
Academic Library-Based Publishing: A State of the Evolving Art

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ABSTRACT

As technology has advanced, scholarly communication has evolved, creating new opportunities for academic libraries to serve researchers. This article examines the current state and potential future of academic library-based publishing. The review of the literature explores the scholarly communication ecosystem as it pertains to new publishing paradigms supported by academic libraries, including the complexity of nontraditional publishing models. These models and their implications, as well as how they may be implemented, are then explored in the academic library environment. Next, survey data from nineteen academic librarians collected at the American Library Association Midwinter Meeting in January 2015 is presented. Based on the literature and the survey data, this article argues that the principle concerns for academic library-based publishing going forward include 1) the need for the dedicated and/or sustained financial models for library-based publishing initiatives and 2) the cultural and financial capital to support librarians as they further expand their knowledge and expertise to support additional publishing-related functionalities in support of these new models. Both of these concerns ultimately tie to the persistent question of perceived quality, and by extension, reputation, of library-based publishing and open access publishing more broadly.

INTRODUCTION

In academia, reputation is key. Scholarly communication provides a forum for sharing and disseminating research results—an environment where content is king (Regazzi 2015) and reputations follow. Mechanisms such

as double-blind peer review arguably ensure high quality of the research being put forward (Kelly, Sadeghieh, and Adeli 2014), thereby reinforcing the standards and reputation of the outputs. Metrics have been developed over the past sixty-five years to measure the impact (and perceived value, and reputation) of scholarly venues, starting with Eugene Garfield's Impact Factor for journals in 1955 (Garfield 1999); a suite of journal metrics now exist that are actively endorsed by academic librarians in support of their patrons (Suiter and Moulaison 2015).

A host of additional measures now exist to provide quantitative data regarding the impact of individual scholars. Scholarly identity metrics such as the various h-indices and related indices based on publications and citation patterns (e.g., the g-index, the e-index, the AW-index, etc.)¹ supply information about scholars that could be used to compare them to others in their field. Other scholarly identity mechanisms such as ORCID identifiers support those initiatives, and profiles on Google Scholar pages and through social media platforms such as ResearchGate and Academia .edu allow scholars to promote and share research (Suiter and Moulaison 2015). The impact and perceived value of both scholars and their work in online environments can also be demonstrated through various types of altmetrics, especially those that gauge attention paid to research on social media and news media outlets (Priem et al. 2010). In this way, altmetrics "recognize the breadth of a scientist's intellectual contributions" in a more public context (Piwowar 2013, 159).

Why, then, in a post-Impact Factor scholarly ecosystem, where metrics exist for numerous other aspects of the scholarly communication process and the value of one's personal reputation, should the quality and value of an author and his or her work not be extracted from and evaluated independently of the venue in which he or she publishes? We assume, as Reggie Raju (2017) does, that all external motivations for scholarly publishing can be seen to distill down to the desire to be "read by the widest possible audience" (2). Given rapid changes to the field of scholarly communication wrought by the technological advancements shaping all aspects of the research process (Regazzi 2015), the time is right for information professionals to explore new ways to support scholars' efforts to produce high-quality research—the kind of research that has a positive impact both on their field of endeavor and on the reputation of the institution where they work.

Indeed, the evolving landscape of scholarly communication "can be directly correlated with perceived failures of and inequities in the contemporary scholarly publishing ecosystem" (Lippincott 2017, under "Opening Access to Scholarship"). At great cost, libraries have purchased scholarly works from publishers in order to make them available as common goods; ironically, they provide this service to the very scholars who create the works in the first place (see Mangiafico and Smith 2014; Courant and

Jones 2015). For the reasons explored in this issue of *Library Trends*, “library consumer dissatisfaction with the costs and use constraints imposed by commercial publishers” has encouraged libraries to explore alternative options for sharing scholarly research (Bonn and Furlough 2015, 3). A number of ideas have been tested and proven successful, for example, collaborative efforts between libraries and traditional presses, including Project Muse, Highwire Press, and Project Euclid (Lippincott 2017). Another option for re-envisioning the scholarly communication process is through the creation of materials published via nontraditional means. Mark Mattson, Sarah Pickle, Andrew Gearhart, and James O’Sullivan (2016) assess that the *social mechanisms* are increasingly in place for the sustainability of open access (OA) as a means of scholarly communication, implying that libraries can begin to capitalize on these changes to promote a new paradigm for communication.

In short, with the advance of information and social infrastructures, libraries have found a way to push back by “actively explor[ing] alternative means and models for scholarly publication” (Bonn and Furlough 2015, 3; cf. Okerson and Holzman 2015), and the time is right for these means and models to be accepted and valued by the academic community. This article considers what it means for the academic library to function as an alternative publishing paradigm for scholarship in a rapidly evolving scholarly communication ecosystem.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following review of the literature explores the scholarly communication ecosystem as it pertains to new publishing paradigms supported by academic libraries. We begin by exploring traditional and nontraditional publishing models, and what alternative publishing means in the academic library context. Next, we consider the roles that librarians have already taken as part of the scholarly communication process in relation to content creation, especially, and we look to their work in OA. Lastly, we consider caveats and concerns identified in the literature as being potential barriers or roadblocks to these initiatives.

