Feature Article

The encouragement of the open access movement: an essential realm for health information professionals in the 21ˢᵗ century

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Abstract
According to the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Policy for libraries and the recommendations of the BOAI10, libraries and librarians have an important role to fulfil in the encouragement of open access. Taking into account the Competencies for Information Professionals of the 21st Century, elaborated by the Special Libraries Association, and the Librarians' Competencies Profile for Scholarly Publishing and Open Access, we shall identify the competencies and new areas of knowledge and expertise that have been involved in the process of the development and upkeep of our institutional repository (Repositorio SSPA).

Key words: librarians; professional competence; access to information; library technical services; libraries, digital.

Introduction

The first time the term "open access" (OA) with regard to scientific literature was used was in 2002 by the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) (1). The goal was to get OA to peer-reviewed journal literature, through two complementary strategies: the deposit of the refereed journal articles in open electronic archives by authors, known as self-archiving; and the publication in OA journals. Ten years later, in 2012, this Initiative and the experience gained over a decade led the participants attending the meeting to mark the tenth anniversary (BOAI10), to reaffirm that making scientific literature open access continues to remain necessary and essential. It also led them to write a set of recommendations for the next ten years. Those recommendations were addressed to institutions of higher education, research funding agencies, research institutions, scholarly publishers, researchers and libraries. They were concrete steps on institutional policy; licensing articles under CC-BY or equivalent licenses; repository infrastructure and sustainability; and advocacy and coordination to spread and strengthen the message about OA (2).

However, there is a specific and important milestone in this subject for health libraries. In 2003, during a meeting on Open Access Publishing held at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in Maryland, a document known as the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing was drafted. It intended *to stimulate discussion within the biomedical research community on how to proceed, as rapidly as possible, to the widely held goal of providing open access to the primary scientific literature"* and *"to agree on significant... steps that all relevant parties... can take to promote the rapid and efficient transition to open access publishing.* In addition to the working definition of open access publishing, the document included the reports of three working groups, one of which was composed of libraries and publishers. In it, the libraries proposed to develop and support mechanisms to make the transition to open access publishing; to teach their users about the benefits of open access publishing and OA journals, and to highlight these journals in the catalogues and other relevant databases (3).

According to both initiatives and the Librarians' Competencies Profile for Scholarly Publishing and Open Access (4), health libraries have an important role to fulfil in this subject:

- to promote OA and its benefits for their institutions and among researchers, authors, users and citizens;
- to advise on author rights and intellectual property;
- to provide guidance on OA options to authors and researchers, including the criteria and code of conduct followed by OA Journals to assess their quality;

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- to develop and manage open and interoperable repositories and to encourage self-archiving;
- to help authors to comply with the OA institutional policy and requirements of the funding agencies.

In response to the OA movement and the requirements of the National Spanish Law 14/2011, of June 1st, on Science, Technology and Innovation (5) and the FP7 Cooperation Work Programme: Health 2013 (6), the Regional Health Government entrusted the Andalusian eHealth Library (Biblioteca Virtual del Sistema Sanitario Público de Andalucía, BV-SSPA) with the creation of an Institutional Repository. It would collect all the scientific output generated by the Andalusia Public Health System professionals, resulting from their medical care, research and administrative activities. This repository was part of the strategy of the Regional Government to support and encourage research in Health Sciences.

The process of the development and management of the Andalusian Public Health System Repository (Repositorio SSPA) has required the acquisition of new knowledge and skills by the librarians who have taken part in it (7).

According to the Special Libraries Association (SLA), information professionals *"play a unique role in gathering, organizing and coordinating access to the best available information sources for the organization as a whole. They are also leaders in devising and implementing standards for the ethical and appropriate use of information"* (8).

These information professionals, among which librarians are included, require two types of competencies:

Professional competencies, *which relate to the practitioner's knowledge of information resources, access, technology and management, and the ability to use this knowledge as a basis for providing the highest quality information services.*

Personal Competencies, *which represent a set of attitudes, skills and values that enable practitioners to work effectively and contribute positively to their organizations, clients and profession. These competencies range from being strong communicators, to demonstrating the value-add of their contributions, to remaining flexible and positive in an ever-changing environment.*

Above all, there are two core cardinal competencies. They are the acknowledgment of the value of developing and sharing their knowledge and the observance of the ethics of the profession.

