

Establishing a Community of Practice for Small- and Mid-Sized Academic Libraries to Explore the Possibilities of Transformative Agreements beyond the Top-Tier Research Library Level

Summary – In pursuit of an Institute of Library and Museum Services National Forum grant, Robert Morris University (lead organization) and Purdue University Fort Wayne request \$122,483.40 to plan for and develop a Community of Practice from small- and mid-sized academic libraries capable of pursuing transformative Open Access (OA) agreements. In furtherance of IMLS’s goal to advance libraries and their users at a national level, the community will explore collectively held needs, facilitate conversations that identify possibilities for collaborative action, and articulate best practices to realize the communities’ aspirations and plan next steps. This project will result in a first-of-its-kind community that represents a critical mass of institutions with sufficient publishing output and negotiating power to speak with one voice. The driving question we seek to answer: *How can a diverse representation of small- and mid-sized academic libraries create more inclusive conversations on OA that empower them to operate at a network-level to participate in the national trend towards transformative agreements?*

Statement of National Need - High stakes players such as large library consortia, research libraries, and powerful international publishers are redefining academic publishing via transformative agreements. Developments at these levels will undoubtedly have a sizable impact on participation in the scholarly communications landscape that smaller universities have - until now - enjoyed thanks to the stability and advantages that the big deal brought by combining the FTE of smaller institutions with their larger peers. While the world’s most eminent research organizations will advance the national transition to OA, their focus is on local needs and extends only as far as their peer libraries, up to and including the largest consortia such as the Big Ten Academic Alliance. Notably, the staff at the California Digital Library recommended that libraries remain in big deals for this transformation to occur, yet this remains an unrealistic request until smaller libraries are represented in the conversation and pricing models.

At the LYRASIS Leaders Forum in Pittsburgh in May 2019, with over 100 attendees from across the Midwest and mid-Atlantic region, project lead Tim Schlak gave a favorably received presentation on the future of scholarly publishing and the risk of smaller libraries being cut off from emerging models and electronic resource acquisitions, as well as the instability of big deal packages as funds are reallocated to support new models and associated needs. Moreover, Duquesne University, LaSalle University, Grand Valley State University, Indiana University system, and Butler University have all expressed concern regarding these trends and the need for inclusion. As the IMLS’s *National Digital Infrastructures and Initiatives 2017* report advocated, this proposal places the value of collaboration and partnership at the highest level as we seek to integrate smaller institutions more into the landscape while enhancing the impact of those institutions’ contributions through open publishing models for all and not merely the most well-resourced institutions.

Project Design - We are proposing the creation of a Community of Practice of library and faculty leadership from small- and mid-sized institutions that have an acutely-felt need for OA publishing and remaining relevant in scholarly discourse. Working with three member-driven consortia—the Academic Libraries of Indiana (ALI), the Midwest Collaborative for Library Services (MCLS), and the Pennsylvania Academic Library Consortia, Inc. (PALCI)—we will use a Human Centered Design (HCD) approach to explore ways to:

- Incorporate OA principles into the existing work culture of small- and mid-sized universities;
- Collectively explore an acquisitions model that encapsulates partner institutions’ needs;
- Develop a holistic plan to address funding OA publishing that aligns with emerging transformative agreements and reframes services for contemporary scholarly communications.

HCD is rooted in the human experience of observing problems from multiple perspectives, then brainstorming and prototyping innovative solutions. The Luma Institute is internationally known for their HCD methodology and will facilitate conversations with partnering institutions to arrive at collectively held needs regarding transitioning to OA and develop the foundation to work with publishers on legitimate and sustainable transformative agreements. Conversations will be driven by on-ground forums, but communications and work will continue apace electronically via email and conference calls led by the Project Team.

Robert Morris University

Phase 1 (September 2020 – June 2021): Build Awareness & Capacity in the Community of Practice

- Promote forum among member consortia through outreach via listservs and attendance at consortial functions; create communication channels with the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC) to ensure the broadest possible outreach;
- Build electronic web-based platform to host and facilitate conversations and activities at a national level;
- Dialogue with institutions that have transformative agreements and consult existing ALI, MCLS, and PALCI members as well as leading OA consortial experts such as representatives from the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA) or the Statewide California Electronic Library Consortium (SCELC);
- Hold 4 Luma Institute forum retreats (2 separate sessions duplicated in Indiana and Pittsburgh) addressing the primary charge of determining what our collectively held needs are and what is required of the national scholarly communications environment to create entry points for smaller institutions.

Phase 2 (July 2021-March 2022): Transition to Best Practices & Operationalize Emerging Concepts

- Engage Luma in one final combined forum of all participating libraries to consolidate the community of practice and establish groundwork for operationalizing the collective aspirations and intentions;
- Articulate a functional model that captures the collectively held understanding to negotiate a first-of-its-kind transformative agreement with publishers;
- Refine and publish best practices post-forum in a national publication as a white paper.

Data gathered from the HCD conversations will create a shared understanding of how transformative agreements will affect small- and mid-sized research institutions, best practices for negotiating transformative agreements, and guidelines for incorporating OA into the culture of partnering institutions. This includes support for reviewing promotion and tenure cases, addressing copyright and intellectual property concerns, and understanding the nature of OA.

Project Team – Tim Schlak, Ph.D., Dean of the University Library at Robert Morris University, and Alexis Macklin, Ph.D., Dean of Helmke Library at Purdue University Fort Wayne, will serve as Project Directors. On behalf of their board of directors, the Executive Directors of PALCI (Jill Morris) and MCLS (Scott Garrison) will serve in a supportive capacity to foster member library interest, as will the ALI Executive Committee.

Diversity Plan – The Community of Practice will engage stakeholders across multiple consortia in order to explore a business model and acquisitions mechanism that will subsequently serve libraries nationwide. The project is focused on a diverse range of institutions that are unable to fully support their faculty and students' access needs to scholarship, as well as creating a more equitable scholarly publishing landscape.

National Impact -The impact of this National Forum grant will be a collective understanding of how transformative agreements affect small- and mid-sized research institutions and creation of innovative ways of remaining relevant in the changing landscape of academic publishing. We expect to identify solutions to implement through the HCD process, while creating a coalition of small- and mid-sized libraries from the above-named consortia that is acutely aware of its collectively held needs and otherwise insurmountable shortcomings around OA publishing. With this shared understanding and commitment, these institutions can pool resources and FTE to create new acquisition and procurement mechanisms and negotiate offsetting agreements that are as beneficial and unique as those crafted by the largest research libraries and consortia. The national impact would also be a more inclusive conversation around the latest developments in scholarly communication that are at times exclusive of smaller institutions that are at risk of being left behind.

Budget Summary – We respectfully request \$122,483.40 to cover: \$15,000 for salaries and wages for the two project leads split equally, \$1,200 for fringe benefits (FICA only), \$47,000 in travel funds for participating organizations (\$1,000/institution, \$1,000/consortium and \$2,000/each for project leads); \$2,000 in travel for 2 leading consortia representatives; \$500 for printing costs; \$40,000 for Luma's facilitation and data analysis (48 in-session hours, 16 hours planning, 16 hours debriefing = 80 hours @ \$250/hr. x 2 Luma consultants); \$10,000 for catering and meeting spaces for on-ground sessions; \$1,000 for honoraria for 2 leading consortia representatives; \$5,783.40 in indirect costs for salaries/fringe benefits overhead.