



“The New Scholars: Library Publishing of Undergraduate Research Journals”

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Introduction

“Library publishing” is the latest buzzword on the tongues of library science practitioners and scholars. As the academic publishing world adapts to new business models and growing expectations for open accessibility, libraries have responded by adopting the role of publishing services provider. Recent reports¹ and the formation of the Library Publishing Coalition², an “organization dedicated to advancing the emerging field of library publishing,” evidences the foothold that libraries are asserting in the publication and dissemination of scholarly research in support and hosting of open access content. Members of the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) are active participants in this growing area of library service. In a Fall 2012 survey of ASERL members, 18 libraries reported that they were engaged in the hosting or publication of open access scholarly journals through the Open Journal Systems software³, an institutional repository, or some other digital publishing platform.

However, academic library engagement in publishing is not mandated only by the changes in the business of scholarly publishing. The Association of College and Research Libraries also has charged academic libraries with educating students about the economics of the distribution of scholarship as part of the information literacy mission. Specifically, ACRL has found that “librarians who have become more involved with student-run journals find that working with undergraduate students as authors, editors, and publishers is an excellent way to teach about the economic, technological, and legal aspects of publishing, emphasizing the traditional life cycle of scholarly information.”⁴

¹ In March 2012, SPARC issued the final report documenting the findings and recommendations of the “Library Publishing Services: Strategies for Success” project which surveyed the publishing activities of North American academic libraries and suggested ways these services could be broadened and strengthened.

http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/purduepress_ebooks/24/. In August 2013, the free eBook *Library Publishing Toolkit* was released. The *Toolkit* examines the “broad and varied landscape of library publishing” through case studies and articles on the current state of library publishing activities. <http://www.publishingtoolkit.org/>

² Library Publishing Coalition, <http://www.librarypublishing.org/>.

³ Public Knowledge Project, Open Journal Systems <http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs>.

⁴ Association of College and Research Libraries. Working Group on Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy. *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy: Creating Strategic Collaborations for a Changing Academic Environment*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2013, 7-8. <http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/publications/whitepapers/Intersections.pdf>

Publication of undergraduate research is not without its challenges, however. A major issue is sustainability. A natural consequence of working with students is turnover in editorial support staff. Maintaining faculty support and enthusiasm can also be challenging. Another factor for sustainability is competition with disciplinary journals. To succeed, the undergraduate journal needs to offer distinctive and complementary positioning to the disciplinary journal. Another challenge faced by those producing undergraduate research publications is formulation of a streamlined workflow. Questions such as who should conduct peer review, how should the content be disseminated, and what body should maintain control of editing and journal design frequently stymie persons involved in undergraduate research journal publication.⁵ Despite these challenges, academic libraries are thriving in the realm of undergraduate research publication. A survey by the Library Publishing Coalition, which will soon be published as a “Directory of Library Publishing Programs,” found that 57% of the responding libraries publish student journals.⁶ ASERL Libraries are also engaged in publishing the research of undergraduate students. Three ASERL members recently presented on their undergraduate research publication activities.⁷

Tulane University

Already a host to two journals dedicated to undergraduate scholarship⁸, Tulane University Libraries is a partner with its Center for Engaged Learning and Teaching⁹ to develop a new undergraduate research journal, entitled Tulane Undergraduate Research Journal, that seeks to address the challenge of sustainability in publication of undergraduate research and provide an academic outlet to students seeking to become creative, inquisitive, ethical and responsible scholars. The goal of the journal’s planners is to create an organizational model that utilizes the existing relationship between faculty and the Center’s student fellows. The student authors of this new journal will be designated as Fellows of the Center working with faculty mentors on research projects in a variety of academic disciplines, including the liberal arts, science and business. The journal’s editorial board will be comprised of faculty from each of the University’s major schools and departments. Student representatives on the editorial board will function as liaisons between faculty advisors and other students. At present, there is no publication date for the new journal’s first issue. Journal planners are focusing on building adequate support

⁵ Charles Watkinson, “Library Based Publishing: Focus on Undergraduate Research Journals,” Presentation to the Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, July 23, 2013. http://www.aserl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Perdue_Undergrad_Journals.pdf.

