

STRENGTHENING THE SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT THROUGH RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES AND INFORMATION LITERACY SKILLS

TARVINDER SINGH HANDA

Assistant Librarian, Indian Institute of Technology Ropar (Punjab)

GURPREET SINGH SOHAL

Librarian, Goswami Ganesh Dutta Sanatan Dharma College, Chandigarh

ABSTRACT

A substantial body of literature has been published and is available on the shelves of libraries to instruct the promising researchers on how to deal with different aspects in scholarly communication environment. While the core mission of higher educational institution the world over is to create a holistic scholarly environment, yet they fail to provide basic supports on doing research. The present article draws an attention on the role of libraries and that of librarians in instructing and guiding the research community to overcome the challenges of publishing in leveraging the scholarly communication environment.

Keywords: Scholarly communication, research support services, information literacy skills, core competencies and tools, role of libraries and librarians

1. INTRODUCTION

Research is a noble process aimed at creating and discovering new knowledge essential to eliminate the societal uncertainties and propel for future growth. Scholarly Communication (SC) is the process by which academics, scholars and researchers share, publish and convey their research findings, either formally or informally, so that they are available to the wider academic community and beyond. ACRL (2003) defined scholarly communication as “the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community and preserved for future use. The system includes both formal means of communication, such as publication in peer-reviewed journals and informal channels, such as electronic listservs.” Research support services are a set of tools and facilities that aim to facilitate the research in carrying out their research process and help enhance the institution's research strategies. Before we discuss these services, let's discuss how the process of scholarly communication takes place.

2. SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION (SC) LIFECYCLE

Scholarly communication (SC) is a cyclic process in which new content is created/generated, reviewed, disseminated, acquired, preserved, discovered, accessed and assimilated for advancement of future research. Assimilation potentially leads to generation of new content and thus starts a new iteration of the process called lifecycle. Carpenter et al. believe (2011) that libraries are completely enmeshed in scholarly communication lifecycle wherein the academic leaders and libraries themselves are driving forces and their focus is on creating and managing scholarly content as well as striving for efficiencies of process in publishing.

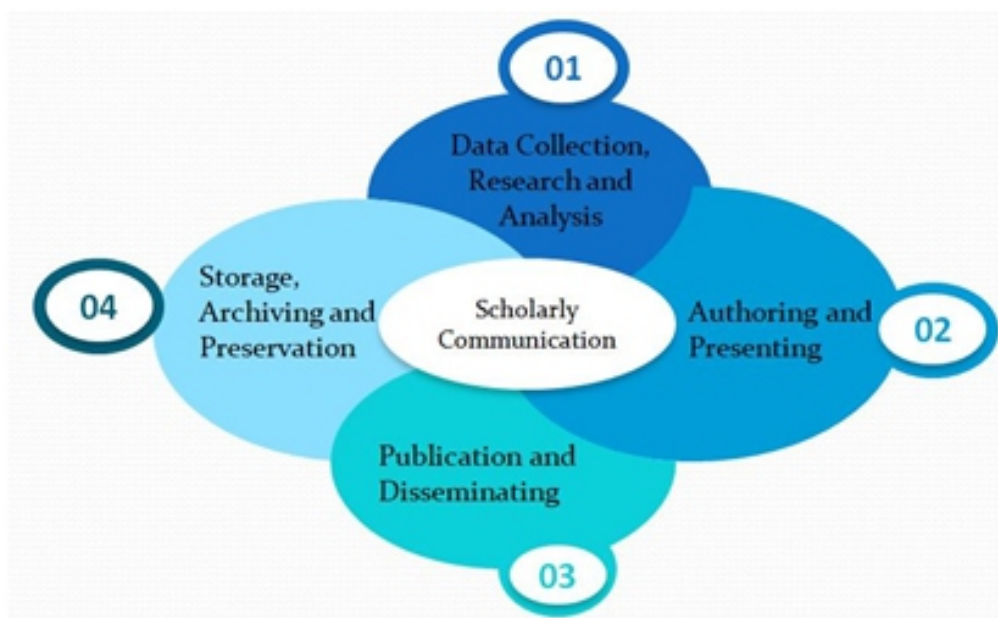


Figure-1: Scholarly Communication (SC) Lifecycle

There are primarily four stages through which the scholarly communication takes place in a research setting. At the first stage, the research gets proposed, funded and reported on. Second stage, the works are well-written and presented for quality evaluation and edited by the peers. At the third stage, the publishers provide editing, layout and publishing services. The works are further distributed in print or online through libraries, retailers and the web. At the fourth and final stage, copies of the versions of scholarly works are saved for posterity. So finally, the works are further get read, cited and recombined.

3. EXTENDING RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICES

In view of the growing research activities in the academics, there is an increasing demand for providing research support to the researchers and the faculty. Libraries strive to arrange such kinds of expert guidance which are aimed at bridging the gap between early career and advanced career researchers by supporting the researcher's needs for getting their papers published in high impact journals, navigating through the dimensions of advanced publishing topics and segments and finally focusing on their subject-specific publishing requirements from the editor's point of view.

