

Research on Publishing Service Practices of Small Academic Libraries in the United States: Post-print

Authors: Li Lu, Hu Jing, Tian Xiaodi

Date: 2023-08-26T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] American small academic libraries have already accumulated considerable practical experience in the publishing services domain, characterized by uniqueness and innovation. Studying their publishing service practices can provide references for small and medium-sized university libraries in China to develop publishing services.

[Method/Process] This study selects and summarizes the publishing activities of five representative small academic libraries in the United States, and analyzes and summarizes the publishing service models of small academic libraries.

[Result/Conclusion] Small and medium-sized academic libraries in China should seek practical opportunities to formulate publishing policies, extensively engage in cooperation and campus outreach, demonstrate service value and enhance visibility, thereby developing their own publishing service practices.

Full Text

A Study on Publishing Services at Small Academic Libraries in the United States

Li Lu¹, Hu Jing¹, Tian Xiaodi²

¹Sichuan University Library, Chengdu 610065

²Beijing Normal University Library, Beijing 100875

Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] Small academic libraries in the United States have accumulated considerable practice in publishing services, demonstrating unique characteristics and innovative features. Studying these practices can provide

valuable references for small and medium-sized university libraries in China seeking to develop publishing services. **[Method/Process]** This paper selects and summarizes the publishing activities of five representative small academic libraries in the United States, analyzing and synthesizing their publishing service models. **[Result/Conclusion]** Small and medium-sized academic libraries in China should seek practical opportunities to formulate publishing policies, extensively develop partnerships and conduct campus outreach, demonstrate service value, and enhance visibility in order to implement their own publishing service practices.

Keywords: small academic library; digital publishing; publishing services

Classification Number: G250.76

DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2018.01.011

1. Introduction

Library publishing services refer to the organized production, dissemination, presentation, and preservation of scholarly works in any form provided by libraries [1]. Library publishing first originated at large university libraries such as the University of Michigan, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of California. In addition, small academic libraries in the United States have also developed distinctive publishing activities. As C. Watkinson, Executive Director of the Library Publishing Coalition (LPC), noted, much innovation in library publishing occurs at small institutions, demonstrating that the ability to provide publishing services is not determined by institutional size [2]. Small academic libraries are defined as those serving institutions with generally no more than 3,000 students [3], placing strong emphasis on teaching and learning, undergraduate research, rigorous curricula including interdisciplinary inquiry, and rich experiences in full-time and collaborative programs. To provide abundant academic resources for faculty and students, institutions with small academic libraries typically participate in various consortia, dedicating themselves to resource sharing and prioritizing collaboration over competition. Due to budget constraints, small academic libraries often lack full-time staff dedicated to publishing services, instead reallocating portions of existing staff time to this work, and frequently employ hosted models rather than open-source software to focus more intensively on service provision.

A CNKI search reveals that domestic scholars have shown considerable interest in library publishing services abroad. You Jie [4] and Zhao Huifang et al. [5] analyzed the content and characteristics of library publishing services from the perspective of scholarly communication, arguing that academic exchange represents a key value of library publishing. E Lijun [6] and Cheng Wenyan et al. [7] conducted case studies on the academic publishing practices of MIT Libraries and the Australian National University Library. Wei Rui and Chu Jingli [8] investigated and analyzed the publishing service practices and features of large

American university libraries based on institutional repositories from the aspects of resource types and carriers, service content, and service platforms, contributing to understanding of library publishing services built on institutional repositories. Liu Ziheng and Tu Zhifang [9] posited that libraries can participate in digital publishing in multiple capacities, such as content providers, academic exchange platforms, and vehicles for long-term digital preservation, engaging in activities like digital content provision and processing, institutional repository construction, and digital resource preservation and dissemination. However, research from the perspective of small academic libraries undertaking publishing services remains virtually nonexistent. Therefore, this paper specifically selects five representative small academic libraries in the United States to introduce and analyze their publishing activities, with Colby College being a founding member of the Library Publishing Coalition and the other four small colleges—Claremont Colleges, Illinois Wesleyan University, and others—all being LPC members. Their publishing services are mostly based on their institutional repositories and local distinctive resources, aiming to provide references for small and medium-sized university libraries in China.

