2015

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

Michael A. Arthur
University of Alabama, maarthur@ua.edu

Stacy Sieck
Taylor & Francis Group, stacy.sieck@taylorandfrancis.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.7225

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.
B uilding 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-greet, 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 invitation to continue on page 24
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; Phone: 504-280-6499) <lreno@uno.edu>

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.” 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? Continued on page 25