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ne and Religion noted that she was able “to make the course less expensive for students, to waste less paper, and to use a wider variety of materials so that the course was more engaging.” Another professor noted that the ACMI helped him “get to know the resources available through the library better and who to go to with questions about particular topics. This has actually proven helpful for both my teaching and my research.”

Student feedback in course evaluations was also positive. A student in an awarded course in ecology and evolutionary biology noted, “The lack of a textbook and the fact that we read current and applicable research journal articles was very useful and I would seek out courses offering this sort of material in the future,” and another commented, “As for the reading material, the online library readings were EXPONENTIALLY better than a textbook because I didn’t have to spend money that I do not have and [the instructor] tailored the readings so that each reading complemented course material.”

At the time that the ACMI was launched, the UCLA Library was also exploring options for setting up a journal article subvention program. Early on, we discussed the equity challenges between researchers in highly-funded scientific areas and those researchers in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. We were concerned that journal subvention could in fact perpetuate the inequities currently in the scholarly publishing environment. Also, a recent analysis of article processing charges (APCs) found that APCs from commercial publishers are significantly higher than those charged by open access publishers, like BMC and PLoS.  

Finally, a newly-released report from JISC found that “frequently it was unclear whether the APC payment was made for an article to be totally open, embargoed, available for deposit in a repository.” This data suggests that subvention for APCs primarily benefits large commercial publishers and does little, if anything, to transform scholarly publishing. The data also confirms to us that we made the right decision in launching the ACMI and not setting up a journal article subvention fund.

Next Steps

Next steps include reporting results to our current campus partners and securing funding for the ACMI’s next phase. We also plan to identify additional campus partners, including deans, chairs, student government officers, and other campus leaders. We hope to continue to more fully integrate the ACMI into the suite of library services we offer to the campus and to broaden the number of faculty and students that benefit from the program. Our initial results in both qualitative and quantitative terms have more than met our expectations. The diversity of campus interest as evidenced in Figure 1 above is exciting and we hope to see this initial trend continue.

The ACMI provides a model built on ongoing engagement of library-led interdisciplinary teams to customize support to best meet the needs of our faculty and students. Do the collections created through the ACMI represent the future of textbooks on our campus? It’s hard to know at this point, but this initiative will help us assess how our collections are used by our community and guide us as we build collections that are integral to teaching and learning.

We look forward to continuing our work with faculty and students and to integrating this work throughout the library and across all disciplines and departments on campus. Doing so will require utilizing the full array of library staff and resources and to integrate this initiative into the routine activities related to teaching and learning support and collection building. As more OERs are created, described, and discovered, the long-term goals of educational access and affordability become more attainable. The ACMI is a step in this direction.

Endnotes
