

## Session Handout: Adventures in the Study of Scholarly Communication

*Compiled by Robyn Hall (MacEwan University), Christie Hurrell (University of Calgary), & Richard Hayman (Mount Royal University) for the COPPUL Scholarly Communications SkillShare held online May 2, 2023.*

### Summary Notes

**Question 1: Briefly, tell everyone about your research and how you developed a research plan.**

**Describe the challenges and successes encountered while doing this work.**

*Christie:*

- My research is based in my practice. When my institution signed on to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) the year before I was eligible for a one year research and scholarship leave, I wanted to learn more about how the library and our digital repositories could support its goals. If you're not familiar with DORA, it is a declaration about how research assessment should be shifted away from a narrow reliance on quantitative metrics, like the impact factor, and also that a broader range of research outputs should count towards research impact.
- I'm interested in this concept of non traditional research outputs – things like data, code, digital collections, digital projects, exhibits, etc – and how university repositories might help make them easier to find, cite, track, and preserve.
- I'm doing a website analysis and survey of digital repositories (both institutional and data) of DORA signatories in the UK. I developed a data set of 78 institutions and analyzed their repository websites and library websites to ascertain how repositories are currently supporting non traditional research outputs.
- I also contacted the repository managers to survey them for further details about their involvement (or not) in implementing DORA on their campus, and about the personnel and support required.
- Biggest challenge has been recruiting participants to participate in the survey. In retrospect, I would have designed this study to rely more on website analysis from the outset – it's time consuming but can be completed by the researcher alone, something I actually had time to do while on leave – and used the survey to only gather (mostly qualitative) data that couldn't be found publicly.

*Richard:*

- I identify as a researcher-practitioner, using each to inform the other.
- Working at a teaching-focused institution helped shape my project. Majority of research on these topics is focused on “big-R” research institutions, and I wanted to explore what and how researchers at a smaller institution were thinking about and using OA resources, and understanding how predatory practices affected their own perceptions and habits.
- Methods: Primarily quant-driven study using a census approach, via a cross-sectional survey inviting all FT faculty no matter whether they were required to do scholarship as part of their

official workpattern, with questions about open access and about predatory practices. Quantitative analysis of closed Likert-type responses using descriptive statistics. Some open ended questions intended for participants to use their own words, using independent qualitative analysis and coding for themes.

- My project began from a six-month sabbatical proposal, with goals to develop and finalize the project plan, and submission of a grant proposal aligned with the project.
- Sabbatical was successful in that I had fully outlined my project and applied for (and got) a small grant.
- Began and completed data collection after my sabbatical leave ended and I'd returned to normal practice. Workload got in the way first,, and then the pandemic hit, and then some health issues.
- Time has been by far the largest barrier to dissemination and in immersing myself back into the project to bring it to a conclusion that I am happy with. I feel guilty, since I asked colleagues to give their time over to participating, I should repay that time.
- Success found in that after many years the sabbatical break let me pause and reset my service commitments. And, having dedicated time to actually work on research was a big change.

*Robyn:*

- Commenced a 12-month sabbatical in July 2022 to better understand ways that academic libraries can support community-based research after noticing a service gap in this area. Interviewed Canadian researchers (n=17) and administrators (n = 6) engaged with community-based research, and surveyed scholarly communications librarians (n = 16).
- The greatest challenge (so far) has been participant recruitment.
  - Academics' schedules are full, and a few months was not a lot of time to build rapport and make connections.
  - Librarian participation was also low, perhaps due to survey fatigue, leaves, and lack of engagement with the topic.
- Another challenge has been trying to stay committed to open practices. Planning to share qualitative data openly in a data repository has been cumbersome, and only wanting to publish in open access journals has meant missing out on relevant calls for papers.
- Learning about how scholarly communications services are valued and understood directly from researchers, administrators and colleagues has been eye opening and motivating as I continue to explore ways that libraries can provide greater support for community-based research outputs.

**Question 2: What advice would you give to a scholarly communications practitioner who is about to engage in a project to gain a better understanding of scholarly communications in a Canadian context?**

*Richard:*

- Research problems and projects change over time, and it's OK to actively recognize this evolution.
- Keep in mind that once you start down a path, especially involving human research participants, there's an obligation to them and yourself to stay true to what was planned.
- Be aware of limitations and benefits of your methods.

- Impostor syndrome is real, and even established, seasoned researchers will question what they are doing and their ability to do it properly. In my opinion, that shows you care about the project and the process.
- Reserve some energy for self-empathy and reflection along the way.

*Christie:*

- Make sure you choose a project you find personally interesting and motivating, helps you keep momentum! Consider working with collaborators or having a peer group to check in with to keep your spirits up and energy flowing.
- Make your life easier by building research into your practice. For example, build assessments into your teaching/program development/technology projects, or think about pre and post testing. Also consider the wealth of data your library probably already collects in the form of things like chat transcripts, reference questions, etc – how can these be used to either formulate or inform research questions?

