Research Agenda on the Research Environment
and
Scholarly Communication System

Proposal Submitted to the ACRL
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Research Agenda on the Research Environment and Scholarly Communication System

Scholarly communication as a discrete area of study has been a relatively recent development within academic colleges and libraries. The field is now growing rapidly, as libraries continue to expand the role they play in different facets of the scholarly communication environment. The Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions (COAPI), formed in Summer 2011 by 21 North American universities, now has 99 full and affiliated members on several continents, all committed to enabling robust institutional repository deposits of publications by faculty on their campuses. The Library Publishing Coalition, founded in 2014, today boasts a membership of 71 libraries, several of which either oversee or closely work with their local university press. Digital humanities initiatives are flourishing, and there continues to be considerable interest in developing digital scholarship centers within libraries. Recent acquisitions of publishing infrastructure commonly used by libraries (e.g., Bepress) by large commercial companies has triggered impassioned debate in the library and scholarly communication community. The research agenda on scholarly communication, published by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) in 2007, in retrospect was quite accurate in pinpointing the topics that would emerge and require further understanding in the years ahead.

The proactive approach established by ACRL to identify critical issues and to develop an actionable plan to understand them takes on an added urgency today. Libraries see real opportunities in transforming their mission to support their campuses' faculty and students, scholars, and scholars-to-be, yet commercial players also see real opportunity here, whether in terms of for-profit journal publishing, acquisitions of infrastructure, or even adoption of open-access business models. Today, libraries and their leaders have a great opportunity — perhaps even an obligation — to decide on the role(s) they would like to own in this space.

Our Approach

Research agendas, like strategic plans, can too easily end up being well-produced documents that are celebrated at publication and then quietly forgotten. The ACRL community, however, has a history and commitment to deep and ongoing engagement, and to that end we have designed a process that is intended not merely to surface areas of future inquiry that are important to library leaders, but to do so in a way that engages the wide and diverse spectrum of the ACRL community, laying the groundwork for members to take forward the parts of the agenda most important to them.

Our process will involve several stages, taking place over the course of several months from Spring through Fall 2018. The investigation will begin by our developing a shared understanding of the needs and desires of the ACRL Research and Scholarly Environment Committee (ReSEC) and will move outward from there. An environmental scan of the literature will be followed by interviews with representatives from key underrepresented communities, to permit us to identify a range of topics that go beyond the literature. Those interviews will also provide

us with a means of inviting further members of those communities to participate in our study as we move into the later stages of our research.

We will then develop a survey, which will be open to ACRL members, asking them to rank the importance of each research topic, to suggest other research topics, and to volunteer themselves to participate in a focus group, should they be interested in doing so. The survey will ask for basic demographic and professional information so that we can balance the focus groups' representation.

This grounding in the key issues will permit us to develop an initial framework of topics and subtopics that will be the basis for our community engagement activities.

With this grounding in the key issue areas, we will promote and facilitate a series of focus groups and community conversations, both online and in-person — in addition to the online open fora mentioned in the RFP — intended to bring together representatives from a range of backgrounds and work settings. These groups will test interest in the original list of topic areas, expand upon that list, and help at a first attempt at prioritization. Feedback from the interviews, survey, and focus groups will be evaluated against our understanding of gaps in the existing literature and will be developed into a final set of recommendations to be discussed with ReSEC and to be presented to the ACRL membership in the open forum scheduled for Fall 2018.

Throughout this process, we will remain in close touch with ReSEC, which will serve as our de facto advisory board. Communication will include a series of touch-base meetings as outlined in the RFP as well as engagement with the broader community through the open fora. The plan below outlines the steps we plan to take to make this process as inclusive as possible. The final design will be made with input from ReSEC.

Workplan

The stages outlined below describe how we will conduct our work. The items are roughly chronological, but given the short timeframe there is some overlap.

Project Initiation

Mid- to end of March. At project launch, we will meet with ReSEC to review the project plan in detail. This will include a review of the research design including our data-gathering plan, our list of potential interviewees, and timeline.

Literature Review

April. A comprehensive literature review will begin at the start of the engagement period and continue as our work progresses. In the earliest stages, we will focus on the current academic college and research library landscape for research and scholarly communication and issues of diversity and inclusion. This will permit us to create a schematic of issues and challenges related to scholarly communication in general and to diversity and inclusion in particular. We will

compile the recommendations that have been made to date to enable the transition to "more open, inclusive, and equitable systems of scholarship."

Public Consultation

In addition to our participating in the designated live online open forums, our plan involves structured engagement with the community throughout the process. Community participation and feedback will be crucial to our success in developing an actionable research agenda that enjoys broad support and enthusiasm from across a wide spectrum of ACRL membership.

Expert Interviews

April and May. With input from ReSEC, we will develop a list of 10-15 experts representing the range of voices of those from underrepresented populations within librarianship, who will provide crucial perspectives for our work. This group will include those who work within academic libraries, particularly in scholarly communication positions, who come from or are experts in the challenges facing underrepresented populations within the profession; those who can speak about issues in scholarly communication in academic institutions of different sizes, geographic locations, and budgetary circumstances; and those who can speak to the point of view of those working at HBCUs, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges, as well as research universities in both private and public settings.

