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Development of a Scholarly Communications Program at Grand Valley State University

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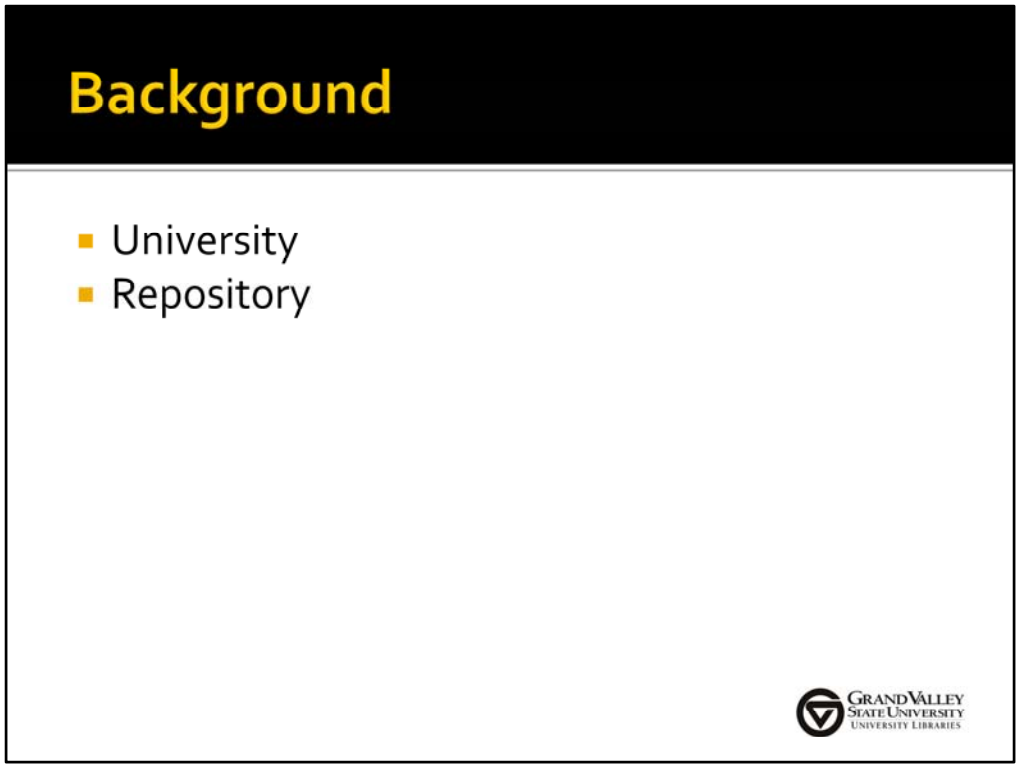


I normally try to avoid spending much time discussing the characteristics of my university when doing these kinds of presentations, but I think it is important in this case, as it provides some context to how we differ from other universities, especially since we're not an ARL.

GVSU is a comprehensive, Master's I university with more than 24,000 students. So we're not a research intensive university, but we are relatively large.

Regarding a repository, it was something that was on our radar for some time. Our dean is a huge proponent of open access and the idea of establishing a repository was something she brought with her to the university. At the same time we are very careful about not trying to take on more than we can handle. Sustainability is very important to us when we look at programs and a lack of staff-knowledge and just staffing in general really prevented us from establishing a repository on our own.

In the fall of 2007, though, we received multiple requests from different groups on campus that were essentially requesting we establish a repository.

