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Book Review

Review of *Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge*

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ABSTRACT

Review of *Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge*, edited by Maria Bonn, Josh Bolick, and Will Cross. Association of College and Research Libraries, 2023. 528 pp. ISBN 9780838939901.

KEYWORDS

Librarianship, open access, open data, open education, open knowledge

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Introduction

Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge is a call-to-action for an “open access revolution” that engages librarians, other educators, and their students in the study and practice of transformative scholarly communication. A valuable tool for the study of library and information science, this textbook offers a comprehensive exploration of academic publishing practices and highlights the imperative of dismantling barriers that hinder equitable access to knowledge—a core mission of the library profession.

Summary of Argument

In an era of rapid technological advancement and evolving scholarly practices, models of academic publishing and knowledge sharing are undergoing profound changes. *Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge* emerges at its point of need as an essential contribution to this discourse, presenting academics with information necessary to successfully navigate an open access culture. Editors Maria Bonn, Josh Bolick, and Will Cross have compiled viewpoints that critically examine ways in which librarianship intersects with the publishing industry and the field of education, exposing a harsh reality: that the library profession has been complicit in systems that permit greater access to knowledge for individuals in privileged socioeconomic situations. As the editors illustrate, this is in direct conflict with the profession’s core value of “access,” which is defined by the American Library Association as a value that allows everyone in a community to obtain library resources and services with minimal obstruction.

To guide librarians, other educators, and their students in the interrogation of this phenomenon, the book is organized into three parts. Part I is chunked into five sections to address evolving definitions of scholarly communication, its economic and technological contexts, and its social and legal structures. This is followed by Part II, which introduces readers to the complexities of open access, open data, open education, and open science in an easily digestible textbook format. Part III allows for application of knowledge gained in Parts I and II by providing readers with rich examples from professional practitioners and stakeholders, accompanied by pedagogical devices to assist educators in course integration. Concluding with an invitation for readers to join in the conversation, the book provides biographical information for each of its roughly 80 contributors.

The editors of the book acknowledge that the work is a static text, which is not ideal for the dynamic and rapidly changing specialization of scholarly communication. To address this, they have published the work as an open textbook through the Association of College and Research Libraries using a Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial license that allows for its contents to be shared, adapted, and updated as necessary. They also secured a grant for the development of an online community and repository called the Scholarly Communication Notebook, which is modeled on the pre-existing Open Pedagogy Notebook. In deciding to allow for open sharing and derivatives of *Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open*

Knowledge—and by creating a space for conversation and collaboration—the editors have demonstrated in practice that access solutions are achievable and that “access is what a library is, does, represents, and advances.”

Summary of Content

Part I, “What is Scholarly Communication?,” provides historical context and theoretical frameworks for the defining characteristics of scholarly communication librarianship, exploring how the specialization emerged alongside developments in communication technologies and in both formal and informal settings. Part I also examines the socioeconomic and legal aspects of the relationship between non-commercial knowledge sharing and for-profit publication, illustrating how the traditional form of this relationship has exacerbated barriers to access and created artificial information deserts. Transformative publication practices are introduced in this segment and presented as a response to contradictions between scholarly publication models and library values. The editors assert that librarians are ideal practitioners to develop and share expertise in scholarly communication, due to their involvement in direct research and their positionality as stakeholders of research outcomes. To prepare librarians for this work, Part I introduces readers to copyright law with the British Statute of Anne in 1710, then provides an overview of developments in copyright and licensing practices to the present day. Readers will be delighted to find that this part of the book cites a plethora of useful resources for locating and sharing open scholarship.

The first part of the book prepares readers for Part II, “Scholarly Communication and Open Culture,” which is a collection of contributed work edited by four esteemed professionals who are recognized for their expertise in the areas of: open access, open data, open education, and open science and infrastructure. A thorough summary of historical progress in the Open Access Movement is provided, alongside clearly outlined levels of open access publication, their benefits, and their limitations. Open data is contextualized within the scope of the Open Access Movement, but with special attention to data management, security, and ethics. Part II also addresses open science and how it supports research validity by allowing for the testing of reproducibility. Finally, Open education—its history, practices, settings, and resources—are covered at-length, with discussion on its benefits, barriers. Of note, the editors of Part II model a commitment to open practices by including repurposed, openly licensed work with proper attribution.