2. Publishing Service Practices at Small Academic Libraries in the United States

Since most small colleges abroad lack affiliated university presses, libraries can fill this important gap by providing publishing services, though they similarly lack the professional collaborative support that presses can offer [2]. Nevertheless, small academic libraries can more dedicatedly provide publishing services according to institutional mission, teaching practices, or faculty research interests. Many “campus journals” are not suitable for commercial publishing due to limited audiences but can provide research and teaching support for the institution and larger communities [10]. Some small academic libraries argue [11] that rather than placing resources on other platforms for access and integration services (which are often overpriced), providing resource and knowledge access through publishing is more appropriate, especially when serving niche audiences.

2.1 Macalester College 2.1.1 Library Publishing Practice

Macalester College has been a member of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) since 1999. The Macalester College Library views publishing activities as an important pathway for reforming scholarly communication, with its institutional repository and publishing program being closely related. Through institutional repository construction, Macalester College aims to achieve three goals [12]: long-term preservation and utilization of institutional outputs; participation in new open access publishing models to increase the discoverability and visibility of faculty publications; and provision of new tools for research and teaching, including enhancing research collaboration between

students and faculty and helping students better understand the new publishing environment. In 2005, the library decided to build an institutional repository to meet readers' needs to find and access student scholarly works, and within a year had launched digital publishing for journals.

2.1.2 Service Effectiveness

Currently, the Macalester College Library publishes academic journals (most edited by college faculty, a few by external faculty), undergraduate research journals, and a multimedia book [13], maintaining cooperative relationships with many college departments and organizations. Based on the college's teaching mission and the library's publishing vision, the library director collaborates with the college to teach courses on scholarly communication. Overall, Macalester College Library's publishing strategy is to leverage its expertise in content management, cooperate with strong organizations, and develop publishing activities to meet the needs of specific audiences, thereby achieving good service results [14].

2.2 Colby College 2.2.1 Library Publishing Practice

Colby College is a founding member of LPC and launched its institutional repository project in 2005, initially aiming to provide a digital storage platform for faculty publications without connecting it to publishing activities. Since this goal did not attract much attention, the library shifted its focus to archival collection and undergraduate research education. To celebrate the college's 200th anniversary, the library digitized the six-volume printed *History of the College* and published it as an e-book through a digital sharing platform, allowing readers to read online, download PDFs, and purchase through the college bookstore [15]. The digital platform also includes digitized back issues of the *Colby Quarterly* (a journal about Maine regional culture and history) from 1943-2003. Due to the easy accessibility of this journal on the platform, it has very high usage with approximately 20,000 downloads per month. The library collaborates with the college's communication center to provide permanent digital archiving services for the center's publications. Additionally, the library partners with the college's environmental assessment team to publish an annual report on the Belgrade Lake ecosystem in Maine (<http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/lakesproject>).

2.2.2 Service Effectiveness

The annual report is produced by undergraduates from environmental studies courses and has become an important reference resource for Maine homeowners and lake organizations. Meanwhile, the library's support and contribution to undergraduate research has become an important highlight of the college's student cultivation. Currently, through both student self-submission and digitization of print materials, the library has stored nearly 1,000 outstanding papers and senior theses on the digital sharing platform [12].

2.3 Claremont Colleges 2.3.1 Library Publishing Practice

The Claremont Colleges Library serves seven geographically proximate institu-

tions with diverse needs and identities, providing rich soil for its publishing practices. The library has five peer-reviewed academic journals covering music, mathematics, botany, drama, and science and engineering, plus three student publications, one focusing on undergraduate research writing and another publishing conference papers from undergraduates nationwide [16].

