

Time to Step on the Gas in Approaching the *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy*

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Time to Step on the Gas in Approaching the *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy*

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Commentary on:

Association of College and Research Libraries. Working Group on Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy. (2013). *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy: Creating Strategic Collaborations for a Changing Academic Environment*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2013. Available from <http://acrl.ala.org/intersections/>

As someone who believes scholarly communication and information literacy will continue to be essential growth areas for academic libraries, I welcomed the recent appearance of *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy: Creating Strategic Collaborations for a Changing Academic Environment*. This white paper, developed by an ACRL working group, advocates for the integration of scholarly communication and information literacy to strengthen the educational roles of academic libraries. Merging these areas represents something of a new frontier that will require many libraries to shift models that presently support scholarly communication and information literacy as separate endeavors. The paper effectively makes the case for this shift based on the premise that scholarly communication knowledge is vital to information literacy skills and the ability to navigate the world of digital information. The “how” part of making this transition happen is described mostly in broad strokes, suggesting a need for sharing successful models from the field. One step in this direction is the newly published book *Common Ground at the Nexus of Information Literacy and Scholarly Communication* (ACRL, 2013), which serves as a companion to *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy*, with more specific strategies for implementation.

A fundamental argument of *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy* asserts that every academic librarian is a teacher, and all roles in academic libraries are impacted by the changing nature of scholarly communication: “Therefore, every librarian has a role in teaching, whether informally or formally, about scholarly communication issues” (p. 4). The authors further state, “Transformations in the publishing and education environment provide abundant opportunities for collaboration and partnerships among scholarly communication and information literacy experts to meet the educational needs of faculty and students in the digital information age” (p. 5). Within this overarching context, the white paper analyzes three major intersections of scholarly communication and information literacy: Economics of the Distribution of Scholarship; Digital Literacies; and New Roles for Librarians.

While economic concerns are at the heart of the first intersection, the discussion also emphasizes teaching students about emerging paradigms of information dissemination from the perspective of both creators and consumers of content. The second intersection on digital literacies continues this theme, focusing on the need for faculty and students to know how to function effectively as creators and consumers in the world of non-textual



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content (e.g. multimedia formats, data). Lastly, the “New Roles for Librarians” intersection examines roles that are emerging from current organizational models, including changes to liaison librarian duties, in response to the increasing relevance of scholarly communication to information literacy.

After analyzing these intersections, the paper offers a number of responses and recommendations for moving forward. These range from embracing a concept of “information fluency” that encompasses information literacy and scholarly communication skills to advocating for the development of new pedagogical strategies and organizational approaches. (The information fluency section illustrates some of the semantic challenges of this transition, as the term is already used by some as an equivalent to “information literacy,” even while the paper’s discussion of “transliteracy” may eventually replace “information fluency” altogether.) Clearly, progress across academic libraries in fully integrating scholarly communication with information literacy—both in name and in practice—will require buy-in on multiple levels, from individual librarians and institutions to organizations like ACRL. The recommendations presented in the paper provide a flexible framework in which change agents on all levels can operate.

While the discussion and recommendations in *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy* raise many thought-provoking topics, three issues in particular warrant further discussion due to their big picture implications:

- The coupling of scholarly communication instruction with experiential learning
- The faculty impact of shifting scholarly communication programs toward students
- The integrated model’s value to parent institutions and higher education

A central theme in the paper is the need to alter existing instructional practices. The authors wisely indicate that forcing scholarly communication concepts solely into traditional one-shot, lecture-based instruction is not enough. Instead, they advocate the development of experiential, active-learning opportunities in which learners serve in the roles of creators, disseminators, and consumers of information. These models may, for example, incor-

porate undergraduate research journals or other vehicles for expressing student research and creativity.

This explicit coupling of scholarly communication concepts with the adoption of experientially-based instructional methods is one of the paper’s greatest potential contributions. Ideally, this combination will simultaneously accelerate integration of scholarly communication with information literacy while encouraging broader use of experiential learning methods in library instruction. At the core of this approach is a learning experience based on active participation in scholarly communication processes by students under the guidance of librarians and professors working in tandem.

Beyond the need to collaborate with librarians in developing this new instructional model, the paper’s proposed integration of scholarly communication and information literacy has additional implications for faculty. While the traditional focus of information literacy programs has been largely on undergraduates, scholarly communication programs have primarily emphasized engagement with faculty members. An increased focus on bringing scholarly communication into student instruction will continue that engagement through collaboration with professors to design new course content. Yet this emerging priority also has the potential to shift library resources *away* from other faculty-oriented scholarly communication endeavors such as open data initiatives.

With this in mind, libraries will do well to approach the integration process as an opportunity to rethink their faculty, as well as student, engagement across the entire spectrum of scholarly communication activities. While the authors don’t discuss this issue directly, it seems clear they would encourage libraries to consider how instruction in this area may be linked with faculty members’ research in order to cultivate scholarly communication connections between the two. A holistic approach could help to ensure that the incorporation of information literacy can leverage, rather than detract from, scholarly communication efforts that relate primarily to faculty research.

This kind of system-wide thinking is also required in articulating how the integration of scholarly communication and information literacy aligns with the goals and priorities of individual parent institutions and higher education as a whole. The paper makes reference to this in its recommendation to “Articulate the value librarians

bring to the academic enterprise and the individual when we forge deeper collaborations around the intersections of information literacy and scholarly communication” (p. 21). The transition to an integrated model will be a significant undertaking at many libraries, and much of the initial attention will naturally be on internal processes. However, long-term success must also involve making the case for this approach’s contributions to larger institutional goals in areas such as lifelong learning and critical thinking skills.

The integration of scholarly communication and information literacy has the potential to become a central element in demonstrating the value of academic libraries. The paradigm advocated by *Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy* is bound to gain significant traction as libraries customize it according to local resources, priorities, and strategic agendas. It will ultimately be up to each library and the profession as a whole to ensure that traction fully extends to the surrounding higher education landscape as they navigate the various intersections of this collective journey.

EDITOR’S NOTE:

Our thanks to Shan for providing the first P² review in JLSC! These reviews are intended to provide a forum for expert commentary on non-monographic literature—highlighting both published articles and grey literature with implications for library and scholarly communication practices. Reviewed publications may include journal articles, conference papers, or white papers. To read more about contributing a P² review to this journal, visit <http://jlsc-pub.org/jlsc/authors.html#p2>.

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