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## LIBRARY PUBLISHING FORUM 2014

# Alignment with Editors' Expectations

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Library publishing is a growing area of interest for academic libraries as journal editors are increasingly seeking the services offered by libraries to start new journals, revive older journals, or cross over from commercial publishers. The purpose of this paper is to reflect upon how library publishers can align with journal editors' expectations. Six categories are discussed, and recommendations are proposed relating to: (a) variation in editor expectations; (b) preservation, access, and discoverability; (c) tools and services; (d) training and education; (e) resource sharing; and (f) library publisher-editor relationships.

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## BACKGROUND

Library publishing, while not new, is a growing area of concern for academic libraries. The nascent Library Publishing Coalition defines it 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” (LPC, 2013). In 2010, three-fourths of Association of Research Libraries (ARL) member libraries surveyed reported either offering or exploring library publishing services (Mullins et al., 2012). The rise of these kinds of services is well documented; there is motivation and interest among libraries towards advancing and maturing their publishing services. This might be exemplified by the broad interest in the Library Publishing Coalition project—an initiative to develop a new professional association for libraries engaged in publishing scholarly materials—and its recent inaugural forum.

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Faculty have long been key constituents of the academic library—in their teaching and research capacities, as partners and as customers. Library publishing services add faculty as journal editors to that list of roles. While librarians have a history of theory and practice relating to liaison service to faculty (Hahn, 2009), librarians' background in service to editors is generally not well developed, barring instances where libraries and university publishers are organized under the same institutional bodies (e.g., Purdue University or the University of Michigan). Librarians are situated, as a larger body, at the lower end of a learning curve. As library publishing services develop, we will need to become more familiar with the needs and expectations of faculty-as-journal editors.

One of the suggestions that rose from Tyler Walters's (2012) exploration of future library publishing scenarios was that faculty editors will be moved to adopt library publishing services not by attraction to the services per se, but by dissatisfaction with some aspect of service from their traditional commercial or professional scholarly publishers. That is, most editors will come to library publishing with pre-existing expectations formed in the commercial publishing world, but no longer being met there. Aligning library publishing services with those expectations, therefore, seems critical to the success or failure of the enterprise. This article follows a session at the 2014 Library Publishing Forum co-facilitated by the authors, and reflects upon the questions: How do library publishers identify and align their goals and services with editor expectations? What do editors expect, and how do those expectations impact the planning and implementation of library publishing services?

## **KEY CATEGORIES FOR ALIGNING WITH EDITOR EXPECTATIONS**

Three main factors can be said to apply to this problem of alignment: (a) journal editors' expectations of library publishing services, (b) the services library publishers are currently providing, and (c) opportunities for library publishers to align those services with editor expectations. As authors with very different roles in regards to publishing and journal editing, we propose to discuss issues of alignment with editor expectations in six key categories related to the above factors. These categories are: (a) variation in expectations; (b) preservation, access, and discoverability; (c) tools and services; (d) training and education; (e) resource sharing; and (f) library publisher-editor relationship.

### **Variation in Expectations**

The only constant that can be asserted about journal editors' expectations of library publishing services is that they are variable. Some editors may not know what they want or how to ask for it; others may be experienced and confident in the process of managing a journal. Editor expectations of service may be high or low and can fluctuate given a range of factors. Three of these factors that appear to have particular influence on editor expectations

are the developmental stage of the journal, the discipline or scope of the journal, and the experience of the editor.

As a journal progresses through developmental stages, from startup to established, editor expectations of publisher services will change. Editors of new journals may be primarily concerned with graphic design, cost, and establishing a peer review network and editorial workflow. As the journal matures, those concerns will be less immediate, and editors will begin to look at more fine-grained services, like analytics, indexing and abstracting, impact factor, and positioning in the broader landscape of the discipline. This process may also work in reverse, as when an inexperienced editor takes over a journal from a more experienced editor, and the developmental stage of the journal slows or regresses. Quality of a journal can also be seen as a developmental stage that impacts editor expectations. A lower quality journal may lack in effective management, workflow, or infrastructure, and editors' expectations regarding those processes will be respectively high. As a journal grows and increases in quality, the developmental stage of the journal will change, and editors will expect different and more sophisticated services from library publishers. These expectations may come in waves, and different journals may be at different stages of development.