2.3.2 Service Effectiveness

The library's publishing services include education and training on publishing, scholarly communication consulting, publishing platform support, collection digitization and management assistance, and promotion and marketing of publications. The library can assist faculty editors in publishing digital versions of journals and help faculty establish new journals while training them on online publishing and open access feasibility and significance. After new journals are established, library cataloging staff also provide cataloging services.

2.4 Illinois Wesleyan University 2.4.1 Library Publishing Practice

Illinois Wesleyan University is a small liberal arts college with approximately 1,900 students. The library's publishing program focuses primarily on the college's undergraduate research education. Two staff members are mainly responsible for the college's overall scholarly communication program: a scholarly communication librarian and a digital projects coordinator, with participation from student assistants. The library's publishing program originated from institutional repository services, with its digital commons platform capable of managing the academic journal production process, including content submission, peer review, editing, and communication. The library also collaborates with the Economics Department to publish an open access journal, the *Undergraduate Economic Review*, which solicits submissions worldwide with an acceptance rate of approximately 25% [17].

2.4.2 Service Effectiveness

The *Undergraduate Economic Review* is integrated with a core economics course, providing students with practical journal editorial experience while inspiring them in scholarly communication. The library currently supports publication of six additional undergraduate journals and remains attentive to faculty needs for journal publishing.

2.5 Pacific University 2.5.1 Library Publishing Practice

Pacific University is a private university in Oregon with nearly 3,500 students (1,720 undergraduates) and four campuses. The library's publishing services include teaching a standalone course, co-teaching a minor course on publishing and editing with academic departments, and supporting publication of academic journals, undergraduate journals, and other publications [18]. Similar to the aforementioned libraries, its publishing services initially developed based on the institutional repository platform. In 2009, the library first migrated philosophy journal papers from the existing institutional platform to the library's digital commons. Building on this, the library partnered with the Philosophy Depart-

ment to create an open access journal dedicated to publishing papers presented at an undergraduate philosophy conference.

2.5.2 Service Effectiveness

Through experimenting with publishing services, Pacific University Library has become “more clear about what services we can provide and where our future direction lies” [19]. The library now publishes three academic journals—one professional journal and two focusing primarily on undergraduate research and technical reports—with plans to publish books next. In 2010, the library established a dedicated publishing services department responsible for the institutional repository and publishing services, providing training on editorial tools and publishing platforms, and assisting editors in communicating and negotiating with aggregators.

3. Analysis of Publishing Service Models at Small Academic Libraries

3.1 Mission and Motivation Most libraries view publishing as an extension of their mission to disseminate knowledge and a powerful means to demonstrate library value and promote scholarly communication to their institutions. In the publishing process, libraries become supporters of content production, organization, dissemination, and knowledge preservation. Their capabilities in copyright, intellectual property, and long-term preservation provide strong support for this publisher role. To gain faculty and student support for open access and alleviate their concerns about intellectual property, small academic libraries typically make this an important part of their mission.

3.2 Developing Publishing Projects Small academic libraries generally explore suitable publishing services for their institutions through one or two small projects, while understanding what publishing skills the library already possesses and what needs to be learned. Through initial practice, they can understand publishing skills and significance. Therefore, small academic libraries in China can learn from foreign experiences, seek appropriate opportunities, and conduct preliminary trials combining their institutional resources to accumulate experience. Additionally, although libraries should flexibly respond to needs in publishing activities, developing publishing policies to clarify needs and service scope is also essential. Publishing policies include internal service policies, such as publishing project goals, staff service models, budgets, and target service groups, as well as external service policies, such as service scope, requirements for publishing partners, and intellectual property regulations (e.g., student requests to withdraw online open access papers). Claremont Colleges Library stipulates that each journal established is an essential component of the college’s research and teaching and can provide long-term service. Macalester College has also developed a series of measures to manage journal establishment, institutional repository content submission, and withdrawal.

