Rollins College
Rollins Scholarship Online

Faculty Publications

2015

Being Earnest with Collections: Investing in Open Access at a Small Academic Library

Jonathan H. Harwell
Rollins College, jharwell@rollins.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Published In
An invited contribution to a column in Against the Grain, available online at http://www.against-the-grain.com/

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Rollins Scholarship Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Rollins Scholarship Online. For more information, please contact rwalton@rollins.edu.

Being Earnest with Collections:
Investing in Open Access at a Small Academic Library

Jonathan H. Harwell, Head of Collections & Systems, Rollins College,
jharwell@rollins.edu

This morning I woke up by reading a long passage from Richard Grant's *Dispatches from Pluto: Lost and Found in the Mississippi Delta* (Simon & Schuster, 2015), a fascinating account by a writer who has migrated among various countries and now settled in Pluto, Mississippi. This book is listed at $16 in paperback or $11.99 for Kindle; it's not available from any of the library ebook vendors listed in YBP's GOBI interface. I read the excerpt as published in *The Telegraph* online and accessible free of charge. It's being shared on social media, so it can be discovered and read by people like me who weren't aware of the book or who don't regularly read *The Telegraph*. This is the sort of serendipity that opens texts to a broad readership because they are not hidden behind paywalls. At least that's the case for one selection from Grant's book.

As I write this, it's Open Access Week 2015, in which SPARC promotes the ongoing open access movement. In recent years we've been seeing increasing numbers of articles, books, and multimedia available with open access. Yet of course there are still many texts that are not. That's not always a problem for people. As long as we're academics…currently employed…by institutions with healthy budgets…whose librarians have acquired the exact resources we need to access…or can request them via interlibrary loan. But it can be a problem for people who are members of public libraries that don't provide ILL service…independent scholars…academics who are between jobs, retired, or employed by institutions with limited budgets, or in remote countries…or remote areas of the Mississippi Delta, for example…many of our own students the day after graduation (or commencement, if you will…commencing reduced information access)…or perhaps anthropologists working for a state government that doesn't provide them with the library resources they need.

So in honor of Open Access Week, I'd like to share what we librarians are doing at Rollins College to support the movement. We are a small liberal arts college with a graduate business school, located in Winter Park, Florida. We've found over the past few years that while our faculty continue to actively recommend library purchases, those numbers have declined. Meanwhile we review every serial and database subscription annually to make sure we're using our funds effectively. Even without a cancellation mandate, we're identifying low-hanging fruit-- subscriptions that have little or no usage and high costs. These factors have enabled us to find more effective uses for some of our

library funds. We have canceled some subscriptions and added new ones. We have also invested in open access, to do our part in opening up the information landscape for our own patrons and for the world at large.

Rollins is a leader in open access. Our College of Arts & Sciences faculty passed an Open Access Policy in 2010. According to our Library Director Jonathan Miller, we were the third liberal arts college faculty to adopt a policy of open access, following the Harvard model (Miller, Jonathan. "Open access and liberal arts colleges: Looking beyond research institutions." *College & Research Libraries News*; vol. 72, no. 1, Jan. 2011, pp. 16-19,30; also available in our institutional repository).

Our library faculty have already supported the pilot collection of Knowledge Unlatched, which provides open access to books from a variety of scholarly publishers in various disciplines. This fall we decided to take a close look at the proliferating OA projects and determine whether we will support more efforts. Erin Gallagher, Electronic Resources & Serials Librarian (and *ATG* "Hot Topics" columnist), worked with Shawne Holcomb, Collections Data Specialist, to produce a spreadsheet with data on the projects to be considered. For each they provided the URL, a summary, availability of usage statistics, discoverability, embargo period, DRM, perpetual archiving, MARC records, cost, platform features, contacts, internal notes, and notes from an informal survey of other libraries in the Oberlin Group consortium of liberal arts colleges. With Ms. Gallagher and Dr. Miller's leadership, the librarians discussed and voted on whether to support each project. Some we will go ahead and invest in, and others we will keep an eye on for further development, and possible investment in the future. We'd like to share our decisions in case they're useful for our colleagues; and in the spirit of open access, we can share the spreadsheet with anyone interested. Here are our decisions in no particular order.

- Knowledge Unlatched: We paid $1300 for the pilot collection a few years ago. We will pledge at least $2643 for the next collection, although this cost might go down with more libraries participating. We will be selecting packages to support, based on upcoming webinars.
- PLOS: We will join as an institutional member, and will use direct billing to cover any author costs for our faculty.
- BioMed Central: We will join as an institutional member for $960 annually.
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: We will join with Professional Membership at $25 annually.

- Open Textbook Library: No cost unless an entire book is printed. We are promoting with a link on our OER page (see below).
- Lever Initiative: We will support with $4000 annually.
- Open Access Network: $10,791 sought. Not supporting at this time.
- Open Book Publishers: $500 annually sought. Not supporting at this time.
- Open Library of the Humanities: $500 annually sought. Not supporting at this time. (Disclosure: I volunteer as a section editor for the OLH.)
- PhilPapers: $500 annually sought. Not supporting at this time.
- Open Library: donations accepted. Not supporting at this time.
- Reveal Digital Independent Voices: $5130 sought. Not supporting at this time.
- HAU-NET: no cost information available yet. Not supporting at this time.
- Unglue.it: free to join, and pledges accepted. Not supporting at this time.
- UC Press Luminos: $1000 minimum sought. Not supporting at this time.

Along with these investments in external programs, we're investing internally as well. Dr. Miller has initiated an internal grant program for Rollins faculty, as an incentive to adopt and/or create open educational resources (OER) for their courses. Our OER page at http://www.rollins.edu/library/services/oer.html provides an explanation of the grant program, a brief note on the costs of textbooks (some are over $350), and links to OER repositories. The grant provides a stipend to the faculty member, as well as a team of collaborators consisting of a librarian, an instructional technologist, and the director of our Institute for Effective Teaching. The first recipient, Dr. MacKenzie Moon Ryan, is bringing OER to her course on global art history.

After Dr. Miller presented the OER grant program at the Florida ACRL meeting last week, several in attendance remarked that he had given them a nudge toward actually taking action and investing in what we're talking about so much. OER is an important element of the open access movement, and has become a hot topic recently as textbook prices continue to rise.

As we head back to Charleston, I'm hoping to hear about how other librarians are choosing to invest in open access. Are you supporting some of the programs we've listed, and/or others? Are you collaborating with faculty members on identifying and/or creating OER, and researching the usage rights for those resources? If we're going to be earnest in supporting the open access movement, we're going to have to continue investing time and funding in open access resources.