Traditional and Alternative Publishing Models

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *publishing* as it relates to books, etc., in the following way: “The action or business of preparing and issuing books, newspapers, etc., for public sale or distribution; an instance of this.”² Traditional publishing goes far beyond simply disseminating content on behalf of authors for money. “Part of the essence of this model was the role of the publisher as a filter to guarantee quality” (Bankhead 2015, 8). For instance, traditional publishers have brought to the creation and dissemination of content a variety of value-added editorial and production services designed to augment the quality and influence of their

publications. One result has been trust by authors and readers alike in the expertise and reputation of traditional publishers (Myers and Wight 2016). Publishers work closely with authors throughout the book-creation process—from conception of the idea and the assurance of market need, to the crafting of the content and copyediting of the author's words, to the layout of the text and the selection of cover art, to legal aspects including securing an ISBN and applying for copyright, to marketing of the final product (Moulaison Sandy 2016).

Publishing, however, has a connotation of an institution making a profit on the sale of another's work; for instance, definitions of publishing used in German associate the activity inextricably with a for-profit enterprise (see Schmolling 2015 as well as the English definition above). With recent advances in technology, though, not all publishers are necessarily for-profit entities. Libraries, including both academic (e.g., the institutions listed in the *Library Publishing Directory* (Library Publishing Coalition Directory Committee 2018) and public (see Bankhead 2015; Moulaison Sandy 2016)) have been experimenting with alternative publishing models as a way of supporting content creation.

Alternative (i.e., nontraditional) publishing models can be a way to encourage the unmediated dissemination of content, both scholarly and otherwise, without the intervention of traditional publishers. *Self-publishing* is a complex notion, especially when it comes to electronic materials, since it more readily applies to print (see Bankhead 2015). "According to people who work in traditional publishing houses, authors who pay for their editing, formatting, or cover design are self-publishing their work. The book is traditionally published only if the publishing expenses are paid by the publisher" (Hillcrest Media Group, n.d.). Three refinements to this model, particularly adapted to new technologies, including ebooks and e-resources, are as follows: 1) *independent self-publishing*, where the author is responsible for all aspects of book production and sales and might outsource some aspects that are outside of his or her areas of expertise, 2) *self-publishing with a company*, where a company is paid by the author to support some or all of the publishing process, and 3) *print-on-demand self-publishing*, where a company prints (or publishes to the web) a product, often with support for design or layout (Hillcrest Media Group, n.d.). Yet, these models are not mutually exclusive, and overlap exists based on the alternative publishing venue being retained by the author and the nature of the format.

Against this backdrop, the question emerges in regards to what it truly means to publish. And by extension, what does it mean to be a publisher? There is likewise disagreement over what exactly is meant by these terms in the context of academic libraries, especially, with a resulting Tower of Babel in the Library and Information Science (LIS) literature surrounding the literature being produced by information professionals researching

and writing about library publishing and other nontraditional publishing initiatives. One of the biggest areas of confusion surrounds the publication of online resources.

At the most basic level, information professionals uniformly consider that posting a resource and making it available through a digital library or an institution's institutional repository (IR) is a form of publishing (Borgman 1999; Schmolling 2015). Resource Description & Access (RDA), the current international library cataloging standard, for example, considers electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) and indeed "all online resources to be published" (RDA Toolkit 2018, Instruction 2.8.1.1); in the case of ETDs, these resources, vetted not by the library but instead by the student's committee, will generally be made available electronically on the web through a library's IR. At the same time, some commercial online self-publishing platforms do little more than make a text-based resource available to a wider audience through printing a run or posting a file to an ebook platform.³ Is this publishing, or a form of self-publishing, that is being carried out?

Not all content will have mass appeal, and in these cases in particular, alternative publishing is becoming increasingly recognized as an option for sharing one's work. For authors with niche interests that will not appeal to a broad audience, self-publishing may be the only option—a point we return to below from the library's perspective. Additionally, public libraries and special collections may have an interest in unique, local resources that, due to their character or format, can only be viably disseminated through self-publishing platforms. Despite this growing recognition and demand, there persists an expectation that self-published materials will be of inferior quality because they will not pass the litmus test of being shepherded through the publishing process by a for-profit publishing house. The presumption is that the end products will have not undergone the rigors of the publishing process under the aegis of a reputable publishing house and are therefore lesser. Indeed, the notion that self-publishing produces inferior quality work has afflicted the industry for years (Limb 2016), at times with cause.