These conversations will help us in two important ways: (1) by guiding us in creating our first-pass list of topics to be reviewed and discussed in the open fora and the focus groups to come and (2) by providing a conduit to others who are part of those communities we hope to include in the process. In addition to learning from our interviewees, we will encourage them to promote this agenda-setting project by identifying others we should be speaking with and inviting to our focus groups and by getting the word out to their broader communities when the survey goes live.

Online Survey

April. The first-pass outline of major topics developed from the environmental scan and interviews becomes the backbone of an online survey we distribute, seeking broad input from ACRL members. The survey will present a range of topics and subtopics for respondents to rank and rate as well as the ability to write in additional topics that may not have been surfaced before.

The survey will help us (1) get feedback on whether the issues we have identified are those most important to respondents or whether there might be other topics we might have missed that we should include; (2) supply us with contact information for those who indicate they would like to participate in one of our focus groups or other discussions; and (3) provide us with a first view of how well engaged the various categories of participants that ACRL is interested in including are. Hearing from the ACRL community early in the process will help us to refine our discussion guide for the focus groups and may also help us identify participants for those groups.

We will work with our library contacts and the members of ReSEC to post the survey to key lists, social media outlets, and membership organizations that serve these populations and will encourage those who have participated in our interviews to do the same.

Focus Groups

Strongly underpinning ReSEC's RFP is the argument that certain groups tend to be underrepresented in discussions of scholarly communication issues, and that their needs, priorities, and approaches may well be different from those who generally and historically have set the research agenda. We will make a concerted effort to include those whose views will help to elucidate those differences: those with specific cultural or ethnic identities and lived experiences; those with particular concerns and expertise in issues concerning accessibility; and those for whom their institutional size, location, and focus may be the key factor. Other types of diversity — gender, sexual identity, geography — will be taken into account across each of the focus groups. The makeup of our focus groups will be designed with input from ReSEC.

To ensure there are as few barriers as possible to participation, the focus groups will be run as virtual meetings. They will all follow the same discussion guide and will each include 8-10 people per session, to ensure as much as possible consistency in methodology across the groups. We will populate each focus group by asking leaders of the groups we speak with in the landscape phase to nominate people and by reaching out to those who indicated during the survey that they were interested in participating; we will also encourage others to apply to participate, via a web-based application system. We believe that using this approach we can best ensure we can cover the needed bases with the following focus groups while as much as possible eliminating the barriers to participation that geography or funding would have made difficult or impossible. We estimate these focus groups will include approximately 70 people in total:

- 3 to 4 groups that specifically include those from underrepresented cultural or ethnic communities. Because there are so many different library organizations and ACRL special interest groups, we feel we need to have several of these groups to ensure we hear from as many voices as possible.
- 1 group focused on those with expertise and experience in universal accessibility challenges
- 1 group for those from community colleges (i.e., 2-year colleges)
- 1 group for those from liberal arts colleges (i.e., 4-year colleges)
- 1 group for those from research-intensive universities (i.e., colleges and universities with graduate programs)

We will use Zoom for these focus groups, which provides stability even for low-bandwidth users and provides a range of accessibility tools for those who may require them.

In-Person Community Conversations

May through September. To bring more voices "into the room," we will host three in-person meetings in addition to the focus groups. Each will be carefully designed and facilitated to encourage active participation of those who attend.

- **Library Publishing Forum.** This session will be held in conjunction with the Library Publishing Forum in Minneapolis, which runs from May 21–23. Attendees of this meeting include scholarly communication managers and directors as well as early- and mid-career librarians whose daily work includes library-based publishing but also often covers the range of scholarly communication. The focus here will be on getting feedback from those who are working daily on scholarly communication issues as to their particular challenges and their priorities for a research agenda.

- **ACRL meeting at ALA.** This event will be promoted as a broad, inclusive work session, as part of the ALA Annual meeting at the end of June. This meeting will bring together up to 60 attendees. This session will engage participants in the prioritization process through a mix of discussion and dynamic activities. Participants will choose the topic(s) they care most about, and review and discuss the themes, topics, and questions most pressing to them and their work.
    - In addition, we will use the opportunity of our being present at ALA to speak with other ACRL committees, to offer (for example) a briefing on our progress and address their questions. Such meetings could include the diversity committee as well as any others ACRL would recommend.

- **Third National Joint Conference of Librarians of Color.** This meeting offers the opportunity to have a large-forum facilitated discussion to elicit feedback on our proposed research agenda, particularly to ensure that we have properly captured the ideas and feedback we have heard throughout the research process. Ideally, prior to this meeting we will have sent participants a draft of the proposed research agenda, or a detailed outline of topics as developed up to that point. The function of the meeting would be to have JCLC membership vet and comment on that draft.

