

CHAPTER 13

The Academic Library and the Research Office: Providing Scholarly Communications Support at Imperial College London—A Case Study

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

The Library Services at Imperial College London have, like all research libraries, always provided support to researchers, but primarily through the provision of resources and specialist subject advice, our ‘traditional’ mission. Researchers in departments have been supported by a network of subject or liaison librarians for several decades, the latter’s role being focused on collection development, information seeking advice, specialist training, and information literacy teaching. In the United Kingdom, and internationally, the delivery of services by libraries for scholarly communications, defined by the ACRL as ‘the systems by which the results of scholarship are created, registered, evaluated, disseminated, preserved, and reshaped into new scholarship’ ([Association of College and Research Libraries. Working Group on Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy, 2013, p. 4](#)) has become a significant, challenging, and relatively novel departure from our expected roles. Major drivers for this shift have been the growth of open access publishing, altmetrics and traditional bibliometrics, open science, and the parallel increase in funder policies affecting how research outputs should be made available. National research assessment exercises, improved institutional publication management, and the rapid multiplicity of institutional repositories have also contributed to changes in library strategies for research support.

Likewise, the College’s Research Office has ensured that effective governance and compliance procedures were in place so that the College could

be assured that funder and other policies were adhered to, its normal role. Prior to 2012, the main connection between the two was the Wellcome Trust open access funding; managed by a member of staff in the Library, and reporting returned by the Research Office. However, research support is much, much broader than merely supplying journals and compliance reports.

The driver for a much closer collaboration was, as with many institutions, the announcement by RCUK (Research Councils UK) of their open access policy in 2012. At that point at Imperial, after considerable negotiations and debate, the College had approved an open access mandate applicable from 1 January 2012, and, in a new role within the Library Services, I had thought that coordinating communication and advocacy materials would be my main challenge. Following the announcement from RCUK, it became rapidly clear to the Library and the Research Office that managing the RCUK's block grant and policy compliance would be a much bigger and extensive responsibility than either of our existing teams could handle. Recognition from the heads of department and senior management teams that collaboration would bring significant benefits to both departments and the College was critical, as was the opportunity for the sharing of knowledge and staff expertise.

Since neither I nor the Research Office had the resource to ensure that a College-wide support system could be implemented by early 2014, the date from which the RCUK open access policy would apply to publications, it was decided to appoint a project manager reporting to the Research Office to coordinate activity across the Library, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) department, and the Research Office. Presciently, with the HEFCE post-2014 REF open access policy announced in 2015, this appointment allowed us to be in a much better position to expand our open access services than we might otherwise have been in.

13.2 IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

The College is a research-intensive institution, frequently cited in university league tables as within the top 3 UK HEIs and top 20 international HEIs. Its research specialisms and faculties are focused on science, engineering, technology, and medicine, and the Imperial Business School. Nearly 4000 researchers work across the College's departments, institutes, and schools, and the average journal article output per annum is consistently around 10,000 items. The humanities and social sciences are supported in a cross-curricular

programme for undergraduate students, and the College's well-established Science Communication MSc, but research outputs in these disciplines are few. A significant percentage of research funding is received from the UK Research Councils, as well as industry and government collaborations, and the College prides itself on its Research Excellence Framework results.

At the point of the introduction of the College's OA mandate, we had one positive initiative to support it: the College's senior management rapidly recognised the need for resource and governance, which began with the establishment of an institutional open access fund. However, support for the institutional repository, known as Spiral, and processing of APC (Article Processing Charge) applications to the only OA fund we currently received was spread across a number of Library teams and the College's ICT department. This was a very distributed service. None of these staff were in my Education and Research Support team (renamed Scholarly Communications Management in summer 2015) until 2014, and there was no one full-time member of staff, so we were not well placed at all to scale up any type of open access support.

All of the factors cited above placed considerable pressure on support departments following the RCUK open access policy implementation, and the subsequent announcement by HEFCE of their post-2014 REF open access policy. Funder open access policies have, to date, primarily required compliance for specific research outputs: journal articles and conference proceedings. In the knowledge that the former are the primary choice of output for the majority of the College's researchers, it was going to be essential we could ensure that policy changes and the support for them were to be communicated as widely as possible along with creating underpinning systems that were user-friendly and efficient, both for researchers and support staff.

