Book Review
The No-nonsense Guide to Research Support and Scholarly Communication

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The No-nonsense Guide to Research Support and Scholarly Communication

By Claire Sewell

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With the arrival of Plan S (Schiltz, 2018), the scholarly communications sector is receiving fresh attention (Johnson, 2019); the subscription model is being questioned, and open access (OA) has found itself at a new crossroads, being assessed for how to best serve access to scholarly output (Debat & Babini, 2020; May, 2020; Šimukovič, 2020). New technologies emerge, new business models are under consideration, and the lines between academic research and library support are now blurred; university libraries are building synergies with research departments to support research projects undertaken by academics. In *The No-nonsense Guide to Research Support and Scholarly Communication*, author Claire Sewell's intention is to introduce the reader to the fundamental concepts of scholarly communications and suggest how these concepts can be implemented in practice via researcher support. Sewell, a research support librarian at Cambridge University with a considerable presence in the wider professional community, delivers a measured and balanced account of scholarly communications and the support roles to be found within a university library.

The book's structure resembles that of the research life cycle, starting out with the definition of scholarly communications and moving from research data management (RDM) to publishing OA and disseminating results to the post-publication activity of measuring impact. At this point, Sewell introduces the various career paths that librarians can design for themselves to enter the sector. This is a very logical way of presenting the information and allows the reader to gradually build an understanding.

The book can be read in bits or cover to cover and is split into two thematic sections: chapters one through five introduce the reader to scholarly communications through its various components, such as the definition of scholarly communications, understanding RDM and OA, disseminating research results, and measuring impact. In chapters six and seven the author

elaborates on how librarians and information professionals can be involved in the research process, by either moving into roles supporting researchers or by doing research themselves. Chapter eight is simply a conclusion with little to offer but for additional resources to enhance understanding of the various subjects.

One topic omitted from the book is copyright. Sewell deliberately excludes copyright and defends her choice by arguing that copyright is a complex issue worth its own investigation. The reviewer partially agrees with the omission. The book is relatively small and there seems to be space to add, at the very least, a discussion of the evolution of Creative Commons, a development that has shaped sharing practices in scholarly communications. Creative Commons and open licencing receive sporadic mentions in various chapters. However, omitting copyright can be justified for two reasons: one is that it does not detract from the value of the book. The second is that, as the narrative of the book seems to progress through the research life cycle, the topic of copyright affects each stage of the cycle and may seem out of place as a standalone chapter.

Moving forward, several of the book's chapters warrant a special mention. Chapter two discusses RDM. Libraries are now using lessons from the well-established OA efforts of the past two decades to develop equivalent RDM services. Sewell covers the pitfalls of managing data and alerts the reader to the several iterations that RDM can take. Crucially, the chapter covers data management plans (DMPs). A DMP is key in the planning process at the early stages of a research project, and readers will benefit from learning what is involved in producing or reviewing one. She caps off the chapter with a fun activity using Lego toys in a creative way to illustrate data management.

Chapter five is an impressive summary of all the variations of metrics and how they shape the measuring of impact in the scientific world. Sewell expertly weaves together the definitions of traditional (the Eigenfactor score, the h-index) and non-traditional (altmetrics) methods of measuring impact. As existing methods have fallen into disrepute (Seglen, 1997; Kirschner, 2013), there are now calls to develop the practice by considering responsible metrics. Consequently, readers stand to gain the most from understanding the three key responsible metrics initiatives (the Declaration on Research Assessment, the Leiden Manifesto, and The Metric Tide) that are shaping the future of measuring impact.

In chapters six and seven, Sewell demonstrates how the knowledge gained in previous chapters could be adapted into practice. In many ways, this is the most useful part of the book, because it allows individuals to identify possible future careers in research support and strategies to plan for developing their skills. Sewell has dual roles as both a researcher and a research support librarian and is well equipped to advise on each type of practice. Readers may feel more

comfortable with the content of chapter six, discovering potential support roles, but Sewell nudges us to consider contributing to research in the scholarly communications sector, for librarianship has a considerable body of literature that we ought to enrich.

In addition to professionals who wish to go into this area, the reviewer would recommend this book to students of library and information science at an undergraduate or postgraduate level. The information in each chapter accurately depicts developing events even in the most complex of matters such as OA (including all aspects of the debate). Furthermore, individuals who aspire to complete a professional accreditation outside academia, i.e., with a professional body, will find chapters six and seven especially useful.

The author ought to be commended for delivering on the initial promise: introducing professionals to this emerging area of work within libraries. In summary, Sewell shows us that there is a cultivated skillset within the library services that can be put to good use when it comes to supporting researchers. And that is the relevance of this volume and the space within which it operates. At a time when libraries develop research support services and collaborate with research departments, this book is a timely addition to the existing literature supplemented by Sewell's professional expertise and comprehension of the subject matter.

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