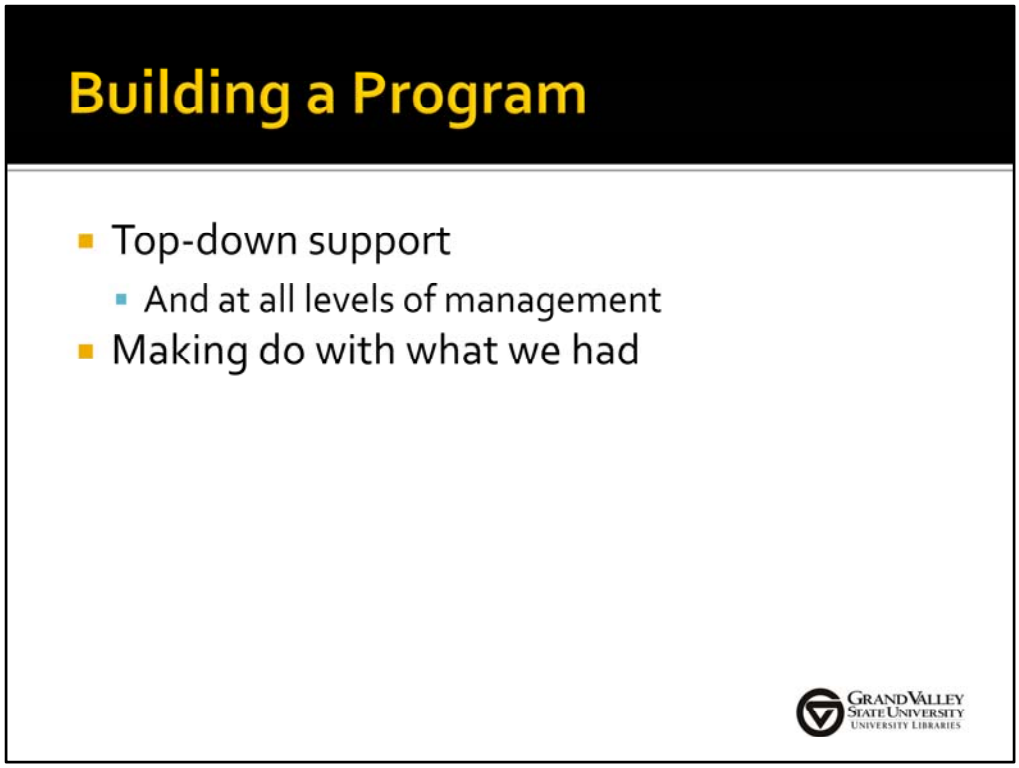
With this demonstrated demand, we felt that we needed to move forward with developing an institutional repository and in the winter of 2008 our repository went live.

So we had a repository. Now what?

We put together a small committee to set the direction of the repository and many of us took on different responsibilities on top of our existing duties.

As we worked with different groups on campus we were pleasantly surprised by the amount of success we had and the enthusiasm by which we were greeted. In addition to the repository we were able to do some university-wide programming on author rights that was sponsored by groups outside the library.

This was all great, but all along we knew we still had work to do to build a sustainable program. We knew from others' successes and challenges that liaison librarians would be key to a successful program, and that the model we were working with was not a final solution. Workshops and presentations only reached small numbers of faculty and generally reached only those who were already in the "know." We were only able to work on the repository in fits and starts and we were limited in what we could take on. Our liaison librarians, as a whole, were very interested and enthusiastic, but there was an acknowledged learning curve to be addressed. The librarians who had that knowledge or strong interest were being very successful, but one or two successful liaisons do not make a successful program.



I kind of like to look at those early years as the infancy of the repository and scholarly communications program. We were kind of bleary-eyed parents, just trying to keep things up and running, but not necessarily making a lot of progress. We didn't drop the baby down the stairs or forget to feed it or anything, but we weren't able to give it all the love and attention it probably wanted and needed.

As our repository has moved into its toddler years, though, we have been able to make progress at establishing what is much more of a library-wide scholarly communications program. What I'd like to talk about next are some of the keys to doing this and the steps we have taken to put this program in place.

The first thing I'd like to talk about is having support from the top on down. This starts with the dean and sets the tone for the library. Just as important is to have support at the other levels of management. This includes the associate deans and the department heads who directly supervise liaison librarians.

The second thing is making do with what you have. As I talk about how we developed our program hopefully you'll be able to see how we didn't receive a lot of extra funding or resources. What we were able to do, though, was to question existing practices, examine the opportunity cost of continuing to do things the way we always had and then make changes where appropriate that made better use of our limited resources. In many of these instances, this allowed us to reallocate those resources toward supporting the repository.