Parts I & II support readers in applying new knowledge and engaging deeply with Part III, “Voices from the Field: Perspectives, Intersections, and Case Studies.” This section is comprised of 24 reader-friendly accounts submitted by 37 practicing librarians and stakeholders, complete with openly licensed teaching aids like suggested reading, discussion prompts, and activities. Voices from varied institutional settings create a well-rounded collection of standpoints, covering topics like vocational awe, neutrality, services for people with disabilities, tenure and promotion, mentorship, and sustainable program development.

Situating these topics within the scope of scholarly communication helps student readers to relate vital library concepts to their prior and current experiences with academic publishing as students, while helping librarians to relate scholarly communication to their prior experiences in the library profession. Contributors to this segment discuss successes and challenges in their dynamic work with scholarly communication, demonstrating the intersectionality of librarianship and the impact that an open knowledge culture can have in diverse settings.

About the Editors

Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge is a product of the OER + Scholarly Communication Unconference, which began in 2018 as a grant-funded gathering of professionals who sought to produce an open textbook on scholarly communication. The book's three main editors were the leaders of this gathering, and they have continued to facilitate the project through to its completion.

Maria Bonn, the book's first-listed editor, is Associate Professor at the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois. Prior to this appointment, Bonn acted as Associate University Librarian for Publishing at the University of Michigan Library. Her research focuses on publishing, scholarly communication, networked communication, the economics of information, open culture, and next generation librarianship, and she has shared work in publications such as *D-Lib Magazine* and *Against the Grain*. Bonn received her Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Michigan.

The work's second-listed editor, **Josh Bolick**, is Head of the David Shulenburger Office of Scholarly Communication and Copyright at the University of Kansas. Prior to this role, Bolick served as the Scholarly Communications Librarian at the same institution, and he received his Master of Library and Information Science degree from Florida State University. His research centers on open access, author rights, open education, and scholarly communication, with work appearing in publications like the *Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship*.

The book's third editor, **Will Cross**, is the Director of the Open Knowledge Center and Head of Information Policy at the North Carolina State University Libraries. Cross is also the Senior Policy Fellow at the University of Washington College of Law, and he received his Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of North Carolina. His research centers on alternative textbook production, copyright and licensing, and library-university press partnerships, with writing appearing in publications like the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*.

In addition to its three book editors, Part II of *Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge* is edited by Amy Buckland, Brianna Marshall, and Lillian Hogendoorn. **Amy Buckland** is University Librarian at Concordia University. Prior to this role, Buckland served as Assistant Deputy Minister of Collections at Bibliothèque et Archives, Canada. She received her Master of Library and Information Science degree from McGill University. **Brianna Marshall** is Interim Dean of the W. Frank Stealy Library at Northern Kentucky

University. Previously, Marshall served as Director of Research Services at the University of California Library, and she received her Master of Library and Information Science degree from Indiana University. Lastly, **Lillian Hogendoorn** is Web Product Manager and Content Strategy Librarian at the University of Toronto, where she also received her Master of Library and Information Science degree.

Conclusion

Scholarly Communication Librarianship and Open Knowledge presents a wealth of insights and embodies a progressive ethos in its publication model, aptly showing that access to information is not merely an ideal but an ongoing and fundamental mission of librarianship. Organized logically to provide a comprehensive introduction to scholarly communication and the Open Access Movement, the book is an engaging and accessible resource for use by librarians, other educators, and their students. The inclusion of learning aids, discussion points, activities, and linked resources makes it especially useful for integration into foundational coursework for library and information science programs, challenging all stakeholders to actively and collaboratively engage in shaping a sustainable future where everyone is free and able to ethically access, build upon, and share knowledge.