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A Conversation with the Authors of *Open Access Literature in Libraries: Principles and Practices*

Rachel E. Scott, Karen Brunsting, and Caitlin Harrington

In lieu of a traditional editorial or book review, in this issue I offer a conversation with Karen Brunsting and Caitlin Harrington, my co-authors for the recently published monograph *Open Access Literature in Libraries: Principles and Practices* (ALA Editions Core, 2022; 978-0-8389-3954-3). Over the past year, Michael Fernandez and I have documented some of the work we have undertaken to make *Library Resources & Technical Services* open access. These efforts have, of course, been informed by our grappling with the complex topic over a much longer period of time. For several years, I have been pondering what librarians, and especially those of us at smaller or less robustly funded institutions, can reasonably do to assist in making scholarly literature freely available to all to read. Like many of you, I share my questions, concerns, and ideas with professional colleagues and friends. Sometimes these discussions lead to research projects. What follows is an example of an ongoing conversation among technical services colleagues leading to research projects, changes in our practices, and, finally, a practical guide to getting started with open access in your library.

Before we get started, some context might be in order. Caitlin and I worked together at the University of Memphis, and when we arrived, the library by policy did not catalog open access journals. As the integrated library systems and electronic resources librarians, we had to make sense of why this policy was in place before we could advocate for integrating open access content into library collections and making it discoverable alongside subscribed content. We began to study librarians' attitudes, practices, and policies with respect to open access and learned that although most librarians expressed positive attitudes about open access, few had created policies related to open access.[1] We continued to explore this tension in a NASIG presentation, and uncovered more of librarians' concerns about open access content and their reluctance to write policies to address it.[2] When Karen joined our library as the acquisitions and collection development librarian, the three of us submitted a chapter proposal for the planned volume *Open Access Collection Management through the Technical Services Lens*. Instead of accepting or rejecting the chapter proposal, the editors invited us to write a book. After the surprise wore off, and with helpful feedback and encouragement from the editor and Chair of the Core Publications Coordinating Committee, Susan Thomas, we wrote the book that we are pleased to share with you all.

Rachel E. Scott: Thanks for joining me to discuss the book, Caitlin and Karen! Why approach open access through "Principles and Practices"?

Karen Brunsting: Our intention in approaching open access through principles and practices was to give more library workers a chance to participate in bringing open access to their libraries. Practices represent the workflows and daily work—all of the things that are needed to allow open access into your collection. Principles work at a higher level and have to be decided on by administrators, or committees for the whole institution.

Caitlin Harrington: Like Karen said, practices are a part of your daily work, and your principles are the kind of thing that can be reflected in your strategic plan at your library that can provide more of an expansive view of the future rather than explicit rules and boundaries that are not going to work as well for something that is changing as quickly as open access.

RS: That's fair—both principles and practices are important, despite being differently accessible depending on one's role in the library. There is a huge amount of literature on open access. How is this book different?

CH: I think this book is different because we tried to write it in such a way that there were entry points to participate in the support of open access for all types of library workers, regardless of the size or budget of their institution. A lot of talk around open access at this time assumes funding that is not available to many institutions. And as librarians who have worked in those types of environments, we wanted to find ways to promote open access—even if your budget has no room to spare.

KB: I agree with what Caitlin said, but I also want to go back to what she said about the principles and practices being helpful because open access is changing so rapidly. The rapid changes in open access also impacted how we wrote the book and why it's different, because we're trying to provide simpler, faster ways for library workers to establish some type of open access in their libraries. Even if they haven't gone through the whole procedure of incorporating open access into a strategic plan, or haven't been in the position to meet with all of the stakeholders and come to some sort of consensus, there still might be a way for them to bring open access into their collections, even in a small way.

RS: Did researching and writing the book change the way you think about any aspect of open access?

KB: Researching the book changed the way I think about open access in almost every way, because I learned so much researching each chapter we wrote—it was a big learning experience for me.

CH: I think that one of the things I got out of researching this book was ideas for how all roles within the library can support open access. My perspective is rooted in technical services, but in researching the book I learned about ways that non-technical services librarians can also participate in this work.

RS: I'll follow up to ask how researching and writing has impacted your daily work in a technical services department. Have you found that this research changed or informed how you go about journal renewals, for example?

KB: Yes, it's made me ask more questions, such as why we are paying for subscriptions to open access journals, what these payments are actually for, whether open access journals and monographs have a place in academic libraries. I also have a greater interest in read and publish or transformative agreements—that's on my list of things to investigate for my library this year. The book definitely made me more aware of the possibilities out there.

CH: I think that in my role as department head what I learned by researching this book were the ways the folks I'm working with are already supporting open access that I wasn't aware of. I wasn't aware of the great tools available through interlibrary loan, for example. I knew about indexes for open access content from my perspective as an e-resources librarian. I knew about knowledge bases and collections like the Directory of Open Access Journals and things like that. But I didn't know about interlibrary loan tools and I learned a lot by talking to the interlibrary loan librarian I supervise.

RS: Who did you write this book for and how can it help them?