Final Deliverables

As per the RFP, the final deliverable for this project will be a written report of between 24-40 pages that will include the following sections:
- **Executive summary.**
- **Introduction.** A review of the trends in the research and scholarly environment.
- **Effective and promising practices.** Recommendations on actionable steps that academic librarians can take to accelerate the transition to more open, inclusive, and equitable systems of scholarship.
- **Priority areas.** Subsections will identify 6-10 priority areas where more research is required and will include context, research questions, and high-level suggestions for research design.

- **Conclusion.** A brief summary of major findings and recommendations.
- **Ancillary and supporting materials.** Materials that will aid and encourage discussion and use of the research agenda, including an annotated bibliography and talking points for academic librarians to use in conversations with three distinct audiences: higher education administrators, researcher-authors, and scholarly publishers and others engaged in the distribution of scholarly works.

In addition, we will deliver a memo offering specific suggestions to encourage and incentivize the community to take the research agenda forward.

The first version of the research agenda will be drafted in Summer 2018, so that participants of the JCLC group are able to review it in advance of the meeting scheduled for late September. The first full draft of the final report will be shared with ReSEC by October 15, 2018. With feedback from ReSEC, we will revise and deliver the final report. We anticipate the report and the memo will be delivered to ACRL by December 4, 2018.

Potential Challenges

The greatest challenge in this project concerns the timeline. The project will start one day after the contract is awarded, with a first draft of the report due by mid-September. This means a very aggressive plan for undertaking the literature review and the scheduling and logistics required for the interviews, focus groups, and in-person meetings. That said, both of us have deep contacts in the field and have already been in touch with several potential interviewees, who have expressed interest in participating.

Accurately identifying the key issues for the ACRL community poses its own challenge, since the field is so vast! But both of us are skilled researchers, facilitators, and listeners; our ability to analyze quickly what we are learning, combined with frequent touch-base meetings with ReSEC, will insure that our work progresses in a way that is most useful to ACRL's goals.

Our Team

The research team is made up of two consultants with collectively nearly 50 years of experience working in libraries, academic publishing, and higher education consulting.

Rebecca Kennison, K|N Consultants; co-PI
Rebecca Kennison is the Executive Director and Principal of K|N Consultants, a 501(c)(3) organization that provides strategic and operational guidance to academic institutions and organizations; academic, national and public libraries; learned and scholarly societies; scholarly publishers and university presses; government agencies; private foundations; and other mission-driven organizations struggling to adjust to the rapid change in higher education. Prior to working full time at K|N, Kennison was the founding director of the Center for Digital Research and Scholarship, a division of the Columbia University Libraries, where she was responsible for developing programs to facilitate scholarly research and the communication of that research through technology solutions. Kennison has worked primarily in the scholarly

publishing industry, including project management and production leadership roles at Cell Press (now owned by Elsevier), Blackwell Publishing (now owned by Wiley), and the open-access publisher Public Library of Science (PLOS). She holds an M.A. in English from Arizona State University.

Nancy Maron, BlueSky to BluePrint; co-PI

Nancy Maron has over 20 years of experience working at the nexus of publishing, higher education, and technology. She is founder of the strategic consulting firm BlueSky to BluePrint, which works with publishers, librarians, and other innovative project leaders to define, test, and refine assumptions about new and existing programs and products. While Program Director for Sustainability and Scholarly Communications at the not-for-profit organization Ithaka S+R, her team developed provocative and insightful studies on funding models and sustainability strategies for digital initiatives, including dozens of case studies in sustainability, spanning the US, Canada, the UK, and beyond. Her current research in scholarly communications includes addressing new models of publishing, community-based infrastructure for research, economic analyses of monograph publishing, and development of a library publishing curriculum and services. Maron serves as President of the Board of Trustees of the Yonkers Public Library, a three-branch system serving a city of 200,000, and is the founding President of the Foundation for the Yonkers Public Library. She holds a B.A. from Yale University and an M.A. in French Studies from New York University, where she was a McCracken Fellow.

ACRL Scholarly Communications Agenda

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Workplan

Legend:
- ■ Designates work in progress
- ▪ (yellow) Designates timing of a specific event or deliverable

Phase	Description	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Project Initiation	Literature review	■									
	Draft interview guides, focus group guides	■									
	Convene Advisory Board (virtual)	■									
Member consultation											
Interviews	Identify and invite 10-15 interviewees	■	■								
	Conduct 10-15 interviews via phone/Skype		■								
ACRL Online Open Forum - for community feedback				▪							
Online survey	Design, set up, and test survey instrument		■								
	Deploy survey/promote/support			■							
	Analyze results										
Focus groups	Identify and invite participants to 7 focus groups			■							
	Conduct up to 7 focus groups via Zoom			■	■	■					
Facilitated Meetings	Library Publishing Forum (Minneapolis)			▪							
	ACRL/ALA (New Orleans)				▪						
	JCLC (Albuquerque)						■	▪			
ACRL Online Open Forum - for community feedback									▪		
Develop Report	Write and edit first draft					■			▪		
	Incorporate feedback from ACRL (1st, 2nd drafts)								ACRL reviews	■	
	Format and submit final deliverable										▪