

Changing Role of Academic Librarians in Open Access Environment

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Abstract

Application of information and communication technology is supporting various ways of scholarly communication. The transition from print to electronic and paid resources to open access resources has a great impact on information society and resulted open access movement. This paper enumerates various declarations on open access and discusses the impact of open access on libraries particularly on the role of academic librarians. On the basis of existing literature, an attempt has been made in this paper to understand transforming role of academic librarians and suggest new responsibilities in open access environment.

Keywords: Open Access, Open Access Movement, Academic Librarians, Role of Librarians in Open Access, Scholarly Publishing Literacy.

1. Introduction

In the last two decades information technology has radically changed social communication pattern and information behavior.¹ This transition has affected both scholarly communication and the forms of scholarly publications. Since the advent of scholarly journals in the mid of seventeenth century, scholars have been seeking better ways to disseminate their outputs². With the advancement of information and communication technology, the mode of access to scholarly information has changed from print to electronic. The concept of e-journals consortia emerged as a subscription model to journals during the time due to the high cost of access to e-journals. In parallel with this technological development the amount of research itself has increased exponentially, coupled with the desire for wider dissemination of research result. From this scenario open access has arisen³ as an alternative to subscriptions as a business model for scholarly journals⁴ and has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years. The Open Access Movement has focused on free access to research and scholarship and changed the approach to disseminate it.

2. Open Access and Open Access Movement

Peter Suber described that “Open access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions”⁵. Open access can also be defines as providing free access for all Internet users to scholarly information that is published or to be published in research journals. Many academic libraries are trying to provide free and open access material in the form of scholarly journal publications, textbooks and open educational resources. While there are many free resources, the term “open access” refers specifically to

content that is peer-reviewed and shareable according to author licenses, such as Creative Commons, or it refers to contracts the author signs with a publisher to retain certain rights. These rights are listed on the SHERPA/RoMEO Web site (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation/Rights Metadata for Open Archiving) and pertain to publisher policies on the self-archiving of journal articles online.⁶

Open Access Movement is more about growing consciousness among public towards having access to research results which are mostly supported by public money collected in the shape of taxes and other forms. The question arises, why should public pay for those things which already have come up with public money and making available research results to public is more of a matter of right, if it is supported by public money.⁷

The Open Access Movement was formally initiated by the “Budapest Open Access Initiative”⁸ on February 14, 2002 and further supported by “Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing”⁹ in June 2003 and “Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities”¹⁰ in October 2003.

In Bethesda Statement, open access was redefined and again in Berlin Declaration the definition was refined and declared that open access contributions must satisfy two conditions:

1. The author(s) and right holder(s) of such contributions grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship (community standards, will continue to provide the mechanism for enforcement of proper attribution and responsible use of the published work, as they do now), as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.
2. A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in an appropriate standard electronic format is deposited (and thus published) in at least one online repository using suitable technical standards (such as the Open Archive definitions) that is supported and maintained by an academic institution, scholarly society, government agency, or other well established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, inter operability, and long-term archiving.¹¹

Other declarations on open access are:

1. Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Principles and Strategies for the Reform of Scholarly Communication, August 28, 2003. (<http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/whitepapers/principlesstrategies>)

2. UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Declaration of Principles and Plan Action, December 12, 2003.
(<http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/promotional/brochure-dop-poa.pdf>)
3. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Declaration on Access to Research Data from Public Funding, January 30, 2004.
(<http://www.oecd.org>)
4. IFLA Statement on Open Access Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation, December 5, 2003.
(<http://archive.ifla.org/V/cdoc/open-access04.html>)

On the basis of the Budapest, Bethesda, Berlin definitions it was analysed that:¹²

1. Open Access Literature is Freely Available
2. Open Access Literature is Online
3. Open Access Literature is Scholarly and Royalty Free
4. Open Access Literature can be used with Minimal Restrictions
5. Open Access Literature Metadata can be Harvested
6. Open Access Strategies: Self-Archiving and Open Access Journals

3. Open Access and Libraries

For libraries, open access offers a variety of new opportunities and challenges. In the long-term, open access may help shrinking materials budgets by mitigating costs for resource purchase and access. It may also reduce some of the headaches involved in negotiating electronic journals and database licenses.¹³ Many open access advocates are optimistic that it will enhance scholarly communication by making content broadly available and by providing relief to libraries from continuing large price increases of subscription journals.¹⁴ There is no doubt, open access has enhanced scholarly communication and library users are getting unrestricted and free access to scholarship. It is always not possible for a library to purchase or access to full range of research literature on payment basis while open access publishing model has added a lot to library collection indirectly. Libraries play an essential role in open access developments by their expertise in building infrastructure, in creating user-friendly services of high quality and in securing long-term access.¹⁵ Academic libraries have played an active role in the expansion of the OA movement by promoting it in a variety of ways:¹⁶

