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Review **Library Publishing Curriculum**

Rachel P. King

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Library Publishing Curriculum

By Educopia

2016-2019 | Educopia

One of the defining features of contemporary librarianship is the daunting amount of knowledge and new skills librarians are expected to continue acquiring throughout their careers—years and even decades after completing their degrees. It's not just the dizzying array of cutting-edge technologies that those of us in the field feel pressured to master, but the myriad roles and job responsibilities that those technologies suddenly make possible. For example, the combination of skyrocketing journal prices with the increasing affordability and accessibility of publishing platforms has led many libraries to take on a challenging new role, that of academic publisher. Still, it's a hard field to bootstrap your way into, since there's so much to learn: everything from rights and permissions, to selecting a house editorial style, to handling the production aspects of artwork and graphics (“Narrative: Nuts and Bolts of Scholarly Publishing”). Full disclosure: I worked in academic and commercial publishing for years before I ever became a librarian. In position after position, I always relied on more senior people to train me, and I don't feel I could have managed without them. I am, therefore, acutely aware of how in a newly-established library publishing operation, efforts to provide high-quality publishing services might be hampered or even derailed by a lack of institutional knowledge and absence of experienced staff.

Fortunately, Educopia has created an open access Library Publishing Curriculum to provide the kind of training budding library publishers need. Created by a committee of publishers and librarians and offered to the public via Google Drive, it's a comprehensive course on virtually all aspects of the field. The first two modules, Content (which discusses “how library publishers attract, select, edit, manage, and disseminate content”) and Impact (which focuses on “how library publishers measure and extend the impact of their work”) were authored by academic publishers; the second two modules on Sustainability (covering “Business Basics,” “Financial Basics,” “Staffing and Governance,” and “Preservation”) and Policy (which offers advice on creating legal agreements and developing library policies on copyright, diversity, and digital preservation) were created by librarians.



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Fortunately the writing is clear and user-friendly. That is a very good thing, because the sheer amount of content being offered makes mastering the Curriculum quite challenging. The creators have succeeded in addressing just about every aspect of publishing that a neophyte might feel curious about or want to learn. Encompassing both theory and practice, the Curriculum offers instruction on how and why to begin a library publishing program, as well as on how to ensure that it is ethical and sustainable. It is designed for group learning settings and each module is conveniently divided into smaller sections with readings, handouts, and lecture slides. The creators say that the Curriculum is meant to be a “dynamic” and “extensible” document that will continue to evolve and improve (*home page*). While this fluidity is certainly an advantage—the editors do express an intention to continue adding content (e.g., to build out the Policy module) and keep the Curriculum up-to-date—it can be a little jarring and confusing for the user to go back to the home page or one of the Google Drive files and discover noticeable changes. (As if to prove this point, after the first draft of this review was written in November 2019, a new “Library Publishing Workshop,” based on the Curriculum and designed for individual learners rather than groups, was added to the project’s home page on December 16, 2019.)

Furthermore, the Curriculum’s flexibility works both ways: In addition to allowing its creators to constantly update and improve their work, users are encouraged to download the materials and to customize them to suit their own needs. To that end, the Curriculum is covered by a Creative Commons CC-By license, which allows for unlimited sharing and adaptation (Creative Commons, n.d.). That said, the format is essentially unguided and asynchronous. It is up to group leaders or instructors to decide both how to structure the course as well as how to best use the materials that have been provided.

Although it’s possible to try to plough through the entire Curriculum quickly, there is so much information to absorb that it would be best for most learners to complete the modules at a more measured pace. In addition to the exercises and lecture slides, some sections have extensive bibliographies. Working through all this material could easily take months, and I suspect that some users—true beginners—will want to circle back and revisit the readings and lectures multiple times. (Others with stronger publishing backgrounds, of course, will be able to save time by selecting the modules and sections that feel most relevant.) All of which is to say that this isn’t exactly a quick-start guide, but that’s the point. For any librarian or library student who wants to really understand academic publishing, it’s hard to imagine a course more thorough or thoughtful.

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BIOGRAPHY

Rachel P. King is the Online Services & Scholarly Communications Librarian at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University in Camden, New Jersey. She has worked at the New York City College of Technology (CUNY), LIM College, and Manhattan College, all in New York City.