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Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, Sarah E. Crissinger, Emily A. Hardesty, and Aaron S. McCollough, "Publishing Our Own Work: Contributing to the Professional Literature Through Systematizing Sharing of Library Reports" (2015). *Proceedings of the Charleston Library Conference*.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5703/1288284316317>

Publishing Our Own Work: Contributing to the Professional Literature Through Systematizing Sharing of Library Reports

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Abstract

Library employees often work on teams, committees, or task forces to do research, and investigation as part of their responsibilities in carrying out the operations of a library; however, much of this work is not published in the professional literature and is only inconsistently recorded in committee documents. As such, this work is hidden both from others in the library who might use it and from the profession at large, meaning that other libraries were not able to benefit from it. To address these challenges, the University of Illinois Library (Urbana-Champaign) established the Library Occasional Reports Series (LibORS) in 2015. This paper presents a case study of the ongoing process of establishing LibORS. Phases of work included exploring what it would mean to commit to publishing and promoting the University Library's work as an organizational practice as well as creating workflows, acquisition criteria, editorial guidelines, a report template, and communication mechanisms.

Why a Library Publication of Library Work?

Faculty and staff of the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign conduct a wide-ranging program of research and development as part of their responsibilities in carrying out the management and operations of the Library. While some of this work is published in the professional and scholarly literature, much of it is not and is only inconsistently recorded in committee and task force minutes. This work is thus hidden both from others in the Library who might find it useful and also from the profession at large, meaning that other libraries do not benefit as they might from our work, and the University Library does not have as prominent a profile in this area as it should.

Though individual library faculty do publish some of the research that is conducted, it is typically cast as general findings, recommendations, etc., as is appropriate to the scholarly literature. Scholarly articles typically do not present the

findings within an organizational context and do not document the specific programs or practices the libraries adopt or the decisions made about how to actually manage a library over time. So, for example, though Mischo, Schlembach, Bishoff, and German (2012) have published a study of transaction log analysis, the Library's reports assessing discovery systems for implementation relative to the Library's operational needs (e.g., WebFeat and Primo) have not been. Likewise, Bowles-Terry, Hensley, and Hinchliffe (2010) coauthored a study on student perceptions of video tutorials; however, there is no easily available Library report of how the User Education Committee examined the Library's instruction strategy as a result. Finding these internal reports as the years pass can also be a challenge since they are not consistently archived or posted online to committee websites.

In addition, librarians are often looking for these sorts of pragmatic evaluations and program development documents from other institutions.

For example, the University Library's Discovery and Delivery Study Team has drawn on reports from the University of Minnesota, North Carolina State University, University of Michigan, Harvard University, and the University of California at Los Angeles in various projects. These research-in-action reports are very helpful in managing a library and understanding decision-making influences and processes.

Finally, the concept of a series of reports—published by the library generated from library operations—fits within the continuum of publications types that the University Library is committed to supporting under the auspices of its recently formalized scholarly communications and publishing unit, which is in the Library's Office of Research. Though monographs and journals are more high-profile publications, supporting publication and dissemination of grey literature is also an important role for library publication programs, evidenced by the profiles in the *Library Publishing Directory* (2016).

Funding and Resources for the Publication

Recognizing that the University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign already had many reports and other documents that would be beneficial to the library community at large but lacked a mechanism for systematically publishing and promoting them, Hinchliffe applied for and received an Innovation Fund grant from the University Library.

The Innovation Fund supports opportunities “to be innovative and make original contributions to the ways in which the Library works” by piloting or advancing new ideas, services, or technologies; investigating new or alternative ideas, technologies, or processes for conducting or organizing Library activities; encouraging users in using and enhancing library-managed content; or initiating or advancing strategic partnerships with other campus units, other libraries, or library consortia or other organizations.

The Library Occasional Report Series (LibORS) proposal was developed around three objectives:

1. To document the research and development work carried out by the University Library
2. To make such reports discoverable by others in the University Library and the profession at large
3. To raise the profile of the University Library as a key contributor to research and development in academic and research libraries.

The Innovation Fund grant funded a graduate assistant for 100 hours. The position was initially filled by Crissinger, who graduated after a few months, and then Hardesty. The graduate assistants are responsible for assisting with reviewing how other libraries publish their reports (starting with the list of libraries that have reported to the Library Publishing Coalition that they publish technical reports series); gathering input from library faculty and staff about how they would suggest LibORS be scoped; developing templates, guidelines, production, and communications processes; and creating reports from existing committee and task force documents.

Hinchliffe serves as the principal investigator of the Innovation Fund grant and manager of the LibORS project. She will also be the inaugural editor of the series, drawing on her previous work as editor of *Research Strategies*, an information literacy scholarly journal, and overseeing newsletters for the ACRL Instruction Section and IFLA Information Literacy Section.

The internal library LibORS Advisory Committee is comprised of Hinchliffe, Crissinger/Hardesty, McCollough and the associate university librarian for research, the chair of the Library Research and Publication Committee appointed by the University Library Executive Committee, and the visiting librarian for library and information science and research support services.