Building a Program

- Making scholarly communications a regular part of liaison librarian job
  - Successful scholarly communications program reliant on liaisons
  - Repository as only one part of scholarly communications program
  - Making scholarly communications equal to other liaison duties

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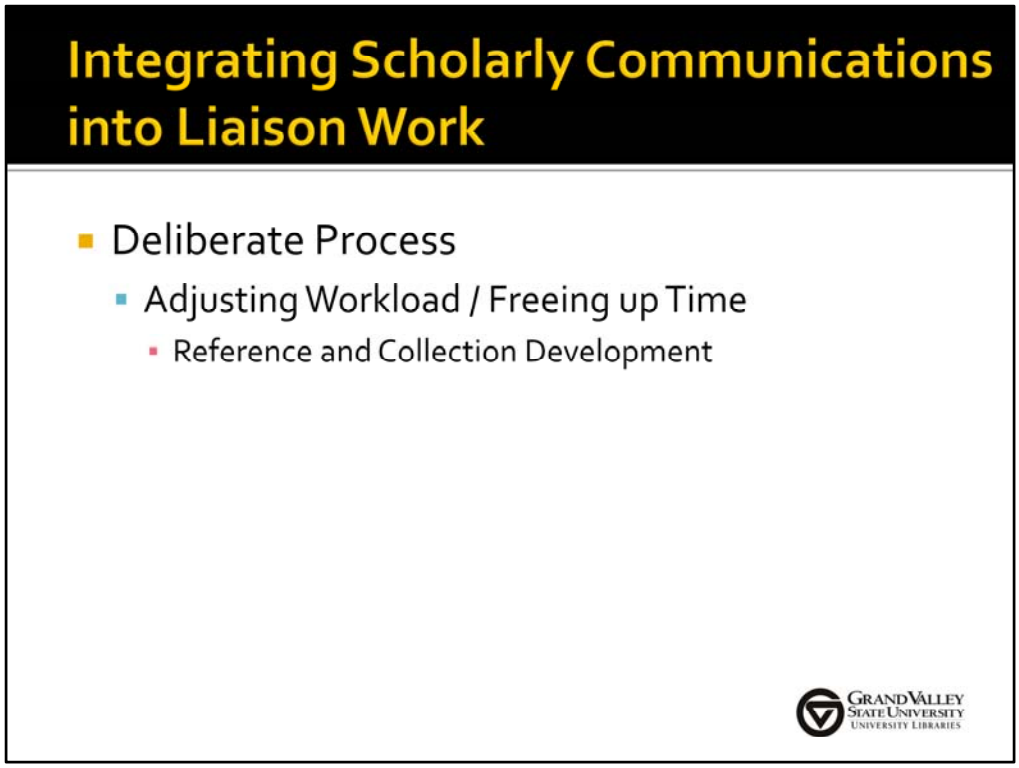
The third thing was to make scholarly communications a regular part of the liaisons' job, just the same way collection development, reference and instruction are parts of their job. Although there are some wonderful examples where a single person has been able to build a successful repository, we feel the repository is only one part of our scholarly communications program.

If we could get liaisons actively involved in this kind of program we knew we could have a much greater impact on our campus. We were already emphasizing getting those librarians out into the university and collaborating with faculty, so this really went right along with that. And we knew that as liaisons they would have so many more opportunities to have those discussions than our I would or my associate dean or our scholarly communications coordinator.



As we began to develop a plan for this larger scholarly communications program, realizing and agreeing on the critical role liaisons would play, we knew that we couldn't just say "you need to also focus on scholarly communications." We needed to deliberately integrate scholarly communications into their work, giving them the time, the tools and the ability to be successful.

To begin, we looked at how we could create time for liaisons to take on these additional duties. As we looked at trends in academic libraries and at our own library, we began to identify some different ways to free up time for our liaisons.

Like many universities we had seen a dramatic drop in our reference transactions and we had also seen a shift in the nature of these questions. We had librarians sitting on the desk eight hours a week handing out pencils and telling students where the restrooms were. So we began to make some changes over a couple of years. We started with adding student assistants onto the desk and have evolved to today where at our main library we have no librarians on the reference desk and actually no reference desk.

