Willa Tavernier

Developing scholarly communication competencies

How a post-master's degree residency program can provide career preparation

Scholarly communication librarianship is a messy field. Its margins are ill-defined and ever- changing. There is a lack of curricular training in library schools and a lack of opportunities for early-career candidates.[1] As a result, preparing librarians for a scholarly communication career presents a challenge. In this piece I discuss this messiness and describe my personal experiences in a residency position, showing how these kinds of positions support the professional development of scholarly communication librarians, with specific reference to the NASIG Core Competencies for scholarly communication librarians.

Craig Finlay, Andrew Tsuo, and Cassidy Sugimoto note that despite its centrality to the profession, scholarly communication has not seen uptake as a "core component" in the Library and Information Science (LIS) curriculum in U.S. graduate programs.[2] Similarly, Josh Bolick, Maria Bonn, and William Cross report that "fewer than 50% of current scholarly communication practitioners felt their education prepared them adequately for any of the named areas of work in that field."[3]

An assessment of impostor phenomenon (also referred to as "imposter syndrome") among scholarly communication librarians in U.S. academic libraries by Erin Owens found that impostor phenomenon is more prevalent among librarians in scholarly communication than academic libraries more broadly. Owens attributes this, at least in part, to the nature of the field, which she describes as "broad, challenging, and rapidly changing."[4]

The sheer number of initiatives, platforms, and tools deployed in the field can be overwhelm-

ing. David Scherer, Kate Byrne, Mark Hahnel, and Daniel Valen drew attention to the wide variety of tools used for assessment, discovery, analysis, writing, publication, and outreach, referring to Bianca Kramer and Jeroen Bosman's 400+ Tools and innovations spreadsheet.[5] As of December 7, 2020, that spreadsheet listed 699 tools and platforms.[6]

In 2018, the Educopia Institute carried out a census of 135 scholarly communication resources (SCRs), including an in-depth review of 39 such SCRs. The census concluded that "scholarly communication is still quickly changing, and we can anticipate that change continuing and even increasing before we reach a long-lived, relatively stable state such as we enjoyed in the print-scholarship arena for several centuries."[7]

Also, there is no single model for scholarly communication librarianship—librarians and departments vary from institution to institution regarding their location within library organizational structures, focus, range of services provided, responsibilities, and division of responsibilities between librarians and staff. At some universities, there may be one scholarly communication librarian. Others expect all librarians to have scholarly communication competency. At Indiana University (IU)-Bloomington, where I work, the Scholarly Communication Department has three librarians, a professional staff member providing technical services who also holds an

Willa Tavernier is open scholarship resident librarian at Indiana University Libraries, email: wtavern@iu.edu

MLIS, and graduate student support. Position titles and responsibilities also vary based on institutional focus.

In their study, Findlay, Tsou, and Sugimoto also found that more senior faculty and staff hold most scholarly communication positions, as opposed to early-career librarians.[8] Taken together with the lack of curricular training, the wide array of tools, and lacking a stable model for this subfield, the predominant avenue to develop the knowledge, skills, and strengths associated with scholarly communication librarian competency is through experience.

The core competencies for scholarly communication librarianship developed by NASIG enjoy general acceptance across the field. NASIG identifies five potential areas of emphasis: 1) institutional repository management, 2) publishing services, 3) copyright services, 4) data management services, and 5) assessment and impact metrics.[9] NASIG also identifies background knowledge, technical skills, outreach and instruction, and team building as competencies that cut across all areas of emphasis. Finally, the NASIG toolbox points out that dynamic and adaptable personal strengths are necessary given scholarly communication librarianship's amorphous nature.

During the final semester of my MLIS, IU-Bloomington advertised its inaugural diversity residency for an open scholarship librarian—the position which I now hold. This three-year residency based in the Scholarly Communication Department, is collaboratively funded by the library and the university. Over the first two years of my residency, I have developed competency in institutional repository management and publishing services, assessment and impact metrics, and outreach and instruction. A high level of institutional support, the length of the residency, and the agency I had in developing projects, together with substantial professional development funding and mentorship, were key contributors to developing these competencies.

