

Promoting Universal Knowledge for All: Open Access Week 2012 at Virginia Tech

by *Rebecca K. Miller, Kyrille Goldbeck DeBose, Nathan Hall, Purdom Lindblad, Allison Scripa, Julie Speer, Philip Young*

Introduction

The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) coordinates an annual international Open Access (OA) Week event, held every October, encouraging participants across the globe to develop tailored programs that inspire researchers to provide open access to their digital scholarship. SPARC supports local efforts by providing easy access to OA resources and fostering collaboration and the exchange of ideas among participants.¹

In 2012, University Libraries at Virginia Tech participated



Rebecca K. Miller is the College Librarian for Science, Life Sciences, and Engineering at VT. She serves on VLA Council as Membership Chair and is Co-Chairing the 2013 VLA Conference. She was a 2012 ALA Emerging Leader, and has published and presented widely on topics related to mobile technologies, instruction, and professional development.

Kyrille Goldbeck DeBose has been the College Librarian for Natural Resources & Environment at Virginia Tech since 2005. Her current interests include: instructional design for in-person and online sessions, changes in the scholarly communications landscape, and best practices for e-Research services.

Nathan Hall is VTechWorks Librarian at Virginia Tech and a doctoral candi-

date in Information Science at University of North Texas. His interests include information behavior, digital libraries, scholarly communications, and data management policy.

Purdom Lindblad joined Virginia Tech University Libraries in 2012 as the College Librarian for Humanities and Digital Humanities. Her research interests include open educational resources and library support of open access. More specifically, she is interested in the tools and methods within the digital humanities promoting open access.

Allison Scripa is the College Librarian for Science at Virginia Tech. She is currently serving as the Student Relations Committee Chair of the Special Libraries Association's Biomedical and Life

Science Division. Allison holds a BS in Zoology and an MLIS, both from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Julie Speer, Associate Dean for Research and Informatics at University Libraries at Virginia Tech, leads efforts to integrate the Libraries' resources, expertise, and services into the university's research enterprise. Her work and research interests involve understanding global research environment issues, knowledge production, and digital curation processes in research workflows.

Philip Young is a Metadata Librarian at Virginia Tech where he has worked since 2006. His 2012 VLA presentation addressed open access e-books in academic libraries, and he blogs about open access at <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/openvt>.

in this event for the first time to raise awareness of open access in general, and to promote services offered by the library for preserving and providing access to digital scholarship and research. By sharing our experiences and lessons learned coordinating a week-long series of lectures, panel sessions, workshops, and promotional activities, our intention is to encourage others to look for opportunities at their own institutions to share information about OA and the value and impact of open publishing.

Partnerships were critical to the overall success of the program. The OA Week program was cosponsored by the Graduate School, and a partnership with the Office of Information Technology's Division of Learning Technologies enabled us to bring Cameron Neylon, Director of Advocacy for the Public Library of Science (PLoS), to campus as both our OA Week keynote speaker and Virginia Tech's 2nd Distinguished Innovator in Residence (DIR).²

The OA Week coordinating team consisted of library faculty from a variety of departments; members were either directly involved in providing OA services or had an interest in raising awareness of the issues on campus. The team began meeting monthly in early summer 2012 and, with little time to create a full and robust program, quickly elected to assign coordinators to certain components of the programming in order to provide speakers and campus partners a single point of contact as well as to share planning responsibilities equally among members. Monthly meetings became an important opportunity for members to provide updates and to solicit feedback and advice from the committee.

Our event coincided with the official launch of our institutional repository service, VTechWorks, and with the publication of the University Libraries Strategic Plan

2012–2018, which affirmed the Libraries' position in support of open access and efforts relating to information and data discovery and dissemination. We dovetailed the marketing of the event with the launch of our repository service and explored a variety of strategies for promoting the event to faculty, staff, and students. In addition to asking subject librarians to send news about the program to their colleges and departments, we emailed various student and faculty listservs, promoted the event on the library homepage, devel-

... our intention is to encourage others ... to share information about OA and the value and impact of open publishing.

oped an open access research guide for the library website, launched an OA Week web page, published a story in the campus daily news, printed numerous posters and flyers, and sent personal invitations to faculty and students with closely related interests.

The final OA Week 2012 schedule included a variety of events and programs that were designed to engage a diverse group of faculty, staff, and graduate students.³

Programming

Faculty & Graduate Student Panels

As part of the week-long program, we wanted to offer events that would provide members of the VT community with opportunities to discuss their perspectives and experiences with publishing in OA sources. We decided that two panel

sessions, one comprised of faculty and the other of graduate students, would allow the audience to not only hear, but also engage in, conversations with panelists to encourage further discussions about OA. We scheduled the panels back-to-back on a single evening, starting at 5:30 p.m. in order to avoid conflicts with classes and promote attendance.