From the content side, many are poorly written with typos and formatting errors, have abysmal cover art, and are difficult to purchase especially if published only in a proprietary format. Practically, most of these books lack cataloging, don't receive reviews, aren't carried by the traditional vendors, and get minimal marketing except for the authors who want the local library to buy the book and/or sponsor a book talk. (Holley 2015, 2)

Yet, for niche materials, especially ones produced through an alternative vetting process, there is no reason to assume that they are tainted with all of the hallmarks of low quality. The stigma is especially pronounced among academics, tainting even some open access publications that are subject

to the traditional rigors of publishing. Despite it all, academics who self-publish or who publish through nontraditional venues (and sometimes who publish open access) are perceived to be embarking on a last-ditch effort to see their work in print before going up for tenure. Before the dawn of digital humanities, at least, self-publishing sounded the death knell to one's academic career (Tyson 2014; see Holbrook 2015, 52).

With the emergence of publishing technologies and of organizations designed only to support nontraditional publishing models, including ones that sell "author services" based on the needs and budgets of the authors with whom they work, alternative publishing is not only becoming viable but is also, some have argued, intellectually respectable and sociologically transformative (Vadde 2017). "As awareness of the fallibility of mainstream publishing has spread, the stigma attached to self-publishing has diminished" ("Doing It Yourself" 2003, 20). One might even argue that, given the possibility to measure an author's value independently of the reputation of the publishing house that he or she has secured, modern scholarly communications technologies are freeing authors to create and distribute their work like never before while increasing the value of their personal brand.

Academic Libraries as Publishers

To support the scholars of academic institutions, a number of academic libraries have developed publishing services targeted to their patrons' needs. The Library Publishing Coalition (2018, homepage) defines *academic library publishing* as

the set of activities led by college and university libraries to support the creation, dissemination, and curation of scholarly, creative, and/or educational works. Generally, library publishing requires a production process, presents original work not previously made available, and applies a level of certification to the content published, whether through peer review or extension of the institutional brand.

Library publishing, although not commonly considered a traditional role of libraries, has existed in a variety of forms in the past. As Ann Okerson and Alex Holzman (2015) point out, libraries published printed catalogs of their own holdings as early as the 1600s. Additionally, "certain major U.S. university presses," including University of California and possibly Cornell, "were started from within libraries" (Okerson and Holzman 2015, 2–3). Success with university press and library partnerships has been uneven, with some small university presses managed by the university library being seen, in some cases, to have a reputation "far too low to attract authors of high ranked papers and theses" (Schmolling 2015, 3). Beyond publishing new content, "many libraries have published or commissioned work based on their collections" (Harboe-Ree 2007, 15), reprinting in

print or online the wealth of their collections for materials that are out of copyright.

Going forward, libraries unquestionably have the technology and expertise to support online access to locally produced content (Brantley, Bruns, and Duffin 2017; Lefevre and Huwe 2013). “Institutional repositories have shown a big potential for changing the value creation chain: Universities act as producers and libraries as repository organizers and disseminators” (Schmolling 2015, 4). Academic library publishing initiatives focused on OA electronic journal-based communications, especially journals that are associated with a local society or organization, have seen broad success (see Adema and Schmidt 2010, 29). Citing Hahn’s 2008 report from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), Janneke Adema and Birgit Schmidt (2010) note that “publishing services are rapidly becoming a norm for research libraries” (32). In the spirit of this innovation, Cathrine Harboe-Ree (2007) proclaims that “this is a time of opportunity, of finding innovative ways of using new technologies, of reconsidering intellectual property policies and practices, of redefining the role of academic libraries in quite radical ways” (23). Some of the most interesting manifestations of academic library-based publishing, however, are in decidedly less traditional domains that nonetheless constitute crucial scholarly content at the heart of the contemporary intellectual record.

First, academic libraries have stepped in as publishers of digital humanities content and other “less formal types of digital scholarly resources” (Mattson et al. 2016, 162) that do not “correspond one-to-one to the analog printed world” (Schmolling 2015, 7). This includes formats that traditional publishers have failed to accommodate, such as “text markup and digital cultural heritage exhibitions” (Mattson et al. 2016, 162) as well as “images, audio, and video data need[ing] a more interactive access” (Schmolling 2015, 8) and publications that go beyond text-based scholarship to view problems differently using computer-based methods, including visualizations and interactivity. For instance, D. Russell Bailey (2017) of Providence College reports on the Dorr Rebellion project, a digital library of multimedia historical content built collaboratively between college faculty and the library. Regine Schmolling (2015) enumerates a suite of publishing and republishing activities for both text and nontext materials at Trier University Library and the Bavaria State Library (BSB, Munich). The digital storytelling work being done by undergraduates at Mercy College and supported by the library (Sakarya 2013) might also be considered humanistic content. In short, digital humanists are increasingly finding the support they need for their research endeavors at the library and are disseminating it thanks to expertise housed in the library.

