

Answering queries pertaining to rapidly changing scholarly communications landscape

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Scholarly communications services and products continue to evolve. Such evolution manifests several questions such as what academic degrees and experience are necessary for individuals who serve in these departments? What services should be offered by scholarly communications departments? How many individuals are required to staff a scholarly communications department? These questions and others will be answered during this panel.

Keywords: Scholarly Communications; Degrees; Experience; Personnel

1. Evolution of Scholarly Communication

The services and expectations of scholarly communications departments in libraries continues to evolve. For example, library scholarly communications departments now include managing Vireo, data repositories, hosting e-journal systems, preserving digital items, and a host of other digital responsibilities. Scholarly communications departments are also often expected to offer copyright, trademark, and other intellectual property advice to stakeholders in the library, and often to other patrons throughout an entire academic campus. With the continued expansion of services and responsibilities of scholarly communications departments several questions arise. How many individuals should a scholarly communications department include? Is one scholarly communications librarian

enough, or is a department of many necessary? May individuals in a scholarly communications department offer legal advice, or simply point stakeholders to legal resources?

2. Personnel Size For Scholarly Communications Department

Many scholarly communications or digital projects units in libraries are now managing several different scholarly communications responsibilities in a make-shift manner. For example, some digital projects units employ multiple librarians who perform varied tasks. For example, one librarian may work on clearing copyright for faculty authors so that the faculty member can deposit an article into a repository, and this same employee may also be responsible for managing Vireo so that graduate students may submit their electronic thesis or dissertation to a separate repository. Whereas, other universities have digital units that employ more individuals who each manage a separate duty. Another issue facing scholarly communication departments is whether to or how to offer legal advice.

3. Legal Advice

More libraries are seeking individuals who are willing to deal with copyright, licensing, and other legal issues that arise in libraries. Some of these legal issues include whether faculty can post specific material in Blackboard or into a repository, how to negotiate a license with a publisher, or how to understand Creative Commons licenses. Several questions arise due to libraries recruiting and utilizing individuals who are willing to deal with such legal issues. One manifested query is do libraries need to have a person with a J.D. if they are grappling with legal questions? Libraries have taken different approaches in this regard. Some libraries have recruited and hired individuals who are licensed attorneys, whereas other libraries hire non-J.D. librarians and believe the non-J.D. person can learn how to deal with legal issues on the job.

3.1. J.D. and non-J.D.

Another related query that naturally arises is can scholarly communication librarians offer legal advice, regardless of whether they have earned a J.D.? Of course, non-J.D. librarians probably should not offer legal advice. It is unethical for a non-attorney to offer legal advice. Then, why would a library hire an individual who did not hold a J.D.? Cost, is a main reason, as non-J.D. librarians probably demand a much lower salary. Lack of an ability to recruit a person with a J.D. may be another factor in regard to hiring a non-J.D. librarian. Yet, librarians who have not earned a J.D. can still point faculty, students, and other patrons

toward the correct legal answer. For example, if a copyright question arises, a non-J.D. scholarly communication librarian can point a patron to information that enables the patron to make an informed decision.

3.2 What degree is necessary?

A related topic is what education is required for a scholarly communications librarian, or a related position. Do these employees need a library degree (e.g., M.L.S. or equivalent)? Do they need a J.D., or some other doctoral degree? Whether to have the J.D. has been somewhat discussed above. Yet, if a library employee is hired to work specifically with electronic theses and dissertations, do they necessarily need to have a library degree? Couldn't they possess a related information technology degree (e.g., M.A. or Ph.D. in Learning Technologies), or a M.A. or Ph.D. in information science and still be able to operate an electronic theses and dissertations repository?

4. Boundaries For A Scholarly Communications Department

Another related query conveys what are the boundaries of a scholarly communications department? For example, some universities are requesting that their library develop and maintain e-journal publishing systems and/or e-university presses. Should these types of services be maintained by libraries? If so, should these services be managed by the scholarly communications/digital unit, or should a separate department maintain such an endeavor?

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, as libraries continuously and rapidly evolve, the roles of scholarly communications/digital project units will advance as well. It is vital to ruminate about what specific services are best offered by a scholarly communications/digital projects units, and what services should be excluded. Further, perhaps, educational requirements for individuals who work in these units should be determined on a case-by-case basis. The number of employees included in these units should also be carefully analyzed. All of these questions should be carefully thought through to ensure a quality service.