Editor expectations may also vary given the scholarly communication culture of the journal's discipline. A discipline's norms can drive expectations for how its journals should be distributed. For instance, the STEM community's willingness to publish in open access venues follows both its research funding structure (largely grant-funded, reducing cost barriers to article processing charges) and pace (fast, broad distribution advances its disciplines and benefits its researchers). In contrast, humanities scholars may be more reluctant to consider open access as grant funding is scarce and research outputs tend towards monographs, which require different economic environments than do research articles. Given a discipline's culture, should a journal in that discipline be produced in print, online, or both? Should a journal require a copyright transfer agreement or operate under Creative Commons licenses? Should a journal provide open or toll access? The answers to these questions are often strongly influenced by disciplinary culture, but given the right tools and education, editors and editorial boards can be advocates of library publishers even in a hostile disciplinary climate. Unfortunately, it is the experience of the authors of this paper that editors often lack this knowledge, and may be fearful to adopt a library publisher because they simply do not understand their value proposition in comparison with traditional publishers in the field.

Editor experience is a strong driver of expectations (in addition to impacting the developmental stage of the journal). A new editor starting a journal from scratch will have different expectations of a publisher than a new editor taking over for an existing journal, and both will differ from an experienced editor. The editorial history of the journal can

also impact editor expectations: A journal migrating from a commercial scholarly publisher to a library publisher will bring along with it assumptions that may misalign with actual library publishing service. Editors will have widely varying expectations, depending on prior experience (or lack thereof) with library and/or commercial publishers.

These are not the only drivers of variability in editor expectations. The longevity of the journal, how long the journal has been under a library publisher, quality of the journal, whether the journal was in print prior to transitioning to a library publisher, and why the journal is being transitioned to a library publisher—all have an impact on editor expectations of library publishers. Editors, too, may simply have unrealistic preconceptions about the affordances of digital publishing platforms, assuming for instance that 'digital' means 'malleable' and that work can be easily changed after publication. The variability of editor expectations can be mitigated by clear communication from both sides about available services, prior editorial experience, journal history, and initial expectations. This may require an active process as both sides may have unarticulated assumptions that preclude clear communication. This approach ties variability in expectation closely to the sixth key category, library publisher-editor relationship, and will be expanded in that section.

## **Tools and Services**

Alignment with editor expectations pre-assumes that library publishers are able to provide tools and services that editors expect. Editors need a breadth of services; library publishers often offer something closer to hosting or distribution. Editor expectations for tools and services may include indexing and abstract services, marketing, permissions and licensing, records management, infrastructure, succession planning, and technical expertise. Unfortunately, most library publishers cannot offer all of these, and this inability to offer a broad range of tools and services causes misalignment between editors' expectations and library publishers.

For example, marketing is a common service that editors expect, seeking to grow the prestige and profile of their journals. However, library publishers may not be able or willing to provide marketing services. The literature is replete with discussions of librarians' aversion to marketing (Garoufallou, Siatri, Zafieriou, & Balampanidou, 2013). While forward thinking libraries have embraced marketing as a basic customer service activity for decades (Koontz, Gupta, & Webber, 2006), resistance remains. Librarians who avoid marketing may stigmatize it as a commercial activity not in line with the ethics of librarianship and so take a passive stance towards implementing marketing activities or underfund it as an area of focus.

There are, however, opportunities for library publishers to establish tools or services to help their editors/journals succeed. Library publishers that operate more like hosting services

are uniquely positioned, at little or no cost to the editors, to revive journals that have lost their infrastructure. With expertise in knowledge management, organization, and archival practice, library publishers could with minimal effort establish records management services to aid in succession planning for journals. Tracking author agreements, operational records, journal policies and history, editorial boards, etc. on behalf of faculty editors could prove invaluable to journals that see regular turnover in editorial management. Library publishing systems often include sophisticated metric reporting, which is attractive to editors and authors alike. Libraries may also provide the perfect infrastructure for student-run journals needing a platform but not extensive copyediting or typesetting service.

### **Preservation, Access, and Discoverability**

Preservation may not be on editors' radar, but it is a key concern for librarians regarding the materials they are producing and disseminating. Preservation is a core competency for librarians dealing with digital and special collections (Phillips, Bailey, Goethals, & Owens, 2013; RBMS, 2008). This may be a unique and attractive feature of library publishing services in general. Libraries' long ethic of preservation activities for their collections translates to a special focus on maintaining an accessible archive of published material, which may come to be more important to editors as a journal matures.