A second area of academic library-based publishing regards data curation and research data management. As Burton and Jackson (2015) point out, “data curation resembles many of the activities essential to publishing:

quality assurance, discovery, and added value through format enhancement” (205). Hence, they propose, data curation is a form of publishing (2015). Data from the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in Canada and the United States reveals that in 2015–2016, there were roughly 225 librarians in member institutions with the title and responsibilities of data curation and research data management (RDM) librarian or, more generally, scholarly communication librarian (including support for open access), a number that has steadily grown over time (Million, Moulaison Sandy, and Hudson-Vitale 2018). Schmolling (2015) sees academic libraries of the future as “co-publishers” (8) of research data. She points, for example, to the example of TextGrid (<https://www.textgrid.de/home/>), “a consortium of ten partners, funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and maintained by Göttingen State and University Library. It has established an infrastructure for a virtual research environment and offers scholars of the humanities a sustainable editing, storing and publishing environment for their data” (Schmolling 2015, 8–9). Humanists, scientists, and social scientists all seem to be creating data; the library is now equipping itself to assist in managing that content through its hosting and publishing capacities.

Third, academic libraries are supporting the creation and use of Open Educational Resources (OERs). Working in collaboration with faculty, academic libraries have launched initiatives “to find alternative textbooks that are assembled from library and open-access resources and open textbooks that are free or freely distributed online” (Oberlander 2015, 178). Alternatively, faculty members or other scholars associated with the university author the OERs themselves, making the OERs a wholly self-published product (Hess, Nann, and Riddle 2016). Levels of support for OERs vary by institution, with some libraries helping faculty identify suitable open resource alternatives for adoption, while others provide financial and technical support to faculty for authoring or adapting open textbooks (Oberlander 2015).

Although textbooks are not considered scholarly (Regazzi 2015),⁴ the context of library-based OER initiatives is similarly rooted in an increasingly untenable financial model, not unlike scholarly journals. Citing findings from a 2012 study, Oberlander (2015, 178) notes that 64 percent of 22,000 students surveyed did not purchase a required textbook because of the cost. What is more, since textbooks support the learning that goes on at institutions of higher education and are often published by the same publishers that dominate the scholarly publishing market, it makes sense to approach them as a component of scholarly communication. This is all the more so given that some OERs are scholarly or creative in content, such as “videos, journals, audio recordings, visual materials, and other types of course content” (Ferguson 2017, 34). Anecdotally, OERs seem to be of high interest on a number of university campuses in North America.

“As with any innovation, OER face a number of challenges. For university faculty, the most pressing of these is the question of quality” (Hess, Nann, and Riddle 2016, 130), echoing concerns about other self-published and nontraditionally published materials that are frequently voiced.

Toward an Academic Library Publishing Role

What emerges from the preceeding review? First, that whereas early institutional and disciplinary repositories focused on faculty preprints and ETDs, the hallmark of contemporary publishing in academic libraries is its broad range of creative and intellectual outputs. This breadth, however, is not inchoate and should not be mistaken for a lack of focus. On the contrary, library publishing has enthusiastically claimed a space in the scholarly communication landscape, specifically by providing a home for the range of content that is routinely ignored by other scholarly publishers. “Many library publishers have found a niche in catering to publications that break the mold. They embrace projects with limited readership and unconventional subjects and seek out high-quality content, regardless of its format or the logistical challenges of publication” (Lippincott 2017, under “Why Library Publishing?”). Royster (2014), for instance, depicts the mission of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) library publishing program as providing a “publishing outlet for scholarly work that does not fit other available publication models,” either because that work is “too long, too short, too esoteric, too expensive, too complicated, [or just] too strange” (slide 18). Often content of library publications is locally produced, and in this way, libraries have embraced “their stewarding roles for campus scholarly output” (Lippincott 2016, 187).

Second, while the extent to which academic libraries engage in any of the types of publishing discussed so far is quite varied, most acknowledge the importance of supporting or encouraging open access to scholarship. According to the Budapest Open Access Initiative, open access can be considered “free and unrestricted online availability,” especially to journal literature (Budapest Open Access Initiative 2002, “Read” para 2). In this way, some kind of open access publishing is a “more-or-less universal” feature of contemporary library publishing (Library Publishing Coalition Directory Committee 2018, x). That open access would appeal to academic libraries makes sense. After all, its tenets are consistent with academic library values to provide the broadest possible access to resources, at least at a basic level (Courant and Jones 2015). With libraries’ primary function shifting from physical “object-gathering” to digital “access brokerage” (Anderson 2015, under “The Multidimensional”), it has become easier for librarians to re-envision what broadest possible access can mean: it can mean open access.

Beyond this, though, open access has a political appeal as a protest against the economic dysfunctions of the scholarly communication ecosys-

tem. Libraries have been saddled with a combination of rising journal subscription costs and shrinking library budgets, making it hard to provide broad access even at a basic level. When coupled with restrictive licenses and digital rights management protections, as well as the continued inattention of traditional presses to “gray literature, data, learning objects, digital humanities projects, and other nontraditional forms of scholarly and creative output,” open access library publishing appeared as a logical solution (Lippincott 2017, under “Opening Access to Scholarship”). In fact, “the research library has become a principal actor in, and motivator for, the scholarly OA movement on many academic campuses” (Mattson et al. 2016, 162).

