Library Roles in Supporting Creation of Serials: Open Journal Systems at UNCG

By: Beth Bernhardt

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This article summarizes a presentation given at the 2016 North Carolina Serials Conference by Anna Craft. The speaker discussed UNC Greensboro's Open Journal Systems (OJS) implementation and librarian roles and responsibilities.

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Article:

***Note: Full text of article below

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Abstract

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Introduction

In this presentation at the 2016 North Carolina Serials Conference, Anna Craft (NC DOCKS) spoke about expectations, and skills needed for journal personnel and library staff who work with Open Journal Systems (OJS). As the Metadata Cataloger at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Craft works with faculty to develop open access journals. Craft discussed what types of issues that librarians may face when considering providing publishing support for faculty. She provided an overview of OJS, how OJS is supported by librarians at UNCG, challenges and lessons learned.

Open Journal Systems

Craft opened her presentation by asking the audience a few questions. How many of your institutions create or facilitate the creation of serials? How many of you are using Open Journal Systems (OJS)? Are you using other OA publishing systems? The audience gave their answers by a show of hands. No one in the audience had worked with OJS. Craft continued by giving an overview of her presentation which included what is Open Journal Systems (OJS), what journals are supported by the UNCG libraries, the challenges, lessons learned and the value for providing this type of program.

Open Journals System (OJS) was developed by the Public Knowledge Project (PKP), (PKP

Public Knowledge Project) specifically to aid faculty and researchers in publishing open access

journals. This is a program that is available for download and run on local serves. PKP also

offers hosting options which can be found on their website. There are several other open access

publishing systems available on the web.

UNC Greensboro started using OJS in 2010 in response to faculty request for support in the area

of open access publishing. To improve collaboration and reduce unnecessary duplication of

effort UNC Greensboro University Libraries also host two OJS sites for other UNC system

schools. (UNCG, 2016a)   The University Libraries host eleven active journals, and have several

others that are in development. The journal topics represent a wide range of subjects including

some of the following titles, Journal of Learning Spaces, Archival Practice and The North

Carolina Journal of Mathematics and Statistics. (UNCG, 2016b)

Craft showed a slide of a typical journal homepage from the Journal of Backcountry Studies.

(UNCG, 2016c) The OJS system enforces the same basic layout for all journals, but there are

also options for personalization such as banners at the top. The Journal of Backcountry Studies

has been around since 2006, it was previously published on the web but migrated to OJS after the

University Libraries started offering the support for OJS. All journals supported by the

University Libraries make content immediately free and open to the public. There is one journal

that requires people to register to read articles, but reader accounts are free.

OJS was developed to support peer-reviewed journal publishing. It supports the process from

initial manuscript submission through dissemination of completed reviewed, published articles.

It can also be used as a mechanism for just part of the process. One of the supported journals

decide to only use the manuscript submission and peer review management part of OJS. They

choose to have a separate website where they publish and disseminate the journal.   OJS can also be used to disseminate things like conference proceedings.

Library Roles

Craft then continued her presentation with a discussion of library roles. UNCG University Libraries supports some pieces of the journal creation process, but not all of them. Our Electronic Resources and Information Technology Department manages the OJS server, maintains the OJS software, and does initial technical setup for new journals. This work is primarily carried out by our Digital Technology Consultant, who spends approximately 4 to 5 hours a week on OJS-related task.   Craft provides user support and software training to personnel for the individual journals. This became part of her job in early 2014, after a retirement. Craft's other responsibilities included providing support for users of the University Libraries institutional repository system, NC DOCKS, so taking on the OJS assignment aligned well with her other duties. Craft can spend between one hour a week or ten depending on what is needed.   The Assistant Dean provides faculty outreach and publicity for OJS which can range from one to two hours a week. The other support person in this process is our Multiformats Cataloging Technician.   Once a new journal is published she is responsible for to making sure it can be discovered by users worldwide by creating OCLC records and placing the metadata into our knowledge base..

What is not provided? And Skills needed.