- » including records for OA journals in their public catalogues and e-journals lists
- » collaborating with their institutions to establish institutional repositories
- » participating in, and at times, leading institutional initiatives to encourage faculty to deposit their work in the institution's repository
- » digitizing historical collections and providing OA
- » becoming active OA journal publishers

4. Open Access and Role of Librarians

As new models of scholarly communication emerge, librarians are situated to play a key role in the development of these models for academic publishing and dissemination.¹⁷ In 2007, the working group of the National Knowledge Commission on 'Open Access and Open Educational Resources' recommended in their report to increase Open Access content from India, in order to increase the public awareness and utilization of OA material.¹⁸ Now it is the duty of librarians to do efforts for creating an environment for open access and make aware to the academic community to maximize the usage of open access resources available either in Institutional repositories or otherwise. Librarians have shown their support for open access by signing open access initiatives and petitions. They have educated faculty and administrators about evolving scholarly communication environment. Libraries have partnered with faculty and research managers to set up open access repositories and to help faculty and students to deposit their research outputs. Librarians have provided support in research data curation and sharing. They have helped scholarly publishers to publish open access journals and books, and they have worked with educators to produce open educational resources ensuring the quality of digital content, its reuse and sharing. Open access has thus changed the profile of academic and research libraries.¹⁹ The librarians' desire to acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate the information available freely is the need of the hour. It is a challenge to generate the interest of the librarians in providing greater access to the masses at lower cost. The librarians must be positive and they must always be eager to adopt new techniques to cope with the changes and ready to do adjustment with the rapidly evolving conditions.

5. Related Literature

The first of its kind study conducted in the form of national survey in USA in 2006 to study the attitude of the academic librarians and certain actions about open access principles. It was resulted that academic librarians support the open access and their involvement is increasing in scholarly communication by establishing institutional repositories and other open access initiatives. The study could not reveal the personal actions of librarians but 30% librarians are with a view that academic libraries should create professional positions whose main duties concern open access issues and projects, and 49% had no opinion or only somewhat agree. Over half of the respondents reported never having spoken with non-library staff about open access.²⁰ Another study on the same lines was conducted covering Nigerian Private Universities in 2009-10 with the objectives to evaluate the perceptions and reactions of academic librarians. It shows that most of the librarians are involved with multiple assignments in the libraries and have a very positive attitude towards open access. They agreed that academic librarians should educate the academic community about the issues and facilities of open access. Regarding the role of academic libraries 73.8% respondents are agreed that libraries should create links to open access resources in their websites while 92.9% agree that bibliographic records for open access journals should be included in their catalogues.²¹

To find out the extent librarians have appreciated the new culture of using open access and institutional repository in their scholarly publications, this study was conducted in South Eastern Nigeria. The questions were asked regarding advantages of open access, role of librarians in institutional repository, constraints to the use of open access in scholarly publishing and strategies to enhance open access for scholarly publications. The result reveals that majority of the librarians are aware of open access information and accepted all the advantages of open access but only some of them have published their article in open access journal. Respondents accept role (as listed) of librarians in institutional repository, however respondents of one university did not agree that librarian are familiar with vendor licensing and copyright laws. All the constraints to the use of open access scholarly publishing and strategies to enhance open access for scholarly publication as listed in questionnaire were accepted by the respondents. It was suggested to find out why many librarians do not publish in open access journals.²² Mercer conducted a survey to analyse and better understand whether librarians employ open access method to make their research available and to offer possible reasons for academic author-librarian behaviours and motivations, with an eye to increasing awareness of and activism in scholarly communication among this group. It was found that out of the 3873 articles indexed in LISA almost 49% of academic librarians' articles were available open access journals. This percentage was bigger than the one reported for articles published by other departments (40%). The author characterized librarians' output as promising.²³

The efforts of librarians in promoting and advocacy for open access started in last decade. In recent years some academic libraries have started to raise awareness among the students community. Through an online survey distributed to three listservs – Electronic Resources in Libraries, Serials in Libraries Discussion Forum and American College and Research Libraries' Scholarly Communication, the study results provide some insights into the thinking of a subset of academic librarians regarding what is being done at their institutions. The questions were asked regarding the important aspects of OA to which users should be familiar, activities of the librarians to educate about OA, and opinion on the role of librarians to educate students about OA. 86% of the respondents indicated that their library provided a link to the DOAJ on their library website but 62% reported that their library was doing enough to make OA resources accessible on their websites. 59% believe that their libraries were not doing enough to promote OA to their students. The study also reveals various promotional and educational activities initiated by the librarians towards promoting OA.²⁴