13.3 EARLY PLANNING FOR ENHANCING OPEN ACCESS SERVICES

Grappling with how to monitor the levels by which our academic staff were complying with the College's open access mandate rapidly turned into grappling with how to promote and communicate the RCUK policy, manage the block grant, and monitor academic staff compliance. The Library has always had a strong and valued relationship with all our departments and academic staff, and understanding the academic workflow and publishing process has always been within our remit as well. Key to that relationship is the Library's relatively singular neutral role among other central services

supporting researchers that are often perceived to be about creating more bureaucracy and distracting them from their ‘real’ work, that of conducting research. Using this to our advantage by being a point of advice and support for enabling compliance was therefore an obvious extension of our research support services. Without a strong connection with the Research Office however, this could not have worked, and if the Research Office had not realised the benefits of a collaboration, I think compliance activities would have been considerably harder and frustrating for all.

The primary aim behind the open access project, and subsequent activities related to scholarly communication, has been to provide as simple and efficient a system as possible for academic staff to have to engage with. That means reducing the number of places where they have to interact to comply with funders’ open access policies, as well as making the infrastructure user-friendly both for the academics and for the support staff managing the processes needed to ensure compliance. To do that meant the project manager’s key tasks included coordinating streamlining of systems, the APC application procedure, communication and promotion of the RCUK policy and subsequently the HEFCE post-2014 OA policy, and reporting to and assuring College senior management that institutionally we could implement the necessary processes to ensure compliance. By appointing to this role, this has meant that scholarly communication support has been able to expand to include Library and Research Office collaboration on developing ORCID iD support, RDM (Research Data Management) services, and a continued joint communication strategy.

Significantly, the recognition in College of the criticality of open access publishing has allowed for the expansion of the support team that I manage in the Library, and meant that our focus has continued to be on building a more combined OA support and advisory service within that team for both library and academic staff, while knowing that systems and infrastructure were being developed effectively to enable this service.

13.4 INITIATIVES ENABLED BY THE COLLABORATION

13.4.1 ASK OA APC Management System

In 2012, there was an understandable focus on managing gold OA funds—the College has three, RCUK, COAF (Charity Open Access Fund), and institutional—so streamlining the APC application process for academic staff was one of the primary activities of the project. Three fund application forms had to be combined to one application point that allowed staff to

login using their College credentials. We needed staff to make applications on behalf of academic staff, wanted to reduce the amount of personal information applicants had to enter, and crucially wanted to be able to display unique grant information to applicants. For my team managing the applications, we wanted a user-friendly interface in which all aspects of the APC application procedure could be managed, including recording of financial information, corresponding with applicants, and reporting. Not unusually among HEIs, all of the information resulting from an APC application was being painstakingly entered into a myriad of Excel spreadsheets, so minimising that activity was highly desirable.

The result is an APC management system, ASK OA, developed in cloud-based enquiry management software, ServiceNow, connected to the on-deposit workflow implemented by Symplectic in Elements, the College's CRIS. Academic staff login to Elements, the only system in College where they can centrally manage their publication activity, and make APC applications whether they are RCUK or COAF funded, or want to use the institutional APC fund to pay a non-hybrid open access fee. The information they have to enter is minimal, and all application information is transferred to the APC management system. This has been achieved by combining data sources from HR and our Grants Management Database, using Symplectic functionality and College authentication.

13.4.2 Combined Green and Gold Workflows

By enabling the synchronisation of our APC application system with Elements, the green and gold open access workflows managed by the Library's OA team are now more smoothly combined. Academic staff have always had to use Elements to upload manuscripts to the College's repository, Spiral, and by incorporating the APC application and deposit interface as described earlier, all relevant open access information can be passed from one place to my team whether it is an APC application, or full-text item for deposit. While it is a relatively new addition to the support infrastructure, launched in May 2015, we are convinced of the benefits of a single user interface, and academic feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

13.4.3 ORCID iD Project

Central to monitoring academic activity, whether for compliance, analytics, reporting, understanding impact, tracking collaborations or dissemination, are identifiers. We are all facing the difficulty of 'knowing'—what papers our academics are writing, when those papers become publications, when is

acceptance, who are academics working with, where has a paper been published, deposited, and cited. Both the Library and Research Office realised early on that the use of ORCID iDs could lead to more effective methods of capturing the data to build up our knowledge of these activities, and with the project manager's lead of the College's participation in the Jisc ORCID pilot during 2014, we were among the first UK institutions to bulk issue ORCID iDs to all academic staff. Sharing the project load in this manner meant that resource in ICT and the Library could concentrate, respectively, on the technical implementation and communication activity required while project management was based in the Research Office. That division of labour provided a solid base from which the Library can now further the ORCID iD roll-out by continuing to provide advice and communication from within my team. The ideal role of the Research Office should consequently be to work with funders and other relevant organisations requiring ORCID iDs.