With collection development we have been adding narrowly defined approval plans that automatically acquire the "obvious" titles for librarians and we have also moved heavily into patron-driven acquisitions. Today approximately one-third of our monograph acquisitions are made through approvals and patron-driven acquisitions and we're working to increase that percentage over the next couple of years.

Both of these changes were done because they're in line with best practices we're seeing today and by freeing librarians from these activities they are able to spend more time collaborating with faculty and working on things like scholarly communications.

Another way we've worked to integrate scholarly communications into liaisons' work is by providing them with training and support. Let me first talk about support in form of human resources and how we acquired them.

We established our scholarly communications initiatives coordinator position earlier this year. Jodi Tyron, the person in this position, is a liaison librarian who spends about half of her time scholarly communications. The idea behind this position is to have a librarian who can keep an eye on "big picture" issues and programming and to provide support and expertise to our liaisons. When we have a program or organization on campus that is interested in partnering with the repository, Jodi gets the ball rolling and assists the liaisons with more deep expertise on the repository and scholarly communications issues.

Our paraprofessional support, handles the nuts and bolts of loading content into the repository, acquiring rights, etc. These kinds of tasks took up great deal of time for those who were engaged in the scholarly communications program and were often the ones that made liaisons shy away from engaging in the repository. Like the coordinator position, this position is partly repository work and also assists on different collection development projects. Also like the scholarly communications initiatives coordinator position, this is a relatively new position.

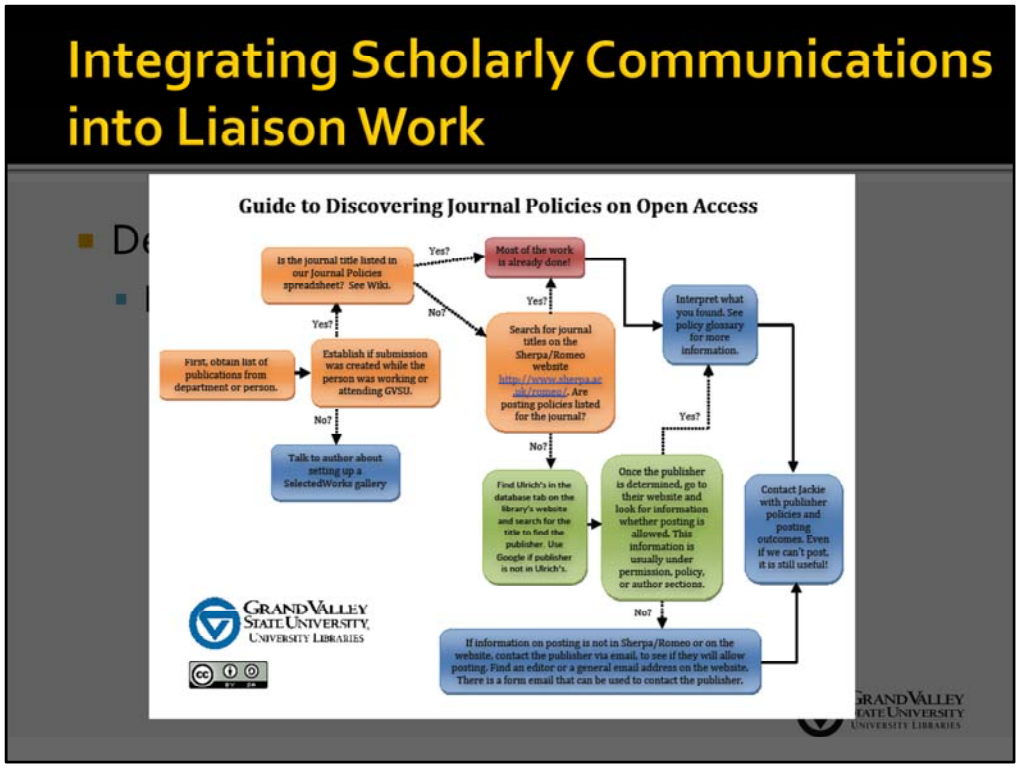
Since we have had this team in place, though, the results have been dramatic. We've seen the repository almost double in size, we've had new programs come on board, we are in the process of adding a peer reviewed journal to repository (including its entire backfile), we have some great programming in the works for Open Access Week and we have been engaging more liaisons than ever in the scholarly communications program.

