



Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship

JCEL is published by Clemson University Press
ISSN 2473-8336 | jcel-pub.org

Volume 2, Issue 1

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Michelle Polchow

Polchow, Michelle. (2018). Breakout Session: Leveraging Licensing to Increase Access. Presented by Jennifer Chan, Scholarly Communication Librarian, University of California Los Angeles. *Journal of Copyright in Education and Librarianship*, 2(1), 1–3.



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Michelle Polchow
George Mason University

Author note: Michelle Polchow, Electronic Resources Librarian, George Mason University.

Correspondence regarding this article should be sent to Michelle Polchow, 4400 University Dr., Fairfax, Virginia 22030. Contact: mpolchow@gmu.edu.

Leveraging Licensing to Increase Access

When the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) embarked on the concept for the Affordable Course Materials Initiative (ACMI), they began with an environmental scan of the open-access (OA) landscape. Many academic institutions have increased their commitment to OA research and scholarship through the adoption of institutional and departmental OA authorship policies, exploring open educational resources (OERs), and making publication subvention funds available. Despite increases in access to these resources, OA had not fully developed to its envisioned potential as of 2013. As an alternative path, UCLA focused their initiative around utilizing access strategies to engage subject librarians, library copyright and licensing specialists, faculty, and campus stakeholders to maximize the use and access of library-licensed content and other free or low-cost resources. The launch focused on three objectives: to engage with faculty/instructors so as to minimize the rising cost of commercial course materials impacting students, to collaborate with faculty to identify and ensure that the library has the material used to support teaching and research, and to collaborate with faculty on building and expanding library collections that could be reused over time. The model incentivizes faculty members to apply for cash awards granted by the library-led service, which engages the full spectrum of library staff and resources and customizes support to best meet the needs of both faculty and students.

Open Access Challenges

UCLA recognized that the OA movement had run into some unintended consequences. Peter Suber, a leader of the worldwide movement, defines OA as a pathway to provide reuse rights and Creative Commons licensing for literature that is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. Several scholarly initiatives have supported the cost sharing of OA by institutions setting aside funds for their faculty/authors to cover article processing charges (ACP) and to encourage participation in OA journals. However, a recent cost analysis has unveiled a more critical OA serials crisis than the original serials crisis that inspired OA. After collecting data to examine the top 11 major academic/scientific publishers who collect ACP, the findings of Ernesto Priego revealed that the publishers' new business models actually monetize OA and result in double dipping into institutional budgets under the pretext of ACP and subscriptions.¹ It is difficult to determine at this time if OA is bending the cost curve and changing the rate of inflation for scholarly materials.

The ACMI strategy took a different path to access high-quality teaching materials that would result in free or low-cost resources. The premise was to fine-tune the copyright balance and realign the rights of the creator or publisher with that of the users of content. One objective was to develop ways the library could leverage their collection to maximize advantage. The American Libraries Association code of ethics makes several references to access, which can be defined as the right or opportunity to use or benefit from content. Libraries can provide access in at least three ways: 1) freedom to access, 2) equitable access, and 3) provision of access. U.S. copyright case law provides content users many rights of access under "fair use." However, libraries increasingly provide access through the licensing of resources rather than outright sale, so it is important to note that the terms of an agreement can expand or restrict the uses of a work, placing greater limitations than those that would have been allowed under copyright law.

Implementing the Initiative

This pilot project focused on collaborating with instructors to use low-cost or free alternatives in contrast to expensive commercial textbooks. Incorporating the use of financial incentives to help drive course instructor participation, the library created support teams to review applicants' syllabi

1. See (Priego, Ernesto. "Lowest and Highest Article Processing Charges from 11 Selected Publishers as Paid by the Wellcome Trust According to 2012/2013 Dataset.)

to identify resources beyond commercial textbooks, expanding the awareness, access, and use of low-cost or free resources to create affordable course materials. This process of collaboration between instructors and librarians helped illuminate ways to leverage content to which the library licensed or owned, such as using open-access scholarly resources, encouraging new OER content creation, digitizing analog content from UCLA collections, and acquiring appropriate user level licenses for e-books. Faculty applicants received a grant of \$1,000 for courses with fewer than 200 students, and \$2,500 was provided for enrollment expectation greater than 200 students. Course instructors initiated the application process in conjunction with subject specialist librarians to ensure they were informed about access to everything the library held. Following the submission process to determine whether the library could support the project, courses were selected for awards. Each faculty application was reviewed by a multi-skilled library team. The overall stakeholders included course instructors, library copyright specialists, a subject/area specialist librarian, campus administrators, the private campus bookstore/print shop, and campus instructional designers.

UCLA modeled ACMI on some aspects of programs implemented at Temple University and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Assessment and Evaluation

One illustrative case successfully benefitted 800 students, saving \$72.00 for each student, with a resulting overall campus financial impact of \$54,800 in savings. Conversely, the goal to drive down student costs to the extent possible was reflected through the rejection of a course instructor applicant who was unyielding on the incorporation of a \$350 textbook into the submitted syllabus. The partnership between the subject specialist librarians and professors was a critical component for success, requiring good communication and a dedicated time commitment from librarians. Faculty members became partners in leveraging licensed library resources, gaining a fuller understanding of copyright and terms of access. The bookstore and the library developed stronger collaboration by sharing terms of licenses and tapping assistance for discovering pathways for access.

The initiative was evaluated as a successful model across multiple disciplines, achieved several instances of substantial cost savings, required minimal financial start-up, and required no additional human resources. Stakeholders from throughout the campus have built successful partnerships with a full array of library staff, and the program has had a lasting impact. Overall, the effort to promote the broadest possible access to and use of library collections successfully merged teaching, learning support, and

collection building. ACMI converted stakeholders into partnerships with the library and established a catalyst for community building.

The ACMI pilot program was initiated and evaluated by the UCLA Associate University Librarian for Collections and Scholarly Communication. With the support of the libraries' Director of Communications, a report was produced that was used to share the evaluation, compile assessment details, and provide evidence for continuation. A funding commitment was made both by the University Librarian and the Vice Chancellor of Research, who authorized matching funds to operationalize the program.

Next Steps

ACMI is now integrated into the library's full spectrum of services. Strategic managers continue to target high enrollment and high-cost courses to optimize investment, but overall, the pilot achieved significant results with a modest financial investment and a limited number of staff. Materials from UCLA's special collection were digitized, with benefits to not only the campus but also to cultural heritage. However, the digitization project was the highest cost incurred by ACMI in transforming a material object into an online resource, and ongoing maintenance to sustain hosting has become an additional issue. Although many lessons remain to be learned, the ongoing experimentation and creativity will both build and sustain ACMI as an integrated component of the library's set of services.