⁶ Id. See also Council on Undergraduate Research’s list of undergraduate journals at http://www.cur.org/resources/students/undergraduate_journals/.

⁷ Association of Southeastern Research Libraries, “Library Based Publishing – Focus on Undergraduate Research Journals,” July 23, 2013. See <http://www.aserl.org/archive/> for archived presentation and presenter slides.

⁸ See Second Line: An Undergraduate Journal of Literary Conversation and Tulane Journal of International Affairs at Tulane University Journal Publishing, <https://library.tulane.edu/journals/index.php>

⁹ <http://tulane.edu/celt/index.cfm>

within the academic community to ensure the journal's sustainability under the proposed model. Discussions are also underway to restructure the two existing undergraduate research journals to incorporate some or all of the elements of the model devised for the Tulane Undergraduate Research Journal.

Florida State University

Started in 2010, The Owl is Florida State University's vehicle for publication of undergraduate student research.¹⁰ The journal started as a print publication, but migrated to online publication in 2012 through the University's institutional repository, DigiNole. The journal is now the third most accessed item in the institutional repository. Prior to migration of the journal to DigiNole, The Owl editorial team grappled with issues concerning editor-author email communication, the process for submission of manuscripts, and the professional appearance of the journal. However, by partnering with the library and using DigiNole, the journal was able to address these challenges. Manuscript submission was centralized such that editorial board members had a single easy-to-access site for submissions. Editor-author communication was also moved to the system, thereby obviating the need to use a less secure and inefficient shared email address. The library also has been an instrumental partner in adopting a smoother workflow by training editorial board members on how to use the features of the DigiNole platform. The library's role will continue as the journal staff works on marketing the journal to the larger campus population and assists in development of citation analysis and reporting of the journal's impact.

University of South Florida

Successfully publishing undergraduate mathematics research since 2008, the Undergraduate Journal of Mathematical Modeling¹¹ positioned itself to have greater impact and presence when in 2012 it contacted the library at the University of South Florida about including the journal in the institutional repository, Scholar Commons. Librarians managing Scholar Commons met with the editorial board to review the journal's needs and issues, such as quality and sustainability. The journal was deemed eligible for inclusion, and design of the journal's launch page and migration of content began. By partnering with the library for central management of the journal through Scholar Commons, the journal has enabled the library to assign DOIs to articles using CrossRef, to improve indexing of the journal in several databases including the Directory of Open Access Journals, and to streamline the submission and editorial processes. As a result, the journal has experienced a marked increase in findability as evidenced by a steep increase in full-text downloads, from 271 full-text downloads in May 2012, which was the month prior to migration to Scholar Commons, to nearly 700 full-text downloads per month following the journal's publication in Scholar Commons.

¹⁰ <http://diginole.lib.fsu.edu/owl/>

¹¹ <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/uimm/>

Conclusion

The number of libraries engaged in library publishing services is likely to increase as the scholarly publishing world continues to adapt to new challenges and requirements brought on by the changing economy and governmental mandates. Further, as librarians integrate scholarly communications into information literacy instruction targeted at undergraduates, and universities continue to take interest in the potential of younger researchers, development of additional journals showcasing undergraduate research seems likely. Libraries are a natural partner and collaborator in the development and promotion of these journals, and the number of ASERL Libraries involved in the publication of undergraduate research journals demonstrates how this can be successful. Further, ASERL libraries have succeeded in addressing the challenges often associated with publishing undergraduate scholarship. Through utilization of existing infrastructure and contribution of expertise, ASERL libraries have helped the undergraduate populations they serve showcase their research in a searchable and sustainable way.

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