CNI Executive Roundtable Report:

Institutional Strategies & Platforms
for Scholarly Publishing
December 10, 2012

Background

Traditionally, to the extent that higher educational institutions had *institutional* strategies for scholarly publishing, they were almost universally limited to support of a university press, perhaps supplemented by some uncoordinated department or school level technical report or working paper series. Faculty, of course, were and are involved in a very wide range of scholarly publishing and communication activities, but our interest in this roundtable was in institutional level efforts – how and where within institutions were strategies being determined, how were they being funded, and how were they being implemented. Scholarly publishing in the digital world involves a potentially much broader range of materials than those historically handled by university presses, and permits a much more nuanced and varying set of scholarly communication activities than those offered by the presses (for example, the dissemination of material without formal peer review, but possibly with facilities for post-publication comment). These activities involve both new units of the institution, especially libraries, taking on new roles and forming new collaborations with both individual faculty members and departments or schools, and the use of new platforms to provide a means for economical and innovative modes of publication and distribution.

While many institutions are working independently, we are also seeing the launch of a number of multi-institutional collaborative efforts to develop and use common technology platforms and/or dissemination channels. Anvil Academic is one interesting development here; another is the Library Publishing Coalition.

In addition, commercial players such as Apple, Amazon and YouTube (Google) are providing new avenues both for direct self-publishing by faculty members (in many formats: audio casts, e-books, videos), or for institutional dissemination of faculty scholarship. In the latter case, there are relationships that may need management at the institutional level.

University presses as a system have been in crisis for a number of years, though a few large (often quasi-commercial) university presses continue to thrive. The market for scholarly monographs in the humanities has shrunk, creating financial problems at many presses. University subsidies for presses have been cut back in many institutions. Some university presses were slow to embrace new technologies, while others, who wished to move forward, found they did not have existing staff with requisite skills or the

budget to purchase needed equipment or software. In what seems to be a steadily growing number of institutions, the press has been moved under the administration of the library. Many justifications have been given for this by one institution or another, including: greater combined expertise in managing scholarly publication within the new structure; hopes for cost control and improved technology access by allowing the press to share library technology infrastructure and expertise; the desire to link the press more tightly to the academic priorities and values of the host institution. One result of this is that we are seeing some institutions now trying to explicitly coordinate the work of the university press (now newly and more closely aligned with the institution and its faculty) with other activities carried out by library units or other groups.

Some libraries, often at the request of faculty who were editors of journals or who authored content in new formats, began to take on publishing roles independent of any press that might exist at the institution. Libraries are also playing a greater role in publishing special collections and critical editions.

A discussion on this dynamic and evolving landscape took place at the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) Executive Roundtable in Washington, DC on the morning of December 10, 2012. Representatives from 13 higher education institutions described their experiences, concerns, strategies, and future plans.

Institutional Perspectives
Some key perspectives from institutional participants included these observations:

- *Many* academic libraries represented are hosting e-journals (most commonly through the Open Journal Systems [OJS] platform), and some have been doing so for over a decade. Among the participants, the number of journals hosted by libraries was generally in the range of 10-20 titles. Note that hosting here can come in two different forms: simply hosting the journal material for public access, or hosting an entire journal management system such as OJS that also handles the submission, review and editorial environment for producing the journal. This activity is much more widespread than we think many people recognize. A significant number of institutions are also offering platform services for electronic conference proceedings (again, ranging from just proceedings access to services for the complete running of the conference and editorial production of the proceedings).

- Overall, many libraries had developed publishing or hosting roles in response to specific faculty requests on a relatively *ad hoc* basis; they are now trying to develop cohesive strategies to address a variety of needs and to scale up. In some cases, conversations started with faculty editors who wanted to work with the library on digitizing back files of the journal they edited, and then store the content in the institutional repository. In other instances, editors of small circulation print journals were seeking technology support from the library to create a digital edition of their journal, or faculty wanted to launch a new journal (often open access) in digital-only form.

