Karen Williams

The ACRL Scholarly Communications Toolkit now online

A resource for administrators, faculty, and librarians

E*ditor's note:* The ACRL Scholarly Communications Toolkit was created by Karen Williams during a recent sabbatical leave from her position at the University of Arizona Library. Williams developed the content of the toolkit in collaboration with the ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee and was assisted in the design of the toolkit site by Adam Engelsgjerd, also of the University of Arizona Library. The toolkit, which is now available online, is linked from the ACRL Scholarly Communication Web page at www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/scholarlycomm/scholarlycommunication.htm.

Meeting the goals of the initiative

The purpose of the ACRL Scholarly Communications Initiative is to work in partnership with other library and higher education organizations to encourage reform in the system of scholarly communication. Educating librarians to serve as advocates and change agents is an important strategy in the success of this initiative. And we are beginning to taste success.

A progress report on the initiative, which appeared in the September 2004 issue of *C&RL News*, outlines a number of achievements in our joint efforts with other organizations to create change. Librarians' voices were strong among those supporting open access through PubMed Central to journal articles resulting from research funded by the National Institutes of Health. We persuaded many of our campuses to decline or renegotiate "Big Deal" electronic licenses with major

publishers. We submitted recommendations to the U.K. Parliament's inquiry into scientific publication, an inquiry that has resulted in a very strong endorsement for principles of open access.

While these developments are certainly encouraging, achieving fundamental reform in the system of scholarly communication will be a long and difficult process. It will require even broader involvement from academic librarians and much greater engagement on the part of faculty and other researchers. We need to create a cycle of continuous learning and action.

Working toward creating change

The Web-based ACRL Scholarly Communications Toolkit is designed to support advocacy efforts that work toward changing the scholarly communication system and to provide information on scholarly communication issues for librarians, faculty, academic administrators, and other campus stakeholders. The toolkit aims to do this in ways that meet the needs of the full range of academic institutions represented in the ACRL membership base. A primary goal of the toolkit is to summarize key issues and content in order to give readers quick, basic information on scholarly communication topics.

Karen Williams is associate university librarian for academic programs, University of Minnesota Libraries, e-mail: kaw@umn.edu.

Actions Librarians Can Take

As Librarians

- Educate faculty, staff, students, and university administrators on the business practices of different journal publishers and their impact on the health of scholarly communication.
- Consider rejecting bundled or aggregated license agreements and issue a public statement explaining why.
- Consider canceling unreasonably expensive journals and issue a public statement explaining why.
- Negotiate with vendors of electronic content (journals and databases) for full access by walk-in patrons.
- Negotiate with vendors of electronic content for the right to use the content for interlibrary loan and electronic reserves.
- Include open access journals in the library catalog.
- Work with your campus to launch an open access, open archives initiative-compliant institutional e-print repository, for both texts and data.
- Help faculty deposit their research articles in the institutional repository. To create momentum, the library could help faculty put their past publications into digital form, deposit them in the repository, and enter the relevant metadata.
- Consider publishing an open access journal.
- Help open access journals launched at the university become known to other libraries, indexing services, potential funders, authors, and readers.
- Consider offering to assure the long-term preservation of some specific body of open access content.
- Consider redirecting some funds from the materials budget to pay author fees for faculty who publish in open access journals.
- Consider buying institutional memberships in organizations such as the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), the Public Library of Science PloS), BioMed Central, or other groups that seek to increase broad and cost-effective access to peer-reviewed scholarship.

As Authors

- Modify any contract you sign with a publisher to ensure that you retain the rights to use your work as you see fit, including posting it to a public archive or institutional repository.
- Become aware of the pricing policies of journals (including commercial electronic journals) in your field.
- Submit papers to quality journals that have reasonable pricing practices. Where possible, publish in open access journals, which employ funding models that do not charge readers or their institutions for access. Notify unreasonably expensive journals of your decision to submit elsewhere. To find peer-reviewed open access journals in your field, see the Directory of open access Journals.
- When applying for research grants, ask the foundation for funds to pay the processing fees charged by open access journals. Many foundations are already on the record as willing to do this.
- Deposit preprints and/or postprints in disciplinary or institutional repositories. There is currently no official or complete list of repositories or archives, but for more information, see www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/lists.htm#archives.

As Reviewers

- Consider declining offers to review for unreasonably expensive journals. Notify the journal of the reason for your refusal.
- When asked to referee a paper for an open access journal, accept the invitation.

As Editors

- If you are an editor or on the editorial board of a subscription journal, examine the pricing practices of that journal. If appropriate, start an in-house discussion on pricing.
- Consider relinquishing editorial posts with unreasonably expensive journals. Notify the journal of the reason for your refusal.
- When asked to serve on the editorial board for an open access journal, accept the invitation.

Actions Librarians Can Take

As Professionals
• Encourage your professional associations to maintain (or adopt!) reasonable prices and user-friendly access terms.
• Encourage your professional associations to explore alternatives to contracting or selling its publications to a commercial publisher.

• Encourage your professional associations to consider creating enhanced competitors to expensive commercial titles.
• Encourage your professional associations to consider launching an open access journal or creating a disciplinary repository in your field.

The toolkit is designed with three pathways: one for academic administrators, one for faculty, and one for librarians. For the most part, the same issues are addressed in the pathways, but the emphasis and amount of information that is included changes for the particular audience. Key issues chosen for inclusion are the effects of inflationary price increases and relatively stable information access budgets; new alternatives for disseminating scholarly information; aggregated or bundled electronic content; author control of intellectual property; and publisher mergers and acquisitions.

In addition to a basic introduction of each topic, other tools featured in the site include a bibliography that selects and annotates a few key items from among the wealth of information available, and a selective Webliography providing annotated links to such items as online exhibits, sample publishing agreements, directories, price data, and a list of other associations working in this arena. PowerPoint presentations and brochures created by librarians for use on their respective campuses can often be adapted for local use by others. The three Act Now! lists suggest ways in which, working together, we can effect change.

Share your materials and ideas
The key word here is "debut." The toolkit was created as a living site with the intention of revising content and adding tools as the issues change. The site will debut with tools contributed largely by members of the ACRL Scholarly Communications Committee. The committee encourages ACRL members to submit other tools and suggestions in order to make the toolkit a vibrant and useful asset. The toolkit will serve as a model for the collegial sharing of educational materials. Those wishing to submit materials are strongly encouraged to include a Creative Commons license.[1] Instructions for submitting ideas and materials will be available on the toolkit site.

A taste of the toolkit is included here with the list of Actions Librarians Can Take[2] to foster reform in the system of scholarly communication.

Notes
1. With a Creative Commons license, you keep your copyright but allow people to copy and distribute your work, provided they give you credit—and only on the conditions you specify. See creativecommons.org/.

2. These sources were used as the basis for this list of actions:

• Peter Suber has compiled and summarized a list of college and university actions against high journal prices. The list includes many links to policy statements. See www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/lists.htm#actions.

• The *Create Change* brochure published by the Association of College and Research Libraries, the Association of Research Libraries, SPARC, and SPARC Europe. See www.createchange.org/resources/brochure.html.

• Suber's site also contains a list of actions to further the cause of open access. See www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/lists.htm#do.