Engrossed, Enraged, Engaged: Empowering Faculty in Transforming Scholarly Communication

Jen Waller
Miami University, jenwaller@miamioh.edu

Jennifer W. Bazeley
Miami University, bazelejw@miamioh.edu

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Jen Waller, Interdisciplinary Librarian, Collections & Research Services; Miami University Libraries
Jennifer W. Bazeley, Interim Head, Technical Services; Miami University Libraries

Abstract

Librarians are deeply invested in the scholarly publishing lifecycle. This investment, in tandem with an evolving scholarly communication system, has encouraged librarians to become advocates for transformation in this landscape. At the same time, some faculty members have been slower to understand the complexities of the current system and its evolution. At Miami University, traditional communication methods weren't sufficient to meaningfully engage faculty in these evolving trends. As a response, several librarians designed and cofacilitated two Scholarly Communication Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) for two academic years. These FLCs have been the most successful method of increasing faculty understanding about scholarly communication and academic publishing issues.

The FLCs brought together university community members comprised of faculty, staff, and graduate students interested in learning more about scholarly communication. Each group spent two semesters doing readings, attending panel presentations, and meeting for seminar-style discussions about current issues and trends in scholarly publishing. Over the course of the year, FLC members became more aware of the nuances in the lifecycle of scholarly publication and learned which scholarly communication issues affected them most. As a result, the cofacilitators saw a rapidly growing understanding about problems inherent in the current system of scholarly publishing, a substantial increase in faculty discussions on scholarly communication, and greater faculty-led advocacy for open access publishing. Additionally, community members appreciated the cross-disciplinary nature of the FLC, which afforded them the opportunity to escape traditional disciplinary silos. This article will discuss how the facilitators used the learning community format to successfully change faculty behavior about issues in scholarly communication and how these experiences altered librarian perceptions and improved interactions with faculty.

Background

About Miami University

Miami University, established in 1809, is a public university with a main campus in Oxford, Ohio (approximately 35 miles northwest of Cincinnati, OH) and four nearby regional campuses. In 2013, the university had a total undergraduate enrollment of approximately 21,000 students and a total graduate enrollment of 2,260 students. The University is residential and focuses primarily on undergraduate liberal education, offering bachelor's degrees in over 100 areas, master's degrees in more than 60 areas, and 12 doctoral degrees. Faculty positions are primarily tenure-track, but adjunct positions and clinical/lecturer positions have been rising in number in recent years.

The Challenge and Previous Efforts

Miami University has a large and active body of faculty members who perform research and publish regularly, yet the University community has been slow to recognize the changes occurring in the scholarly communication landscape.

In 2009, the former Dean and University Librarian formed a Scholarly Communication Working Group charged with supporting the formation and maintenance of the library's new institutional repository (called the Scholarly Commons) as well as to educate librarians, faculty, and the University community at large on current issues in scholarly communication. Members of the working group initially prepared presentations on open access, scholarly communication, and journal costs to present to individual departments on campus. Faculty were clearly interested in the

issues at hand, yet the presentations had the unfortunate effect of generating hostility about subscription costs and open access rather than starting a dialogue among concerned stakeholders. An open access mandate was drafted and presented to the Council of Academic Deans (COAD) in 2010 but was not widely understood or accepted, and ultimately not implemented. Additionally, the working group created a LibGuide about open access and copyright, but it was not widely utilized by faculty or students. Some of the group's most successful efforts consisted of offering copyright seminars for faculty, increasing faculty participation in the institutional repository, and establishing a stronger scholarly communication presence on campus through social media and the celebration of Open Access Week.

While these successes helped to overcome some faculty skepticism, the group struggled with a way to educate researchers on campus in a focused and deliberate manner. At the end of 2011, the group discussed the idea of using a Faculty Learning Community (FLC) to educate a finite group of University community members on issues in scholarly communication. The FLC was an appealing idea for several reasons. The University community has a high participation rate in FLCs, because they are important additions to tenure-seeking faculty resumes, and because FLCs offer each participating member a $500 stipend to be used for educational materials or professional development. While some FLCs are restricted to faculty-only membership, the Scholarly Communication Working Group felt it would be more beneficial to open FLC applications to full- and part-time faculty, as well as administrative staff, librarians, and graduate students. This was done because scholarly communication issues affect many points in the research lifecycle, so the facilitators wanted to allow an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to apply. With support from the library administration, three librarians volunteered as potential cofacilitators for the FLC, and moved forward in preparing a description and proposal for an FLC on scholarly communication for the 2012–2013 school year. In February 2012, the FLC proposal was accepted and a call for applications went out in March.