Open access library publishing includes a variety of content, from preprints and technical reports to digital humanities projects and other nontraditional formats. Among these, however, OA scholarly journals stand out. In 2018 the Library Publishing Coalition directory reported that 685 journal titles were published by libraries. Although not all are OA, “open access journal publishing is by far the most common activity” (Lippincott 2017, introduction). Still, library OA journal publishing constitutes only a small fraction of journal titles published annually. Hence, to the extent that the OA movement is making a political statement, it is less through OA journals published by libraries than through OA “of the [g]reen variety”—that is, through self-archived preprints of manuscripts published in traditional journals (Anderson 2017); and by providing funding to cover article processing charges (APCs) (i.e., publishing fees) for authors pursuing gold OA with a traditional press (Reinsfelder and Pike 2018).

Caveats and Concerns

A number of caveats to active library participation in publishing initiatives have been identified in the literature, with the question of expertise, as well as the question of funding, being left somewhat unresolved.

Expertise in scholarly communication (i.e., in this case, “modern digital scholarship”) is becoming increasingly common in academic libraries (Brantley, Bruns, and Duffin 2017), but in terms of technical expertise, not necessarily in terms of publishing expertise. Julie Lefevre and Terence K. Huwe advocated in 2013 for the skills and competencies associated with the suite of activities considered *digital publishing* to be considered core competencies in libraries; by extension, these competencies would also support the *technical* (emphasis, ours) aspects of academic library publishing. Adema and Schmidt (2010) identify “strengths, skills, and services” (37) that librarians already provide in support of library book publishing in the humanities and social sciences (HSS), including things like digitization and digital production, as well as the selection and provision of platforms for making digital content available. Adema and Schmidt (2010)

also note concerns relevant to the protection (and use of) intellectual property in OA book publishing.

The scholarly communication skills and technologies that librarians are perfecting, although essential to library publishing, are not enough to support full-scale publishing initiatives *writ large* in the same way that for-profit publishers do. The work of traditional publishers involves a number of skills that extend beyond the usual work that librarians are taking on in the area of scholarly communication, such as the ones mentioned above (e.g., cover art creation and page layout, editing and copyediting, market analysis for readership, and profit analysis). Harboe-Ree (2007) notes:

In this time of flux libraries are also exploring whether or not they have the skills to thrive as electronic publishers. It is interesting to note that, while many library staff contribute to the Monash University ePress and it was librarians who initiated it, the core staff, including the manager and a specialist marketing manager, now come from a traditional academic publishing background. This is because, while library staff have many of the technical skills required, they do not have the necessary commissioning, editing or marketing skills. Traditional publishers add value through quality control, as already mentioned, as well as by establishing and managing distribution and access channels. Libraries' strengths lie in the technical aspects of distribution and access, but this is less the case in cost recovery models, where greater effort has to be made to find and secure subscribers or readers. (23)

Although finding aspects of the publishing enterprise that correspond with work already being carried out in libraries is somewhat easy, finding expertise in the areas specific to publishing will represent a considerably greater challenge. This echoes the concerns raised by Moulaison Sandy (2016) in the public library self-publishing environment in regards to the ability of librarians to support self-publishing initiatives when authors know so little about the work done by publishers in the first place. In that environment, although "authors may understand the mechanics of writing, they do not seem to have a clear vision of how their writing maps to their audience and future readers, or how author services might influence the lasting nature of the final product they are producing" (16). When libraries take on the role of publisher, they need to be prepared to support their authors in these highly specialized tasks.

Skills to support publishing should also be considered to include competencies related to financial aspects of the venture. Adema and Schmidt (2010) raise concerns about funding models for library publishing, specifically in the humanities and social sciences, stating, "Naturally, there are still many challenges concerning OA book publishing for libraries. The quest for sustainable business models and funding of OA publishing is ongoing. Most of the library OA book publishing initiatives are still in an experimental stage, and it is thus hard to predict whether they will be

sustainable in the long run” (38). Schmolling (2015) notes that, in regards to the revised (future) mission of the library to support publishing of and long-term access to academic products such as data, the mission “can only be realized with the investment of additional financial resources” (Schmolling 2015, 8).

From where will that funding to support the creation of and long-term access to library-published content emerge? OERs have seen support recently (see Ferguson 2017), but the budget crisis continues to loom large at most institutions of higher education. Some envision OA library-based publishing programs as weathering the budget crisis, courtesy of redirected funds from more traditional resources (Reinsfelder and Pike 2018). Others are less sanguine, viewing this siphoning of funds toward OA library publishing as a tension that divides libraries and librarians (Anderson 2015).