CH: I think we wrote the book for an overwhelmed librarian or library worker that has a curiosity about open access but is unsure where to start and feels like there's too high of a barrier for entry. Also, the book was written in such a way that individual chapters or portions of chapters can be read as standalone material. You don't have to read the entire book. If you don't have the time or that degree of interest in the subject, you can really zero in on the parts that you feel will be most beneficial to you and leave the rest if it's not going to be helpful.

KB: I think about the book as sort of an introduction to open access, because it covers a wide, broad view, so many different aspects of open access. But it doesn't contain everything about those aspects. It's very much the basics of what you need to know, and then you can take each chapter or each section, and do a much deeper dive on that aspect of open access. I've actually used it to prepare an introduction to open access lecture for the League of Awesome Librarians. The book helped me out with that, because there's so much information out there and it is hard to distill it down in a way that people can approach it and not be overwhelmed.

RS: What were some of the challenges of a book-length project?

CH: I think organization was a challenge. When we were writing the book, we had a strong idea of what we hoped to achieve, but figuring out the most logical way to present that information was a challenge. This was the first full length

book that I've ever been responsible for and contributed to all portions of the book. It's just a lot longer than an article. I remember us spending a lot of time trying to figure out where things made the most sense and how to include everything we wanted to in an appropriate way.

KB: Having the outline was a huge help, but then we also had to be willing to change the outline when we realized we were maybe forgetting something or changing directions, and then we also had to be willing to cut out paragraphs or pages of what we wrote because they took the book into a direction we didn't want, or it was not critical to what we were trying to do.

CH: This was a writing project that changed the most while I was working on it. Articles that I've worked on haven't changed as much as this did from inception to completion. This was truly in flux—the outline was changing as we wrote and we had to be flexible with letting it be a living and breathing thing until we were finished. And then, even after we had finished writing all of the content, it still needed some finesse to make it the best it could be.

KB: Doing it the way we did it, chapter by chapter was difficult, I can't really think of another way, but we would work on a chapter and come to some sort of completion on that chapter, and then have to start all over again with the next one. There were times when it was like "I can't believe we're still doing this" and "whoa, this is still going on!"

RS: It was indeed a long project and I remember some concern about how many things would change between the date of completion and the date of availability. Because the open access landscape shifts so quickly, a book length project is somewhat risky, and we acknowledge that some parts of the book will age better than others.

We'll close by noting that there is sometimes a bit of public shaming involved when literature about open access is published behind a paywall and perhaps that is only fair. We are attempting to practice what we preach by depositing the publisher's version of the complete book in the Illinois State University Institutional Repository for those who cannot afford to purchase it. We hope that those who can purchase it will buy a copy from ALA. We have also opted to donate any proceeds from the book to the open access publishing campaign of Core journals, which includes *Library Resources & Technical Services*.

In this issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services* you'll find:

- Sean P. Kennedy and Melanie J. McGurr discuss changes to management practices in technical services departments during the global COVID-19 pandemic. They surveyed technical services managers in academic library settings to establish the prevalence of changes related to communication, resource provision and support, job characteristics, and job stressors. The findings suggest that managers made substantive changes to communications practices and practices related to work-life balance. Managers report keen interest in supporting the mental health of their employees.
- Migrating systems can wreak havoc on long-established processes and workflows. William H. Midgley and Kavita Mundle describe how differences in ledger structures between Voyager and Alma posed considerable concern about the impending implementation of Alma and share the solution they devised by utilizing Alma's "Reporting Codes" feature. This case study demonstrates the value of thinking creatively when working with ledgers, reporting codes, and invoice automation processes from collection development or acquisitions perspectives.
- In "Collaborative Learning on Linked Data through a Virtual Study Group," Xiping Liu, Sharon Reidt, Jodene Pappas, Jill J. Crane, and Ada Laura Ramirez share their experience forming and sustaining a virtual group dedicated to learning about and applying linked data. The authors discuss their activities, the challenges encountered, their collaborative work on a PCC Wikidata project, and their plans for the future. They discuss the opportunities for and implications of technical services librarians working in distributed and online settings to learn together.
- Books reviewed include *Metadata for Digital Collections* by Steven Jack Miller, *Transforming Technical Services through Training and Development* edited by Marlee Givens and Sofia Slutskaya, *Project Management in Technical Services: Practical Tips and Case Studies* edited by Elizabeth German and John Ballestro, and *The Ultimate Privacy Field Guide: A Workbook of Best Practices* edited by Erin Berman and Bonnie Tijerina.

References

1. Rachel Elizabeth Scott, Caitlin Harrington, and Ana Dubnjakovic, "Exploring Open Access Practices, Attitudes, and Policies in Academic Libraries," *portal: Libraries and the Academy* 21, no. 2 (2021): 365–88, https://doi.org/10.1353/pla.2021.0020.

2. Caitlin Harrington and Rachel E. Scott, "Documenting an Open Future in a Post-Policy World," *The Serials Librarian* 82, no. 1–4 (2022): 113–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/0361526X.2022.2017673.