

National Forum on the Assessment of Scholarly Communication Programs

The Sacramento State University Library, in collaboration with the San Jose State University Library, seeks a National Forum grant totaling \$149,796 from the IMLS National Leadership Grants for Libraries program to hold a two-day forum that will focus on standards and best practices in evaluating scholarly communication programs at M1 Carnegie classified public universities. Building upon forum content presented by experts and input from attendees, the forum will result in a report with recommendations for standards and a comprehensive set of best practices in assessing the range of services that comprise a scholarly communication program.

Statement of National Need

With new technologies and paradigms for creating and sharing work, scholars across all fields have seen changes in research output, dissemination and preservation of the scholarly record, emergent publishing models, and the measurement of scholarly impact. Libraries have broadly defined their efforts to address these concerns as “scholarly communication” services. During the past two decades, academic libraries have begun to further invest in scholarly communication through the allocation of staffing and resources and even establishing institutional repositories. However, quantifying the actual outcome or impact of these scholarly communication activities remains elusive, beyond output measures such as simple counts of consultations, workshop attendance, or by repository downloads or growth.

Establishing the infrastructure for a scholarly communication program, including an institutional repository (IR), represents a significant investment toward preserving, making accessible, and showcasing the intellectual and creative output of a university’s community. It is widely acknowledged that IRs are of value – to the academic institution and its community and to the wider global audience who are accessing their work. In the California State University (CSU) system, the largest four-year public university system in the country, 13 of 23 CSU campuses have dedicated repository staffing; these campuses spend an average of \$85,000 yearly on salaries. Five CSU campuses pay for proprietary repository services. Additionally, 14 of 23 CSU campuses are Carnegie classified as M1 institutions, representing a compelling trend among public universities of this kind. The purpose of this project is to seek wide and diverse input from IR practitioners and scholarly communications stakeholders on the myriad of quantitative and qualitative measures by which one could evaluate the IR and the larger scholarly communication program at M1 institutions.

A review of the literature and of the academic libraries’ professional organization (ACRL) website indicates a lack of consensus on performance indicators for scholarly communication services. A recent discussion on the Digital Scholarship Section listserv illustrates a lack of comprehensive assessment practices. Many of the institutions who discussed their assessment programs describe storytelling of individual successes or advocate logic models, combining counts with other qualitative measures. Some projects such as the Immersive Scholar¹ visualization project touch on the concepts of impact and assessment, but not in a systematic way, nor in a way that could be adapted by public institutions with less staffing and smaller budgets. Even IR data, widely seen as objective and straightforward, may be inaccurate (see the Repository Analytics & Metric Portal).² How to assess scholarly communication services are discussions that many academic libraries are engaging in, nevertheless, these local discussions have not resulted in national standards or best practices. IMLS funding is needed to bring this strategic conversation to fruition, so that next steps and actionable practices can be incorporated in our scholarly communication programs.

This project will gather experts in assessment and scholarly communication along with M1 public university stakeholders to develop an assessment framework for scholarly communication services – these include addressing assessment possibilities for the digital tools used for scholarly communication such as repositories, data management planning tools, and academic publishing support.

¹ <https://www.immersivescholar.org/>

² <http://ramp.montana.edu/>

Project Design

Grant funding will support a forum for approximately 25 experts and others interested in the topic to gather for a two-day workshop in May 2020. We propose to recruit experts from library assessment, who may have experience in scholarly communication, to present and lead discussions on how existing assessment techniques can be implemented for scholarly communication services. In preparation for the forum, a representative/convenience sample of scholarly communications practitioners will be invited to participate in focus groups at the October 2019 Digital Library Federation (DLF) Forum and will be asked to discuss the inputs/outputs/outcomes they use to report their successes. Every effort will be made to ensure feedback from a diverse group of participants and stakeholders. Results of the focus groups and National Forum will be reviewed by the forum experts and shared in a whitepaper by the conclusion of the grant in December 2020. We plan to share results from the focus groups and forum in the fall of 2020 at conferences such as the DLF Forum or Library Assessment Conference.

Our team includes Co-PIs Nicole Lawson, Suzanna Conrad, and Emily Chan. Nicole Lawson is Associate Dean for Academic Services at Sacramento State. In this capacity she leads assessment planning for the library. Suzanna Conrad is Associate Dean of Digital Technologies and Resource Management at Sacramento State. As past convener of the ACRL Digital Curation Interest Group, she led the conversion of the group to the Digital Scholarship Section, a new Section within ACRL for addressing many scholarly communication topics. She previously launched and managed the institutional repository at Cal Poly Pomona. Emily Chan is Interim Associate Dean of Research and Scholarship at San José State University (SJSU). As SJSU's former Scholarly Communications Librarian, she managed the campus institutional repository and led the library's efforts in supporting scholarly communication. Lili Luo, Professor at SJSU's School of Information, will serve as the evaluator on this grant. She is well versed in research design and is both a lead instructor for the Institute of Research Design in Librarianship and the coordinator of SJSU's Center for Information Research and Innovation.

National Impact

Over the past decade, academic libraries have been pushed to better quantify the value they bring to the higher educational experience. At the same time, scholarly communication has been a growing field within library science. Recruitments for librarians and library staff frequently incorporate elements of scholarly communication, as institutions invest more in these services. Public universities in particular have an imperative to act as good stewards of public funds. Within the broader mandate of expressing value, assessment of scholarly communication has been an elusive goal, with no real measures or standards for success. By gathering experts and stakeholders at M1 public universities to discuss current practice and identify gaps, this project lays the groundwork for developing these standards.

Performance Goals and Outcomes

The outcome of this forum will be a whitepaper articulating a set of assessment best practices which, along with presentations and workshop materials, will be made available for download from the institutional repositories of both institutions and announced via various listservs. Success of this project will be measured by timely organization of focus groups and analysis of resulting data, satisfaction surveys completed by forum attendees, and dissemination of the whitepaper and forum content.

Budget Summary

Funding will support a part-time Administrative Support Coordinator, who will assist with planning and scheduling the focus groups and National Forum event (\$33,600 including benefits). Travel costs include focus group participant stipends for attending DLF an extra day (\$3,000 for 10 participants); travel stipends for experts to participate in the National Forum (\$37,500 for 25 participants); travel costs for the PIs and evaluator (\$13,500); an evaluator to assist with crafting and moderating the focus groups (\$10,000 including benefits); refreshments and venue fees for the forum (\$3,000); and equipment and supplies (\$600). Indirect cost rates for our institution are \$44,306 (calculated at 42%); \$4,290 in indirect costs are incurred through the sub-award to San Jose State (calculated at 26%). The total budget for this project is estimated at \$149,796.