While the SLA's document follows the usual structure for a Competency Map, the Librarians' Competencies Profile for Scholarly Publishing and Open Access has a different approach, more focused in content and new fields of knowledge. Therefore it does not include either professional or personal competencies, but it establishes as Core Competencies that *"librarians will need to have a broad perspective and understanding of the traditional (commercial, society) and open access models of publishing, intellectual property issues, and economics of scholarly publishing. And other core competencies are knowledge, expertise and awareness in the following areas: 1. Scholarly publishing Services,… 2. Copyright and open Access advocacy and outreach,… 3. Scholarly resource assessment…"* (4).

Despite their differences, both documents may help us to identify the competencies and new areas of knowledge and expertise that have been involved in the process of the development and upkeep of our institutional repository (9).

The fact that the Regional Government entrusted it to the Andalusian eHealth Library is directly connected with the professional competencies *(A. Managing Information Organizations Information professionals manage information organizations ranging in size from one employee to several hundred employees.* In our case, the Andalusian Public Health System consists of many different kinds of institutions and centres which carry out activities such as health care, research, administration and professional training, which are run by more than 100,000 professionals).

Therefore as an institutional repository, it has special features that have determined its development:

1) It has to give visibility to each institution and centre. *(A.1 Aligns the information organization with, and is supportive of, the strategic directions of the parent organization)*

2) It must not gather only scientific journal articles and monographs published by the Health System, but also a very specific set of document types. These included plans and health programs, guides, health care protocols, clinical practice guidelines, research projects, brochures to help patients to make decisions and citizen education handouts. *(B.4 Provides access to the best available externally published and internally created information resources…)*

3) Some of these specific documents remain unpublished but other important parts are produced in electronic formats and are scattered around many institutional or subject websites and intranets from the Health System. *(B. Managing Information Resources Information professionals have expertise in total management of information resources, including identifying, selecting, evaluating, securing and providing access to pertinent information resources.)*

4) Every document has to fulfil strict quality criteria related to format, content and legal aspects before being submitted to the repository. Each one is subject to the policy of the collection to where it may be sent *(A.8. Advises the organization on copyright and intellectual property issues and compliance)*

5) The software selected requires to meet some criteria (10): it has to be an open source tool, according to the Andalusian Government standards and policies; has to have a large community of users and developers and cover our main specifications. *(A.7 Gathers the best available evidence to support decisions about the development of new service and products. D. Applying Information Tools & Technologies. Information professionals harness the current and appropriate technology tools to deliver the best services).*

Once the software was chosen it was customized starting by defining an exhaustive metadata schema, simplifying the submission process, broadening the advanced search and integrating the MeSH Thesaurus (11). *(B.3 Demonstrates expert knowledge of the content and format of information resources, including the ability to critically evaluate, select and filter them).*

The policy of each collection was established taking into account the specific characteristics of each type of document and was agreed by a commission consisting of the repository managers and members of the Health System. *(B.6 Develops information policies for the organization regarding externally published and internally created information resources and advises on the implementation of these policies).*

Nowadays the upkeep of the repository rests on three different levels:

- the librarian network that consists of the information professionals who work in hospitals, institutions and centers of the Public Health System (7);
- the reviewer group;
- the management repository office.

The functions of the first group fall into the considered as new areas of expertise by the Librarians' Competencies Profile for Scholarly Publishing and Open Access (Scholarly Publishing services; Copyright and OA advocacy and outreach; scholarly resource assessment):

- to support the institutional repository- gathering information, promoting self-archiving, helping authors to submit their published and peer reviewed articles;
- to train users in open access, intellectual property and responsible use of information. To teach researchers criteria to choose where to publish, publisher copyright policies and self-archiving, requirements of the funding agencies and institutional open access policies;
- to submit published articles in the author's name;
- to ask for unpublished versions of articles from the author.

In addition to these functions, the reviewer group has specifically to:
- assess intellectual property and versions of manuscripts accepted;
- review submissions;
- evaluate the acceptance or not of submissions.

Finally, the mission of the management repository office is to supervise the upkeep of the repository; to support the technological development of the tool and plan the migration to new versions; to draw up tutorials and train librarians and users and to launch new services.

It is undeniable that, in order to carry out this project, the professionals involved in it have been challenged and their knowledge and skills have been put to the test, but at the same time, it has led them to become better able and prepared to meet the Competencies for Information Professionals in the 21st Century (12).

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