Emerging Library & Information Perspectives

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Male: The podcast that explores why Library & Information Science research matters.

Female: We interview researchers about their work.

Male: And they connect the dots between what they do and its importance to your life.

Female: Okay, let's get on it.

Sarah: I'm Sarah Glassford and my article in ELIP was Black Hole or Brave New World: Archivists, Historians and the Challenges of the Digital Age. So, my paper is really a combination of where I was coming from as a historian and where I hope to be going and where in fact I have gone forward as an archivist, and thinking about those two professions and those two different relationships with archives in the context of digitization, digital preservation, really the digital age.

             Now, how do we deal with all of this digital stuff? I think historians are more concerned with we're not going to have anything. Well we're going to have something, we're just not, you know I'm not sure at this point what it will be and how you will access it.

             Student publications are the most accessible way for new researchers, who are obviously students, to get a foot in the door of the publishing world, both in terms of getting their name out there, making yourself Googleable in connection with Library & Information Science, but also sort of getting a foot in the door in terms of actually seeing what publishing is about. There's really no substitute for doing it.

Alex: That was Sarah Glassford, one of the authors published recently in Emerging Library & Information Perspectives, a new student-run journal in Library & Information Science published at the Faculty of Information and Media Studies at the University of Western Ontario and hosted by Western Libraries. ELIP, as the journal is often called, is a bit different because it's tied to a course. As the students learn about scholarly communication in the course, they practice it by taking on various roles in running the scholarly journal. They are editors, peer reviewers, proofreaders, consultants, promoters and many other rolls.

             Hello, I'm Alex Mayhew, a Ph.D. student at the Faculty of Information & Media Studies here at the University of Western Ontario. I recently spoke with four of the key people who are responsible for starting and sustain the journal; Marni Harrington, head of the FIMS Graduate Library; Melissa Seelye, the instructor in the scholarly communications course; Meghan

Kirkland, the current Managing Editor of ELIP; and Madison Edgar, the Inaugural Managing Editor

There was a lot to cover in our conversation. Here's Marni Harrington.

Marni: For many years I've wanted to have a journal coming out of our library that highlights the research that goes on through our MLIS program. And we have lots of students who work on research projects, you know, write awesome things for class, so wouldn't it be a great place for that work to go.

My role regarding ELIP is that I am an editorial team advisor. I also support the journal in many ways. So, this is a student-run, student-contributed journal, but it goes hand in hand with a course as well with Melissa Seelye's scholarly communication open access course. And the other part of that is having a Managing Editor so that we have some structure to ensure the journal sustainable. So, part of my role is working with that Managing Editor.

Students want more hands-on learning for many things, and this is giving them that. I think it's giving them that experiential learning they want, working with the journal, understanding how these things are put together. So that's what, you know that's part of why we do this and why I think it's important for the library to support it.

Alex: Here's Madison Edgar.

Madison: So, I'm Madison. I was the Managing Editor for the first issue of the journal Emerging Library & Information Perspectives. When I was a student at Western doing my MLIS, I worked at the FIMS Graduate Library and I became involved with the project. About a month or so into my job Marni thought that I would be a good fit for it. She had seen how I worked and how I organize things and communicated, and so she offered me the role. And I knew it was, you know, it was the first issue so we were going to have to figure out the logistics and everything, so I joined the team and away we went.

A lot of it was trial and error, feeling things out, just because this was the first time they had done this so really just seeing what worked and what didn't. I coordinated a lot so any communications with the journal I was a liaison between the Editorial Advisory Board and the advisors to the editorial team, as well as the class scholarly communications and open access publishing, so those students acted as the peer reviewers as well as the copyeditors of the journals. So I was really just the liaison between everybody and organizing the logistics of the journal and how it would be published through OJS, Open Journal System, so kind of, yeah, I guess just overseeing the logistics of everything.

Alex: Here's Meghan Kirkland.

Meghan: So I'm the Managing Editor, so I basically, I do editing, I was in charge of acquisitions, managing the submissions that are going on. I've managed volunteers who are copyediting, fact checking. I've liaised with students in the open access and scholarly communications course, so I've assigned submissions to them to peer review. I've looked at what they've submitted. I've basically amalgamated edits, everything. I'm currently formatting, so it goes on.

Nicole: I'm Nicole Schoenberger and I authored Access to Information in the Age of Trump, by looking at what's happening in the States under the Trump Administration in terms of changes to what information is available to the public, mainly government information, looking a bit deeper into what some of those implications are and what that actually means a bit further down the road. This changes too what information is available or, if it's taken off completely, it kind of undermines the public trust in the authenticity and the reliability of information, especially in how complete it is.

I think there's definitely always a connection between policy and politics, either overtly or not. So overtly, some of the information that I looked at that was – had seen changes was there was a lot of information on things like climate change, and of course that's something that the Trump Administration has ties to politically so I think there's definitely a connection there.

And in terms of some of the government websites that were taken off, I believe there were some sites on the LGBTQ community and, again, climate change and even like HIV prevention. Those are very important and, if you look at the changes that have been made and the political viewpoints and ideologies within the Trump Administration, I think there are some clear connections. So changes to information policy are really important and have deeper and longer-lasting impacts. It's not just a short-term 'Oh, this information isn't available'. It really can hinder scientific research and even just people's wellbeing if they don't have access to that information anymore.

