Making the Effort with Open Access

By: Michael A. Crumpton

Abstract:

Libraries have become publishers across the country in many ways and with many benefits to the academic community. The utilization of open journal systems has enabled libraries to develop relationships with content experts in order to deliver serial capacity in an organized and credible manner, but it takes an effort to sustain a properly vetted publication.

Keywords: Journal publishing | Library publishing | Open journal system | OJS | Open access

Articles:

Getting Started

Open access publishing has put libraries on the map as an alternative to publishing houses for many years now. In some cases, there is still the debate over the validity of protocols offered to researchers and authors, which justify credibility of the source. Peter Suber's 2012 primer on Open Access provided a strong foundation for many open access initiatives and continues to be the supporting reference source for open access programs and activities. Suber put into context the financial elements and considerations that open access publishing presents, both to researchers and authors. That context is the effort made to conduct research and write about it without compensation, and this extends to libraries who take on the role of publisher.

Libraries who take on the role of open access publishers do so as a natural extension of investing in scholar communication initiatives for their campuses. This can complement other services and initiatives related to digital scholarship, data management and institutional repositories. Sarah Lippincott outlines the value of these initiatives in her book, Library as Publisher. She contends that libraries that act as information intermediaries with these programs are helping to offset a dysfunctional economic relationship between producers of scholarly literature and those who must pay to use it.

The process of developing open access journals must be strategically developed to be successful and make the type of impact desired for the discipline. David Solomon in his book, Developing

Open Access Journals: A practical guide, outlines necessary steps for operating an OA journal efficiently, which ultimately can reduce the need for resources. The advantages can be many, but the risks and ultimate workload requires careful planning and a dedicated effort to sustain.

Case Study – The Journal of Learning Spaces

A free, open-source software developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) was selected to host several journals within the university due to its design to assist faculty and researchers with peer review publishing. First published in 2011, the Journal of Learning Spaces sought to fill a gap within the field literature regarding the use of space for learning. While many of the founding members were from the academic library world, the focus and scope was broadly defined to include all kinds of spaces in which learning can occur.

Focus and Scope

A peer-reviewed, open-access journal published biannually, The Journal of Learning Spaces provides a scholarly, multidisciplinary forum for research articles, case studies, book reviews, and position pieces related to all aspects of learning space design, operation, pedagogy, and assessment in higher education. We define learning as the process of acquiring knowledge, skill, or understanding as a result of study, experience, or teaching.

Learning spaces are designed to support, facilitate, stimulate, or enhance learning and teaching. Learning spaces encompass formal, informal, and virtual environments:

- formal: lecture halls, laboratories, traditional classrooms
- informal: learning commons, multimedia sandbox, residential study areas, huddle rooms
- virtual: learning management systems, social media websites, online virtual environments

We invite submissions of practical and theoretical works from practitioners and academics across a wide range of subject disciplines and organizational backgrounds, including Architecture, Interior and Product Design, Education, Information and Library Science, Instructional Technology, Sociology, and Student and Residential Life. Submissions should focus primarily on learning spaces and their impact on or relationship to teaching and learning.

It is also important to establish a brand and identification, a logo was created as well as a Facebook presence in order to promote and enlarge the readership.

A statement of purpose was also created to address the copyright issues with both contributors and readers:

Journal of Learning Spaces is an Open Access journal which means that all content is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution. Users are allowed to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of the articles, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without asking prior permission from the publisher or the author. This is in accordance with the BOAI definition of Open Access.

Establishing roles and relationships

A successful open access journal requires many steps and thus individual roles to ensure a viable and credible product is produced. Recruitment into these roles are critical for smooth workflows and consistent communication with authors and contributors. Primary roles needed include:

- Editors
- Peer reviewers
- Copy editors
- Layout editors
- Proofreaders/reviewers

Added to these roles are authors or content providers and of course readers to maintain a demand for the content. The relationships between these roles are important to ensure integrity for the author's research, and tapping individuals who have the appropriate skill set is essential. Depending upon the function required, personnel need skills related to graphic design, policy and decision-making, copyediting expert in punctuation, spelling, and grammatical structure, as well as technical expertise in working with online systems.

A primary focus and concern for publishing is the peer review process. This is the core of providing a trustworthy journal that can stand up to criticism or challenges. Within the professional industry, peer review becomes the self-regulation of accurate content and enables