A leading open access publisher - InTech has published the findings of a survey appraising attitude and awareness of the library community towards the open access business model in scholarly publishing. The online survey was conducted in April 2012 with the objectives to explore current levels of familiarity with open access; current opinion of and attitude towards open access; current role of the librarian with regards to open access and whether and how open access is changing the role of the librarian. Majority of the respondents were from large academic institutions based in Europe and North America. Results shows that

familiarity with open access is quite good (95%) among the librarian community 54% of respondents state their author and reader communities are not familiar with open access. 78% of respondents are in favour of open access and 95% think that open access is already bridging tangible benefits and will do so in the future. 70% of participants' institution already have an institutional repository and majority of the participants (97%) feels that librarians should provide information on open access. Majority of the librarians are agree that open access is changing the role of the librarian positively and librarians should involve themselves in the pertinent activities and acquire necessary skills.²⁵

The SAGE hosted a roundtable in association of the British Library to discuss challenges and changes ahead for libraries in relation to the impacts of changes in scholarly communication on 26 April 2012. The aims of the roundtable were to provide an international perspective on the likely impact of an open access future on librarians, to identify support and skills required for librarians in such a future, and to further current discussion on support for the library community from their institutions, publishers, funders and other parties. The group of 14 librarians and other industry experts discussed a number of key questions like setting parameters for what the likely shift towards open access might be in different disciplines and different geographic regions, then considering what the impact of such a shift would mean for the academic library community. The Report of roundtable meeting suggested following actions:

- » academic libraries need to evolve to continue to meet the changing needs of their users
- » libraries will need to look for ways to work together; greater dialogue is needed between libraries about strategies for dealing with open access and best practices
- » clear communication of open access, its benefits, processes and implications is needed for researchers
- » a review should be taken exploring attitude towards the role of institutional collections as more content as available as OA
- » as with the publishing models, open access carries both benefits and cost. The group believes that good policy outcomes will only result if those involved in the marketplace are willing to acknowledge and evaluate both and calls upon those involved to maintain open dialogue on open access.²⁶

6. Transforming Role of Librarians

With the advancement of information communication technology and its implementation in library operations and services, the role of librarians has been changed significantly. Open access supported by technology has become a public movement globally and this movement has provided new challenges as well as opportunities for the librarians. With knowledge of open access, understanding of copyright and licensing, expertise in bibliometrics and applying quality indicators for research quality evaluation, and access to a range of resources and tools, academic librarians are well situated to claim a proactive role in supporting scholarly publishing literacy in the following areas:²⁷

1. Raising awareness of open access developments, for example the different roads to open access, operations of open access repositories, and hybrid and fully open access journals
2. Assisting researchers with accessing tools and resources to enable them to understand funders and publishers' policies related to open access, for example database such as SHERPA/RoMEO, SHERPA/JULIET
3. Supporting the management of authors' rights, for example information on copyright and licensing, including Creative Commons
4. Administering and promoting the use of institutional repositories, for example supporting the depositing of research outputs
5. Using bibliometrics tools and other journal quality indicators for quality and impact evaluation, due diligence checking on open access journals

The librarians are facing challenges and opportunities due to the impact of open access movement on libraries; they have to play important roles by their activities or by rendering new services to users to be relevant in the changing information landscape:

1. They should do efforts to educate academic community about the benefits of making their research openly available.
2. They should have positive attitude towards open access policies and open access movement.
3. Establishing institutional repositories, providing link to open access resources in library web pages and supporting in publication of open access journal, they can enhance the scholarly communication.
4. They should publish their own research work in open access journals/repositories to become participate in open access movement.
5. They have to do research on open access scholarly communication periodically to know the dependency of academic community on open access information resources and take policy decisions accordingly.
6. They need to improve their professional knowledge and skills to deal with various stakeholders in scholarly communication process.
7. They should prepare young staff by providing training to cope with the new challenges.

8. Conclusion

In the present Indian scenario, the roles of librarians are refreshed and even more specialized roles are defined. Apart from traditional roles, they are managing digital library projects, digital archiving, institutional repositories, publishing open access journal, providing metadata harvesting services, creating web portals etc. In addition to current practices by librarians, scholarly publishing literacy needs to be considered through the lenses of digital scholarship and information literacy to be fully understood.²⁸ Though the roles of the librarians and support services provided by them differ from one library to another, it is the great

responsibility of the library schools to produce librarians with sound theoretical knowledge and trained with new skills to respond to the challenges in the transforming profession.

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