3.3 Staffing and Organizational Structure Small academic libraries often cannot hire new staff to develop publishing services, generally reallocating existing staff time instead. Although librarians have some knowledge of metadata and digital technologies, they need to learn new skills such as design, layout, marketing and business planning, contract drafting, copyediting, and publishing technology to adjust their service roles according to publishing service changes. For example, at Macalester College and Illinois Wesleyan University, after electronic storage needs decreased, staff were reassigned to institutional repository and publishing service projects, fully utilizing their knowledge reserves in copyright and digitization.

3.4 Technology Architecture Small academic libraries generally lack staff and technology to support and operate publishing platforms, so they typically adopt hosted models. The bepress Digital Commons platform is a commercially hosted institutional repository and publishing platform; almost all the small academic libraries introduced in this paper use this hosted platform. A recent LPC survey shows that 57% of libraries use the Open Journal Systems platform, 36% use DSpace, while only 25% use Digital Commons, indicating that other platforms have higher usage rates in large libraries [20]. Small academic libraries choose bepress because it can serve as both an institutional repository platform and provide publishing services, better suited to small library needs. This hosted model allows small academic libraries to focus more on publishing content rather than technical details, and its widespread adoption demonstrates the intersection of institutional repository services and publishing services, as well as libraries' need for customized resource hosting.

3.5 Funding Sources For small academic libraries, securing funding sources represents the greatest challenge to establishing publishing services as long-term work. Publishing project funding generally comes from the library's regular budget, with very few able to obtain institutional support or sponsorship funds, while libraries already face heavy burdens from rising journal prices. Therefore, libraries need clear vision, value demonstration, and publishing policies to attract collaborators, sponsors, and donors, such as by promoting institutional research. The download statistics for Illinois Wesleyan College Library's journals mentioned earlier provide powerful evidence of value, while Claremont Colleges established a digital humanities center with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, where the Claremont Colleges Library provides space, technology, and personnel to support faculty in undergraduate teaching, research, and curriculum development in digital humanities, while exploring support methods for publishing and resource archiving.

3.6 Effective Integration of Undergraduate Research and Journal Publishing In the aforementioned cases, small academic libraries operate at least one journal specifically targeting undergraduate research, with most libraries managing 3-4 journals and Illinois Wesleyan University Library manag-

ing as many as seven. Some colleges have undergraduates directly participate in journal operations and management, providing students not only with practical editorial experience but also inspiration from scholarly communication, enabling them to better understand and master academic paper writing standards, content requirements, and publication formats, thereby effectively promoting their research. Small academic libraries' publishing services support for undergraduate research has become an important highlight of student cultivation at small colleges, achieving the integration of promoting research through publishing, stimulating undergraduate research enthusiasm, and simultaneously driving journal publication and distribution through research to improve content quality—effectively combining undergraduate research with library journal publishing and highlighting the publishing characteristics of small academic libraries.

3.7 Promoting Undergraduate Thesis Publication A distinctive feature of small academic library publishing services is the publication of undergraduate conference papers, annual reports, and technical reports. Conference papers and technical reports often have strong thematic focus and rarely receive public distribution and collection; small academic libraries organize, preserve, and distribute undergraduate research results by publishing these materials, not only fulfilling libraries' essential function of document preservation and filling publishing gaps, but also promoting and disseminating the college's undergraduate research achievements, providing services and support for relevant communities—for example, the annual report produced and published by undergraduates at Colby College Library has become an important reference resource for Maine homeowners and lake organizations, forming a distinctive feature of its publishing services.

3.8 Integration with Teaching and Research Small academic libraries not only publish undergraduate research journals and collect undergraduate conference papers but also integrate publishing and scholarly communication content into relevant courses, guiding and training students on how to establish academic journals. Through student publishing practice, libraries can transform the current situation of information literacy classroom education alone, combining theory with practice. For example, Illinois Wesleyan University's classic economics course trains students in thinking patterns, writing ability, research and data literacy, and understanding of peer review and academic trends in scholarly communication; at Pacific University, the library participates in two courses focusing on scholarly communication, such as "Journal Editing and Publishing." This also promotes cooperation between the library and academic departments and faculty, demonstrating the library's value in scholarly communication.