For the faculty panel, our initial goal was to have faculty members from a variety of departments and academic backgrounds give an overview of their experiences of publishing in OA journals, as well as the perception of OA resources in their different disciplines. To determine names of potential panelists, we first asked our colleagues for recommendations of faculty involved with OA journals or other open access projects. We then reviewed editorial boards from journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) to locate editorial board members from Virginia Tech. As the list of names was generated, we sent email invitations to determine interest and the faculty member's availability during our designated OA week. After we queried twelve potential panelists, eight expressed interest in potentially participating, but only three were available to participate in our event.

The resulting panel included faculty members from the Department of English, the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the founding editor of the OA publication *Journal of Technology Education*.⁴ Panelists were each given ten minutes to share their experiences with open access, with the remainder of time open for questions by the audience. Discussions by the panelists included: factors pre-tenure faculty consider in deciding whether to submit manuscripts to OA or traditional publications, an historical examination of publishing economics and how current

OA models follow early publishing author-pay models, and the reasons why a journal was converted to an OA platform and the impact this decision had for both the publication and discipline over the years. The diversity of the topics regarding OA led to several questions and follow-up conversations with the audience that provided keen insights for the panelists and audience members. After the success of this panel, the OA Week coordinating team determined that the inclusion of a faculty panel would be worthwhile to offer in future OA Week events.

In addition to highlighting faculty concerns, support, and needs around open access, the OA Week coordinating team invited three graduate students from different disciplines to share their experiences with open access. The goals of the panel included contributing to and supporting campus-wide dialog around open access. Furthermore, the library sought to identify student needs and areas of potential library support.

Graduate students from the VT Departments of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, Science and Technology Studies, and Fish and Wildlife Conservation outlined opportunities and challenges open access presents for emerging scholars. Awareness of open access and mentor support emerged as significant themes within the discussion. Speaking broadly, the students explained that some faculty mentors were highly supportive of open access. Supportive mentors helped guide young scholars toward open access journals, while faculty mentors who are less supportive of open access actively discouraged their students' pursuit of open access platforms. Indeed, recent research indicates that a mentor's encouragement or discouragement profoundly shapes graduate students beliefs about the validity of open access.⁵

Two graduate students on the panel currently collaborate on *Public Knowledge Journal*, an open-access, graduate student-run, peer-reviewed journal hosted by the Center for Digital Discourse and Culture at Virginia Tech. The student currently serving as Editor-in-Chief highlighted the journal's mentoring role around open access. Overall, the panel discussion emphasized how the students' roles with *Public Knowledge Journal* led to peer-to-peer outreach and education about open access.

**... a mentor's
encouragement
or discouragement
profoundly shapes
graduate students beliefs
about the validity
of open access.**

Faculty Development Institute Workshop

While the faculty and graduate student panels and other presentations offered opportunities for faculty, students, and staff to share their experiences with and questions about open access, the OA Week coordinating team scheduled a hands-on workshop during the week in order to assist interested faculty and students with using the Libraries' institutional repository to provide open access to their own research and publications. Virginia Tech offers a program called Faculty Development Institute (FDI), which includes a variety of classes and workshops in different areas for professional development of faculty and staff, but open to graduate students as well. The classes cover diverse subject

areas such as course management software, research methodology, university policies, and research administration. The coordinating team determined that FDI was the perfect platform for offering the sort of hands-on workshop that would enhance the OA Week program of events.

The VTechWorks librarian scheduled an FDI class during OA Week on how to use the institutional repository. The class was designed during the previous semester and offered three times each in the Spring 2012 and Fall 2012 terms. The class introduced the concept of digital repositories and then guides participants through the steps of account creation, depositing articles, and managing a collection in Virginia Tech's DSpace installation. Additionally, two OA Week coordinating team members collaborated to conduct an *Introduction to Open Access and Copyright* workshop through FDI. The class discussed the concepts and history of OA, and gave attendees a better understanding of copyright law as it pertains to libraries and academic publishing. The class also discussed the VT subvention fund, managed by the Library, the Office of Research, and the Provost's office.

Four people attended each OA Week FDI session, a number lower than 8–11 participants who usually attend. However, when there are fewer participants in this class, the instructor spends less time on the formal presentation, and more time asking participants about particular situations with scholarly communication and ways to provide access to their research. These smaller, more intimate discussions often lead to attendees creating a repository collection for themselves or for a larger unit such as their research lab or department.

Knowledge Drive

A unique component of OA Week was the “Knowledge Drive,” an outreach effort modeled on a blood drive that encouraged students and faculty to donate their scholarly works to the institutional repository. Tables were set up in three locations on campus: the Graduate School, Fralin Life Science Institute, and Newman Library. One or two volunteers from the library worked at each table every weekday during OA Week for two hour shifts. These volunteers actively engaged passers-by in conversation about OA and benefits of depositing their scholarship into a repository and encouraged visitors to sign up for a VTechWorks account.

