

Developing an Academic Publishing Service Continuum

Matthias AMMON^{1,a} and Danny KINGSLEY^a

^a *Office of Scholarly Communication, Cambridge University Library*

Abstract. This paper describes the establishment of a continuum of publishing and preservation services for the academic community at the University of Cambridge, particularly in relation to grey literature. It sets out the initial identification of the need for this service and the process of establishing a variety of options. As the project is at an early stage, the paper discusses the particular issues such an initiative faces in a research university consisting of a large number of institutions with significant levels of autonomy.

Keywords. Library publishing, academic led publishing, grey literature, repositories, academic publishing

1. Introduction

The University of Cambridge is formed from a variety of institutions, including over 100 academic departments organised into six schools. As the starting point for an investigation into academic-led publishing initiatives at the University of Cambridge and the potential need to offer services in this area through the Office of Scholarly Communication, a search was undertaken for publications emanating from the departments of the University that did not come under the usual output category of peer-reviewed journal articles or monographs. The exact amount of material falling under this category is extremely difficult to quantify, as it is not always clear whether publication series are ongoing or defunct, what the association with the University is, or who the contact person might be. Faculties and departments at the University enjoy a large amount of autonomy in administration. It is therefore difficult to get an overview of publication undertakings that happen across the university, as there is no central place where such information is collated. Such initiatives may indeed be undertaken by members of the academic community on a personal basis without necessarily having an official affiliation with a department.

An analysis of the material that was discovered established that the publications comprised a wide variety of outputs and formats. In terms of publication method this ranged from photocopied sheets of paper to professionally produced and indexed publications, both in print and online. Discussions with some of the originators of the content indicated a lack of knowledge about, and understanding of, the need for unique identifiers, indexing services and preservation. In some cases the same material was

¹ Corresponding Author, Office of Scholarly Communication, Cambridge University Library, West Road, Cambridge, United Kingdom, CB3 9DR; E-mail: mra29@cam.ac.uk.

being published across multiple platforms – each with their own unstable links, causing identification, citation and long term preservation issues.

In addition, the lower quality publications posed a potential branding challenge for both Cambridge University Press and the University of Cambridge itself. Discussion with both organisations resulted in the decision to provide solutions to increase the quality and stability of academic-led publishing outputs to a standard that is expected of the University of Cambridge. In addition it was clear that a solution needed to be found for capturing, preserving and disseminating these outputs as part of the research undertaken by the academic community at Cambridge.

2. Context

Institutional repositories have grown in importance within UK universities due to funding mandates requiring the research output of funded work be made Open Access. In addition to a place of deposit for peer-reviewed literature under these terms, institutional repositories also offer a place for the capture and dissemination of grey literature. For our purposes, grey literature refers to outputs produced by or in association with university departments that have not gone through the peer-review process and/or are published by academics or departments themselves, rather than a commercial publisher. This includes but is not limited to full academic journals, working papers, technical reports, student journals, lecture series, conference proceedings, one-off publications and other ephemera. In the first instance, the focus was on the capture of already existing material, such as back issues of journals, for preservation, with a view to channelling future publications through the infrastructure hosted by the University Library.

Cambridge University established a DSpace repository in 2005. The Office of Scholarly Communication (OSC) was established in 2015 and took responsibility for the management of the repository. In 2016 the OSC upgraded the repository with an improved interface and name - Apollo. In addition to Open Access versions of peer-reviewed articles, the repository also holds research data, such as 175,000 chemical molecules, and is home to several thousand theses.

Clearly Apollo is a simple solution to many of the use cases we uncovered in our original audit of academic-led publishing in Cambridge. One of the first activities in this project was to address the vulnerability of the *Cambridge Journal of China Studies*. This journal had been in print publication for a decade with an online version of the articles available on an unstable website. The OSC undertook a bulk upload of all the past articles for the journal to Apollo[1]. This meant the articles now had digital object identifiers (DOIs), were properly indexed and discoverable through search engines and their long-term preservation was being addressed.