An overarching concern, relating to both the suite of skills necessary and the funding models that need to be developed, is that of library-wide standards and established best practices for publishing. Groups such as SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition; <https://sparcopen.org/>) are providing guidance on implementing open access, especially in the North American context, and resources such as the *Library Publishing Toolkit* (Brown 2013) provide access to numerous case studies on a variety of relevant topics, including academic library publishing of monographs, journals, and other materials. Schmolling (2015) reminds us, “In spite of several national and collaborative initiatives, we are still lacking a supranational strategy for the digitization of all relevant analog research resources, for the transformation of the cultural heritage into a digital infrastructure” (10). With each library left to its own devices at present, and with the field too young for established practices to have emerged and withstood the rigors of testing, libraries must independently define publishing and self-publishing, recruit for it, finance it, and subsequently implement it, tasks that promise to be as daunting as they are rewarding.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the review of the literature, we find that library publishing initiatives are expanding and growing, as is interest in exploring the future directions for supporting scholarly communication initiatives. As interest increases, however, no single clear way forward emerges. Given the increasingly complex nature of scholarship and the field of scholarly communication, as well as limitations stemming from financial burdens being felt by libraries and their sponsoring institutions, we consider the following question:

RQ1: What is needed to support academic library publishing initiatives going forward?

Based on the literature, library publishing in some form will continue as a way that libraries support the scholarly communication process along with the stakeholders they serve. If library publishing is indeed a logical step forward in the current scholarly communication ecosystem, what is needed to support its advancement? The present study relies heavily on the literature reviewed along with empirical research in the form of survey data to address this question.

METHOD

To investigate academic library work in library publishing and impressions and concerns felt by academic librarians interested in self-publishing through libraries, a paper-based survey was distributed to attendees at the American Library Association (ALA) Midwinter Forum entitled "Libraries as Publishers: Next Steps in Self-Publishing?," an event held on Monday, February 2, 2015, at 10:30 a.m. This forum was presented under the aegis of the ALA Association of Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS).⁵ A copy of the survey is available through the MOspace repository: <https://hdl.handle.net/10355/45886>. A total of thirty-three session participants responded to the survey, nineteen of whom self-identified as academic librarians. The responses of the academic librarians have been retained for analysis, and the results are presented below.

RESULTS

The majority of survey respondents ($n=12$; 63%) were not at libraries with any kind of publishing initiative. Seven of the nineteen respondents (37%) were in libraries with an initiative in place, and of them, only two were at institutions with initiatives that were in any way mature. See figure 1 for more information.

The third question of the short survey asked respondents to indicate what most concerned them about publishing and libraries—respondents were given a list of options, as well as a write-in option, and were asked to check all that applied. Options provided were the following: Equipment costs; Costs to hire/train staff; Legal concerns (e.g., that photo we published wasn't authorized); Usefulness to users (if we build it, will they come?); Unforeseen issues with sponsoring self-publishing initiatives; Programming to support self-publishing; and New publishing-related services to implement (i.e., ISBN services). The nineteen respondents tended to select a number of concerns, with those concerns being, in descending order of frequency of selection: staffing costs ($n=9$; selected by 47%); the usefulness of such an initiative ($n=8$; selected by 42%); legal concerns ($n=7$; selected by 37%); and the cost of equipment as well as new services ($n=5$; selected by 26%).

Figure 2 graphically represents information about the concerns while breaking out the status of publishing initiatives in the libraries where the

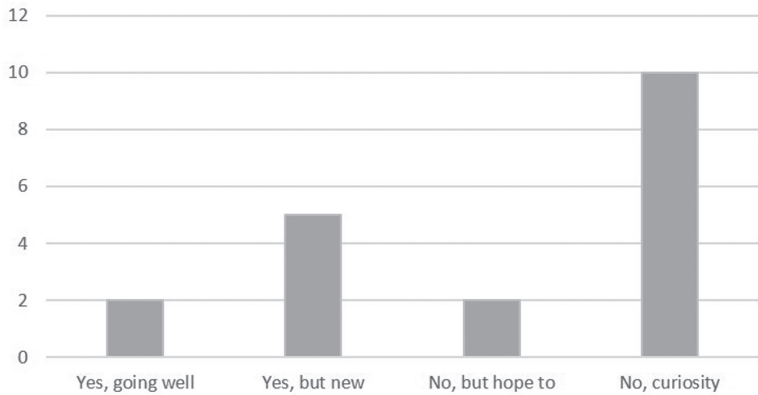


Figure 1. Responses to survey question into the status of publishing initiatives at the librarian's home institution

respondents are employed. Respondents with no program in place whatsoever, who were only curious about library publishing initiatives (n=10), unsurprisingly had a number of concerns, but were by far the largest group sampled. Respondents with new programs (n=5) as well as ones who are looking into publishing initiatives (n=2) had comparable numbers of concerns overall, despite the smaller numbers of respondents. Interestingly, the librarians who had a publishing program in place that was mature and “going well” (n=2) had very few concerns overall. Only the implementation of new services and a concern about the unforeseen were mentioned by these librarians.

Seven additional write-in concerns were provided by respondents, many of which reflect the scholarly literature. Four of the concerns seem to revolve around stakeholders within the library and the university: how to sell the idea of library publishing, work with campus partners, and advertise services. Two of the concerns focused on perceptions of quality. Finally, a concern about support for librarians and the knowledge they need was also expressed. No write-in concerns were supplied by respondents with a publishing program that was in place and going well; additionally, no write-in concerns were expressed by respondents who did not have a publishing program in the works. See table 1 for the text of these concerns.