Even more than preservation, access (i.e., practices to make resources available and useable) and discoverability (i.e., practices relating to the description, findability, and disbursement of resources) are central to library practice. Library publishers, often leveraging institutional repository and other related software, can provide enhanced accessibility to a client through best practices in metadata creation and exposure, distribution through multiple channels (redundancy), visibility of materials to search engines, etc. Editors may not expect preservation, access, and discoverability services from their publishers; or, they may equate discoverability only with traditional journal indexing services and ignore the broader service the library can provide. This suggests that library publishers positively manage editors' expectations, helping editors understand why library competencies are of benefit to their journals' health.

### **Education and Training**

Library publishers have an opportunity, undergirded by librarians' long experience with instruction and outreach, to provide education and training for new editors. Library publishing services can be particularly attractive to startup journals with limited resources, in part because library publishing services generally leverage distribution models that remove some of the costs from the publishing equation. Where these startups represent faculty just venturing into editorial work, libraries can help faculty ascend the learning

curve toward successful journal management and publication. Providing journal editors with programming, workshops, and materials—on best practices of journal management, training of peer reviewers and editorial boards, editorial workflows—can be instrumental in successfully increasing the quality of library-published journals, boosting editors' confidence, and aligning with editors' expectations. There is opportunity here for the Library Publishing Coalition to develop central programming that members can appropriate to educate their respective journal editors.

## **Resource Sharing**

Education and training shares its ethos with a fifth category, resource sharing. Library publishers have been functioning in silos, developing their own tools and education materials in accordance to the communities they service and the services they provide. Some may be more willing than others to share these resources. As with education and training, there is opportunity for the Library Publishing Coalition to play a role here: The Coalition could serve as resource clearinghouse for useful materials, as recommended by Mullins et al. (2012). The library publishing community could both contribute to and benefit from such a central knowledge repository and share these resources in turn with their editors. These resources could include: (a) best practices and strategies for editors, editorial boards, and peer reviewers; (b) templates for memorandums of understanding or succession plans; (c) informational tip sheets of lessons learned; (d) potential marketing and indexing strategies; and (e) more. Libraries, with their general bias towards open access publishing models and their historically close working relationship with faculty, are uniquely positioned to contribute the kinds of resources that could help change the tenure and promotion reward structures prevalent in higher education. The Library Publishing Coalition could even serve as a bid broker for problem-solving across its constituency. Because library publishing programs vary—in size, resource, maturity, and focus—a clearinghouse promises to reduce duplication of materials and effort and to disseminate valuable lessons learned by individual institutions in a range of publishing contexts.

## **Library Publisher-Editor Relationship**

Finally, and potentially most important to the question of alignment with editor expectations, library publishers and editors must establish strong working relationships. For new projects it is critical to have an in-depth series of discussions in advance of a working partnership, perhaps facilitated by an intake form or other instrument. Here, expectations about what services library publishers will and will not provide an editor can be communicated, and misalignments can be identified and worked out. Libraries, too, have the opportunity here to clarify what will be expected of journal editors. This can be especially important in library publishing, where traditional functions like copyediting

may not be provided, and editors may have to spend more effort on quality control for the materials they shepherd to publication. A Memorandum of Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding between the library publisher and the journal/editor can document and cement these pre-partnership understandings. Taking these steps helps both editors and library publishers avoid frustration, opens the way for future innovation not hampered by unspoken or misaligned expectations, and ultimately leads to a more productive and fruitful working relationship between both parties.

## SUMMARY

It is apparent that there are both opportunities and misalignments in bringing library publishing services and faculty editors' expectations together. As budgets constrict and the models of scholarly communication change, faculty increasingly find themselves looking for publishing services outside of traditional channels, and library publishers are situated to meet some of that demand. At the same time, library publishers as a class offer a range of services that differ from those of traditional scholarly publishers, and editors' expectations will need to be managed in order to make clear what libraries will and will not provide. Libraries, and the Library Publishing Coalition in particular, could take the lead in educating faculty editors about the workflows of journal publishing that were customarily handled by commercial publishers in the past. Library publishers may bring their professional concerns and ethics to the table—including expertise in preservation, access and discovery and a willingness to pursue open access and non-profit scholarly communications economies—and these may be of benefit to editors. And the Library Publishing Coalition is particularly well suited to serve as a resource clearinghouse for editors and library publishers alike, directing both to third parties who can manage services that neither can provide.

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