In the scholarly communication lifecycle, there are various steps involved in the publishing process where libraries assist to provide hands on experience to the scholars and researchers, i.e. guiding them to sources from they can attract grants and funds for their research, doing effective review of existing literature, mastering the craft of writing, presenting and navigating the publishing process. A researcher is required to write not only the scientific papers but also project proposals, reports and sometimes articles in the magazines. Yet, good writing is not often taught as a skill that can be acquired with practice. Usually, the researchers are not aware of the publishing process from an editorial perspective and they often fail to circumvent the rejection rate for the paper. Libraries can offer to provide a systematic approach focusing on researchers' area of investigation to help them

become more effective writers for their scientific papers.

Mastering the art of writing is alone not sufficient in the scientific world as researchers further need to conquer the intricacies of various citation styles and managing the references. Many researchers often fail to differentiate between the references and a bibliography and they don't know how to appropriately cite the web pages and other electronic documents. Researchers need to know the digital tools for handling citations and references. Libraries and librarians, adopting the '*cite them right*' approach; can offer to provide them guidance in the use of various reference styles and the art of appropriately citing those references in the text of the article. Librarians can advice researchers on copyright and intellectual property rights and making fair use of other researchers' work. A further guidance in winning the game of publishing the research paper by selecting an appropriate and high impact journal in the concerned field, raising the researchers profile and extending the impact of their publication can be extended by libraries and their managers. Owing to the highly rising publishing costs by certain journal publishers the researchers face a dilemma of showcasing their research. The websites of libraries can better serve as the platforms for promoting openness of scholarly content.

4. THE INFORMATION LITERACY (IL) COMPETENCIES

Information literacy (IL) is a set of skills and abilities that enable a person to realize and recognize the need for information and to further acquire, evaluate and use that information (ALA, 1989). IL helps a person to master content, become self sufficient and take a greater control over his/her self-learning. In a fast growing academic research environment an individual may face a large amount of information some of which is relevant to his/her and lot more may be biased, outdated, misleading or false in nature. Hence, linking IL with research productivity becomes essential to boost the SC environment.



Figure- 2: Spectrum of IL skill sets in scholarly communication

Information literacy revolves around a spectrum of certain skill sets which determine an individual's strength to successfully operate in a scholarly communication environment. An information literate student is capable to recognize the transition of learning from school level to that of higher education level. He/she can easily reflect on how to create strategies for comprehending new

knowledge. An IL skilled individual is capable of developing an evaluative criteria for recognizing the information landscape and selecting the authentic sources of academic quality. IL enables an individual to identify key finding aids in the respective discipline. At the next level, there is understanding of data analysis and curation. The researcher is capable of finding, selecting, managing and processing academic information effectively. Further in the process of scholarly communication, the information literate is able to identify how to avoid plagiarism, use correct academic practices in quoting, citing and paraphrasing. He/she is able to communicate his/her findings using appropriate writing style and format for the intended audience. Finally, an information literate individual is competent of assimilating new information within the disciplinary framework and develops new insights and knowledge in the concerned discipline.

5. CONCLUSION

The higher education institutions across the globe need to take the driver's seat to fulfill their critical societal roles in the creation and advancement of knowledge and to sustain an innovation driven economic growth culture. For this, there is a dire need for doing cutting edge research through the creation and promotion of scholarly communication environment by mitigating the major publishing challenges and issues of the researchers. Furthermore, librarians and libraries can engage in promoting the scholarly communication ecosystem by way of partnering with academic departments and research centres in higher education institutions for hosting open events to publicize the latest developments happening on various scholarly communication topics. They can direct and assist the students and faculty throughout the scholarly communication process by way of providing them research support services and various literacy skills requisite to the academic and research understanding. Libraries can establish academic skill zone type of units as basic infrastructure wherein dedicated staffs with expertise in the fields can be deployed for imparting instructions to the budding researchers.

WORKS CITED

- ACRL Scholarly Communication Committee. (2003). Scholarly Communication: Principles and strategies for the reform of scholarly communication: Issues related to the formal system of scholarly communication. *College & Research Libraries News*, 64(8), 526–547.
- Carpenter, M., Graybill, J., Offord, J., & Piorun, M. (2011). Envisioning the library's role in scholarly communication in the year 2025. *portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 11(2), 659–681. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/428878>
- Olakunle, S. A., & Popoola, S. O. (2019). Relationship between information literacy skills and research productivity of researchers in Nigeria, and the mediating role of socio-economic factors. *LIBRES: Library & Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 29(1), 51–76. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341322455_Relationship_Between_Information_Literacy_Skills_and_Research_Productivity_of_Researchers_in_Nigeria_and_the_Mediating_Role_of_Socio-Economic_Factors
- Pears, R., & Shields, G. (2019). *Cite them right: The essential referencing guide*. Macmillan International Higher Education.
- Sandy, H. M., Million, A. J., & Hudson-Vitale, C. (2020). Innovating support for research: The coalescence of scholarly communication? *College & Research Libraries*, 81(2), 193–214.