Engaging Undergraduates in Open Access: A Critical Information Literacy Module
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This presentation describes a 5 week 1.5 credit University Honors module taught during the spring of 2014 at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. Designed to introduce students to Open Access from a social movements perspective, and capitalizing on the wealth of resources available via the student-led Right-2-Research Coalition, the module was titled “The Academic Spring: Student rights, faculty boycotts, and moral outrage.”

Objectives:
- Examine economic, ethical, legal, political and social contexts which shape the production and distribution of scientific research and scholarship.
- Investigate disparities in discovering and accessing this knowledge.
- Recognize how these factors relate to the OA movement.
- Explore the OA movement continuum from the radical → reasonable
- Analyze/ evaluate the implications of OA from the individual to the global level.

Grades
Discussion/ Participation: 20%i
Project Development: 20%ii
Literature Review: 30%iii
Final project (30%)
The final projects were part of a campus-wide public information campaign during Open Access Week October, 2014.

Critical Inquiry
Readings from journals, blogs, news sources raised questions about
- Peer review process
- Impact factors
- Faculty rewards, prestige, tenure, intellectual property rights
- Disciplinary differences in acceptance of OA
- Publisher practices among traditional and OA publishers
- Benefits of publishing negative findings
- Predatory Publishers
- Local, national, global stakeholders
Sample readings included:

http://www.nature.com/news/investigating-journals-the-dark-side-of-publishing-1.12666

Delman, S. E. (2012). Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. CACM Online, 55(6), 12. 


Esposito, J. Parting Company with Jeffrey Beall. Posted Dec 16, 2013 
http://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2013/12/16/parting-company-with-jeffrey-beall/

doi:10.1007/s12109-012-9272-5

Disciplinary action: How scientists share and reuse information is driven by technology but shaped by discipline (27 March 2013). Nature, 495(7442) http://www.nature.com/news/disciplinary-action-1.12668

Guest speakers

Dr. David Croteau, textbook author and Associate Professor of Sociology, VCU: "Why Textbooks Look So Similar...and Cost So Much."

Dr. Alison Breland, Senior Research Associate, Institute for Drugs and Alcohol Studies. VCU. “The Peer Review Process: Comparing my experiences with traditional and open access publishers.”

Suggestions/ Lessons Learned

The vast majority of Honors undergraduate students are currently engaged in research with faculty and/or plan to attend graduate school. These students were highly motivated to learn about the implications of open access for their own futures. As the scope of their projects demonstrate, undergraduates can play a valuable role in educating other students and faculty about Open Access.

Based on the success of this module and student suggestions, VCU Librarians are submitting a proposal to offer a yearly 3 credit Honors course on Scholarly Communication in the Open Access environment. By organizing the course around a different social problem each year (drug addiction, clean water, obesity, etc.) and examining it through 3-4 disciplinary lenses throughout the semester, students can explore differences in approaches to the same broad problem through various types of research questions, methods, and dissemination practices. The latter will highlight the importance of stakeholder access to scientific research and scholarship.
Team-teaching is HIGHLY recommended. I began planning this module with a medical librarian who left VCU shortly after the course proposal was submitted. Cross-disciplinary collaboration among Academic Librarians is essential, not only for enriching curriculum content and classroom experiences, but because we all have a critical educational role to play in the Open Access Future.

\[\text{i} \quad \text{Assigned readings were critically examined in each class and used as basis for question posing} \]

\[\text{ii} \quad \text{During a mandatory research consultation, students were guided in development of projects relevant to their own interests} \]

\[\text{iii} \quad \text{Brief review of OA followed by topic-relevant literature} \]