The fourth and final question on the survey was completely open-ended. Respondents were asked what they “most need to know about self-publishing in libraries.” Ten of the nineteen respondents provided information, provided here in table 2. The extent to which library publishing represents uncharted waters becomes clear when looking through the responses provided. One respondent who was not planning a publishing initiative imminently wanted a toolkit, presumably covering everything

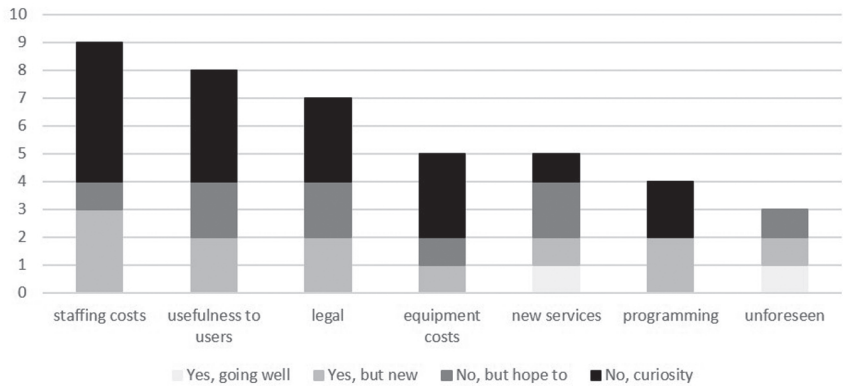


Figure 2. Responses to survey question about concerns with library publishing initiatives, broken down by the status of respondent publishing initiative

Table 1. Write in concerns about library publishing initiatives expressed by respondents

Write-in concerns	Status of library publishing program
Building partnerships on campus to facilitate this work	Yes, but new
Scope and general management of process if open to all within University	Yes, but new
Perception that “self-published” materials are low quality or not valuable to collect	Yes, but new
Interest from administration	No, curiosity
Effective marketing	No, curiosity
Legitimacy of self-published scholarly work	No, curiosity
Support for library professionals from ALA groups, with public service lens	No, curiosity

that would need to be known (possibly not unlike the popular traveling roadshow in support of scholarly communication that ACRL has been doing for roughly a decade [see Cross, Oleen, and Perry 2017]). Others focused on specific aspects, including areas related to finances, best practices on the part of librarians, outreach, and the perceived quality of the end-product of the initiative: the scholarly material.

DISCUSSION

Based on the review of the literature and reflections on feasibility drawn from the empirical research presented, the potential for academic library publishing initiatives to coalesce into a discernable publishing model that better (or differently) serves academic communities remains open to exploration. Before beginning to address the research question, we

Table 2. Write in topics relating to library publishing that respondents wanted to know more about

Open ended question: topics respondents need to know	Status of library publishing program
What business models are proven to be effective	Yes, going well
Indexing, abstracting, DOI assignment, marketing	Yes, going well
Best practices (i.e. management, workflow, finance, etc.)	Yes, but new
Determining best platform, should we work with university press, how to best advocate with senior university administration that this is a strategic priority	Yes, but new
How to successfully reach out to faculty on campus to discuss this concept. As an academic library, we are more interested in that audience rather than the community at large. (Although our [state] collection does collect self-published regional materials).	Yes, but new
Staffing	No, but hope to
Is this something a small/mid size library should pursue?	No, curiosity
Is the reward worth the large time/staff/money investment?	
It would be great to have some kind of toolkit for libraries just beginning to explore self-publishing services.	No, curiosity
Grants and other funding available for this initiative	No, curiosity
Perception of self-publishing; quality; reputation	No, curiosity

conclude that academic library publishing is no longer the questionable model for scholarly communication it once was. Although the paradigm has not been fully fleshed out, library publishing is emerging as a valid and viable solution to thorny questions of supporting scholarly communication. To some extent, the well-established relationship between traditional publishers and libraries, with libraries serving purely as distribution channels, is clearly falling away. This is especially so in areas like digital humanities and data curation. In other areas, like open access journal publishing, the extent of change is less clear. While libraries have assumed the role of OA publisher, they are also financiers of OA by traditional publishers, especially if they bear the cost of APCs for gold OA. In any case, however, in this era of social media and emerging technologies aligning with big data and new expectations for communication, some form of new scholarly communication ecosystem is developing. Although the literature does not imply every scholar is changing his or her perceptions and that academic library publishing is set to replace traditional publishing, it points to an emerging creative new scholar who understands and accepts new models for scholarly communication and who values open access (Mattson et al. 2016). In the following paragraphs, we address more specifically the concerns raised by the survey respondents in light of our analysis of the literature and our perceptions of the field moving forward.

One little-discussed caveat that emerges from this study is that of expertise in publishing in academic libraries. Librarians consistently have concerns, both in the literature and in the survey results reported here,

about the aspects of publishing relating to the information professions—skills and proficiencies of staff, technology supporting the work, quality of the end product, outreach to stakeholders, etc. These are all concerns that, as Borgman (2000) points out, can be associated with service. Questioning the extent of their knowledge in a known area is logical—but an appreciation of the extent of knowledge and skills required for traditional publishing seems to be lacking at present.