*Robyn:*

- If possible, find collaborators you work well with. Research can be a lonely, unpredictable endeavour and it can be beneficial to have research partners to help work through the many challenges that come with planning, data collection, analysis, and dissemination.
- Explore collaborating on existing faculty research projects, as well as community-based research practices. Community-based approaches take time and resources, but could lead to really meaningful collaborations and directly meeting the needs of users and stakeholders.
- Advocate for more time and resources towards scholarly activity. It's so valuable to practice what we preach and bring experience to the scholarly communications support we provide.

## Learn More About Our Research Projects

**Robyn Hall** ([hallr27@macewan.ca](mailto:hallr27@macewan.ca) | Twitter: @robioteca):

- Project materials: <https://osf.io/zi76p>
- Future presentation materials & publications will be posted to <https://roam.macewan.ca>
- Upcoming conferences (spring 2023): Library Publishing Forum, OTESSA (Congress), WILU, C2UExpo (Community-Campus-Exposition)

**Christie Hurrell** ([achurrel@ucalgary.ca](mailto:achurrel@ucalgary.ca) | Twitter: @achurrell)

- Project materials: <https://osf.io/5kjna/>
- Future presentation materials & publications will be posted to <https://prism.ucalgary.ca/>
- Upcoming conferences (spring 2023): Conference on Postsecondary Teaching and Learning, Library Publishing Forum, OTESSA (Congress), BRIC

**Richard Hayman** ([rhayman@mtroyal.ca](mailto:rhayman@mtroyal.ca))

- Project materials: <https://osf.io/63bj5/>
- Presentations made at OTESSA (Congress) 2022, Banff SoTL Symposium 2022

## Librarian Research Resources

### *Professional development and support*

- [Building Your Researcher Toolkit](#) (The Partnership)
- [Community-Based Research Certificate Course](#) (Community-based Research Canada)
- [Librarians' Research Institute](#) (Canadian Association of Research Libraries)
- [Library Research Forum](#) (Concordia University)
- [Research in Librarianship Grant](#) (Canadian Association of Research Libraries)
- [Research and Writing Community of Practice](#) (Canadian Association of Professional Academic Librarians)
- [The Librarian Parlour](#)

### *Where to research and publish*

This is a select list of peer-reviewed journals that include scholarly communications and closely related topics as part of their scope. (\* indicates non-open access journals.)

- [Information, Medium, and Society](#)\*
- [Insights: the UKSG journal](#)
- [Journal of Altmetrics](#)
- [Journal of Electronic Publishing](#)
- [Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication](#)
- [Journal of Scholarly Publishing](#)\*
- [KULA: Knowledge Creation, Dissemination, and Preservation Studies](#)
- [Learned Publishing](#)\*
- [Portal: Libraries and the Academy](#)\*
- [Publications](#)
- [Scholarly and Research Communication](#)

## Facilitated Discussion Notes

Summary of participant responses at the COPPUL Scholarly Communications SkillShare May 2, 2023.

### 1. What questions/worries/anxieties do you have about conducting research?

- *TIME*: Time was the most commonly mentioned roadblock to conducting research. Participants noted that the demands of their professional practice do not allow for enough time to conduct meaningful research, and that even a research leave may not offer enough time to see a project through to completion. When practitioners perceive a gap in their research skills or knowledge, this adds additional pressures to acquire these skills prior to embarking on a research project. Similarly, if research questions arise out of practice, completing the requirements of something like an ethics application can be onerous.
- *SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE/CONFIDENCE*: Participants noted a number of anxieties related to research, including doubt as to whether their ideas were original or could contribute meaningfully to existing research, as well as concerns about a lack of data analysis skills. Others noted that the administrative aspects of conducting research (e.g. ethics, research accounting) can be confusing and time consuming to navigate.
- *MOTIVATION*: Doing research alone was noted as a barrier by a number of participants, who mentioned the difficulty of maintaining motivation, enthusiasm, and momentum without a partner or without externally enforced deadlines.
- *EXTERNAL PERCEPTIONS*: Other themes mentioned by participants included working against external perceptions that librarians' role should not include independent research, and difficulties in aligning research interests with institutional expectations.

### 2. What advice do you have for other attendees thinking about conducting research into scholarly communications?

- *FUNDING*: Participants noted the value of funding, as well as understanding how funding works to better understand the researchers we work with. They also noted that internal funding options can be less intimidating, along with specific funds available to librarians (e.g., through the Canadian Association of Academic Libraries, for those eligible).
- *BUILD A COMMUNITY*: Research does not happen in a vacuum. Participants mentioned the benefits of having research collaborators, hiring an external data analyst if feasible, and hiring student research assistants to strengthen and enrich research projects. Backfilling positions while librarians are on research leave was also noted as a crucial competent to support this work.
- *LEVERAGE YOUR EXPERTISE*: A common theme noted was to work with what you have and what you already know to conduct a research project that fits your timeframe, workload capacity and priorities.

**3. What areas of scholarly communications require more research in the Canadian context?**

Areas for future research identified by participants included looking more closely at compliance with institutional open access policies, open access funds, the possible retraction of green open access options, as well as ways to support new forms of scholarship to ensure they receive recognition. It was also noted that the SSHRC Connection grant [Research Data Management Capacity Building Initiative](#) closes August 1, 2023.