I didn't really think that I would publish a paper as a student still. It was something I'd always seen as something to do after I complete my degree as opposed to something that I could tackle while I was still a student. I would definitely encourage students to look into publishing while they're still a student, especially in an open access journal like ELIP. It shows that you're engaged, you have research interests, that you are willing to put in the work to publish paper. And even if you're not looking to work at an academic library, I think it still shows that initiative and it's something that you can build on as you go further in your career.

Alex: Here's Melissa Seelye.

Melissa: I am currently the Scholarly Publishing and Systems Librarian at the University of Michigan Law Library. I'm also a limited duties instructor in the Faculty of Information & Media Studies at the University of

Western Ontario, which is why I am involved with this journal and the associated course. I'm a graduate of that program. I finished my MLIS there in the summer of 2017. And prior to that, I was involved with academic editing, so I have a background in scholarly publishing on that level and have seen the back end of production work that goes into publishing scholarly work.

ELIP's origin story is, well it's indicative of broader trends in the scholarly communication ecosystem, because initially we planned to launch ELIP on Bepress's Digital Commons software which is the software that Western Library still uses to power their institutional repository. However, in August of 2017 Elsevier acquired Bepress and we were at that stage in the final steps of designing ELIP's website on the Digital Commons platform.

So that pushed us to really sit down and think about what it would mean to launch an MLIS journal on a for-profit platform in general but especially one associated with Elsevier, given that Elsevier is such a giant player in the scholarly communication landscape and is increasingly consolidating all of the work-flow tools.

In light of that, we ultimately decided to move towards an Open Source platform and we chose Open Journal Systems, OJS, which is associated with the Public Knowledge Project out of Simon Fraser University. So of course we liked that that solution was Open Source, we also liked that it was based in Canada, and a lot of other universities in Canada are already using OJS so we felt that we were joining a well-established community.

We talk a lot in the course about the importance of audience and the importance of thinking about, especially in an open access publish context, thinking about writing not just to be cited by a few other peers within other academic institutions, but really writing so that others who may discover your work through a Google search or on Twitter will find it engaging and valuable.

The nice thing about doing it within this course is that the students complete individual peer review reports, but they are also assigned to a group and essentially sworn to secrecy to maintain the double-blind nature of the peer review process. But within that group they are able to discuss the article and, especially for students that have never published or been involved with peer review processes, this has been a really great learning experience, I think, based on the reflections they've shared with me, because it's helped them to see submission they're reviewing in a much more nuanced way beyond just their initial reading of it.

Alex: Meghan again.

Meghan: So, when you're writing an essay for a class, obviously it's meant for just your professor. Most people just write it and then submit it and they're done. Some people don't even edit what they've written, and I think it's more just something that people are just doing for the sake of doing it.

Whereas academic and scholarly publishing, it's something that people feel very passionate about, something that they're trying to actually contribute to the community, and they know that other LIS professionals are going to be reading that. So I think that's very important, that you have that passion for the topic that you're writing about, whereas when it's just an essay it's usually just something that like, 'Oh, it was from the LIS that I chose so, blah'.

Alex: Melissa again.

Melissa: We critically engage with long-established processes in scholarly publishing. We interrogate whether existing peer review processes are in need of significant re-imagining. We talk about, again, impact and understandings of what impact mean. And so, to me, this has been incredibly rewarding because, in the day-to-day work of libraries, one doesn't often get to question such foundational things as that. We're often focusing on how to make what already exists better. But that kind of transformation change isn't exactly looped into one's day-to-day work, and so I've found that aspect of the course and the journal really rewarding.

Marni: I like the fact that it actually came together and all the pieces fit together so that, you know, we had this whole idea of doing this journal but where were our peer reviewers coming from? Where was the work coming from, so that all these different pieces fit together? Because it's a big puzzle that we've got the journal, we've got the class, and together it's just symbiotic so one doesn't work without the other. So I think for me that's the real story is how well these things fit together.

Jim: I'm Jim Seale and with Nicole Schoenberger we wrote Be Internet Awesome: A Critical Analysis of Google's Child-Focused Internet Safety Program. It is looking at Be Internet Awesome, which is a child-focused Internet safety program made by Google. And we were basically looking at does this equip children with the tools and abilities to stay safe on the Internet.

The conclusions that we come to are that, although there's a lot of interesting pedagogical stuff within Be Internet Awesome, it is putting the onus on users to keep their information safe. Be Internet Awesome doesn't focus specifically on companies and the risks that companies can have in terms of your Internet safety. The job isn't done by just plunking your child in front of Be Internet Awesome and saying 'Well, now that they've done that they're safe on the Internet'.

It was actually quoted in a New York Times article, a journalist who got in touch with us who was writing about Be Internet Awesome and used some quotations from our article in that New York Times article, which was very cool to be able to see that kind of a reaction to our work. I had to look the person up and make sure that they were legitimate before I felt really good about it.

I absolutely would encourage students to publish in this journal or another journal. I guess are a couple reasons why I think that students should try to publish their work. On the very selfish end of the spectrum, I think that it's important for students to be able to get that line on the resume if they're interested in academic librarianship. I think that it goes a long way and lets people know this is a person who can do this aspect of the job.

On the other end of the spectrum, in terms of learning and educational – I mean I guess that's selfish too, but I think, you know, in terms of making you a better librarian, it has drastically affected the way that I teach information literacy, just because I have a personal experience of going through this process of research and publishing and seeing the reactions to my work so that, you know, the idea of scholarship as a conversation takes on a much more concrete meaning for me.

Female: This has been another episode of So What.

Male: The podcast about Library & Information Science research and why it matters.

Female: So What is created and produced by students at the Faculty of Information & Media Studies at Western University in London, Ontario.

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