What Is an FLC?

A faculty learning community (FLC) is a community of interdisciplinary faculty, graduate students, and professional staff, comprised of 6–15 members, who engage in an active, collaborative, year-long program. Each FLC chooses a special topic that is relevant to some aspect of teaching and learning, and holds regular meetings and activities that provide opportunities to learn about and develop that topic. Participants in an FLC may select an individual or group project to identify innovations or assess student learning. Participants are also encouraged to present the results of their work to the university as well as at national and regional conferences.

At Miami University, FLCs are sponsored by the University's Center for Learning, Teaching, and University Assessment (CELTUA). CELTUA supports long-term and short-term FLCs, workshops, and seminars. They also offer grants and awards to support innovative teaching and help the university's programs in assessing their educational effectiveness. CELTUA organizes and hosts the annual Lilly Conference on College Teaching and also publishes several journals on teaching and learning.

Prior to the FLC on scholarly communication, the library hosted an FLC on information literacy from 2004 through 2012. In 2012, the Information Literacy FLC facilitator chose to retire the FLC after eight successful years. He agreed to assist in the creation of the Scholarly Communication FLC, taking responsibility during the first year for administrative duties and liaising with CELTUA.

This freed the two other facilitators to focus on content and projects, both of which are crucial to the success of a first-year FLC.

Creating an FLC

The process for preparing for and creating an FLC took approximately nine months:

- January: began prepping description/proposal.

- February (end): FLC proposal accepted by CELTUA.

- March: call for applications sent out.

- Mid-April: deadline for application submission.

- May: decisions on applicants made and invitations distributed.

- September: first FLC meeting.

Typical Application Questions

- Why do you wish to participate in this community?

- Please indicate areas in which you can contribute to the work of the community.

- How do issues of scholarly communication and open access to research apply to your academic focus/discipline?

- How do you believe that participation in this FLC will motivate you to educate your colleagues and/or students regarding communication and open access issues?

- Are you a member of a scholarly society? If so, which one and what is your involvement?

- Are you an editor of a scholarly journal? If so, which one?

Choosing Members

For both years, the Scholarly Communication FLC received between 12 and 16 applications from faculty (both full and part time, as well as faculty from both the main and regional campuses), administrative staff, librarians, and graduate students. Criteria for selection were based on answers to application questions and research interests. The facilitators looked for applicants who demonstrated genuine interest in objectives of FLC in relation to their role in the Miami University community. It was clear after the first year that some faculty applied to numerous FLCs using the same answers to the general questions, and so facilitators ranked thoughtful answers very highly. There was also a desire for equitable distribution across subject areas, since scholarly communication issues are significantly different for STEM researchers than for humanities scholars.

Original Objectives and Activities of the FLC

Original goals for the FLC were lofty:

- Raising awareness and increasing the intellectual depth and curiosity among faculty, staff, and students across disciplines regarding the changing state of scholarly communication.

- Strengthening student understanding of scholarly communication and research as part of Miami's emphasis on active, student-centered engagement.

- Exploring the impacts of digital technology on scholarly communication issues in a reflective manner.

- Generating interest among faculty on scholarly communication issues so that students engaging intensely with faculty on research will benefit from knowledge of these issues.

- Developing methods of integrating education regarding open access to scientific research and data into existing curricula.

- Developing knowledge among faculty working on federal grant proposals (e.g., NSF, NIH) regarding digital preservation and its role in their research.

Planned activities included:

- Seminar-style meetings five to six times per semester for approximately 1.5 hours.

- Panel presentation during Open Access Week (October).

- Conferences: FLC members to attend and potentially present at Lilly Conference in Oxford (November) and two to three members to attend and potentially present at the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) Open Access Meeting (March).

