SPARC innovator

The University of California Office of the President (UCOP) launched the UC Office of Scholarly Communication in 2004 to support and coordinate a plethora of diverse, cutting-edge initiatives that help scholars and researchers regain control of their work, while exploring innovative means of scholarly communication. This simple organizational act represented the culmination of work conducted over a ten-year period by UC administrators, faculty, and librarians who took a focused, activist stance to change the status quo.

In the late 1990s, for example, UC initiated the California Digital Library and as part of it, the eScholarship repository. Since then it has moved from strength to strength. For example, it has developed groundbreaking contracts with publishers which have helped to curtail hyperinflation in the price of online journal subscriptions; developed guidance for faculty on ways to manage intellectual property and retain copyright; developed, through the academic faculty senate, a series of white papers advocating shifts in scholarly communication; established innovative new scholarly publishing programs and forged an electronic publishing alliance between the CDL and the University of California Press; and created a Scholarly Communication Officers group comprising senior librarians at each of the 10 UC branches to harmonize local and system-wide planning and action. For its extraordinarily effective institution-wide vision and efforts to move scholarly communication forward for the benefit of its faculty, students, and the public, SPARC has named UC a SPARC Innovator.

With 10 campuses, 100 libraries, 121,000 faculty and academics and a whopping 208,000 students, the University of California system is the largest public university system in the country. Its faculty, librarians and administrators are used to doing things on a grand scale, so it's no surprise that when they decided to band together to create alternative methods of scholarly communication, they employed creative, cutting-edge solutions that have reverberated across the academic landscape – as well as the marketplace.

The impetus for UC's efforts to permanently alter the status quo in scholarly communication came from the top – the University of California Office of the President, which served as an informal think tank for those who first realized that the UC system could not sustain its serials budget in any long-term way. In 1997, then-UC President Richard Atkinson committed funding to an idea without precedent: the California Digital Library (CDL). CDL's marching orders – harness technology and leverage the University's extensive yet distributed library investments to assist in an orderly transition into a digital scholarly realm – seemed simple enough. But no institution had yet attempted such a large-scale digital library effort.

According to John Ober, Director of Policy, Planning, and Outreach co-director – with Catherine Candee – of UC's Office of Scholarly Communication (OSC), the CDL "was built from a set of principles that explicitly included the need to influence the marketplace

for scholarly content to become more sustainable." Just a few years after its founding, the size, influence and impact of the CDL helped facilitate large e-journal and database purchases for the UC system; subsequent negotiations with publishers that took into account the spending power and needs of the UC system have in fact allowed the UC libraries to achieve multi-year agreements for access to over 23,000 journal titles, lowered the base subscription cost for some large contracts, and in several cases eliminated the hyperinflation in the yearly price increases sought by publishers.

Faculty Involvement

Critical to its achievements is the way the UC faculty have engaged with issues related to copyright management and library-publisher negotiations. In its "Letter to UC Faculty Re: Publisher Negotiations and Actions to Address Scholarly Communication," distributed and published on the web in January 2005, the UC Academic Council and University Librarians state up front that "the rising costs of online scholarly publications continue to plague UC libraries," continuing: "Now we ask you to support us in our resolve to say no to similar or hyperinflationary price increases. There will be hard choices as we work within our means and prove our resolve with publishers." Consistently, faculty have accepted these hard choices and demonstrated a willingness to assume the risk (losing access to selected scholarly publications) in having to make them. This success made news in library and university publications and influenced other universities, which have taken their cues from UC.

"The University of California's activities in the area of publisher contract negotiations have had an immediate and positive effect on the UC system, and the tactics they employed have reverberated around universities throughout North America," said Heather Joseph, SPARC Director. "UC's openness and its willingness to make all information relating to these negotiations available publicly via the web has been an eye-opening education for librarians

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who are struggling with similar issues. It is no exaggeration to say that UC has made a significant and beneficial contribution to the scholarly communication process while altering the marketplace as well."

UC's faculty have taken an even stronger position with regard to copyright management. In 2006, the Faculty Senate endorsed a proposal recommending to the President that the University's copyright policy be amended to enable open access to UC research. The proposal evolved through an extensive, faculty-led consultation process that also produced five white papers on aspects of the scholarly communication crisis, one of them focusing on scholars' management of their copyright.

UC officials have emphasized faculty involvement for a variety of reasons, approaching the issues with a deep sensitivity to scholars' motives for entering academia in the first place. "Issues of scholarly communication are deeply personal ones for faculty because they are tied up with the normal freedoms they enjoy, to express themselves on issues of their own choosing, but also crucially with the reward processes that shape their trajectory through the academy," said Daniel Greenstein, University Librarian for System-wide Library Planning and the CDL. "Consequently, University administrations are immensely sensitive and reticent about moving into this space in any top-down sort of way. In this regard, it is probably fair to say that "top-level" efforts can only be responsive to grassroots initiatives, rather than be instigative of them. That is what happened here."

Early Recognition

The founding of the CDL was only the beginning of UC librarians and administrators' plans to revitalize the scholarly communication marketplace. They wanted to be able to capture the scholarly output of UC faculty so that access would cease to be an issue altogether. The ideas behind institutional repositories were just beginning to gain exposure in the late 1990s, when SPARC awarded the UC's blueprint for its repository a Scientific Communities Initiative grant in 1999. CDL's eScholarship was selected from among over 50 other highly competitive proposals "because it brought a remarkable, strategic view of how to engage scholarly communities in the process of change," said Rick Johnson, SPARC Director from 1998-2005, who coordinated and oversaw the grant selection process.

