Are we walking the talk?

Tensions between librarians’ values, academic freedom and open scholarship

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I’ve been curious ...

- Do most librarians support open access?
- Are we actually sharing our work openly?
- Do we think OA statements of support are important?
- Do academic freedom standards influence OA dissemination?
So I did a research survey

- May 2019: distributed via CAPAL, Scholarly Communication groups and listservs, CANMEDLIB, social media
- 134 consented; 119 completed
- 119 were librarians in Canadian PSE
  - 105 at universities
  - 7 at colleges
  - 7 at other:
    - Teaching hospital, research institute, polytechnic, etc.
- Career status:
  - Early career: 52%
  - Mid-career: 35%
  - Late career: 21%
Primary work responsibilities

- Teaching and learning: 40%
- Collections: 23%
- Public Services: 16%
- Scholarly communications: 9%
- Data: 12%
Responsible for advancing open access

- Never: 4%
- Sometimes: 48%
- About half the time: 9%
- Most of the time: 19%
- Always: 19%
What do we think – and do – about open access?
I support the principle of open access
Why? N=94

Positive N= 80
- Publicly funded research should be open to the public
- Knowledge a public good
- Information equity
- Advances research and improves society
- Broader impact
- Preserves copyright

Negative/neutral N= 14
- OA contrary to intellectual freedom
- Costs of OA
- Not enough infrastructure/support for OA
- Not everything should be open
“Scholarly research, especially that which is publicly funded, should be openly available for everyone to access, download, share and read, regardless of their institutional affiliation or ability to pay for access. Open access democratizes knowledge and can bring about important change in society as policy makers, charities, and members of the community can make informed decisions based on scientific research.”
“The current models of open access are not sustainable and do not accurately reflect the true cost of academic/scholarly publishing. OA boosters would have us believe that OA costs next to nothing. This is false. Academic publishing requires substantial investment and support.”
I disseminate my scholarly work openly

- Always: 43.22%
- Most of the time: 32.20%
- About half the time: 2.54%
- Sometimes: 2.54%
- Never: 0.85%
- Not applicable: 18.64%
Why? N=64

Yes N=41

- “Walk the talk”
- Aligns with values
- Disciplinary norm
- Enhance access
- Enhance impact

Sometimes N=21  Never N=2

- Collaborator barrier
- Cost barrier
- Publisher barriers
- Sometimes forget
- Not everything should be open
“It's my personal conviction toward open, plus my professional responsibility to share findings widely. I'd be a hypocrite if I asked others to publish OA and not do it myself.”
“I don't pay much attention to whether a journal is open access or not. But given that most of my research is 100% self-funded, it doesn't matter because I can't afford publication fees. Having said that, if my co-authors have access to funding, or if the journal has no publication fees (eg. JMLA) than I'm happy to do it. I also usually put my papers into our institutional repository, but I don't always have time/remember.”
What do we think about open access statements?

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OA statements from library/academic organizations

- Encourage members to promote and participate in open access practices. For example:
  - [Canadian Association of Research Libraries: Position Statement on Open Access](#)
  - [Association of College and Research Libraries: ACRL Policy Statement on Open Access to Scholarship by Academic Librarians](#)
  - [Canadian Association of University Teachers: Open Access CAUT Policy Statement](#)
OA statements from professional organizations are important.
Why? N=72

Positive N=57
- Provide guidance
- Raise awareness
- Motivate change
- Align with professional values
- Enhance solidarity

Neutral/negative N=5

Mixed N=10
- Impact unclear
- Support/infrastructure more important
“They help establish norms and expectations in the profession as a whole, embodying our expressed values more deeply in our routines.”
“Statements are important, but institutions need to provide/engage resources to build strong open access services.”
OA statements influence dissemination

- To a great extent: 15.25%
- Somewhat: 43.22%
- Not at all: 33.05%
- Not applicable: 8.47%
Why? N=65

Positive influence N=23
- Provide guidance
- Align with values
- Reinforcement
- Motivates change

No influence=42
- “I’d do it anyways”
- Other factors more important
- Individual choice
“Personally, I prefer to make my own choices about how I would like to disseminate my work, and although I value these statements, I do not require them for my own use. I would choose open access options regardless of these statements.”
“I'm very proud of this position adopted by professional organizations for librarians. It gives me power and motivation to publicly share with the research community the intrinsic values of open access and defend its rights... and ultimately promote open access.”
Institutional OA statements/policies

- Most (57%) respondents are at institutions with OA statements/policies
- Similar rates of influence on dissemination
- Similar rationales
- 38% said not applicable
“I say no because it really doesn't have an impact on my practice - I would publish open access even if it didn't exist. However, I really, really want these to impact researchers in our institution. I hope that it motivates graduate students, faculty, and post docs to make their work open access.”
“It reminds me that I am a member of a team of librarians working together under a shared understanding (expectation?) to contribute to the societal good.”
Academic freedom and open access

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Academic Freedom: CAUT Policy Statement

"Academic freedom includes the right, without restriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom to teach and discuss; freedom to carry out research and disseminate and publish the results thereof; freedom to produce and perform creative works; freedom to engage in service\(^2\); freedom to express one’s opinion about the institution, its administration, and the system in which one works; freedom to acquire, preserve, and provide access to documentary material in all formats; and freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies. Academic freedom always entails freedom from institutional censorship."
AF aligns with personal beliefs re OA
Why? N=22

Alignments N=14

▪ Freedom of choice = OA option
▪ Research should benefit the public

Neutral N=4

▪ CA doesn’t address dissemination

Conflicts N=4

▪ OA requirements would conflict with academic freedom
▪ Freedom of choice entrenches status quo
“The CA at my institution states ‘... Members are entitled to the freedom to carry out research and to publish the results, to the freedom to teach and discuss their subjects, and to the freedom from institutional censorship.’ Although I personally feel compelled to make my own publications available in OA venues, I believe it should remain the case that each faculty member is free to choose the best publication venues for their works.”
Conclusions and next steps

▪ Librarians show strong support for OA principles and practices
▪ OA statements are valued, but we make our own choices
▪ Academic freedom usually not perceived as conflicting with OA
▪ Next: more data analysis!