

Reality Check:

Preservation and Scholarly Communication: The Grand Challenges of Our Time

By Mary M. Case

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When I started this column, I planned to write about the rewards of collaboration and the lessons learned from my experiences. I believe collaboration is a fundamental value of librarians and is essential to our ability to meet local needs and solve grand challenges. But as I wrote, I found myself drawn to two of the major issues we face today: preserving the intellectual and cultural record, and ensuring a robust and affordable scholarly communication system. If I were not a pretty good sleeper, I would say these are the issues that keep me awake at night. These are two grand challenges that I am afraid we are running out of time to solve.

Preservation

In thinking about preservation, I reflect on my experience with CARLI, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois, which actively promotes a collective collection. CARLI runs our local library management system, along with a union catalog and direct borrowing and delivery services, in a program known as I-Share. CARLI also encourages the expansion of available print resources by recommending no more than five copies of a new work be collected within the consortium. Based on circulation data from the direct borrowing system, this policy

encourages institutions to spread their collection dollars across a greater array of titles, with the knowledge that a needed work will be only two-to-three days away. With these programs and significant electronic resources licensed consortially, CARLI provides access to more than 9.3 million unique titles to its I-Share members. For those libraries working to reduce collections space, CARLI also has established a last-copy repository service, with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign serving in this capacity. This allows libraries to discard little used or digitally duplicated physical material knowing that locally non-essential but rare materials will have a permanent home.

CARLI is certainly not the only consortium in the country to have these kinds of programs. The existence of print repositories is particularly critical to libraries' ability to manage local collections and space. Repositories are part of our preservation strategy, allowing us to embrace fully the benefits of digital resources without everyone having to maintain print copies for a "just-in-case" scenario. Our faculty (especially those in the social sciences and sciences) are supportive of our strategy to reduce print as long as we are doing it deliberately and collectively. Collective efforts are even more important as we reduce the number of copies of newly purchased titles; we are no longer in the situation where "lots of copies keep stuff safe." Leaving long-term retention and preservation to chance is no longer a viable option

But how do CARLI's efforts connect with other state and regional consortia across the country? How do our unique titles compare with others' holdings? How broadly can we conceive of the collective collection? Is it sufficient to leave it to state

and regional consortia to sort out the collection and retention of print on their own? Will these consortia be self-organizing systems that in the end will take care of the problem without intervention or coordination? Perhaps. But retaining actual physical volumes, while critical, is only part of the overall preservation challenge today.

Preserving Digital Content

After many years of debate, libraries embraced digitization as the preservation technology that would succeed microfilming. The benefits of access were so compelling that agencies and foundations were motivated to fund an activity that previously had been difficult to justify. Moreover, mass digitization projects such as those undertaken by JSTOR, Google, and the Internet Archive, dispelled our notion that digitization could never be done at scale. As a result, we are creating significant quantities of digital content that, given the investment, itself needs to be preserved. In addition, we are spending more and more of our collections dollars on electronic resources that we do not own and with more and more of them having no print equivalents. Our institutions are generating terabytes of electronic records, and social media is exploding. The preservation of digital content is a huge challenge—financially, technically, and administratively—that cannot be solved at a local or even regional level.

A number of organizations have arisen over the last decade focused on the preservation of digital collections. Among these have been LOCKSS (Lots of Copies

Keep Stuff Safe), CLOCKSS (Controlled LOCKSS), Portico, the HathiTrust, the APTrust, and the Digital Preservation Network (DPN). While there is certainly collaboration among these groups, debate continues over the best approach in the future, and each new entity competes for our finite dollars. How do these organizations connect? Where are the overlaps . . . and the gaps? How do or could they contribute to an overall strategy? How can we leverage our dollars more effectively?

National Preservation Strategy

In her keynote address at the annual program of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) this spring, Deanna Marcum, managing director of ITHAKA S+R, reviewed the library community's history of unsuccessful attempts at devising a national preservation strategy.¹ Marcum recounted the laudable goals and subsequent disagreements that stalled multiple efforts to collectively address the preservation of print. With the onset of the digital age and the rise of multiple players, she noted, "The world has become more complex. There are more demands on our shrinking library dollars. Expectations for digital access are ubiquitous and growing. And the need for a national preservation plan is more urgent than ever."² Without such a plan, much of our heritage will be lost.

