

Facilitating Discovery of Free Online resources: Challenges and Opportunities for the Library Community: A White Paper by Taylor & Francis

*A précis written for the readers of **INCITE***

Information in the digital world has burgeoned dramatically over the past 10 years. Information professionals now find themselves in an environment where information is coming from everywhere at once: social networking sites, blogs, wikis, Open Access (OA) books and monographs, forums and discussion groups, videos, mobile apps... These phenomena were a starting point for Taylor & Francis, the world's leading publisher in the Social Sciences, to put on our thinking caps and explore what key issues librarians are experiencing when it comes to the discoverability of free content.

As part of our commitment to supporting the academic and library communities, we decided to research how librarians, striving to best serve their end users' needs, make free content fully integrated and searchable within the library OPAC. We intended to identify the challenges that librarians face in facilitating access to free online resources, while continuing to manage paid resources as they have traditionally done. As an academic publisher of scholarly journals and books, we wanted to provide help and support to librarians with those challenges they face when navigating non-purchased content.

Free resources could potentially be of great value in all aspects of education: teaching, learning and research, but the challenge lies in librarians determining the value of all these online resources when 'free-to-access' doesn't necessarily mean easy-to-find. Users are increasingly overwhelmed with content and find it difficult to navigate effectively through what is available in order to apply it in their research, studies or teaching. In helping users to navigate this non-purchased content, librarians often have no 'ownership' in the traditional sense of library acquisition and often no usage statistics by which to gauge relevance.

Taylor & Francis wanted to define the types of non-purchased content currently being used in academic institutions for research and teaching to understand how librarians help users to recognize quality and relevance in non-purchased resources. We aimed to identify any perceived problems with using non-purchased content and understand how librarians demonstrate the value of non-purchased resources. We wanted to start a debate on the next generation of publishing activities so that we could start solving some existing issues across the industry by commissioning research on the discoverability of free online resources.

Taylor & Francis used a variety of primary research methods to collect research intelligence that was as representative as possible. The research was run from our UK offices, and included responses from initial phone interviews with our Library & Information Science editors, focus groups in the UK and the US, in-depth tele-interviews (with UK librarians) and an online survey that elicited over 500 responses. We also conducted desk research to support our findings on the discovery of free online resources to represent the views of as many librarians as possible.

Our primary research explored the following key 7 themes:

1. Growth and value of free content

Free content is growing rapidly. The White Paper explores how librarians sift through this volume of material to identify what high quality free resources should be brought to the attention of their patrons.

2. Resource Challenges for librarians

Making free resources discoverable takes up staff time. Our White Paper explores how librarians can ensure that bringing together free and paid content is worth the effort when no metrics are available to identify an institution's performance.

3. Identification and selection of content

Currently it is a challenge simply to identify access restrictions to content. Many librarians comment that the lack of metadata makes the management of free online resources difficult and unpredictable. Free content can also be subject to a variety of licences, with no easy way to identify reuse terms. The White Paper discovers what librarians require in their new role as facilitators of free online content and analyses attitudes towards free and paid for content.

4. The role of the library

The White Paper identifies that the role of librarians relating to the facilitating of free online content falls into two key areas:

Evaluating and selecting resources following a clear methodology

Providing guidelines and training

We look at the subsequent challenges librarians face and make recommendations based on these.

5. Information literacy

Moving out of the library and into their community, and in particular forging links with faculty, appears to be a key priority for many of the librarians who participated in our research.

6. User needs and expectations

User behaviours and expectations are changing. We ask librarians about their plans for improving their discoverability services for users to identify what they feel is of the greatest importance to support users when discovering free content.

7. The role of publishers

Librarians' views are split on the role that publishers should take in helping solve some of these problems. Nevertheless, there are clear areas where publishers can provide support and we will be looking at these areas. Ultimately publishers generally need to continue to support collaborative efforts to provide industry level safety nets that tackle issues of preservation, indexing, measurement and evaluation.

Taylor & Francis is supporting all the current Open Access mandates and working with authors, institutions, funders and policy makers to ensure we develop robust, transparent and trusted services for all involved. We have author rights policies that allow for posting of author manuscripts post-peer review ("post-prints") on institutional repositories, supporting the Australian Research Council's recent "Green Open Access" mandate.

Under our Library & Information Science (LIS) pilot program, which has been running since 2011, authors in our LIS journals can freely post their "post-prints" **immediately on publication** (i.e.: without any embargo). We have already reached agreement with a number of repositories such as PubmedCentral and the World Bank to deposit the author accepted manuscript directly to the

repository on behalf of authors to enable them to fulfil their funder mandates. And we see this program expanding further in future. Details of our current LIS Author Rights Policy can be found on our website: <http://journalauthors.tandf.co.uk/preparation/lisrights.asp>

The Taylor & Francis White Paper uses the results and findings from our research to explore the above themes in more detail in order to draw conclusions about what our research means for the library and publishing community, as well as for Taylor & Francis. It looks at challenges that are faced by librarians and publishers, and how they and aggregators are responding to the changes. It then addresses the next steps for librarians, publishers and aggregators at the face of this burgeoning of digital content. Ultimately, the key message that emerges from our research is that collaboration is the key to success in the searchability and permanence of free content.

This is just the start of a conversation, so please download the White Paper, view the supplementary data, sign up to webinars and let us know what you think:

<http://explore.tandfonline.com/lmt/discoverability>

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