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Cooperation is Key: How Publishers and Libraries are Working Together to Achieve Common Goals

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Cooperation is Key: How Publishers and Libraries are Working Together to Achieve Common Goals

by **Michael A. Arthur** (Head of Acquisitions and Collection Services, University of Alabama) <maarthur@ua.edu>

and **Stacy Sieck** (Library Communications Manager with Taylor & Francis Group) <Stacy.Sieck@taylorandfrancis.com>

Building the library/publisher relationship is by no means a new issue. It's an issue we see covered in conferences and industry news articles, and it's often a point of discussion (and sometimes contention) on listservs and industry blogs.

More recently, however, there's been a gradual shift away from publishers being seen as adversarial to libraries, and there's now a stronger sense that improving these relationships is important, if not imperative, to the success of both parties.

More and more publishers co-host workshops or Webinars or conference sessions with library partners, and we're seeing more and more session-based conferences being launched that aim to bring librarians, publishers, and vendors into the same room for discussions and sessions.

It makes sense — after all, both share at least one common goal: meeting the needs of researchers and professionals. Librarians who feel that publishers and vendors are only out for profit are restricting their opportunities and those of their library to take advantage of amazing post-sale services now being offered by several key publishers.

But developing these relationships doesn't happen overnight. It's a process that starts with building trust and creating open and honest lines of communication. A process that the **University of Central Florida (UCF)** and **Taylor & Francis** more recently went through.

Striving for Positive Relationships

Prior to 2012, the relationship between **Taylor & Francis** and the **University of Central Florida (UCF)** was strained. The library faculty at **UCF** was skeptical of **Taylor & Francis** and there wasn't much of a relationship between the two organizations.

Then in 2012, new staff at **Taylor & Francis** took over the management of the **UCF** account and they began working with **Michael Arthur** — then Head of Collections at **UCF**. This "changing of the guard" allowed the two organizations to basically start from scratch and to establish a positive and collaborative relationship.

It started out with the usual emails and occasional phone calls about **Taylor & Francis** products and services — efforts to determine what content **UCF** needed but did not currently have access to and what the University's researchers and faculty wanted and needed. Leadership from **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF** began making in-person meetings at conferences a priority. Being able to put a face to the name — to the email address — helped exponentially, and that attentiveness helped

create trust and confidence between **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF**, which developed close ties between the two organizations.

Moving Cooperation to the New Level

Within two years and with their relationship renewed, **UCF** and **Taylor & Francis** began discussing potential opportunities to reach out to other library faculty and researchers.

Up until that point, **Taylor & Francis** staff had mainly communicated with **Michael**, and both groups agreed it would be beneficial for **Taylor & Francis** to get to know the other library faculty and to better understand their needs.

Michael and **Elyse Profera**, the Library Communications Manager at **Taylor & Francis** at the time, started throwing around ideas and eventually decided to co-host a two-day library-centric workshop and internal publishing event on the **UCF** campus. The goals of **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF** were well-aligned, and they both aimed to spread the word to workshop attendees that **Taylor & Francis** was an active partner with **UCF**.

Planning began almost immediately in fall 2013. It was decided that the workshop would be held on February 25 and February 26, 2014 (an ideal time for **Taylor & Francis** staff coming from snowy Philadelphia and a fairly quiet time for librarians and **UCF** researchers!). **Michael** booked meeting space at **UCF**'s **John C. Hitt Library** and contributed to the invitation lists for both the librarian and author days. He also helped secure guest speakers for the events and generate interest on-campus. **Elyse** handled the logistics, like creating and distributing invitations and organizing guest speakers from **Taylor & Francis**. **Michael** and **Elyse** worked closely together to create agendas that would meet their goals while also appealing to a wide audience.

Taylor & Francis Heads South for the Winter (or at least for a few days)

After months of planning and hard work, February finally arrived, and **Elyse**, as well as editorial and sales staff from **Taylor & Francis**, headed to **UCF** for the workshop.

The agendas **Michael** and **Elyse** created were meant to be both engaging and informative, which helped draw interest in the events. The library workshop, held on February 25, showcased **Taylor & Francis** products and the **TFO** platform. It also included a presentation on Open Access with an OA panel discussion given by seven **UCF** librarians. The day ended with a joint session on the importance of digital archives, given by faculty guest speaker **Dr.**

Rosalind J. Beiler, Director of Public History and Associate Professor of History at **UCF**, and **Adam Feine**, **Taylor & Francis**' Journals Sales Executive.

The internal event for **UCF** faculty and librarians focused on best practices for getting published and a look at content usage for **UCF**. **Barbara Tierney**, Head of Research and Information Services at **UCF**, discussed how faculty and students can work with **UCF** librarians during the research process and also the support they can provide when publishing academic research in books and journals.

In the end, the events were hugely successful. Almost 60 librarians and faculty from **UCF** and other universities across central Florida attended the workshops, and some great discussions came out of the workshops. The benefits of in-person meetings were obvious. These events weren't just lectures or Webinars with minimal interaction online or in a large conference room. **Michael** and **Elyse** intentionally developed the agendas to allow time for a breakfast meet-and-great, coffee breaks, and a lunch break so presenters, librarians, faculty, and **Taylor & Francis** would have time to meet face-to-face and to start to form a relationship outside the **UCF** leadership. These breaks between sessions were key to **Taylor & Francis** establishing positive ties with the library and faculty community at **UCF**.