Identifying Technologies and Developing Processes

Operationalizing the LibORS objectives required developing workflows, acquisition criteria,

<p><i>Subject Content</i></p> <p>The Library Occasional Report Series accepts committee and technical reports compiled by the University of Illinois Library faculty, staff, and graduate assistants. These reports can cover a variety of topics, including (but not limited to) instruction, discovery, scholarly communication, user experience, reference, digital humanities, and other important initiatives in the University Library. Reports should be scoped to a specific committee's or initiative's findings.</p> <p><i>Criteria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report generated from work done within the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Library • Applicable to the larger library community's conversations and initiatives in specific area(s) • Requires little to no editing for formatting or grammar • Follows the Illinois Writing Style Guide at: identitystandards.illinois.edu/writingstyleguide/. The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition should be consulted for further questions: chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html. • Includes appropriate metadata about the submission and its creators, including date created, authors, committee (and committee charge, if available), original URL/where it was originally published • Cites any outside information used <p><i>How Will My Report Get Published?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reports of any length can be submitted, though reports will usually be 10–20 pages long. 2. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the report and the statements it includes. 3. The ORS editor will format the report to the ORS template. While the editor will check for basic grammar errors, the report will not go through a rigorous editorial process. 4. All hyperlinks will be checked. All hyperlinks should include an ALT tag for accessibility reasons. 5. There is no uniform citation requirement for reports. However, each report should use a consistent citation style throughout. For example, if the committee uses MLA citation style for the first reference, subsequent references must also follow MLA. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. The ORS editor will contact all members of the committee that generated the report before it is published and publicized. Further changes will not be made.

Figure 1. Editorial guidelines.

editorial guidelines, a report template, and communication mechanisms. In order to minimize the effort required in order to maximize the output of the series, the design ethos for all of these was intentionally lightweight and built upon existing library technologies and services whenever possible.

Publication Platform

The Library's institutional repository, IDEALS, was selected as the publication platform for LibORS. Also considered were the campus blog platform and the Library's website management system; however, IDEALS offers a number of advantages including permanent handles for the LibORS reports, metadata exposure, and long-term

preservation as well as the opportunity to keep the documents for managing the LibORS as a publication in the same repository as the publication itself. The Library Occasional Reports Series community (<https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/77875>) is a subcommunity of the University Library community (<https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/99>) and thus also helps to showcase the broader spectrum of the University Library's output as well as promote the IDEALS repository itself. IDEALS also has established account creation and management procedures as well as workflows for file submission that benefit LibORS.

Unfortunately, IDEALS does not create DOIs for submissions, which are needed as part of the assessment of the effectiveness of IDEALS. Though the University Library can create DOIs for text documents through its participation in DataCite, CrossRef DOIs would offer additional advantages and are also needed for other developing publication projects. As such, the University Library is in the process of joining CrossRef. Fortunately, the DOIs can be recorded in the IDEALS record for each report in LibORS once they are created.

Editorial Process and Template Development

Foundational to the creation of LibORS is a set of editorial guidelines for authors to use when submitting a report and for the editor and graduate assistant to use in publishing. Establishing this process raised many questions for the LibORS project team including:

- How do we choose which reports to include in this series?
- What type of reports are valuable?
- How do we decide what is meaningful to the series?

To answer these questions, the team sought advice from faculty and staff in the University Library and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, reviewed the University's writing style guide, and explored current examples of editorial guidelines for other publications on campus. The guidelines are intended to be easy to follow and lightweight in

order to encourage submission to LibORS. See Figure 1 for the guidelines.

After establishing concrete criteria and guidelines for the series, the team then developed a Microsoft Word template into which each submission would be formatted by the designated editor. For each submission that LibORS receives, the editor will arrange the report into the LibORS template, which will later be published as a PDF in IDEALS. The template is complete with official branding from the University of Illinois, a copyright statement, and a sample citation for citing the report. The editorial team hopes that this template will serve as a standard for future committee reports so that little reformatting is needed for submissions.

Marketing and Communications

Also crucial to creating LibORS was establishing a marketing workflow that would effectively promote new reports. Once a report has been formatted into the template and uploaded into IDEALS, the editor will write a blog post on the LibORS WordPress website (<http://publish.illinois.edu/libraryreports/>), which will include background information about the report, a description of the team or committee that authored the report, and who will benefit from reading the report. The editor will then Tweet a promotional message about the new report with the LibORS Twitter account (@UIUCLibORS). The editorial team chose Twitter as the social media platform to promote the series in light of the many conversations that are held on Twitter among library professionals.

In addition, in order to give LibORS a visual identity, the editorial team sought out the creation of a graphic icon that can be used on social media, the WordPress blog, and the series template. Crystal Sheu, the eLearning Specialist in the Office of Information Literacy in the University Library, worked with the team to develop a visual identity, which LibORS can use in its promotional efforts.

Assessment and Sustainability

LibORS will begin formal publication in 2016, and informal assessment and monitoring will be part of the responsibilities of the graduate assistant and series editor; however, more formal assessment and reporting is planned to determine whether LibORS is achieving its goals and is offering the desired return-on-investment of library resources.

The effectiveness of LibORS will be assessed relative to the project objectives outlined in the Innovation Fund grant proposal.

Objective 1—To document the research and development work carried out by the University Library: This objective is an output objective. Metrics used to assess the benefits will include the number of reports published and the response rate from committees, tasks forces, units, etc. when invited to submit.

Objective 2—To make such reports discoverable by others in the University Library and the profession at large: This objective is an output objective. Metrics used to assess the benefits will include an assessment of report adherence to editorial guidelines, degree of full record details in IDEALS, number of subscribers to the publish.illinois.edu WordPress site for the reports series, and number of followers to the UIUCLibORS Twitter account as well as likes and retweets.

Objective 3—To raise the profile of the University Library as a key contributor to research and development in academic and research libraries: This objective is an impact objective. An indirect measure of the benefit will be the number of downloads for each report from IDEALS as well as the use of altmetric reports based on the DOIs.

LibORS will only be sustainable with continued allocation of resources to the production of the

publications in the series. The work funded through the Innovation Fund proposal provided the up-front investment in establishing templates, practices, and procedures. Much of the production work long-term will be decentralized in that it would be carried out by a committee,

task force, team, etc., as a component of doing their work; however, a central editor will be needed to ensure ongoing coordination, publicity, and adjustments of workflow as needed over time.

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