However, the inadequacy of the repository interface for the purposes of displaying a journal's table of contents became apparent. The repository is organised into collections, which can provide statistics for and pull related material together, however the standard interface with a linear list of content is not appropriate for, say, the display of images, or conference proceedings.

As work has progressed over the past year, the OSC has had more in-depth discussions with departments about other potential use cases for publication. Several research areas have a long established tradition of publishing working paper series. While these were usually initially paper publications, mostly they are now available

online on a department's website. In one instance, some investigation identified that the papers were being uploaded into several websites as well as in the repository, meaning there were several different links to the same material, only one of which (the repository version) had a DOI attached or displayed. This is clearly far from ideal.

Other use cases that have arisen include the desire to publish conference proceedings, and a platform for publishing typeset and copyedited monographs.

While the details of the needs of the academic community may be specific to Cambridge, the recent rise of new university presses or academic-led presses, based in or originating from the university library, in the UK indicates a desire on the behalf of university-centred academic communities and the academic libraries associated with their institutions to provide publishing capabilities and services that establish alternatives to the traditional publisher model [2].

In this regard, Cambridge is at an advantage because it already has a long established University Press, with all the infrastructure and know-how that a large academic publisher is able to provide. On the other hand, Cambridge University Press is precisely that, a large academic publisher with commercial considerations and established products, costs, tools and policies. It is a considerable bonus to be able to leverage the infrastructure of an established publisher and to collaborate with CUP. However, the relationship between Cambridge University Press and the University affects the extent to which the Library can offer publishing services that may be perceived to be in competition with CUP.

There are opportunities for offering a range of publishing services to reflect the multifarious nature of use cases and user needs discussed above, allowing as much flexibility and independence as desired on the part of the publishing departments or academics. There is a distinction between 'Library-led' publishing and 'Academic-led' publishing. The former, according to the Library Publishing Coalition, is a set of activities led by college and university libraries to support the creation, dissemination and curation of scholarly, creative or educational works [3]. Academic led publishing, on the other hand, can be defined as set up and run by academics, usually not for profit and providing alternative publishing options to commercial publishers.

Discussions with our academic community have demonstrated that the need for a solution – a publishing service in this instance – is often only perceived when a concrete example of the proposed tool can be shown. Conversations so far have indicated that outreach to academics and development of the various options therefore need to run in parallel, so that needs can be established while at the same time attracting interest by being able to offer a ready-made service.

The OSC has identified a clear gap in service provision for immediate action and is targeting the material that falls outside the usual peer-reviewed publication model. These research outputs have an urgent need for capture and preservation. Strategically, the value of the assistance the library would be able to provide for this material can be most readily perceived in these cases.

3. Future Developments

The development of this service is still in its early stages. We ultimately envisage a continuum of services that we will be able to offer the academic community for the capture and preservation of any kind of research output. Based on the variety of user needs and discussions that have been held with members of the academic community,

departmental administrators and representatives of graduate student journals, we are planning to launch the full service with a multi-stage continuum. The stages are:

1. The repository 'as is': individual items or collections can be deposited in the repository with no additional visual or editorial additions.
2. Repository with enhanced display: a repository collection presented with a visually improved user interface customised to reflect the logo or colours of the originating author, department, organisation or event.
3. Publication overlay module: a customisable module that can be integrated into a department's website via its web design software, with links to metadata and individual items in the repository. The module automatically checks for new content added to the repository and updates the page on the department's website. This allows for customised images and texts such as editorial introductions while keeping the hosting and preservation in the hands of the repository management team. This is in part modelled on the journal *Discrete Analysis* which uses a similar system for preprints published on arXiv.org [4].
4. Facilitating academic-led publishing, possibly by providing publishing and hosting options for the community to develop their own open access outlets.
5. Working with a professional publisher to capitalise on their infrastructure to provide publishing services for non-peer-reviewed literature.

Work is underway on all stages of the service and we are hoping to have a full offering sometime in 2017.

References

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