor and journal editor who will speak on

sustainable publishing models in mathematics. The other keynote speaker will discuss the importance of open access publishing for patient and consumer health information. She will give one lecture for the university community and one lecture for the general public. University libraries' staff members will lead the seminars on copyright, authors' rights, self-archiving, and the NIH Public Access Policy.

In 2010 the planning group will redesign the survey to take into account the larger variety of programming to be offered and to capture information about whether or not attendees are affiliated with one of the libraries on campus. To boost the return rate, the group will offer small premiums to those who complete the survey. It would be desirable to measure whether knowledge of the issues of open access publishing improves as the result of Open Access Week programming. The planning group considered administering an additional survey to attendees before each program but rejected the notion as too intrusive.

Outcome

Expanded programming for Open Access Week 2010 will emphasize the themes that last year's attendees found meaningful and that the planning group believes will draw a wider and more diverse audience. More people are involved in the planning process. At this writing, acting on advice from one of the interviews, the group has obtained grant money from two additional sources for 2010 programming. One of these successful grant applications has facilitated a partnership with learning technology groups on campus for help with publicity and outreach. The full impact and efficacy of the 2010 changes are unknown until the programs take place. To help measure that impact, in 2010 the group will use a re-designed survey and more assertive methods to improve survey results. If those results are more reliable, they may help the group learn whether the decisions they made were effective and may provide more

complete guidance for future prospects in this area.

Reflection

Using Open Access Day 2009 survey results and interviews to make decisions about 2010 programming was a straightforward process. Methodical use of interviews was particularly useful to help widen planning group participation, to obtain more grant money, and to make new partnerships.

What is less straightforward to determine is whether use of that evidence will help the 2010 programming meet the continuing challenge of making faculty, staff, and students outside the libraries aware of the role open access and other scholarly communications issues plays in research and teaching today. This is one of the planning group's more difficult goals. Paradoxically, most of the evidence used to plan 2010 Open Access Week programming came from library faculty and staff, and so it is likely to reflect that group's interests and concerns primarily. The evidence to determine the best ways to reach members of the university community who are not part of the libraries may need to come from other methods and instruments.

Acknowledgements

The author thanks the members of the 2009 Open Access Day Planning group at Ohio State University and the organizers of and attendees at the Evidence-Based Scholarly Communications Conference, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, March 11-12, 2010 for their help and support.

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