most actions toward academic standards. The Journal of Learning Spaces peer review process is established as follows:
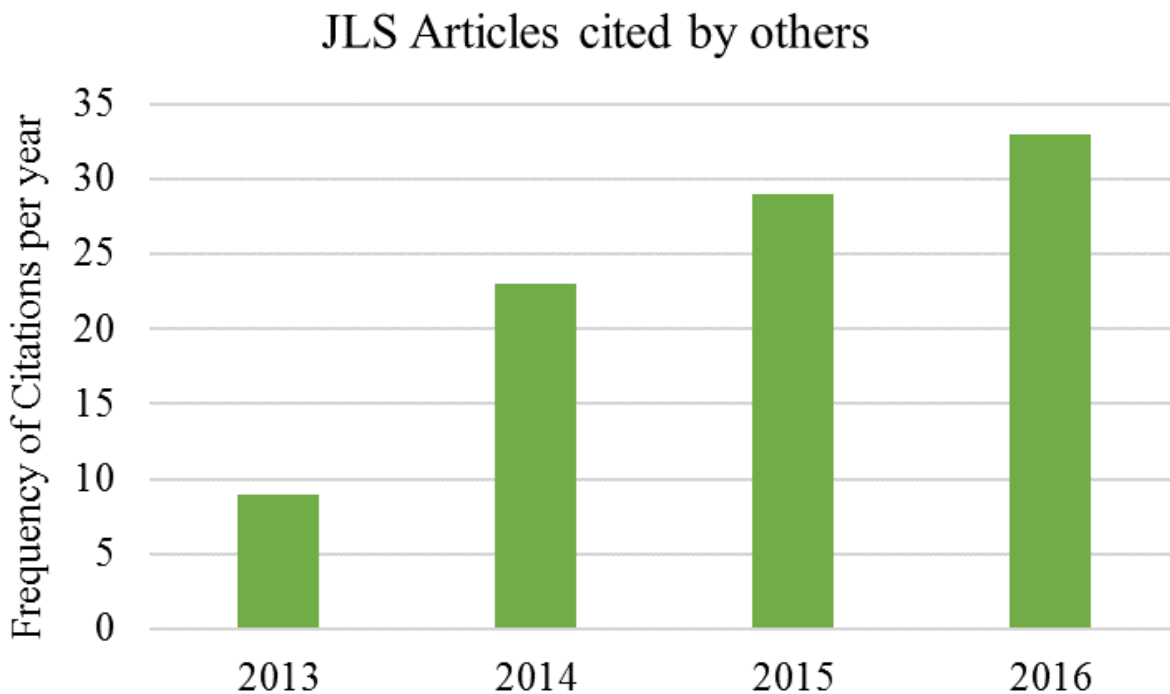
Peer Review Process

All submissions are subject to double blind reviews by two reviewers. The review period is usually between 4 to 8 weeks depending on when the article is submitted in the publication process, and when the reviewers are available. Reports from reviewers are anonymized and returned to authors with a decision or for appropriate action. Articles are reviewed by experts in the subfields of learning space categories.

The journal utilizes a troupe of reviewers who all identify with specialty areas of education as it relates to spaces and the use of space for learning.

Assessment

Content within the journal is assessed periodically for content use, most notably articles that are cited by others, which is a professional standard for contribution to field literature. This is a Google Scholar review of journal articles cited over a 4 year period, demonstrating that the journal is getting read and used for research purposes:

JLS Articles cited by others

Frequency of Citations per year

Year	Citations
2013	9
2014	23
2015	29
2016	33

Other means of assessment are PDF downloads and abstract views which help gauge overall usage. In addition, word usage analysis of the article titles helps determine the types of subjects being viewed for consideration.

Motivating staff and volunteers

In the short time this open access journal has been in publication, many individuals have been involved across many different organizations. This includes volunteers who conduct the peer reviews, staff and volunteers who perform the roles mentioned earlier that drive the process to bring a submission to publication, and of course the content providers or authors who are sharing their work. Keeping everyone motivated is a huge task, but is definitely worth it.

Human motivation is intricately tied to emotions. Volunteer/staff motivation directly impacts publishing achievement goals and is correlated to emotional intelligence. Utilizing emotional intelligence principles to enable other's self-awareness can help editors find answers through others (Crumpton, 2013). As some people who are performing these needed roles do so on their own time, and some are being paid by their institution as regular work time, the burden of additional workload is still a consideration that impacts success.

Conclusion

While open access publishing provides a great benefit to many professional fields of research and academic scholarship, the process takes considerable effort to manage content into a publication that can clearly establish the validity and quality of the author's work.

Open Access Policy

This journal provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.

It is important to recognize this effort in using open access publications. As the concept grows, especially within libraries, models will evolve to help maintain sustainability for publications going forward, but the effort is always there, pressing on regardless.

References

Crumpton, M. A. (2013). Keeping the motivation going, Bottom Line: Managing Library Finances, 26(4), 144–146.

Lippincott, S. (2017). Library as Publisher. : ATG LLC (Media).

Solomon, D. (2008). Developing Open Access Journals: A practical guide. Oxford: Chandos Publishing.

Suber, P. (2012). Open Access. Cambridge: MIT Press Books.

About the author:

Michael A. Crumpton, MLS, SHRM-SCP, is the Assistant Dean for Administrative Services at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro as well as an adjunct instructor for the Department of Library and Information Studies. Mike is the current president of the North Carolina Library Association.