- It was becoming increasingly clear that there are a series of concerns involved in running a viable digital journal that go beyond the simple hosting and editorial processes, and that faculty are looking to libraries for both leadership and help with such services, including digital preservation strategies (ensuring coverage in services like Portico or LOCKSS), inclusion in abstracting and indexing services, marketing, optimization for indexing by search engines, bibliometric issues, and questions around intellectual property (including everything from permissions, to what are appropriate Creative Commons licenses).

- A number of academic libraries are publishing Open Access digital monographs with fee-based, print-on-demand options (supported either by local or remote printing facilities). Some libraries publish works by members of their institutional community, some focus on subjects of institutional strength, and others publish works by their own faculty as well as those from other universities. One very interesting area of collaboration is around the in-print backlist and out-of-print list of the local university press; these are often being digitized, permissions cleared from authors and others as needed, and then they are made available for open access. There is a very interesting question here going forward: Will born-digital monographs from university presses ever go "out of print"? If so, when? Will we ultimately see some form of open access moving wall like those often used by scholarly journals, where all monographs go open access after five years (perhaps with a few exceptions)?

- Some of the libraries are their institutions' sole monograph publisher; other libraries publish titles alongside of the university press, but not in competition with the press. In the latter case, one participant noted that the library publishes works that are too short, too long, or too obscure for most standard print presses. One characterized the library publishing program as the "publisher of lost causes."

- Several publishing units are already working with Amazon and other commercial entities for delivering their content. However, none of the participants at this roundtable were offering consulting services to faculty who wanted to self-publish directly through Amazon's or other providers' platforms. A fascinating question posed by one participant was "who holds the keys to the Apple IOS app store for new publications from our institution?"

- Preservation of digital content needs to be addressed more thoroughly and systematically. The relationship of the library-published content to the institutional repository was not always straightforward. One participant noted that they are moving the university press backlist of titles into HathiTrust.

- Library representatives at several institutions indicated that, while they were moving forward with innovation in the digital environment, their institutional

university press was not interested in innovation, partnership, or even being part of the conversation on such topics.

- Several participants noted that they are interested in moving into publication of open access e-textbooks, particularly in the context of institutional strategies to encourage the adoption of electronic textbooks.

- A small number of representatives mentioned initiatives related to content developed for mobile platforms.

- Publishing, curating, and preserving data for both e-science and digital humanities projects were other types of services being studied or developed by several participants. We did not discuss this in depth as it was not the focus of this roundtable, but it is important to recognize the complex interconnections and overlaps between data curation and publishing or dissemination programs.

- One participant mentioned interest in publishing by other cultural organizations on campus, such as museums. We believe that this is a fruitful and often overlooked opportunity.

- As programs grow at libraries, the need for additional staff expertise grows with it; in some cases we are now seeing staff shared between university press and non-press publishing activities. Several library representatives stated that they are interested in working with and training subject liaison librarians to play some role in marketing publishing services to faculty, and in offering specific kinds of support.

   Some participants highlighted the global reach of their initiatives both in development of platform software or in information access. OJS has a particularly large international implementation base, including the developing world.

- Many libraries are using multiple platforms and some are building their own software in additional to deploying existing open source or commercial platforms. At least some institutional leaders feel that the proliferation of software development is healthy, rather than problematic, since much of the work is still experimental. There is also a great deal of functional overlap with other software and services such as institutional repositories, and some challenging architectural choices and integration issues.

- Many libraries are interested in moving into XML formats and away from PDF. This raises a number of complicated questions about specific standards, validation, who does markup, and appropriate tools and platforms. Some greater cross-institutional discussion of these topics may be helpful.

- Many institutions are seeking business models as they develop a range of publishing initiatives and services. Some questions raised by participants

included whether they can modularize services, whether they can separate platform and service support, whether they can think differently about editorial services, and whether they can influence the development of publications earlier in the life cycle. Questions are emerging about financial models and about how services and platforms might be modularized and "packaged" in ways that are responsive to faculty needs. There is also a growing sense that, for digital projects, it is important to seek early engagement with faculty as the project is designed and developed, rather that have the faculty authors arrive with a mature project that will be difficult to publish or preserve.