13.4.4 Open Access Publishing Governance

Underpinning the project, and to oversee the development of the support infrastructure, communications and service delivery was the Open Access Publishing Group, comprising senior academics across the College, and the Directors of Library Services and Research Office, supported by the Scholarly Communications Officer. Initially focused on the management of the gold open access policies, the reporting and evidence provided to the group over the past 3 years has meant that the Library Services have been well supported in building up resource availability to deliver both gold and green OA services, and ensured that open access publishing remains a strategic priority across the College.

13.4.5 Communications Strategy

All the activity taking place to establish this infrastructure would be wasted without communications. Being clear that the Library Services' role is not to enforce compliance, nonetheless using the network of liaison librarians and the Library's relationships across the College has meant that communication of the various OA policies can be built into those interactions. Presented as assistance with compliance and advice on what open access is, we have been able to conduct a joint strategy, wherein the Director of Library Services and the Scholarly Communications Officer have led in delivering presentations on actions required for compliance at senior management level, and the Library's Scholarly Communications Management team can concentrate on providing advice to academic staff without seeming to be 'policing' their activity.

What is worth noting with communications is that a strong lead in an HEI can become responsible, or deemed as responsible, whatever their original role may have been, for a different message than first intended. As described above, Library Services has not proposed to be responsible for ensuring compliance, but by being the provider of the services that enable compliance, it is perhaps inevitable that in our advocacy this is what is asked for. It is imperative on departments responsible for governance in HEIs that ‘compliance’ activity is delivered strategically and that the messages provided to academic staff are measured and relevant. I continue to be clear that the Library should not have to tell staff to be compliant with policies, and be the only department that does so. Therefore, we must build on the Research Office relationship as a model for working with other support services in the HEI to establish the same trust and ability to share knowledge without unbalancing the responsibility each has been charged with.

13.4.6 RDM Service Management

Following the success of the open access service development, and with a similar policy compliance prompt, the College’s RDM Working Group has now been able to oversee the implementation of the College’s RDM policy, officially launched in September 2015, with the primary assistance of the Research Office and Library Services. The introduction of a post in my team in 2014 to implement the Library’s RDM advisory and guidance service laid the ground for a now increased level of support for researchers, again coordinated across the relevant College support services from the Research Office. Compliance with relevant College and funder policies can be managed and reported, with the knowledge that the underlying support service is also being developed and delivered to assist researchers as efficiently as possible.

13.5 2016 ONWARDS

With the HEFCE policy implementation from 1 April 2016, the multitude of advisory groups recommended from the recent government OA policy review, and RCUK, and heightened compliance enforcement activities from the Wellcome Trust, the collaboration between the Research Office and the Library needs to be maintained. The support required for researchers and academic staff in continuing to understand their funders’ policies, navigating the OA APC schemes available to them, and enabling HEFCE compliance means the Library can build on its advisory and guidance role,

allowing the Research Office to maintain its governance and assurance role in close cooperation. We have already seen an impact on resource, and the Library has absorbed the majority of this. It is very likely this will continue because of the significance of the Library's work in underpinning the researcher workflow. The Research Office has acquired considerable knowledge and expertise in understanding open access publishing, beyond a compliance requirement, and the cooperation between the services has meant that conversations about licensing, the College's own press, and the role of publishing and impact have all been raised at key College management boards and committees.

The most significant activity, particularly where the College is concerned, is 'how compliant' our staff will be with the HEFCE policy. Mitigating the potential tension between the Library teams, which are not responsible for delivering compliance, yet are key to assisting academics to be compliant, will be one of our priorities. This is where the 'traditional' roles still apply, but with considerable modification, and with much better and more strategic alignment than was the case prior to the RCUK requirements landing.

13.6 REFLECTIONS

The relationship has not always been perfect, and having two key roles focused on delivery of a cross-College service meant that on occasion there were differing priorities depending on which stage of the project we were at. There was also the potential for confusion as to the 'lead' of the project and the underpinning services, but regular communication and clarification of roles contributed to clarity as much as was possible. By enabling the Library services to concentrate on building up staffing resource and workflow delivery, the project manager role could lead on building cross-College relationships, engaging academic staff, and coordinating service delivery projects and meetings. Greater understanding of the two departments has certainly been fostered, as has the centrality of the Library Service in providing a research support service that the entire College is dependent on.

REFERENCE

Association of College and Research Libraries. Working Group on Intersections of Scholarly Communication and Information Literacy. (2013). *Intersections of scholarly communication and information literacy: Creating strategic collaborations for a changing academic environment*. Chicago, IL: Association of College and Research Libraries. Retrieved from <http://acrl.ala.org/intersections/>.