The residency contract length meant that I could familiarize myself with the department's work at a measured pace. My initial two-month training occurred via biweekly formal cross-training sessions and working closely with the open access publishing manager. In cross-training sessions, one department member would demonstrate a particular area's workflow and typical service requests for the other department members.

The open access publishing manager, the lone staff member in the department, was an invaluable resource in this initial period. Even before my residency started, he made himself available to talk through coming to the department and relocating to Bloomington. Our work together started with my review of the past year of institutional repository consultations, followed by meetings to discuss my questions arising from those consultations. After this, he demonstrated, then assigned, specific tasks and workflows for managing the institutional repository and the journal publishing program. Through this, we identified gaps in documentation. I then created documentation, which helped to solidify my understanding of publishing and repository workflows and tasks. The open access publishing manager held an MLIS, was a self-taught computer programmer, and a Ph.D. in another field, so he was able to discuss processes with me from a well-rounded policy perspective. These discussions deepened my understanding of the library and academic context in which our department operated.

A few months into my residency, I took over the responsibilities of the open access publishing manager as he moved into another position outside of the department. For the institutional repository, I created collections, managed permissions, ensured deposits had accurate metadata, proposed policy, and worked with other department members to deliver statistical reports. For the publishing program, I managed requests for publishing new journals, published journal issues, created documentation for enabling the DOI plugin, assigned DOIs to articles, along with troubleshooting various editors' issues. This experience allowed me to become immersed in the department's work. After a new hire was made, I regularly served as a backup in these areas.

During that first year, I was also able to get to know the broader campus community, and find where strong connections with the libraries

already existed and where there were opportunities to forge closer relationships. This networking typically occurred in less formal interactions such as luncheons, seminars, department social gatherings, and sometimes just by walking through hallways or having chance meetings off-campus. My department head encouraged me to make and execute a structured outreach plan, which had several fruitful outcomes. These formal and informal efforts included the creation of an open access CV Service Digital Collection of the work of Emeritus Professor Albert Valdman on the closing of the Creole Institute on campus, the creation of a scholarly publishing resource in collaboration with the liaison librarian for African American and African Diaspora Studies, and connecting the African American Arts Institute with library services to support a bicentennial grant.[10] I also became part of the extended community of the Graduate Mentoring Center and the Institute for Advanced Studies on campus.

Rotations in other departments were arranged based on my expressed interests. The hosting departments—Reference Services, Teaching & Learning, and the University Archives have been incredibly supportive. I still work reference and take part in the teaching librarians' community. Although the pandemic thwarted my rotation in the University Archives—we had to leave campus shortly after my onboarding and initial training—I have been able to participate in several virtual training events.

The head of the Teaching & Learning department enthusiastically embraced my goals and ideas and actively sought opportunities for me to teach. As a result, I was immersed in instruction from the very beginning of my residency, handling instructional sessions independently, with other librarians in the department, and with liaison librarians in other departments. These experiences helped me build on my Graduate Certificate in College Teaching, which I completed alongside my MLIS. I developed rapport in the classroom and learned a range of new techniques from librarians who had been developing and delivering instruction for many years. After that, when

I had opportunities to provide instruction or outreach sessions on behalf of the Scholarly Communication Department, I was markedly more confident.

My residency has professional development funding at the same level as tenure-track librarians, a departure from the institutional practice for visiting librarian positions. This funding, supplemented by two scholarships I obtained, allowed me to attend six conferences during the first year of my residency. These fora provided networking opportunities with librarians in scholarly communication, librarians in residency programs, and librarians of color. I was able to talk with, listen to, and learn from women of color at all stages of the profession, and my peers in residency programs. I have built relationships that have outlasted these conferences, and members of these communities have provided support and advice along the way. In many ways, these relationships have served as a means of informal mentoring.

Mentoring, both formal and informal, has been critical. My department head provided guidance on setting research and service goals and recommended the Library Publishing Coalition (LPC) mentorship program. The multicultural outreach librarian, who was also a resource for me prior to arriving on campus, introduced me to campus communities outside of the library and served as a sounding board for my questions about what I describe as the hidden culture of the library—the things that are not explicit but impact day-to-day life in the library.