When UC's eScholarship launched in 2002 as a repository for working papers and eprints, it received recognition and acclaim from a variety of sources, most importantly from UC faculty, many of whom responded quickly to the request to contribute material. eScholarship has continued to grow, adding a journal publishing program and an electronic monograph publishing program, as well as seminars and postprints. Its accelerated usage in readership and deposits is illustrated by UC's recent celebration of the three-millionth full-text download.

"Recently we heard about a research article made available in Spanish through the eScholarship Repository which dramatically influenced tobacco control legislation in Argentina. The UC author of the piece was thrilled. Those kinds of impacts and the clear benefits to UC authors and worldwide readers are what drives our continuing development of eScholarship services," said Catherine Candee, Director of Strategic Publishing Initiatives.

It may seem paradoxical, then, that many faculty and student users of UC's digital library resources have little concept of the system's offerings. That's because the CDL and the UCOP's other initiatives encourage localization; an in-

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dividual library can imprint the system's digital library resources with its own name and brand the information with its own logo so that it looks like a campus service. This is right and proper, according to UC library officials, since the UC libraries pay upward of 90% of the total costs involved in acquiring access to licensed electronic resources.

This was the intent from the start, says Richard Atkinson, UC president from 1995-2003, during the period that the scholarly communication activities took root. "We give each of our 10 campuses independence, and as a result we have 10 separate library systems," he says. "It made sense that CDL should leverage the resources of the UC system in a way that enhances the campus's unique strengths."

The formula seems to be working. "We have relied on the CDL, the Office of Scholarly Communication, and other centrally managed initiatives for a variety of critical operational services (license negotiations, the eScholarship repository), policy evaluation, and R&D - for example in the areas of intellectual property and institutional repositories," says Cindy Shelton, Associate University Librarian for Collection Management and Scholarly Communication at UCLA. "Their work has allowed the campuses to concentrate on local outreach, education, and adoption and use of new mechanisms for scholarly communication."

Campuses, academic departments, and individual faculty "are immensely independent...wonderfully so," according to Greenstein. "It is that independence that underpins our strength and that fosters our academic innovation. What we can do is to facilitate communication and inform and

support individual efforts. The policy, planning, and outreach functions of the OSC are cast in this mold. They are not managing or directive, they are intended as enabling and supportive. The real achievements are the innovation and inspiration of our many constituents who draw on some basic enabling infrastructure and services to do some really cool stuff."

Renewed Focus at the Top

After an internal reorganization in 2004, the UCOP activities related to scholarly communication migrated to a newly created Office of Scholarly Communication, dedicated to pursuing issues on a system-wide level as well as through the 10 UC libraries which have scholarly communication activities and activities and programs of their own.

"Now that the OSC is established, I think it is fair to say that grass-roots initiatives still dominate the landscape, especially campus efforts, scholarship efforts, and library efforts, which remain as strong and as focused as they were," Greenstein said. "But now there is better cross-fertilization. The OSC creates a switchboard or clearinghouse through which connections can be made. It also creates information that can assist in these various other efforts."

The sustained focus on scholarly communication at the highest levels of university administration allows UC to act across a range of related issues that are typically dealt with separately in distinctive organizational units. Presently, UC is focusing on several areas of interest, including supporting innovative means of scholarly communication and open-access publishing; institution-wide scholarly communication policy; education and outreach to faculty; restraining inflationary pressures that continue to act on the price of scholarly publications; and tools that assist faculty authors in managing their copyright. `

"Scholars' management of their own copyright and an institutional policy and support infrastructure that includes copyright management is a big target in the scholarly communication landscape," says Ober. "Helping scholars to

pro-actively manage their copyright is a precondition of long-term management and preservation of UC scholarship." In fact, UC already makes available model copyright clauses complemented by in-depth information about the role of copyright in scholarly communication.

Assisting with the copyright policy change and the related services that it will require may be in UC's immediate future, but there are plenty of other initiatives on the horizon. According to Ober, "publishing data sets and source data is in our sights," as is a long-term policy on data preservation. "We are very interested in the notion of digital stewardship, and caring for the products of scholarship across time," he says. "Long-term preservation and accessibility ties into our digital library activities, and we're building our program intentionally to have hooks in other areas that use technology for this aim."

Ober believes that other universities that engage in scholarly communication activities – though they may have markedly different needs than UC – should allow themselves room to experiment with the methods that might work best for their community. And community is key. "We had some false and slow starts," he says. But he added that in this arena it is the potential for a large systemic failure that deserves fear, and that expansive internal and external collaboration is the key to significant influence and healthy change in scholarly communication.

About the SPARC Innovator Program

The SPARC Innovator program is a new initiative that recognizes an individual, institution, or group that exemplifies SPARC principles by working to challenge the status quo in scholarly communication for the benefit of researchers, libraries, universities, and the public. SPARC Innovators are featured on the SPARC Web site several times each year.

For more information or to nominate an Innovator, visit http://www.arl.org/sparc/innovator/.