Another of the primary caveats associated with library publishing promises to be the financials. Publishing is a business, and the publishing venture, a business model; academic libraries, on the other hand, support institutions of higher education and are not, themselves, revenue streams. Libraries are purchasers of and subsequently purveyors of content created elsewhere, and do not seem to have the mechanisms in place to support publishing in the way traditional publishers do and do not make the same decisions that for-profit entities do. The value-added that libraries provide is typically considered the work they do to support the scholarship upon which the institution builds its reputation, not the content they create and then manage, for the long term. The financial reckoning will likely not be forced upon them by their authors, either, as authors are publishing to promote their work and their own reputation (Raju 2017). Indeed, we will need to step outside of the LIS literature to find urgent or compelling mentions of the finances associated with publishing and managing financials in a for-profit environment if that is deemed a reasonable approach. One core, unresolved question is what impact academic library-based scholarly publishing will have on academic libraries as institutions. Key here is that insofar as academic libraries are engaged in scholarly publishing, they are part of the scholarly communication industry, no longer simply purveyors.

An additional concern for the field of library publishing going forward can and must be the revised role that publishing has in the establishment of quality among research outputs. Is peer-review robust enough to support the brunt of quality control going forward? Who is responsible for peer review, and at what juncture? Peer review is arguably not robust enough to support quality across the board in the present model (Kelly, Sadeghieh, and Adeli 2014). In this time of scholarly social networks and the rise of scholarly identity management through the variety of venues mentioned previously, including through the use of appropriate metrics, altmetrics, and profiles, will the new hallmarks of scholarly quality place enhanced emphasis on the researcher, making venue quality less relevant in the new era of reputation evaluation?

From the interest shown by the small sample of respondents in the survey and the alignment of their responses, and the overall enthusiasm they have for academic library publishing, we surmise that this is an area of great interest in academic libraries; combined with our reading of the literature, we advance that the rewards for a successful academic library

publishing program are substantial: a positive impact on the scholarly communication process locally, opening of scholarship, an emphasis on the institution's talent, etc. Indeed, academic librarians are encouraged by the possibilities that academic library publishing offers, despite the caveats, both known and unknown. A number of questions remain, and the field is wide open for future exploration going forward.

Limitations

Librarians have been studying scholarly communication for a long time (e.g., Garfield 1999) and have been participating in publishing initiatives for even longer (e.g., Okerson and Holzman 2015); however, when considering the two as interconnected elements in the modern scholarly communication ecosystem, the potential scope of the venture has been explored only recently. This limitation affects the current study since much of the review of the literature and subsequent discussion is based on the literature from the past ten years. The discussion is also based on survey data supplied by a small, self-selected sample of respondents who had interest and financing enough to attend a session on library publishing and self-publishing in libraries at ALA Midwinter; this group is therefore not representative of academic librarians, but instead is meant to serve as a point of departure to understanding some perspectives that exist.

CONCLUSION

Nontraditional publishing paradigms in academic libraries are the logical next step in the library's support of the scholarly communication process, following the perfect storm of financial constraints resulting from the big deal, moves to openness and indeed transparency (see Moulaison Sandy, Corrado, and Mitchell 2018) in the scholarly endeavor, the technological advances supporting unfettered communication on a global scale, and advances in the research process wrought by the new technologies themselves (Regazzi 2015). Scholars have new mechanisms for proving their value as researchers, and open, accessible research may prove better able to enhance that value than closed, traditional venues that have previously been a hallmark of quality. Libraries still have a lot to learn about their place in this emerging ecosystem, notably in the areas of finances and sustainability, in required expertise, and the assurance of and provision of quality.

This study concludes, however, that there is reason for optimism. Library publishing programs are powered by motivations of equity and access more than outputs (Lippincott 2016). This, in combination with the survey evidence that librarians with active, mature programs are satisfied with their programs, indicates that libraries may have the commitment and creativity needed to address these challenges in a sustainable, professional, and high quality way.

NOTES

1. See Harzing's Publish or Perish download site: <https://harzing.com/resources/publish-or-perish>.
2. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed., s.v. "publishing," accessed October 15, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/154077?isAdvanced=false&result=2&rskey=zgzzqm&>.
3. For example, lulu.com (<https://www.lulu.com/>) is a well-known self-publishing platform that allows authors to publish, distribute, and print their work. Author services are also available.
4. Regazzi (2015) explains why textbooks are not considered to be scholarly in the following way: "The typical modern textbook written specifically for classroom use is usually not considered a true scholarly work according to the definition of scholarly communication. It is not peer reviewed and does not present original research. Textbooks are a form of scholarly communication only in the sense that they transmit academic information" (56).
5. A recording of the session can be found online: <http://www.eventscribe.com/2015/ALA-Midwinter/presentationinfo.asp?presenter=89252&sess=&pres=80782&sessID=57069>.

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