- CELTUA seminar: FLC members to plan and present a CELTUA workshop on a scholarly communication topic of interest to the Miami community.

FLC Programming and Meetings

The cofacilitators had a general sense of what they wanted to cover throughout the year and at each meeting. Even so, it was important for the cofacilitators to meet prior to each FLC meeting to plan and finalize the agenda and to choose readings for the group. During the first year, the facilitators assigned and posted readings one week prior to each meeting. Based on evaluations from the first year FLC, the facilitators began posting readings two weeks prior to meetings during the second year FLC.

Meeting Topics

Open access and the issues surrounding open access were extremely important topics throughout both years' FLCs; however, scholarly communication encompasses more than just open access. The groups spent time during the first FLC meetings discussing "What is Scholarly Communication?" to set the stage and to gather input from participants in the different disciplines represented. From there, FLC meeting topics included:

- Open Access.
- Data, Data Sharing, and Open Data.
- Open Peer Review.
- Predatory Publishers and Vanity Presses.
- Economics of Publishing and Funding Models.
- Institutional Repositories.
- Altmetrics.
- Author Rights.
- Creative Commons.
- Copyright.
- OER.
- Misconceptions about Open Access.
- Open Access Week Special Programming.

Engrossed

The cofacilitators chose three descriptive words for the title of this presentation—engrossed,

enraged, and engaged. Most meeting topics were successful, but some particularly stood out because of the effect they had on participants. FLC participants were particularly engrossed in the following topics and/or materials:

PhD Comics Video

Released in October 2012 during Open Access Week, Nick Shockey, Jonathan Eisen, and PhD Comics created an eight-minute video, "Open Access Explained!" The combination of the video's anecdotal style and its narration by a scientist makes it understandable but still authoritative. The facilitators didn't show this video when it was first released. Instead, they waited until it better fit into the FLC programming. Surprisingly, this video was one of the most successful tools at getting FLC members to relate to the problems with toll journals and the traditional publishing system, and FLC members highly recommended showing it earlier in the year. The video is freely available on YouTube, and the facilitators have one caveat: the video spends nearly no time on institutional repositories.

Journal Costs

Another successful meeting topic focused on journal costs and how libraries purchase subscriptions. For this meeting the facilitators created a homework assignment where members were asked to select three journals in their field and find the institutional subscription cost for each one. One of the facilitators is an expert in this area, as it is a substantial part of her job. She created a slide presentation outlining the subscription prices for each of the member-selected journals. She took consortia (OhioLINK) pricing and big deals into account and then provided revenue and profit charts for several major publishers. FLC participants were shocked and found the system extremely interesting. Until then they had been completely unaware of how librarians purchased journal subscriptions. Getting a glimpse into the system was eye opening and provided a call to action. Participants were eager to learn how traditional publishers spend their profits. Were they rolled back into the system? Were they used to gild publishers' executive offices? The content shared at this meeting crystallized participants' understanding of the

publishing system, including how academics provide free labor to publishers who then lease it back to academic institutions. Prior to this meeting the FLC participants had not thought about the system in this way. This also led to a discussion about the importance of transparency and that faculty members do care about the cost of library resources.

Author Rights/Copyright

The meeting that covered author rights allowed the facilitators to discuss copyright in a way that was highly relevant to faculty. The facilitators modified an exercise from the ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit and asked each FLC member to bring in a publishing contract that they had signed. The members then broke into groups and examined their contracts for language that allowed them to retain their rights or required them to give away their rights. The facilitators also provided contracts from three publishers whose agreements ranged from very closed to very open. This exercise was eye opening for FLC members, because most of them had never bothered to read their publishing contracts. This topic also provided the facilitators with an easy way to introduce Miami's institutional repository, the Scholarly Commons. Later in the year, one member of the FLC shared an email exchange with the rest of the group in which she had used the techniques and language in this exercise to negotiate her rights with a publisher.

Open Peer Review

The topic of open peer review surprised the facilitators, because they hadn't anticipated that it leading to such a thoughtful and thought-provoking discussion. This was the first time many FLC members had heard about open peer review or had critically thought about the review process. In the past the review process was simply something they did or something that was done to them. The discussion of open peer review then led to a deeper dialog about privilege in the academy.