Success! Collaboration Continues

From the very beginning of the process, **UCF** and **Taylor & Francis** collaborated on almost every detail — from determining who would be invited to selecting dates and topics for presentations. **Michael** and **Elyse** in particular were in constant communication, and this showed at the events. Sessions were interesting and far more than a sales pitch. Librarians and faculty alike shared positive feedback following the events, with **UCF** librarians reporting they now see **Taylor & Francis** as being actively involved with a strong after care support program with genuine interest in promoting usage and supporting the researchers.

The library workshop also gave librarians from numerous universities the opportunity to talk about their experiences and the challenges and successes they experience at their own institutions. The events brought together **UCF** researchers and subject librarians as well, giving them the opportunity to talk to each other about what they want and need when it comes to research and support — a key goal at **UCF**.

With the success of the workshops, other opportunities soon followed. **Taylor & Francis** staff were invited back to **UCF** in October 2014 to present during **UCF**'s Open Access Week, and **Michael Arthur** accepted an invi-

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tation to lead a focus group on social media in the library held at the **Taylor & Francis** office in Philadelphia in August 2014.

Michael Arthur, **Barbara Tierney**, and **Elyse Profera** also had the opportunity to present on the impact of the collaboration from the library-publisher workshops during the **Charleston Conference** that November. Their presentation at Charleston focused particularly on how **Taylor & Francis**' sessions and efforts helped the **UCF** subject librarians build enthusiasm for librarian involvement with faculty on campus.

Keeping the Momentum Going

With the workshops completed, **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF** have continued to maintain a professional relationship built around trust and open communication. Both sides realize the challenges that face the scholarly publishing industry, and they've seen first-hand that working together and preserving close connections can only help them achieve their goals.

There are still challenges, and it can be difficult to keep the momentum going and to continue to cultivate relationships like the one between **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF**. Staff turnover can make it difficult for librarians and publishers alike, which means it is even more important to establish close ties with numerous people within an organization to help ensure that history isn't lost. **Michael** has moved on from his post at **UCF**, and **Elyse** is now a

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people profile

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Stacy V. Sieck

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND BACKGROUND: I've been with **Taylor & Francis** since 2008, when I started out as the manager of the library and information science journals portfolio. Before that, I was on the other side of publishing and was the Editor of a medical magazine published by **Merion Matters**, the media, marketing, and merchandising company behind the popular **ADVANCE** brand.

IN MY SPARE TIME: I love to run and hike with my two dogs, Georgia and Chase Mutley (named for the former Philadelphia Phillies baseball player, Chase Utley). I also love sports, traveling, and food. I'm a huge foodie!

FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Rabbit Series* by **John Updike**; *To Kill A Mockingbird* by **Harper Lee**; *The Paper Bag Princess* by **Robert Munsch**.

MOST MEMORABLE CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Creating and implementing **Taylor & Francis**' Library & Information Sciences Author Rights Pilot Program, a zero embargo pilot program for the LIS author community. 🐾

Journals Sales Manager at **Taylor & Francis**, but the relationship between **Taylor & Francis** and **UCF** remains close.

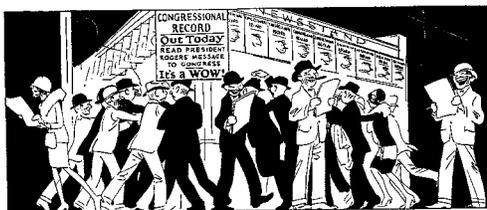
It's also made **Michael's** transition to the **University of Alabama** slightly easier. **Elyse** now oversees university accounts in the central U.S., including the **University of Alabama**,

and their pre-established relationship means **Michael** doesn't have to start over to build new relationships at **Taylor & Francis**. In fact, **Michael** and **Elyse's** replacement — **Stacy Sieck** — is already considering a similar event at his new home at the **University of Alabama**. 🐾

Stemming the Tide: The Role of Subscription Agents and Consortia in Library Communications

by **Lindsey Reno** (Acquisitions Librarian/Subject Specialist, University of New Orleans, Earl K. Long Library;
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One of the benefits of working with a subscription agent or a consortia is streamlined communication. One need only work with their designated representative or online interface of their vendor to accomplish a host of tasks related to subscription orders, such as claiming, invoicing, troubleshooting, ordering, or licensing. Unfortunately, these relationships do little to mitigate the onslaught of communication directed at Academic Librarians from publishers in the form of phone calls, emails, post cards, letters, catalogs, and site visits. This method is not only bothersome, but ineffective, like a magnified version of the spam and junk mail one receives at home. Phone calls are screened, emails are marked as read, paper mail is tossed without a second glance, and visits are tolerated in the



name of vendor relations. The proliferation of communication leads to a sort of blindness in librarians. Making more robust use of subscription agents and consortia would be more beneficial for all concerned, but some things need to change before this can be a reality.

The Current Reality

How many emails do librarians receive from publishers and vendors on a daily basis? How many of these emails are actually read? How many of these emails lead to fruitful communication? The daily deluge of contact from publishers is vast and vastly ineffective. When I scan my inbox on a Monday morning, few emails receive such swift and total annihilation as a product email from a publisher. No amount

of word-smithing or graphic design magic is going to change that.

In her article "Vendor Relations: Tales from a Vendee," **Julie Kitchen** reminisces about the "good-old-days" of acquisitions when a representative would simply drop by for a cup of tea and laments the current climate of "bombardment of electronically mailed, slightly breathless announcements about the latest publication or service."¹ Before the prevalence of electronic resources, the relationship between librarians and publishers was less difficult. The environment in which publishers and vendors work has become much more harsh.²

Adding to that harshness is a declining library market. In this new environment, publishers and vendors have the need to hold onto libraries and prevent poaching by competitors. One of the ways that they attempt to do this is by staying in constant contact with customers.^{3,4} Is this really necessary or effective?

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