

LIBRARY PUBLISHING WORKFLOWS

EDUCOPIA
INSTITUTE
Community Cultivators

Library
Publishing
Coalition

INSTITUTE of
Museum and Library
SERVICES

Preliminary Findings

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Project Background

Library Publishing Workflows is a two-year (2019-2021) IMLS-funded project to investigate, synchronize, and model a range of workflows to increase the capacity of libraries to publish open access, peer-reviewed scholarly journals. Most library publishers have developed services in response to local needs, and initial workflows are generally home-grown, varied, and idiosyncratic. This represents a missed opportunity for comparative analysis and peer learning; it also yields frequent omissions of crucial workflow steps, such as contributing metadata to aggregators (essential for discovery and impact) and depositing content in preservation repositories (necessary for a stable scholarly record).

Principal Investigators: Melanie Schlosser (PI), Educopia Institute, Scholarly Communications Program Leader & Katherine Skinner (co-PI), Educopia Institute, Executive Director

Partner Institutions: Atlanta University Center, California Digital Library, Claremont Colleges, Columbia University, Illinois Wesleyan University, Pacific University, University of Alberta, University of Michigan, University of Pittsburgh, University of Redlands, Virginia Tech, and Wayne State University

Pain Points

In the first round of interviews with partners, we asked what the most difficult parts of their workflow were. We recorded 48 total pain points, spanning the entire publishing process from submission to post-publication, and including issues as diverse as editor training and communication, institutional stressors, platform shortcomings, and text formatting. We found that "people" problems—communication, time limitations, and training—were much more common than technical problems. Most of the pain points discussed impacted the library faculty and staff, but partners also mentioned a number of frustrations that have been related to them by editors, authors, and other colleagues.

Sources of Pain Points	
time-consuming manual work	12
managing expectations of partners	7
editor training/turnover	7
lack of library control over process	6
communication with editors	6
volume of articles/issues	5
format inflexibility on given platform	4
lack of time for big picture/overhauls	4
remembering how to do the process	4
platform doesn't support needed step	3
platform feature needed	3
cost	3
vendor shortcomings	3
volume of different journals	3
metadata ingesting/harvesting	2
lack of staff for oversight/continuity	2
needs of publishing vs rest of library	2
lack of developers/developer time	1
scope creep	1
delayed communication w/ partners	1

When Pain Points Occur	
submission & review	4
production	12
post-publication	9
not tied to a phase	22

We also found that three different areas were at the core of a majority of the pain points highlighted by our partners—copyediting & typesetting, lack of library control over the process, and staffing.

Copyediting & Typesetting

Copyediting and typesetting were the publication steps that came up most often in pain points discussion, largely due to the amount of manual, focused labor required for these tasks. This was also an area where several respondents said that existing software (including Word, LaTeX, and InDesign) are insufficient, and where the publishing platforms partners were using (including OJS and Digital Commons) had little or no functionality for doing this work.

- A few ways that this work manifests for our library partners are:
- library staff are working with journal editors to find funding (including grants & APCs) for freelancers or vendors to copyedit and/or typeset
 - library staff are doing the copyediting and typesetting work themselves, and it is a time-intensive process
 - library staff are doing quality control and correction when layout fails
 - library staff assist in vendor relations or send materials to vendors

Lack of Library Control

Our partner libraries played a wide variety of roles in the publishing process, but all shared at least some responsibilities with external partners, including editors, vendors, and/or freelancers. This means that library workloads, timelines, and technology are often dictated by others.

- Some of the ways that a lack of library control impacted libraries were:
- coordinating work with specialists who aren't very familiar with larger goals and mission of library publishing
 - partners may complete tasks without communicating milestones with library
 - timelines are out of library's control, meaning workloads are unpredictable and can be overwhelming
 - keeping partners engaged and moving forward when timelines get drawn out

Staffing

Staffing plays a large role in what services libraries can provide, as well as the scale at which they can provide them. Most partner programs had just one or two staff working on journal publishing, and none had more than five.

- Some of the ways that staffing has impacted publishing programs were:
- ability to handle time-consuming, manual work
 - inability to scale up the number of journals published by the library
 - inability to provide customized services to different journals
 - balancing publishing duties with other library duties
 - lack of oversight or additional checks on work
 - struggles to fill roles or continue if a staff member leaves the institution
 - balancing the budgetary needs of the publishing program against the needs of the library as a whole
 - lack of developers to make improvements or fix software issues

Next Steps

We will be sharing more information about pain points from Library Publishing Coalition's Twitter account ([@LibPubCoalition](#)) and using the hashtag [#LibPubWorkflows](#) in the next month!

Over the next 18 months, we will hold an in-person project meeting, conduct a second set of interviews, release documentation and visualizations representing the workflows of each partner library, and conduct deeper research into a few of the topics that have been areas of difficulty for partner libraries.

We will be releasing updates on the [LPC Blog](#), and sharing via the [LPC Twitter account](#) and [LPC's mailing list](#).

Please also feel free to contact me with any questions or suggestions!
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