A Community Organizing–Informed Approach to Open Access

Background

Health researchers today must understand and respond to open access (OA) issues and requirements, and librarians are a major source of necessary information about OA. Librarians are increasingly encouraged to develop teaching and presentation skills as instructors, but approaching researchers as a community to organize around OA issues, rather than students in a class, may offer strategic benefits.

This poster considers the question of whether lessons from community organizing (CO) models can be adapted by librarians embedded within research environments, in order to effectively help transition research organizations to open communications models.

Questions

• Why consider drawing on the traditions of community organizing?
• What is the difference between “outreach” and “organizing”?
• What types of educational activities create the most “buy-in” from communities?
• How can we most effectively organize research communities to open up scholarly outputs?
• Is it appropriate to adapt organizing methods developed for disenfranchised communities for use with academics?

To explore these questions, we draw on case examples from the program of OA activities within a health research institute with an embedded librarian, and compare such activities with principles of community organizing models.

OA Organizing in Practice

OA activities by librarians may not initially be conceived as community organizing campaigns; however, the characteristics of effective organizing campaigns can apply directly to OA activities:

• Assess the “community” to be organized
• Create a core committee or group
• Collaboratively develop plans of action
• Prepare well for “actions”
• Cultivate individual relationships
• Build strong communications
• Keep things moving forward

Organizing campaigns can draw upon greater resources if they are large-scale and centrally-coordinated. However, without the flexibility to adapt to the specific group or disciplinary culture, perceived needs, and self-interests, their effectiveness is jeopardized.

Embedded librarians within a research context are well-positioned to develop community, but may lack the support a central organizing institution could lend.

Reflections

While certain elements of community organizing models may be inappropriate to the academic environment, others can inform strategies to effectively help a research community transition to more openness.

Librarians embedded within research groups are ideally positioned, as conduits between the information world and health research communities, to use strategies informed by community organizing models to support research transition. Connecting embedded librarians with greater central planning and resources could strengthen this approach.

How is Community Organizing Relevant to Open Access Outreach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Traditional CO Examples</th>
<th>OA Activity Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct service</td>
<td>Affordable housing development</td>
<td>Building on open repository</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Insulating or weatherizing homes</td>
<td>Mediated deposit of articles into a repository</td>
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<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Creating copyright guidelines</td>
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<td>Soup kitchen</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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<td>Teach people how to look for an apartment</td>
<td>Webpages with resources on OA</td>
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<td>Cultural events</td>
<td>Tailored listser delivering OA info of interest to the particular academic discipline</td>
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<td>Self-help</td>
<td>Neighborhood clean-up day</td>
<td>Faculty/ resolution processes</td>
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<td>Baby sitting co-op</td>
<td>Self-archiving of publications</td>
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<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Propose laws or regulations on behalf of people who don’t necessarily know that it is being done</td>
<td>Research collaborations to investigate disciplinary aspects of open access</td>
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<td>Direct action</td>
<td>The people who have the problem take action to solve it</td>
<td>Proposing policies for research teams/departments/institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Make the city clean up the street or provide childcare</td>
<td>Advocating for funder and/or government mandates</td>
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<td>Authors negotiate with publishers</td>
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<td>Create/suppor new OA Journals as alternative publishing venues, or convert OA journals</td>
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There are different approaches to organizing. The Midwest Academy identifies 5 primary methods. A varied approach can appeal to researchers’ self-interest, cultivate “homegrown” leadership potential, and reach out in multiple ways.

How is Community Organizing Relevant to Open Access Outreach?

改编自《Midwest Academy》中的组织方法

Co-organizing is teaching. Not the academic type, which mostly consists of stuffing data into people’s ears. Organizing is teaching which rests on people’s life experiences. Not only knowing about organizing, but also using organizing.

Community organizing involves mobilizing people to work together to solve shared problems. Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, Community Organizing and Development, New York.

In general, the term community organizing refers to the process that engages people, organizations, and communities toward the goals of increased individual and community control, political efficacy, improved quality of life, and social justice. Marion Orr, Transforming the City.

Organizing tends to emphasize a process focused on engaging individuals in their own terms, in order to achieve collective goals related to a bigger picture of social justice.

What is Community Organizing?

Embedding Librarianship Supporting Research Transition to an Open Era

There are multiple definitions of community organizing; some are more applicable than others to working with academic researchers.

Community organizing is a long-term approach where the people affected by an issue are supported in identifying problems and taking action to achieve solutions. Community organizing looks at collective solutions — large numbers of people who engage in solutions that impact even more people.

Librarians embedded within research environments, in order to effectively help transition research organizations to open communications models.

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