And for both of these positions, we did not receive any additional funding or any additional lines. For the coordinator position we had a librarian leave, which gave us the opportunity to examine librarians' workload. We had some newer librarians who had reached the point where they could take on additional subject areas and that allowed us to craft this new position from an existing line. For the paraprofessional position, we had a retirement. The person who retired worked in technical services. Over the past few years we've outsource much of our tech services work, and by examining our processes we were able to move a position from this area to collections and scholarly communications.

In addition to having the people there to support the liaisons we have been working to educate liaisons on different issues. Having a dean who is a national expert on these issues has helped to educate staff and she has given several formal presentations to liaisons on these issues. We held some brown bags a couple of years ago with some success. Our idea there was to have a core group of liaison librarians develop some deep knowledge and then share that knowledge with the colleagues through the brown bags. In retrospect that may have been asking a lot of the peer instructors. Still, it did help to raise awareness and knowledge.

Currently we are working on developing a tool kit for our liaisons. Jodi Tyron, our scholarly communications coordinator, and Colleen Lyon, one of our science librarians, have been working on a number of different resources, along with Jackie Rander our library associate.

So here we have an example of just how liaisons can get started with working with their disciplines.



And here we have a flow chart that walks them through the process of determining a journal's policy on posting in a repository.

Integrating Scholarly Communications into Liaison Work

- Deliberate Process
  - Providing Support
    - Human Resources
      - Scholarly Communications Initiatives Coordinator
      - Paraprofessional Support
    - Training, Resources & Support
      - Brown Bags and Tool Kit
      - Holding Hands

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The last way we're providing support is by holding our liaisons hands as they work with programs. I know this phrase sometimes has negative connotations, but what we want is for our liaisons to be successful and we want to provide them every bit of support that we can to make sure they are successful. This means providing them things like the tool kit, sitting down and talking one-on-one and going to meetings with them. Again, throwing them out of the nest and expecting them to fly is not going to work. You have to give them every opportunity to develop a skill set and a comfort level with these issues.

Integrating Scholarly Communications into Liaison Work

- Deliberate Process
  - Integrating scholarly communications into job descriptions

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Let's move on and talk about a third way we've integrated scholarly communications into liaisons work. And this is by codifying the role of scholarly communications into their job descriptions. I talked earlier about putting scholarly communications on equal footing with roles like reference, instruction and collection development. Part of making that happen is to making expectations crystal clear.

Integrating Scholarly Communications into Liaison Work

- Deliberate Process
  - Integrating scholarly communications into job descriptions

In collaboration with the Scholarly Communications Initiatives Coordinator, seeks to identify and acquire faculty, student and institutional scholarship and creative materials in assigned departments for inclusion in ScholarWorks@GVSU

Keeps faculty in assigned liaison areas informed of issues surrounding scholarly publishing

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Here is the language we ended up putting into the description. We worked with the liaisons to develop the description and like any good academic unit we picked over every last word in the description.

Integrating Scholarly Communications into Liaison Work

- Deliberate Process
  - Assessment of Liaison Engagement

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We finalized the job language description earlier this year. Now that we have this in place, the next step for us is to begin to assess liaisons level of engagement. We're still working on this, but anticipate that this will be quite flexible. I don't think a quantitative measure like number of new series established or workshops given will be the kind of assessment used. Instead, we will be looking for evidence of engagement, which could happen on a number of different levels and in a variety of ways.

Examples of liaisons working with programs, open access week engagement, rapid expansion of repository with addition of human resources.

Opportunities: librarian knowledge, ramping up in a sustainable fashion, having all liaisons take scholarly communications on with enthusiasm.

Thank You