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Christine N. Turner
University of Massachusetts - Amherst

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Developing a Vendor Scorecard as a Tool to Re-Allocate Acquisitions Dollars and Transform Scholarly Communication

*Acquisitions Institute 2019*

Christine Turner  
Acquisitions & Scholarly Communications Librarian  
UMass Amherst  
cturner@library.umass.edu
Prologue: How my brain works

- High level to detail while making parallel connections along the way
- Not particularly linear
- Or stagnant… I've been thinking about many things and making connections since I put in the proposal, and during the presentations that have proceeded this one.
- That said, here's an overview of what I'll address today
Overview

- Problem & Context
- Principles & Values
- Principles into Practice at UMA Libraries
- Vendor Evaluation Scorecard (VES) Goals
- VES Development Process, Criteria, Rating System
- Lessons
- Future Developments
- Discussion
Simple and I think widely recognized problem statement

- Too expensive: costs to libraries and parent organizations have risen too much, too quickly. Promised economies of digital have not materialized
- Too restrictive & exclusive: 1.) to those who contribute to scholarly discourse in a recognized and distributed way, and 2.) to those who can access & use scholarly outputs
Ecosystem Context

- Many participants
- Varying microsystem norms
- Economic models
  - How/do they exist together?
- Principles & Values || Knowledge & Practices
  - Are they in alignment?

- Participants: researcher/scholar/artist, reviewer, funder, content provider, licensor, vendor, library/repository, consumer/audience, etc.
- Microsystem norms: geography, language, discipline, group/organization, politics, economics, social
- Economic models: Market-based vs. commons. How/do they exist together? What is “public good” and how do we pay for it?
- In the realm of so many variables, an emerging approach has been to promote shared principles & values, then to examine if our knowledge and practices are consistent & in alignment with them
Principles & Values (see examples in handout)

Define & Work from What is Held in Common

- Foundations for Open Scholarship Strategy Development
  - Temporal categories: short, mid & long term
  - Activity categories: search, analysis, writing, publication, outreach
  - Organization categories: individual, group, institute, national
- UNT Manifesto (Library)
- MIT Open Access Task Force Recommendations (not on list but ask) (institution)
- U of California Principles
- Letters of support for UC v Elsevier, many based on values (UNC - Chapel Hill, Virginia, Minnesota, Washington, UMass Amherst)
- See also MDPI Publications (open) “Ten Hot Topics Around Scholarly Publishing” by Jonathon Tennant et al - https://www.mdpi.com/2304-6775/7/2/34/htm
Cited, referenced in Foundations for Open Scholarship Strategy Development
The UMass Amherst’s Strategic Plan highlights our principles and values which cover more than collections. This is available on our website for better reading, but I want to highlight collections related points.
Strategic Plan: Putting Principles into Practice @ UMass Amherst Libraries

- “Explore collection strategies that promote open scholarship”
- “Support new modes of scholarly inquiry and communication”
- “Engage our community with open inquiry, mutual respect, and inclusiveness”
- “Promote meaningful assessment for decision-making”
- https://www.library.umass.edu/about-the-libraries/strategic-plan/

We Value: Collaborations & Partnerships • Diversity & Inclusion • Innovation & Creativity • Openness & Transparency • Sustainability & Stewardship
Meaningful Assessment…

- 2.5% Open Data Collection Tool as benchmarking exercise
  - https://www.cni.org/topics/economic-models/the-2-5-commitment-initiative
- Develop a basis and tool for moving acquisitions $$ to support “open”
  - Initial focus on vendors b/c this is $$ relationship

- Fall 2017 participated with 35 other academic libraries of varying sizes to determine libraries’ investments in open content and infrastructure.
- How do we document, sustain and expand our open investments?
- Start with Red Light, Green Light concept.
Vendor Evaluation Scorecard

- Goals
- Development Process
- Criteria and rating system (handouts)
Goals

- Systematically collect data on vendor performance
- Provide justification for decisions to build open scholarly collections & infrastructure representative of a wide range of participants, perspectives and purposes
- Accelerate transformation of acquisitions spending from paywall to open access
- Demonstrate & communicate values-based collection management with campus community, other libraries & vendors
- Provide benchmarks & vendor performance data to other libraries in support of collective action

- To date @ UMA vendor/provider performance data has not been collected & analyzed in widespread, systematic, collective way
- Create systematic approach to evidence-based decision-making
- Tool for communication and influence
- Back to Foundations & circles of influence: library depts, library, UMass, other libraries, market
Development Process (October 2018-February 2019)

- Cross functional library staff input to criteria list and rating system
- Testing: cross functional team conducted 3 week “sprint” to apply criteria, rating to 2 vendors (SAGE, IOP)
- Regular communication, reports to relevant committees, library management & Research Library Council (Faculty Senate Cte)
- Sharing & comparing with other libraries

- Department & committee meetings and shared documents
- Early questions about criteria weighting
For Your Review (handouts)

- Evaluating Vendors, Aligning Values (v. 1.5)
- VES Form “Map” (v. 3)

Map is questions, vendor + roles, score values and respondent expertise
What We Learned

- Data availability varies
- Some criteria are difficult or impossible to “score”
- How do we create benchmarks for qualitative criteria?
  - Concerns about bias & accuracy
- Data collection, review is time consuming & requires a variety of expertise

- Data availability: existing vs. new vendor; additional roles: content provider, platform, licensor; material type: e-journals, e-books, databases, data sets, streaming, etc.; Vendor’s openness & transparency
- Difficult criteria: diversity & inclusion; financial viability; faculty contacts
Reaction:

Don’t mess with my stuff!

Immediate and strong concerns about implications for faculty research

Cognizant of relationship of trust with faculty, wary of drawing line in sand with sole provider critical resources
Future Developments

- @ UMass Amherst
- Collaboration

Think of this sphere as bowl of ideas with varying degrees of heat, some “pop” and some remain kernals
- Systematically collect & store data about existing vendors
  - Sales & invoicing practices
  - Access & cataloging issues
  - Statistics
  - Support
  - License terms & conditions
- Develop & execute communication plan to share values-based acquisitions criteria w/campus stakeholders
- Develop & test customized scorecards based on vendor/provider roles, licenses & material types

UC Communication Toolkit, other library efforts, “mission driven”
Customized scorecards: complements vendor provided data, includes resource level data, & combines internal & external data for renewals
Collaborations

● Develop & test vendor/provider questionnaire based on common standards & shared values
  ○ Communicate values & expectations with vendors/providers
● Develop & test flexible data collection tool that supports collaborative inputs
  ○ Distribute workload
  ○ Share information

Shared values: letters of support for UC v Elsevier from UNC-Chapel Hill, Minnesota, Virginia, Washington, UMA
Let’s Discuss...

Thank you!!