I must admit, I am still haunted by Nicholson Baker's book *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*.³ While there was much criticism of Baker at the time, there is a lesson to be learned about the unforeseen consequences of well-intentioned, independent action. During the era when microfilm was the accepted

preservation technology, massive volumes of newspapers were filmed. With the promise of being able to obtain microfilm copies when needed, individual libraries made the decision to discard print newspapers. When it was later discovered that the microfilm masters did not last as long as had been predicted, it was too late. Many newspapers were irretrievably lost. While I know as a practical matter we cannot save everything, as a member of *the* profession dedicated to the preservation of our intellectual history and culture, I am dismayed when we cannot seem to come together more readily to take on such significant challenges. There is no one else who will do this. As Marcum concluded in her remarks at CRL: “Americans pride themselves on individual efforts. But we are running out of time.”⁴ Can anyone disagree?

Why is it so very hard for our community to come together? How high do the stakes have to be before competition gives way to collaboration? I have no definitive answers to these questions. Clearly there is activity within regional consortia to coordinate saving physical copies, and the HathiTrust has recently announced the formation of its Shared Print Advisory Committee.⁵ There have also been efforts, most notably by CRL, to bring the print repository and digital preservation players together. While there has been progress with certifications for repositories, efforts to unite behind a strategy have not materialized. Marcum makes some proposals for trying to address the preservation challenge. The key question is who will take the lead? Or perhaps more accurately, who will the community let take the lead?

Scholarly Communication

I also believe that the library community is coming to a similar high stakes moment in the realm of scholarly communication. While we have made significant progress, especially in the implementation by federal agencies of requirements for Open Access (OA) to articles and data (due in large measure to the effective efforts of SPARC (www.sparcopen.org)), it seems that we are caught in a chess game with the large publishers.

When funding agencies around the globe implemented OA policies, publishers responded by creating hybrid and gold OA journals with author's fees still clearly based on revenue targets and not actual production costs. Libraries, frequently with other partners on campus, provided funds for authors who did not have grants. After several years providing this support, however, some institutions abandoned the practice because it did not have the anticipated effect of lowering prices.

When universities began requiring faculty to deposit their work in OA repositories, at least one major publisher introduced a policy making authors obtain a waiver from the university policy, even though the publisher's own policy allowed faculty to post their pre-published manuscripts publicly. ⁶

While there is significant support for OA in the library community, there is still deep disagreement about how to transition away from the current subscription model. Open Access 2020, an international initiative aiming to transform scholarly journals from subscription to open access publishing, has proposed using current subscription dollars to pay existing publishers the equivalent in author processing

charges (APCs) in return for making content openly accessible.⁷ While I am not opposed to repurposing our subscription dollars, I am wary of proposals that reinforce the positions of current players and seemingly justify current revenue expectations. I am hopeful that a new study from the Public Knowledge Project (PKP) being conducted to determine the feasibility of a cooperative OA publishing model might find sustainable ways to publish and govern OA journals.⁸ During a recent presentation at the Association of Research Libraries membership meeting, though, John Willinsky, Director of the PKP Project, suggested that existing commercial publishers would be welcome to participate in the cooperatives.⁹ I suspect even Willinsky is skeptical that the library community could ever successfully co-opt any major scholarly publisher!

Publisher Inroads on Campus

While libraries are focusing on journals and business models for OA, it would seem that some publishers are building other business opportunities on our campuses. Elsevier has developed what it is calling a “Research Intelligence Solution,” which it is marketing directly to our campus administrators. The product—a faculty productivity, profile, or analytics tool, as they are called—provides metrics on faculty research areas, publications and grants.¹⁰ In today’s assessment-driven environment, these products are highly attractive to administrators compelled to increase rankings, demonstrate accountability, and leverage assets. And, of course, this product is most effective when it can import

data from the publisher's abstract and citation database, whose purchase is then required of the Library.

Elsevier also has recently purchased products that provide infrastructure for author social networks and article sharing. These platforms give this publisher several potential advantages. First, they provide even greater access to download and citation data, increasing the value (and hence price) for the productivity product because the metrics will be more comprehensive. Second, these platforms provide knowledge of emerging fields and key researchers, not only increasing the value of the productivity product, but also identifying potential areas for new journals and editorships. And third, these platforms give the publisher direct access to our faculty, providing tools faculty need to streamline their work and collaborate with colleagues. Could Elsevier's reputation be rehabilitated on our campuses, undermining libraries' already limited ability to hold down costs? What's our next move?