My LPC mentor provided a wealth of information, made introductions to other librarians in areas where I expressed interest or challenges, and provided suggestions for how I might begin and sustain research and writing. The Society for Scholarly Publishing Fellows Program also paired me with a mentor who directed me to resources for research and professional development.

In the second half of the first year, I started working with bibliometrics and discovered that I had a particular interest in that field. I pursued available online and in-person professional development opportunities and assisted with bibliometric data analysis. At the start of the second year, I proposed a workshop on research

impact, which generated interest from library administration.

At the time, administration was actively partnering with the Office of the Vice-President for Faculty Academic Affairs (OVPFAA) to support faculty advancement. The Scholarly Communication Department and Libraries Administration scheduled the research impact workshop as the second half of a two-part series that we launched during Open Access Week. Attendance exceeded expectations and generated further requests for material and presentations on research impact as well as individual consultations. These requests came from faculty, institutes on campus, and OVPFAA. I began providing reports on bibliometric data to aid the department and administration in decision-making. At the beginning of my third year, the library added my position to the listing of subject specialists on the IU Libraries website, with responsibility for research management and impact.

My residency has been invaluable in giving me substantial experience in particular areas of scholarly communication librarianship. Given the dynamic nature of academic librarianship in general and scholarly communication librarianship in particular, coupled with a curriculum lag in scholarly communication training, post-master's residencies are an indispensable means of training. Residencies can (and should) provide hands-on experience, give residents responsibilities commensurate with other early-career librarians, and strive to provide a supportive environment for resident librarians. Libraries can facilitate work experiences in residents' areas of interest and provide guidance, mentorship, and professional development opportunities. Libraries should continue to support residency programs as these undoubtedly benefit librarians, libraries, and the profession as a whole.

Notes

1. NCSU Libraries, et al. "Scholarly Communication Notebook. 2019," accessed November 18, 2020, https://www.imls.gov/grants/awarded/lg-36-19-0021-19-0.

2. Craig Finlay, Andrew Tsuo, and Cassidy Sugimoto, "Scholarly Communication as a Core Competency: Prevalence, Activities, and Concepts of Scholarly Communication Librarianship as Shown Through Job Advertisements," *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication* 3, no. 1, eP1236 (June 2015): 4. https://doi.org/10.7710/2162-3309.1236.

3. Josh Bolick, Maria Bonn, and William Cross, "Designing OER to Prepare the Next Generation of Scholarly Communication Librarians," 2017: 2, accessed February 24, 2021, https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/grants/lg-72-17-0132-17/proposals/lg-72-17-0132-17-full-proposal-documents.pdf.

4. Erin Owens, "Impostor Phenomenon and Skills Confidence among Scholarly Communications Librarians in the United States," 2020: 3, accessed November 9, 2020, https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/handle/20.500.11875/2866.

5. David Scherer, Kate Byrne, Mark Hahnel, and Daniel Valen, "Collaborative Approaches to Integrate Repositories within the Research Information Ecosystem: Creating Bridges" *The Serials Librarian* 78, no. 1–4, 181–90, https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2020.1728169.

6. Bianca Kramer and Jeroen Bosman, "400+ Tools and innovations in scholarly communication," March 1, 2015, accessed February 8, 2021, http:/bit.ly/innoscholcomm-list.

7. Katherine Skinner, "Mapping the Scholarly Communication Landscape – 2019 Census – Case Studies," Educopia Institute, 2019: 36, https://educopia.org/mapping-scholarly-communications-infrastructure.

8. Finlay, Tsuo, and Sugimoto, "Scholarly Communication as a Core Competency."

9. NASIG Executive Board, "NASIG Core Competencies for Scholarly Communication Librarians," January 10, 2020, accessed December 19, 2021, https://www.nasig.org/Competencies-Scholarly-Communication.

10. IUScholarWorks, "Professor Emeritus Albert Valdman Research Collection," 2019, accessed February 24, 2021, https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/23223. African American and African Diaspora Studies, "AAADS Publishing Outlets and Self-archiving Policies," accessed February 24, 2021, https://bit.ly/AAADSpublish. Indiana University Bicentennial Grant Program, "Images of the African American Arts Institute," accessed February 24, 2021, https://200.iu.edu/participate/grant-program/images-aaai.html. ✀