Celebrating International Open Access Week the COPPUL Scholarly Communication Task Group Way

Michael Hohner
University of Winnipeg
m.hohner@uwinnipeg.ca

Leah Vanderjagt
University of Alberta
leah.vanderjagt@ualberta.ca

Joy Kirchner
University of British Columbia
joy.kirchner@ubc.ca

The Council of Prairie and Pacific University Libraries (COPPUL) is a consortium of 22 university libraries located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia [1]. At a meeting of COPPUL Directors in March 2011, COPPUL agreed to establish a task group on scholarly communication. The group's initial charge was to determine whether there is a role for COPPUL in scholarly communications and open access work. The initial opportunity to explore this role arose with the impending occasion of International Open Access Week 2011. Member libraries were to explore collaborations for activities for an Open Access Day or Open Access Week at member campuses and share webcasts of speakers as learning resources for COPPUL member libraries. Additional issues of focus, including the rights of authors and licensing language, were also articulated as general direction for activity focus from the COPPUL directors.

The inaugural members of the COPPUL Scholarly Communication Task Group include Michael Hohner (University of Winnipeg), Inba Kehoe (University of Victoria), Joy Kirchner (University of British Columbia, Task Group Chair), Carol Shepstone (Mount Royal University), Marinus Swanepoel (University of Lethbridge), Leah Vanderjagt (University of Alberta), Andrew Waller (University of Calgary). The members of the COPPUL Scholarly Communication Task Group embarked on plans to independently and collaboratively celebrate International Open Access Week [2] October 24-30, 2011.

The organization of our celebration was the closest to an unconference that many of us had experienced. An unconference is a participant-driven meeting without a structured agenda, similar to conference 'birds of a feather' sessions that may be familiar to those who attend Access conferences. The term "unconference" has been applied to a wide range of gatherings that try to avoid one or more aspects of a conventional conference, such as high fees, sponsored presentations, and top-down organization [3].

In the spirit of open access, our Task Group attempted to make our Open Access Week events available as freely and as widely as possible. Each member library organized events locally at our respective institutions, but we also worked together to share content that would educate audiences and generate interest in open access at our institutions.

We compiled a list of previously archived OA talks from COPPUL libraries [4]. The COPPUL Directors also agreed to sponsor two live webcasts that would serve as keynote presentations for our celebration. With luck and effort, the Task Group was able to recruit two renowned speakers for a local live and webcasted Open Access event. The 2011 Public LOCKSS Network (PLN) Community Meeting was held in Vancouver [5] following Access 2011, and Dr. David Rosenthal, Chief Scientist, LOCKSS Program, Stanford University, spoke about problems we should really look to Open Access to try to fix. We were also fortunate to recruit Reilly Yeo, Managing Director of OpenMedia.ca, to hear her reflect with insight and passion on the openness of the Internet.

With keynote speakers arranged and with many archived talks from previous Open Access (OA) themed events at many of our institutions, we proceeded to develop our own Open Access celebrations at our respective institutions as fitting and appropriate, with some consideration given to broader educational benefit for collectively developed content. Kudos are extended to Andrew Waller, who was quite busy speaking at the University of Lethbridge for an OA talk and then joining a panel session at Mount Royal University on OA, in addition to organizing and participating in events locally at the University of Calgary.

As we announced our keynote speakers, archived OA talks and other events that could be shared from our institutions, we were also notified of Open Access Week events occurring at other COPPUL institutions that did not originate from the Task Group. Most notable were the series of webcasted daily OA talks from Athabasca University. The University of Regina also had a session in recognition of OA week that they had organized with CARL.

Through this collaborative approach, we were able to generate and aggregate multimedia content about OA quickly without the constraints associated with the proceeding publishing process associated with formally organized conferences. Overall, the unconventional, 'unconference' approach we took draws some fitting parallels with the broader theme of open access and alternative scholarly communication models, where new room is created for experimentation and flexibility in distribution of intellectual content. As Heather Morrison has recognized [6], the open access movement has had much success in a short time and continues to grow at a rapidly evolving pace. Like the open access movement, COPPUL Scholarly Communications Open Access Week celebration benefited from being organized differently than a traditional conference: this planning experience taught us yet again that opportunities are everywhere for

new models of collaborative work and experimentation in a new era of knowledge exchange.

References

[1] http://www.coppul.ca/

[2] http://www.openaccessweek.org/

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unconference

[4] http://guides.library.ualberta.ca/coppul_oa_lectures

[5] http://www.educopia.org/events

[6] http://poeticeconomics.blogspot.com/2011/09/dramatic-growth-of-open-access.html