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Something to Think About — Where’s the Journal?

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Last Thursday was one of those days that felt like a Monday. In fact, every day that week was a Monday! There was an endless trail of problems that started at 8:00 a.m. and didn’t let up all day. Claims and problems were unceasing and each one became more of a struggle to solve. Finally, near lunch, I had to track down a journal to try and find out why the check for renewal had been returned to accounts. Obviously the address was wrong. I confirmed the address that was used by us and accounts as the one on the Website. So what was wrong? I pulled the phone number off the same webpage and dialed...waited...and heard, “This number has been disconnected...” from the hapless recorded message. Well, perhaps one of the other numbers would do. Google searching is fun when it gives you lots of answers. This one had three sites with four different phone numbers. We had to teach them all! I feel the same sense of responsibility toward the students I serve here at Arizona State University. I work with future teachers, and I want to make sure that they know what they need to know so that they can impact future generations. So it’s not really a question of whether students are ready or able to learn; it’s about how I can differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners. I have a student-centered orientation.

Advice Column

From time to time @Brunning listens to readers and offers advice — consulting is extra...

Dear @B,

I’m a newbie librarian, just graduated with my MLS, and I’m frightened and confused. I can’t understand all this talk about open access. It goes on and on and it is so strident and self-assured. The thing is I’m not so self-assured. As a newbie and it just seems to me that open access doesn’t have much place for we librarians. I mean, if it is all free on the Internet and easy to search on Google, what am I supposed to do?

Please Help,

Darcie, Open Access Librarian, University of Plano, Correctional Branch

Dear Darcie,

Take it easy hon…First of all, you will do alright. Us older librarians always doubted our profession but we got through it and now we are near retirement and all the better for it. Your youth and issues-based focus will make you smarter, wiser, and able to play the game. You have a lifetime ahead of you, the open access people to whom you refer, they average, what, 75 years old? They’ll be gone when you assume managerial rank. Don’t get me wrong, open access is here to stay but it’s like that asteroid that may or may not collide with planet earth at some point in some future. It’s fright is worse than its bite.

It does concern me, a tad, that you sign your letter “Open Access Librarian.” This sort of typecasts you. Typically I’d expect you to be shriller, verbose, occasionally right, and leaning both right and left while you artfully skewer anyone and everyone who dares to challenge you.

But that isn’t you. You’ve drilled right into the tooth pulp of the issue — you question purpose. Your purpose, should I be so bold, is to embrace open access and while you embrace away, just reach around the issue and understand your open access role has a grander goal — taking open access well beyond its emergent idea into its maturity, the blessed and highly compensatory world of co-operation and business as usual in the high margin world of scholarly publishing.

Sincerely, @Brunning
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numbers and four or five addresses. Which was the right one? Where, oh where, had that little journal gone? I tried the next number…waited…and heard, “This number has been disconnected…” from a similar recording. It was nice to know that the voices were different. One more number dialed…waited…and heard, “This number has been disconnected.” I started laughing uncontrollably. The more I thought about the situation, the funnier it got. Where in the world was that journal office? Having reached an end to the frustration, I went to the stacks and retrieved the latest issue, spring 2008. Wow! It only comes out twice a year? Where is the fall issue? Having returned to my desk, I started browsing the issue and found all the various addresses on succeeding pages, each describing different aspects of the organization producing the title. One talked about the main offices, some in one state and some in another with numbers of locating addresses. Another page turned and there was a description of a university where the title was published. Ah ha! I swiveled my chair around to the computer and began searching for the university campus, and then the directory of folks working there. Oh my! One after another, the people weren’t listed. I reread the names again, then began searching the departments. The first two listed didn’t match any at the university, but the last one was close. I called up the directory for the Publications Department and there were two recognizable names. I emailed the person in charge and waited. In about thirty minutes, I received an answer from the subordinate regarding the fact that they were still publishing the journal title and I should email another person, the editor, for additional information. And, oh yes, they had just printed the fall issue and I should receive it next week. I emailed the editor after taking a breath and began asking all the pertinent details. Could I order a renewal subscription? What address should I use? How should the check be made out? Another wait! And then a reply that everything was cool and we could get the magazine by writing and sending the money to the editor. Thanks for us searching them out! No mention about a promise to clarify the Website. Now, the other half of the solution began with accounts. Emailing them, we could use the same check just sent to a different address and that would take care of everything. Quickly, I flipped back to the order screen and listed the correct address and email for the group. Sure hope the renewal won’t be as difficult next year! Two hours of work verified the title, amount, publisher, payee and hopefully the new subscription established as well as the last issue claimed. How can one question/problem be so tiring? I was so exhausted that I looked around and found everyone gone from their desks. Assuming the day was over, I turned the computer off, got my hat and bags, and walked down the aisle to leave. Oh yeah, I had to wait for Kathy who was riding with me that day. A quick goodbye to Dawn and I stood there a second. Dawn looked up and asked if I was leaving early. She told me it was four not five. I thought she was joking and I tried to brush the remark off. NO! It was four o’clock. Dejectedly, I went back to my desk, unloaded the bags and hat, and turned on the computer. All I could do was laugh. It had been a long day and I did find the journal. Had any days like this lately? You probably will, but don’t stop to think about it — just go with the flow!