Solving the OA Puzzle

I believe there is urgency in addressing this grand challenge, but unfortunately there seems to be no agreement on what should be the most effective collective action. Maybe the federal agency OA policies, when fully implemented, will create the tipping point, encouraging more faculty to be less tolerant of high subscription prices and APCs. Maybe other publishers will introduce competitive faculty productivity and social media products before the hearts and minds of our

administrators and faculty are captured. And maybe the PKP will create a model that will allow those of us who have invested in infrastructure for OA journals to work together quickly to increase the scale and speed of our transition to OA. Thousands of highly intelligent individuals have been struggling with this issue for more than 30 years. While librarians have faithfully taken the lead in building coalitions and searching for effective collective actions, scholarly communication is a global ecosystem with many stakeholders. While distressing, it should not be surprising that agreement on action is incredibly difficult.

I must admit that I have begun to think that a significant change in scholarly publishing is likely to come from the periphery or perhaps even from outside the current system all together—an idea, invention, innovation, or technology that totally changes expectations in how research and scholarship are conducted, evaluated and shared. Is this just a pipe dream? In the meantime, I trust that we will continue to explore options that increase access and reduce costs, and work together to leverage our investments. And it is abundantly clear that we need to address—aggressively and collectively—the challenge of managing data now so we do not find ourselves facing the same story in thirty years.

The stakes in preservation and scholarly communication are incredibly high. The future of our intellectual and cultural heritage depends on our solving these grand challenges—together and soon.

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References and Notes

¹ See “@ Risk: Stewardship, Due Diligence, and the Future of Print, A CRL Collections Forum,” Chicago, April 14, 2016, Chicago, www.crl.edu/events/risk-stewardship-due-diligence-and-future-print-crl-collections-forum (accessed July 13, 2016), for program details; Deanna Marcum, *Due Diligence and Stewardship in a Time of Change and Uncertainty*, Ithaka Issue Brief (April 26, 2016), www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/due-diligence-and-stewardship-in-a-time-of-change-and-uncertainty/http://www.sr.ithaka.org/publications/due-diligence-and-stewardship-in-a-time-of-change-and-uncertainty (accessed July 7, 2016), adapted Marcum’s keynote address at the CRL meeting.

² Ibid., 9-10.

³ Nicholson Baker *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (New York: Random House, 2001).

⁴ Marcum, *Due Diligence and Stewardship*, 10.

⁵ See HathiTrust, Shared Print Advisory Committee, www.hathitrust.org/shared-print-advisory-committee (accessed July 12, 2016), for the charge to this committee.

⁶ “Authors at institutions that place restrictions on copyright assignments or that assert an institutional right to distribute or provide access to the works of institutional authors, must obtain an express waiver from those institutions releasing the author from such restrictions to enable the acceptance of this publishing agreement,” Elsevier, Access & Posting Policies, <https://authors.elsevier.com/AccessPostingPolicies/TR/English> (accessed July 13, 2016).

⁷ Open Access 2020, “OA2020 Mission,” <http://oa2020.org/mission> (accessed July 13, 2016).

⁸ PKP: Public Knowledge Project, R&D Initiatives, “Open Access Publishing Cooperative Feasibility Study,” <https://pkp.sfu.ca/current-rd-initiatives> (accessed July 12, 2016).

⁹ John Willinsky, panel presentation at the Association of Research Libraries/Canadian Association of Research Libraries Joint Spring Meeting, Vancouver, April 26-28, 2016; see, www.arl.org/events/upcoming-events/arل-spring-meeting-2016/schedule-for-arل-spring-meeting-2016 (accessed July 12, 2016) for the meeting schedule.

¹⁰ In his piece, *In Oldenburg’s Long Shadow: Librarians, Research Scientists, Publishers, and the Control of Scientific Publishing* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2001), www.arل.org/storage/documents/publications/in-oldenburgs-long-shadow.pdf (accessed July 12, 2016), Jean-Claude Gu don presciently predicted the potential products and power that could result from the panoptic view of the research enterprise publishers would have as a result of their capturing more and more content.