Concluding Thoughts
While there has been a perception that libraries' publishing roles have been primarily in the monograph (and its digital descendants) or digital asset management arenas, this roundtable clearly demonstrated that a number of libraries are involved in providing journal platforms, too.

There are three components of support for journal publishing: providing a platform, which many libraries are currently involved in; providing editorial services, which is primarily a faculty role in almost all cases; and, providing an array of what might be thought of as support services, including working with indexing/abstracting services, monitoring the impact factor, marketing content, branding, and managing the archiving process. It is this third area where a number of libraries are seeking to understand and enhance their role. It seems likely that over time we will see many libraries abandoning their roles in the first area–platform provision–in favor of new offerings of software as a service from either commercial providers or initiatives like Internet2's NET+.

While some library-based publishing services are able to accommodate all of the requests they receive from faculty, others are making decisions on what projects to take on and which they must turn down or help to place elsewhere. In some institutions we see explicit discussions of the pros and cons of placing specific projects in the hands of the university press or the library. Institutions are becoming clearer about the trade-offs between supporting large numbers of projects that essentially follow a standardized template at some level, such as an OJS based e-journal, as opposed to committing resources to work with faculty on an experimental, exploratory, one-of-kind project. (Both are important, but getting the mix right is critical). One participant described this as a tension between what is strategic (in terms of new forms of scholarship), versus what is a critical service (such as hosting e-journals). At the same time, libraries are very reluctant to undertake gate-keeping functions (other than those required due to resource constraints), and they characterize their roles as consultative, as "matchmaking rather than gatekeeping."

We started out by trying to understand institutional strategies and how they were being developed. It appears that, operationally, many institutions are delegating leadership in this area to the library, with some higher-level strategic interventions at the provostial level to align organizational resources to support this leadership (for example, making the university press report to the library, though to the extent that the press is also an

independent not-for-profit there are some complex governance issues here). We do see senior leadership involved in some ongoing high-level policy discussion; for example the Association of American Universities' provosts and the Association of Research Libraries are discussing a possible program to provide subvention for first monographs in the humanities published by university presses, and possibly additional monographs, under some specific constraints.

There's a great deal of faculty-driven, bottom-up innovation as they work with the library and other units. One trend we can see is that this bottom-up innovation has reached sufficient scale that libraries are now trying to develop more systematic service offerings and more strategic plans. There is still concern among some of the roundtable participants that the voice of the average faculty member is not being heard sufficiently in the overall strategy development process. It is also very clear that there are additional organizational complexities and strategic challenges that we did not have time to explore in the roundtable dealing with lecture capture, management and reuse, electronic textbooks, and relations with commercial "channel" providers like Apple or Google's YouTube.

A final topic that we touched upon but did not have time to sufficiently explore was the continuum from digital asset management to digital scholarly publishing. When we think of resources like image collections with annotations, whether created by faculty or by digitizing a library special collection, it is clear that both perspectives need to shape technical, organizational, and financial strategies. Connections among journal articles, underlying evidentiary data, and analysis or simulation software raises related questions. Similar issues will arise as more textbooks, lecture series and related instructional materials move into electronic form. It seems appropriate to conclude here by reminding the reader that not only are the organizations involved in scholarly publishing changing and diversifying, but also the nature of what is being published, and the nature of the publication process itself.

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*CNI Executive Roundtables, held at CNI's semi-annual membership meetings, bring together a group of campus partners, usually senior library and information technology leaders, to discuss a key digital information topic and its strategic implications. The Roundtables build on the theme of collaboration that is at the foundation of the Coalition; they serve as a forum for frank, unattributed intra and inter-institutional dialogue on digital information issues and their organizational and strategic implications. In addition, CNI uses Roundtable discussions to inform our ongoing program planning process.

The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI) is a joint program of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and EDUCAUSE that promotes the use of information technology to advance scholarship and education. Some 200 institutions representing higher education, publishing, information technology, scholarly and professional organizations, foundations, and libraries and library organizations, make up CNI's members. Learn more at www.cni.org.