Enraged

The facilitators, perhaps naively, did not expect any of the FLC meeting topics to be contentious,

so they were surprised to get initial pushback from some of the FLC members about their views on open access. Many faculty members weren't used to thinking about a system in which they had been entrenched, so initial discussions were sometimes met with doubt or skepticism. Additionally, some members of the FLC had misconceptions, which were generally easier to handle.

However, during the second iteration of the FLC one member in particular remained skeptical throughout the entire year. Worse, she became defensive and disruptive to the community by alternately trying to "win people" to her side and then distancing herself from the group, both physically and intellectually. This FLC member's stance remains confusing to the facilitators. The faculty member is on the editorial board for two open access journals, yet she frequently protested that she was anti-open access. She was concerned about her work being broadly distributed for fear it would be misrepresented or fall into the "wrong hands." This member's attitude made community building in the second FLC very challenging.

During the second semester of the second FLC, the facilitators experienced another challenge (although they would not necessarily characterize it as "enraged"). Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules among the FLC members there was no single time when the entire membership was available to meet. Instead of having meetings at a consistent day and time, the facilitators had to alternate meeting days. This meant that that for the second semester, the entire FLC membership was never together at the same meeting. This, in addition to the hostile faculty member, inhibited the community building that is a necessary part of most FLCs.

Engaged

In both years there were topics and meetings that the facilitators deemed beyond successful. These were meetings where members truly participated and engaged with the materials or process over and above the discussions. During these meetings members became actively involved, which was extremely gratifying to all. Some of the situations where members were more engaged included:

Member-Facilitated Discussions

As discussed above, one of the challenges during the second FLC was one faculty member's defensiveness and hostility. In addition to the above discussion, this member seemingly did not respect librarians or the facilitators' knowledge of scholarly communication issues. As a response, the facilitators changed their meeting strategy for the second semester. They asked FLC participants to pair up, choose from a list of topics (see "Meeting Topics" above), and select the date they would be responsible for leading the meeting. The facilitators provided each group with "seed readings," but the choice of what to read and how to run each meeting was left to the individual groups. This strategy, chosen as a response to a disruptive group member, actually ended up working better for everyone. FLC members made connections with a peer from outside their discipline, and the end-of-year evaluations specifically praised this format. The facilitators gave up some control in exchange for higher quality discussions that arose from an angle that made sense to the faculty presenters.

Learning Management System (LMS)

Many people don't think of a LMS as a place for engagement, but the LMS used for the Scholarly Communication FLCs worked well. Miami's LMS is called niihka ("friend" in the Myaamia language), and it is an instance of Sakai. For both years the facilitators added participants to niihka, organized meetings, made announcements, posted readings, and used the LMS as an email tool. This kept the content both organized and in one place. It allowed the facilitators to keep the two FLCs separate yet address them jointly when necessary. Additionally, it gave both FLC cohorts the ability to access all the material. During the second year of the FLC the facilitators added a Twitter feed to the FLC's front page, which enabled members to get a feel for Twitter and see its value. Finally, niihka contains an area for discussion forums, and the facilitators were gratified to learn that several FLC members were interested in using the forums to continue discussions and/or ask additional questions.

Panel on Data, Data Sharing, and Open Data

During the first year of the FLC the facilitators organized a panel discussion on data, data sharing, and open data. One panelist, a member of the FLC, was responsible for providing computing resources to support faculty research. He was eager to participate on the panel, because he had unique insights into the types of data that needed to be supported across the University. The two other panelists included a computational biologist and the Head of the Libraries Center for Digital Scholarship. These other two panelists became very interested in joining the FLC once they participated on this panel, and one of them is a member of the authors' current FLC on OER.

Getting Your Work "Out There"

Readings, discussion, and demonstration of altmetrics and alternative ways to distribute research involved an opportune coincidence with one of the FLC members. About a month before the "getting your work out there" discussion, the FLC member had published research that was then picked up by a major publisher's blog. She was asked to write a blog post, and in the process the publisher asked for her Twitter handle. This faculty member had never used Twitter, but she set up an account, because the publisher "made it seem like I had to." Unsurprisingly to some of us, this faculty member ended up getting tremendous value from Twitter. She began to get requests to weigh in on other research articles, and the Miami University Communication Department added her to their "list of experts." All of this increased her reach, and she was able to facilitate a discussion about impact and sharing through nontraditional channels from first hand experience.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

Several months into the fall semester the cofacilitators realized that accomplishing all of the original goals in a single academic year was unrealistic. Some FLC members did attend the Lilly Conference, but the full FLC group did not have enough time to prepare a presentation for that conference. The goal of presenting a workshop was also postponed—the group's learning curve was different than expected.