4. Recommendations for Small Academic Libraries in China

Although small academic libraries face resource and personnel constraints when providing publishing services, their service value is undeniable. Simultaneously, through the process of providing publishing services, libraries gradually master how to construct and improve publishing policies, which aligns with the library's essential mission of supporting scholarly communication and development vision. Combining China's actual conditions with the practical experience of small academic libraries abroad, this paper offers the following recommendations for small academic libraries in China to develop publishing services.

4.1 Seek Practical Opportunities and Develop Publishing Policies

American small academic libraries generally use one or two small projects to explore suitable publishing services for their institutions while understanding what publishing skills the library already possesses and what needs to be learned. Through initial practice, they can understand publishing skills and significance. Therefore, small academic libraries in China can learn from foreign experiences, seek appropriate opportunities, and conduct preliminary trials combining their institutional resources to accumulate experience. Additionally, although libraries should flexibly respond to needs in publishing activities, developing publishing policies to clarify needs and service scope is also essential. Publishing policies include internal service policies, such as publishing project goals, staff service models, budgets, and target service groups, as well as external service policies, such as service scope, requirements for publishing partners, and intellectual property regulations (e.g., student requests to withdraw online open access papers). Claremont Colleges Library stipulates that each journal established is an essential component of the college's research and teaching and can provide long-term service. Macalester College has also developed a series of measures to manage journal establishment, institutional repository content submission, and withdrawal.

4.2 Extensively Develop Cooperation and Conduct Campus Outreach

Due to resource limitations at small academic libraries, extensively developing partnerships within and outside the institution is crucial. Gaining support and sparking interest from faculty is an important component of library publishing services. Therefore, libraries need to conduct promotion and outreach, seek support, and showcase previous successful cases to help all campus constituencies understand the significance of library publishing projects and the services the library can provide for faculty. Cooperation with faculty often derives from previous collaborative relationships—for example, at Macalester College, an information project eventually led to course collaboration with an academic department. When cooperating with faculty, academic programs, student organizations, and other groups, all parties must ensure smooth communication and clearly define respective roles and responsibilities to guarantee successful collaboration.

4.3 Actively Participate in Teaching and Research, Emphasize Undergraduate Thesis Publishing Due to relatively simple organizational structures at small academic library institutions, librarians at small colleges often have close cooperative relationships with faculty, understanding their needs and facilitating new partnerships. Library participation in publishing courses helps improve students' understanding of scholarly communication and publishing capabilities, deepening connections between the library and curricula, promoting cooperation with faculty, and enabling the library to play a leadership role in demonstrating its value and relevance. In these courses, librarians generally teach scholarly communication models, intellectual property, and related issues, fully leveraging the library's professional value in these areas.

American small academic libraries effectively combine undergraduate research and journal publishing in practice, vigorously promoting undergraduate thesis publishing, which not only stimulates undergraduate research but also forms distinctive publishing features, fulfills the library's essential function of document preservation, and meets the needs of certain communities—valuable practices indeed. This demonstrates that selecting publishing content and directions suitable for institutional positioning and genuinely contributing to teaching and research represents a viable path for small academic libraries with limited funding, resources, and personnel.

4.4 Demonstrate Service Value and Enhance Visibility The author believes that for library publishing projects to obtain long-term institutional support, their services must be closely related to the development vision of both the library and its institution. The greatest challenge for libraries providing publishing services lies in explaining to the public the importance and significance of library involvement in this field, which forms the basis for obtaining financial resources and support from faculty, institutional administrators, and other stakeholders—particularly crucial for small colleges with relatively limited human resources and funding. To increase publication audiences, foreign libraries have tried many methods, such as using social media like Twitter and blogs for promotion. This has proven highly effective in promoting publication usage and expanding readership, representing valuable experience for domestic libraries to learn from. Once institutional faculty and administrators recognize the importance of publishing services for teaching and research and understand the library's advantages and capabilities in this field through practice, the library's role in the new scholarly communication system will gain further institutional recognition and affirmation, enabling the library to gain new momentum and continue fulfilling its functions in serving research and teaching.

