



ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES



Association of College
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A Division of the American Library Association

Institute on Scholarly Communication

EXAMPLE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN FROM A MID-SIZE REGIONAL PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Background

Midsized U, a public institution, focuses on providing a liberal education for its students and has faculty engaged in all areas of scholarship and research. Currently 48% of the 692 tenure track faculty members are not tenured. MIDSIZED U is primarily an undergraduate institution with a current FTE of 18,715. There are 3,063 FTE graduate students. The main campus is in a lovely town in the state and branch campuses are located in two nearby cities. There is also an extensive off campus program. Midsized U was chartered by the legislature in 1960 to meet the needs of students in [the state's] second largest metropolitan area. Student enrollment has doubled since 1990. The university currently draws students from around the state and throughout the region.

The university's mission is "Educating students to shape their lives, their professions, and their societies. The university contributes to the enrichment of society through excellent teaching, active scholarship, and public service." The values of MIDSIZED U include effective teaching, liberal education, scholarship, diversity and community, and service. The desire to create competent professionals co-exists with the belief that a broad education rooted in the arts and sciences provides students with the general knowledge and skills necessary to participate intelligently in public discourse.

The University Libraries hold more than 664,000 print volumes. Our largest area of growth is in electronic collections and we currently have access to over 33,000 e-journals. Additionally, we have over 200 databases, paid and free. Special Collections include a famous person's Collections. Holdings include collections on the Civil War, Regional History Collections, our state in the Novel, as well as many other areas.

Institutional Environment

Because MIDSIZED U has a primary mission of undergraduate education, faculty members are moderately aware of issues/problems with publishing, copyright, etc. Individual departments place different priorities on publishing, thus, faculty knowledge likely depends on the discipline and on experience in the field. Junior faculty appear to be more eager to publish scholarly works and seem to have greater familiarity with publishing in journals. This may reflect greater emphasis on publication during graduate school/postdoctoral work. In some departments, junior faculty are now being encouraged to publish more than faculty hired 15 years ago. The combination of a significant number of junior/untentured faculty that are more eager to publish and are encouraged by senior faculty to work toward publication may signal a general change in the culture of MIDSIZED U.

During the winter semester the library began receiving calls and inquiries about open access journals and publishing. Many of the faculty members who are inquiring are either involved in creating projects or are serving on committees in their scholarly societies.

There is some awareness about copyright compliance, due in part to the efforts of our course reserve staff. Faculty who use the electronic reserve system or traditional course reserve receive information each semester. We are not certain that faculty understand their rights to retain copyright for their own work, however, nor their ability to modify agreements from publishers, either journal or monograph. For example, at a writing retreat attended by approximately 20 faculty, only three expressed concern about whether they or the publisher held copyright to their published work. This is probably indicative of the campus as a whole.

Discussion about institutional repositories is just beginning on the campus. Faculty and staff interest is building in the concept. A small group of librarians and IT staff have been meeting to sort out the issues and complexities of IR's and are gaining a greater understanding through reading, investigating other schools efforts and discussion. Also, conversation has been taking place with small groups of faculty and individual faculty members about the concept and need of institutional repositories (which really need a friendlier name). For example, our Health Sciences faculty are talking about the need for an IR, but they aren't using that term, and, most are not aware of the IR movement. Health Sciences needs better ways to preserve graduate student projects, protocols and theses. And, since some have already created faculty publications pages, they must see a need for a place to showcase their articles and conference presentations.

Overall, however, faculty members are generally unfamiliar with the scope and purpose of institutional repositories. The initial faculty response has included questions regarding the types of information that would be deposited, purpose of the repository, cross-referencing, access, copyright, quality control, and who will screen submissions.

Preparedness

Our library staff has been reading about, and attending workshops on, IR and OA, and seems energized about this potential new direction for the library. Committee members are investigating metadata, preservation, software options, and how faculty liaisons can help populate an IR.

Discussions on the overall issues of Scholarly Communications have been led by our Dean while the rest of the library gets up to speed. There are varying levels of knowledge and comfort with discussing scholarly communication issues, depending on the librarian's liaison duties, background and role in the library.

Outreach Efforts

During the past year the Library Dean, along with the Collection Development Librarian or a liaison, has been visiting departments on campus to discuss library issues. The conversations generally involve scholarly communication and, in particular, issues regarding open access. During the winter semester the Collection Development Librarian identified and began to host meetings with small groups of

faculty to discuss their knowledge and perceptions about scholarly communications, institutional repositories, etc. The Dean and Collection Development Librarian also visited with a new task force that is charged with developing a Center for Scholarly and Creative Excellence to discuss their visions and hopes. There have been informal discussions with faculty members by the team members who will attend the Institute as well as well as by a small group of librarians who have been identified to investigate the Institutional Repository.

Investment

The libraries have made significant investments into electronic resources, including e-books, e-journals and databases. Last summer a new model for collection development was introduced that focuses on collecting electronic resources which can reach all our users, no matter which campus or distance location they are taking classes at or where they live. This policy extends some of the thinking that had begun and is being fleshed out in collection development policies. The priority is on electronic resources of all kinds – journals, books, digital projects, and websites. There is also an evaluation component that has been introduced to assure we are adding quality materials and those which exhibit good stewardship of resources.

In addition to investing in resources, the libraries are investing in training for library faculty and staff. Both faculty and staff have been attending conferences and workshops to add to their existing knowledge and to learn about new developments and trends. The efforts are being supported beyond the library as well. Costs for the Institute will be underwritten by the Library, the Faculty Teaching & Learning Center and Research & Development.