

# SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION SERVICES

## FROM AN ISLAND, YOU CAN BUILD BRIDGES

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In 2012, my library reorganized to align with a new strategic plan. As a result, my position changed and I needed a new job title. My dean suggested *scholarly communication librarian*, to which I had a strong reaction. “What on earth does scholarly communication even mean?” After some discussion, we settled on *faculty research support librarian*, agreeing that it more clearly communicated my role to campus. I was tasked with developing services for assisting faculty throughout the research life cycle. I didn’t have a department or even a group of other librarians who also embraced this work. It was just me on my island, and it wasn’t a sunny tropical island but a medium-sized Midwest public university library with not enough librarians (thirteen) to serve the growing student population (now 20,000), let alone over 500 faculty. My acquired competencies for this position at this point included some basic expertise in copyright, I had recently served as open access track lead for a regional teaching conference where I also presented on institutional repositories, and I was the author of two peer-reviewed articles. I thought back to four years earlier when I was assigned to support the School of Nursing and the School of Health Sciences with no corresponding experience beyond having been a patient. To alleviate my sense of impostor syndrome, I completed every continuing education course I could find on evidence-based medicine, PubMed, and systematic reviews. Fortunately, many courses were free and my administration financed the cost when there was a fee.

With my new title in hand, I set forth, sometimes deliberately and sometimes fortuitously, to develop my skills and knowledge. Reflecting on this eight-year journey, the following themes emerge.

## BUILD COMPETENCIES

Seek out and immerse yourself in professional development opportunities. Be creative in finding funding, ask your administration for support, apply for scholarships, ask if registration fees may be waived. Many webinars are free and allow you to gain a deeper understanding of topics such as copyright, altmetrics, data sharing, open education, and myriad related and other topics. Identify and attend conferences that will provide opportunities to enhance your

competencies and professional connections. I argued that these events directly contributed to building my skills and should be financed from administrative travel funds rather than my limited faculty travel budget. There is also an abundance of literature to read, and a growing amount of it is freely and openly available.

## FIND COMMUNITY

As members of a service-oriented profession, librarians are characteristically welcoming and supportive. Introduce yourself to others doing scholarly communication work, either by chatting at poster sessions or after a presentation or even over e-mail. A game changer for increasing my professional opportunities and expert network was convincing my dean (the third in ten years) to join the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC). SPARC is a leader and driving force for the open access, open data, and open education movements. Social media is another great way to tap into these communities. I had long resisted Twitter.\* Now I can't imagine not having this network to connect and stay up-to-date with the open community (see #opened, #openaccess, #OER, #copyright, #ScholComm). The American Library Association (ALA) e-mail discussion list SCHOLCOMM and others also remain vital connections to communities of experts. Whatever your focal areas, find and connect with that network!

## BORROW

You rarely need to start from scratch to develop a presentation or guide. Most librarians are more than happy to share their materials. My first presentation on copyright was borrowed almost completely, and I hoped no one would ask questions because I was so unsure of my abilities. Years later, the attribution on the presentation remains, but I'm pretty sure none of the original slides are still included and I very much welcome questions. Consider openly licensing your own work to participate in this culture of sharing.

## BUILD BRIDGES

Find collaborators even if you have to grow your own. Provide professional development opportunities for your library colleagues to build their competencies. This will also help offset the load when faculty start requesting assistance. Forge relationships with faculty members throughout campus. Seniority often brings influence; find and befriend those who have longevity on campus, those whose values align with yours, and those who can help you influence the ones that don't.

## NETWORK

Attend every campus event that presents itself, such as open forums, research office workshops, and graduate student presentations. Engage with presenters and other attendees, ask questions, learn more about their work and interests. Insert information about the library into these conversations. Sit with people you don't know at events, tell them what you do, and learn

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\* Twitter's acquisition in late 2022 by Elon Musk and subsequent controversies led many people, including librarians, to reconsider their use of the platform. The main point stands: Social media can be a helpful tool for developing professional communities.

about what they do. Expanding your connections beyond the academic faculty by meeting staff and administrators can be really valuable for future collaborations and initiatives.

## BE VISIBLE

Seek opportunities to speak at department meetings, host events, and offer workshops on scholarly communication topics. Even if only a few people come, which happens to all of us, every conversation has value. Build a scholarly communication services web page that you can point to as a reference and as evidence of the library's engagement with these issues.

## SERVICE

Seek service roles that intersect with your work. For me, this included the university research committee, e-learning and instruction support advisory board, academic computing committee, and responsible conduct of research faculty advisory committee. Librarians are often overloaded with service, but I've found it has always benefited me in some way. It's common that the most engaged people on campus tend to be of the same small group; meeting and connecting with these people is essential.

## PUBLISH

Participate in the publication life cycle in whatever way you can. Be a peer reviewer. Serve on an editorial board. Write and submit articles and book chapters for publication. What you learn from these experiences will enhance your understanding of the research process and aid your growth as a professional in ways no other experience can.

## BECOME YOUR TITLE

Have a thirty-second elevator pitch ready. You will frequently need to explain what you do in relatable terms. Consider how to adjust for different disciplines or career status. Practice explaining your job to your parents and nonlibrarian friends. If they get it, then you're ready.

In 2016, after five years of doing the work in the capacity of faculty research support librarian, I had my title officially changed to scholarly communications librarian. I requested and embraced this change. I finally connected with my role and found my professional community. The library was ready, the campus was ready, and many more people now understood what this work entailed. Through persistence, I am no longer alone on an island. I am recognized in the library and on campus as an expert, and I have built bridges with my library faculty colleagues, the research office, graduate school, e-learning, center for teaching, academic departments, and a national network of colleagues.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Oakland University Libraries. "Kresge Library Open Access Fund." <https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/OAFund.html>.

- . “Kresge Library Open Access Resolution.” [https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/OU LibrariesOpenAccessResolution%20FINAL\\_ACCEPT-EDVERISON\\_LOGO.pdf](https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/OU LibrariesOpenAccessResolution%20FINAL_ACCEPT-EDVERISON_LOGO.pdf).
  - . “Scholarly Communications.” <https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/>.
  - . “Workshop Menu.” [https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/FacultyWorkshopMenuupdate%202018\\_19New%20format.pdf](https://library.oakland.edu/services/scholarly-communication/FacultyWorkshopMenuupdate%202018_19New%20format.pdf).
- Scholarly Communication Presentations folder, Google Drive, <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1oxodYMNv1HwhdEXuidTmpGocGLdccPg9?usp=sharing>

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why are community and a network of peers important to your developing professional practice?
2. How might authoring and presenting scholarship increase an academic librarian’s credibility and professional performance?
3. Given your interests, identify a topical conference you might attend, a journal you might submit an article to, a relevant social media hashtag, and an e-mail discussion list (LISTSERV). For each, how would these resources advance your goals, and what are the ways you might engage with them?