References

- [1] HAHN K L. Research library publishing services: new options for university publishing[J]. Association of research libraries, 2008.

- [2] SCHWARTZ M. Ten questions with the library publishing coalition[EB/OL]. [2016-12-04]. <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2013/04/library-services/ten-questions-with-the-library-publishing-coalition>.
- [3] LIU Y H, TOURTELLOTT M. Blending at small colleges: challenges and solutions[J]. Journal of asynchronous learning networks, 2011(15): 58-67.
- [4] YOU J. Analysis of library publishing services based on scholarly communication[J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2015(1): 61-65.
- [5] ZHAO H F, MAO Y G. A new model of scholarly communication: library publishing services[J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2012(2): 13-17.
- [6] E L J. Introduction to academic publishing services at MIT libraries[J]. Library Journal, 2014, 33(1): 78-83.
- [7] CHENG W Y, ZHANG X H, LI F Y. Research on foreign university publishing based on library management: a case study of Australian National University publishing[J]. Library, 2015(9): 83-86.
- [8] WEI R, CHU J L. Research on publishing service practices of American university libraries based on institutional repositories[J]. Journal of Academic Libraries, 2015(3): 5-11.
- [9] LIU Z H, TU Z F. Analysis of motivations and conditions for academic libraries' participation in digital publishing[J]. Library and Information Service, 2016, 60(3): 32-37, 113.
- [10] BANKIER J G, PERCIALI I. The institutional repository rediscovered: what can a university do for open access publishing?[J]. Serials review, 2008, 34(1): 21-26.
- [11] Colby College. Digital Commons@Colby[EB/OL]. [2016-10-04]. <http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/>.
- [12] FISHEL T, FAIKS A. Digital collections master plan: content, systems, access and comprehensive management framework[EB/OL]. [2016-10-20]. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/annrep/4>.
- [13] Macalester College. Policies and procedures for requesting the start of a new journal in the Digital Commons@Macalester[EB/OL]. [2016-10-21]. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/new-journal.pdf>.
- [14] SIETMANN J, FISHEL T. Showcasing student, faculty and staff publications: promoting, populating and publishing in a small liberal arts college institutional repository[EB/OL]. [2016-10-21]. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/lib_{pubs}/3.
- [15] Colby College. Colby E-Books. Digital Commons@Colby[EB/OL]. [2016-10-21]. http://digitalcommons.colby.edu/colby_{books}.
- [16] CCL (Claremont Colleges Library). Peer-Reviewed Content. Scholarship@Claremont[EB/OL]. [2016-10-29]. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/peer_{review}_{list}.html.

- [17] DAVIS A H L S, SEEBORG M C, GILMAN I. Library publishing and undergraduate education: strategies for collaboration[EB/OL]. [2016-11-13]. http://works.bepress.com/stephanie_{{davis}}_{{kahl}}/38.
- [18] Pacific University. Pacific University Facts[EB/OL]. [2016-11-13]. <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/who-we-are/pacific-university-facts>.
- [19] GILMAN I, IRONS L. Open access and open lives: the changing role of academic libraries[EB/OL]. [2016-12-10]. <http://commons.pacificu.edu/libfac/15>.
- [20] Library publishing services: strategies for success: final research report[EB/OL]. [2016-10-17]. http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/purduepress_{{ebooks}}/24.

Author Contributions

Li Lu: Responsible for conceptualization, writing, and revision;

Hu Jing: Responsible for data collection and organization;

Tian Xiaodi: Responsible for proofreading and editing.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.