Knowledge Drive tables were stocked with informative handouts, candy, and promotional OA buttons designed by the OA Week coordinating team. Volunteers also brought their laptops and/or iPads with them to the Knowledge Drive to be able to demonstrate VTechWorks and the sign-up process to visitors. The drive generated many good conversations about the idea of OA and the repository, but zero VTechWorks accounts were set up during the week. While the idea of OA and the repository was well received, graduate students in particular stated that they needed to check with their faculty advisors before setting up an account, a common occurrence supported by the discussion that occurred during the graduate student panel.

The OA Week coordinating team determined that the Knowledge Drive would be worthwhile to offer during future OA Weeks, but with a few changes. The Newman Library location will be changed in the future to one that has a higher volume of foot traffic. Next, the coordinators noted that the entire drive would have run more smoothly with better communication among the coordinators and

the volunteers. Finally, the team determined that an organized system of tracking the discussions and interactions will offer additional insight into the effectiveness of and potential enhancements to the Knowledge Drive.

Outcomes, Assessment, and Future Directions

Since 2012 was the first year that Virginia Tech held Open Access Week events, it is natural that we were able to identify a number of areas for improvement. Com-

... graduate students in particular stated that they needed to check with their faculty advisors before setting up an account....

mittee members discussed these through our listserv, the internal project wiki, and post-event debriefings. The most notable suggestions for improvement include better documentation of events, and an increase in photographic documentation for future marketing efforts. Additionally, we are seeking stronger partnerships both within and beyond the university, and to provide more oversight of the organization and promotion of the Knowledge Drive, including daily table setup, recording of interactions, and reservation of space. Furthermore, because the coordinators had some difficulty recruiting faculty for the panel discussion, the coordinating team has discussed asking faculty members who have benefited from the Libraries’ OA subvention fund to participate in the panel or provide

testimonials about their use of these funds to subsidize article processing fees in OA or hybrid OA journals.

The OA Week coordinating team plans to leverage other successful outreach events at the University Libraries in order to promote more interest in OA Week events. For example, the Libraries’ first Banned Books Week took place a few weeks before OA Week 2012 and was very well attended, so next year the team plans to create a stronger link between these two events. We also realized that our marketing materials should be leveraged throughout the year. We have already begun to pass out our promotional OA buttons during events like our undergraduate research symposium, and are planning to provide information at a number of different events not associated with OA Week.

While we endeavored to conduct a full assessment of the success of the week, assessment of outreach events can be difficult. Event attendance tallies are a simple measure that can be used to assess the interest in different events as well as the success of outreach over time. Rough counts were gathered for the keynote address, faculty and graduate student panels, and workshops. The keynote address drew an audience of around 70 attendees, and the panels drew an audience of around 10 attendees. As noted above, though, better statistics are needed for the Knowledge Drive. Furthermore, visits to the website and related pages were recorded and will be analyzed to help the OA Week coordinating team disseminate information in the future.

In addition to assessing our Knowledge Drive strategy, we are currently using our internal project wiki to record events at other universities that we may want to emulate. We also plan to offer more practical, hands-on events,

such as how to get started with open access, and with the help of better assessment and lessons learned from 2012, we are looking forward to a bigger and better Open Access Week in 2013.

Additional Resources

Interested in reading more about SPARC, Open Access Week, and Virginia Tech's OA programming? Take a look at the following websites:

- Open Access Overview from Peter Suber: <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>
- Open Access 101 from SPARC: <http://www.lib.vt.edu/openaccess/oa101.html>
- Virginia Tech University Libraries Open Access Webpage: <http://www.lib.vt.edu/openaccess/>

If you have questions or want to know more about Virginia Tech University Libraries' OA Week, don't hesitate to contact any of the authors.

Endnotes

1 For more information, visit The Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) at <http://www.arl.org/sparc>.

2 For more information, visit <https://blogs.lt.vt.edu/innovator>.


3 Detailed descriptions of these events, and other additional information, can be found on the Virginia Tech University Libraries open access website: <http://www.lib.vt.edu/openaccess>.


4 <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JTE/>.

5 Ramirez, M. L., Dalton, J. T., McMillan, G., Read, M., and Seamans, N. 2013. "Do Open Access Electronic Theses and Dissertations Diminish Publishing Opportunities in the Social Sciences and Humanities?" *College & Research Libraries* preprint (May), <http://crl.acrl.org/content/early/2012/04/05/crl-356.short>. 



<http://www.lib.vt.edu/openaccess/oaw2012.html>





DREXEL UNIVERSITY
The iSchool
College of Information Science
and Technology

Apply Online Free!
ischool.drexel.edu/apply

- 20% Tuition Reduction for VLA Members (Visit www.drexel.com/Virginia for details)
- ALA-accredited Library and Information Science Program
- Ranked among the **Top 10** library science programs nationally by **U.S. News & World Report**
- Classes available online and on campus
- **Master of Science Programs:**
 - Health Informatics
 - Library and Information Science—specialize your degree through six optional concentrations
 - Information Systems
 - Software Engineering
- **Professional Development Programs**

ischool.drexel.edu | istinfo@drexel.edu | 215.895.2474