Successes

As discussed above, many FLC meetings were successful. However successes went deeper than individual meetings. Some of the more successful outcomes included:

Open Access Week Panel Discussion—"Publish Don't Perish" (October 2013):

> This panel included four FLC members from the 2012–2013 FLC as well as one moderator. The panel discussion attracted a significant audience and resulted in an interesting and quality Q&A period afterwards.

Scholarly Communication Website:

> The final project for the 2012–2013 FLC was to develop the structure and content for a dynamic website on scholarly communication issues, tailored specifically to faculty and graduate students. This was accomplished through a series of multivoting exercises, discussions, and card-sorting activities. Members of the library's Scholarly Communication Committee were responsible for implementation of the site. Due to time constraints, creation and implementation of the website was pushed to spring 2015.

Faculty Behaviors Change:

> There were several very gratifying faculty behavior changes in both years of the FLC. One faculty member who was originally skeptical about open access ended up publishing articles in two different open access journals, both of which required article-processing charges that he paid for with grant funding. A second faculty member is currently working on the creation of an open access history of mathematics journal (hosted by the library), to be managed by his students in a particular course. The intention is to teach undergraduates about the lifecycle of research and scholarship by immersing them in peer review and editing.

Social Media Tools:

> Several members from year two worked together to create a comparison chart of academic social media-type tools that they felt were useful to academics and early career researchers. The chart compared features of each tool, pros and cons, and possible uses.

Breaking Down Silos

The primary takeaway for cofacilitators was in learning to identify and break down silos, and the diverse community demographics helped accomplish this:

- Status: Having graduate students in the FLC forced faculty and cofacilitators to think about publishing and scholarly communication from a different perspective and look forward at the next generation of researchers and teachers.

- Discipline: The interdisciplinarity of the community helped to engage members more completely and to identify more issues.

- Time at Miami University: Newer faculty and graduate students were the most willing to discuss issues and potential changes. These faculty and students spurred conversations with the less flexible or more skeptical faculty.

Awareness of Roles

Facilitators must be aware of members experience (or lack thereof) with different parts of the scholarly communication lifecycle. It's important not to overestimate faculty awareness of institutional subscription costs, journal economics, or the scholarly research lifecycle. As librarians, we are asking faculty to advocate for change in a system that they know only as authors, editors, and reviewers.

Topics and Programming

What librarians think are the most interesting discussion topics are not always the same as what group members find most interesting (e.g., the PhD comics video). Flexibility in topics and programming became immensely important.

While it is helpful to select topics in advance, it's also imperative to accommodate requests from members who want to discuss other topics. This keeps members of the group fully engaged and increases participation.

Anecdotal Experiences

There were several instances of group members sharing stories from different perspectives (especially experiences with predatory publishers and attempts at negotiating author's rights). These shared experiences fostered a tremendous amount of collegiality and "me, too!" conversations.

Assumptions about Community Formation

The final, and possibly most important, lesson is not to make assumptions about the community formation. The same tactics and community forming norms do not apply to every group. The second year of this FLC had a much harder time forming a community than the first year did.

DIY FLC

The authors recognize that not every college or university has a Faculty Learning Community program in place, but they also believe that this shouldn't limit others from trying to establish their own FLC or employing similar strategies. If readers wish to create an FLC at their institution, here are things they may wish to consider:

Funding and Funding Partners

As stated above, Miami's Center for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching, and University Assessment (CELTUA) and the Miami University Libraries shared the cost of the FLC. By far, the biggest cost was for professional development funds for FLC participants. Each FLC participant received $500, and it was required that the funds be spent on items such as conference registration or travel, a piece of technology that enhanced their job, or some other tangible expense related to their professional development. This meant that approximately $7000 per year was budgeted for the FLC for participant professional development funds. It is probably not necessary to provide a $500 stipend,

but funding helps attract faculty members and lets them know their participation has value.