Next Craft spoke about what functions the library does not provide. There are many roles that can be assigned within OJS. These roles can be Journal Managers, Editors, Section Editors, Layout Editors, Copyeditors, Proofreaders, Reviews, Authors and Subscription Managers. The individual journals are responsible for assigning and carrying out these roles. The journal

creators all come ready to work on content, but they usually do not realize some of the other skill sets they may need or want in order to make the journal meet their desired standards of professionalism. Craft identified the following skills that may be needed; first is technical skills when working with online systems, second is graphic design skills for creating banners and other graphic elements, third is web design skills for customizing stylesheets and web layout, fourth is copyediting and proofreading skills for articles, fifth is layout skills needed for setting up articles with the desired look and feel, last skill needed is someone to make decisions on policy issues such as copyright questions.

Craft also talked about the typical questions that she receives form journal owners. Most all of the questions that she receives deal with the skills previously mentioned. A sample of some of the questions Craft has received are as follows; Why can't I log in?, Where is XYZ article in the review process?, Who has permission to do XYZ action?, Can I use the system to send a modified version of the article XYZ to reviewers?, Is there a copyright agreement for authors?, and How do I get an ISSN for my journal? While Craft can give examples of how others journals are functioning, it is the decision of the journal to decide how they want to do deal with different issues.

Craft provides training on OJS and how to process articles. The journal staff need to be comfortable working in a complex online system that enforces processes. Articles must be submitted by people in the author role, and must go through multiple steps before they can be posted. The system will let you track and monitor submissions closely and will also send automated emails to relevant personnel if you set up that feature. But Craft warns the audience that if you miss a step, it is easy to get stuck or confused in the process, especially for new users of the system.

Cataloging and Discovery

Craft showed an example of a spreadsheet that is used to track the journals that the University Libraries supports. The spreadsheet includes information like title, start date, end date, ISSN, OCLC number, and whether or not the title has a record in our Knowledgebase. This information is then given to the Multiformats Cataloger to process into our system so it can be found in our catalog. The journals hosted by the University Libraries are indexed and discoverable via Google and other search engines. The journals are also discoverable through OCLC WorldCat Local and our A to Z list.

Challenges

The learning curve for the OJS software is the hardest challenge. Craft reported that there are some faculty members who have had some frustrations with the software. Another challenge for the University Libraries is turnover, both in the Libraries and on the staffs of the individual journals. One staffing model that can exacerbate this problem is the employment of students to handle pieces of the journal review and publishing process. Students graduate taking their knowledge of the software with them. So if a journal is relying heavily on students, especially for things like managing the online system, they can up in a bind when those students graduate.

Another challenge is when a journal manager leaves your institution and then goes somewhere else, or if many or all of the journal staff are based at other institutions. Sometimes questions come up that could be answered in fifteen minutes via a face-to-face meeting, but can take hours or days through email or phone conversations.

Craft reported that they sometimes have requests from journal managers that her team is not able to fill. Sometimes they can't fill a request because a change for one journal would affect all of them. OJS is a hosted system so individual customizations are limited. Other requests they can't

fill is because the functionality doesn't exist in the system. An example of this is support for displaying special characters used in mathematics and statistics.

Lessons Learned

Craft continued with information about what lessons the UNCG University Libraries has learned. The first is the even though the system is free, it still has costs related to time and computer server and programing expertise.   A sustainability plan is important and when setting up new journals be a part of the conversation with the journal manager. UNCG University Libraries now requires that each journal have at least one on-campus contact.   If the primary journal manager was at UNCG when the journal started, then leaves, they must designate another person at UNCG to be the on-campus contact. Craft also stated that she is trying to be proactive in educating journal managers before they can on the task of creating a journal about all that is involved and needed for the journal to be successful.

Value to the library

Craft concluded her presentation with information about how providing the OJS service is important the UNCG Libraries. First is that providing this service has helped strengthen relationships between the Libraries, faculty and scholarly communities.   There was a need for this service on campus that now is being provided. Providing OJS helps facilitate content creation on our campus.   The UNCG University Libraries is committed to promoting the Open Access movement and this service helps us continue our education and support.

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