The second largest budgeted expense was for food, which is hospitable but also not critical. When FLC meetings fell during the breakfast or lunch time block, the facilitators felt it was necessary to provide a light meal. However, many of the FLC meetings fell during mid-morning or mid-afternoon when light snacks were more than adequate. For some meetings the University's catering service was used, but this service was also more expensive. More frequently the facilitators purchased fruit, bottled water, and other snacks at the local grocery store.

All of the FLC meetings took place in the library—mostly in the Center for Digital Scholarship. Therefore, no funding was directed to space in which to hold FC meetings.

As mentioned above, Miami University's CELTUA provides the administrative support and structure for FLCs. Other academic institutions may have similar offices that could also provide funding and other means of support, although they most definitely are known under a different name. The facilitators found units at other academic institutions with names such as the "Center for Teaching and Learning," "Faculty Professional Development Center," "Center for the Advancement of Teaching," and the "Center for Teaching Innovation and Excellence." Those interested in establishing a FLC at their own institutions may also look for support from the Scholarly Communication Office, the Provost's Office, the Research and Grants Office, or from grants themselves. In short, while this particular FLC received significant funding, the facilitators do not believe lack of funding should prevent others from forming a FLC on their own campus.

Marketing, Promotion, and Communication

CELTUA also provides support for Miami's FLCs by announcing calls for proposals and soliciting member applications through the CELTUA website and listserv. CELTUA's structure and timing is well known across Miami, and there are FLC applicants and participants every year. Yet the Scholarly Communication FLCs still required advertising and

promotion on the part of the facilitators. For both years, the facilitators developed an email for liaison librarians to send to their faculty members and departments, and it was important for liaisons to be involved in FLC recruitment and—more importantly—be aware of FLC participants from departments they represent. Additionally, the facilitators developed a "pitch list," which consisted of names and email addresses of faculty who had already shown an interest in open access and scholarly communication issues. These faculty names were culled from email questions about copyright, author rights, and data management plans and from faculty who had already uploaded work to the institutional repository. After the pitch list was developed, the facilitators sent individual, targeted emails to every individual on the list (approximately 250 people). These emails generated a great deal of interest among faculty, many of whom applied or asked questions. In any case, it is unrealistic to expect that faculty will come running to apply once you've established your own FLC. Consider recruitment, and plan to spend time and energy recruiting members.

Scheduling and Meetings

Determining a schedule among 12–16 busy faculty members proved to be challenging, so to the extent possible, it is critical to establish a schedule as far in advance as possible. For both years of the FLC, the facilitators scheduled 5–6 meetings per semester, and each meeting lasted between one and one and a half hours. The facilitators began by looking at the course list and time blocks for each accepted participant. This bit of preplanning narrowed down the options, and sometimes a mutually available time block simply emerged. When more than one day/time was available, facilitators distributed a Doodle poll to determine time preferences.

Meetings primarily took place in the Libraries' Center for Digital Scholarship, which was a newly constructed space first available in the spring of the first FLC iteration. Holding meetings in this new space provided a good way to showcase and promote the services of the Center and its staff. Wherever meetings are held, it is important that the furniture and room configuration be flexible enough to accommodate different programming and formats for each meeting. In this way, the room could be set up to assist in forming groups, viewing a web seminar, having a discussion, presenting a panel discussion, and other programs. Of course, the rooms were wired for Internet access, both via ethernet and wireless, and included monitors and screens for viewing content as well as whiteboards for noting "on the fly" ideas.

Conclusion

Reaching approximately 30 people over the course of two years may not sound like a significant impact. However, those 30 people are involved in faculty meetings, attend promotion and tenure meetings, and talk to their colleagues every day. In this way, information about scholarly communication spread naturally and organically among faculty in many different disciplines as opposed to being broadcast by librarians or a "top down" approach. The FLC facilitators have seen the impact these two Scholarly Communication FLCs have made on the Miami University campus, and—in fact—the FLCs have proved to be the most successful way of reaching the Miami community regarding open access and scholarly communication issues.