

Open Access: Increasing Visibility and Impact of Research

Pamela Jacobs, Associate University Librarian for Collections

In 1994, Sharon Terry's children were diagnosed with a rare skin disease. Desperate for information, she and her husband started researching the medical literature. They eventually founded a non-profit alliance to further research into the disease and, amazingly, co-discovered the gene responsible for the disease.

However, Sharon describes, "the most disturbing obstacle we face[d] is the wall around published scientific research."¹ She was shocked by the barriers they encountered and at one point resorted to sneaking into medical libraries using volunteer badges. Even more frustrating was the knowledge that much of the research they were trying to access was funded through government granting agencies – supported by her tax dollars. Sharon's experience made her a strong advocate for breaking down the barriers to scholarly literature and for public access to publicly funded research.

It appears that some universities are listening. In February 2008, Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences adopted a motion requiring its faculty to submit an electronic version of any article they publish to the institution's online repository. Robert Darnton, University Librarian and professor of Philosophy at Harvard explains: "By retaining rights for the widest possible dissemination of the faculty's work, it would make scholarship by members of the FAS freely accessible everywhere in the world, and it would reinforce a new effort by Harvard to share its intellectual wealth."²

While it may appear that posting articles in

1 Terry, S. (2005). In the public interest. *College & Research Libraries News*, 66(7), 522-525.
2 <http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=521835>

a campus repository is incompatible with publication in traditional fee-based scholarly journals, this is not the case. In fact most journals allow posting in online repositories. Such repositories can be institution based (as in Harvard's case) or can be subject based such as the physics archive ArXiv.org.

The good news for scholars is that recent evidence demonstrates that publishing articles in an Open Access (OA) archive increases the visibility and impact of an author's work. University-based OA archives can increase the visibility and prestige of the institution.

Granting agencies are also instrumental in the OA movement. Both the National Institutes of Health in the US and the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) have adopted policies mandating deposit of grant funded research in open access archives.

The obstacles Sharon Terry faced have not disappeared - most research articles are in fee based journals available only to subscribing institutions. However the creation of open access archives is a solid first step towards breaking down those barriers.

What is Open Access?

"Open-access literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. What makes it possible is the Internet and the consent of the author or copyright-holder."

Peter Suber, Editor, Open Access News and Professor of Philosophy, Earlham College

New Resources

The Library continues to build a rich digital research collection through the acquisition of resources supporting research across the disciplines. The Library's most recent electronic acquisitions include:

- Full backfiles (1869-1996) for **Nature**, a weekly international journal publishing the finest peer-reviewed research in all fields of science and technology.
- Full backfiles (1900-1964) for the popular database, **Web of Science**, which contains citations and abstracts for over 8,000 core journals in the sciences, social sciences, and arts & humanities.
- Full **Springer e-book collection** (2005-2008) which contains over 12,000 ebooks, with an emphasis on computer science but including titles from all the sciences and social sciences, and some humanities titles.
- **Global Market Information Database (GMID)**, a vast resource of business intelligence on industries, countries and consumers.
- **Corpus de la litterature francophone de l'Afrique noire**, covering more than 11,000 full texts from French-speaking, sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)**, which contains approximately 10,000 files of US and international quantitative research data files.
- **Film and Television Literature Index with Full Text**, which covers scholarly and popular materials relating to film and television.
- **Book Review Index Online**, a comprehensive database of book reviews on all subjects in journals, magazines and newspapers.
- **E-reference titles**, including the Mental Measurements Yearbook, International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics, and Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

For more information on any of these resources, please consult the Library's website at www.brocku.ca/library or contact your Subject Librarian.

Open Access

The Learning Commons

The OPIRG Collection

Spotlight on Research Workshops

Energize your Research! Spring Workshops

Energize your research with a series of research workshops at the Library! Attend the full day, or select from four sessions. Participants are invited to stay for a light lunch between 12-1 pm.

Date: Wednesday, April 23, 2008
Location: eclassroom (TH 253)

Journal Citation Reports, 9-10:15
Journal Alerts/RSS, 10:30-11:45
Images Across Campus, 1-2:15
Map Library 2:30-3:45



for full session details and registration, please visit...
<http://www.brocku.ca/library/faculty.htm>

Search OPIRG's Resource Collection in the Library Catalogue

Recently, the Library's cataloguing staff worked on a project involving the resource collection of the Brock Chapter of OPIRG (Ontario Public Interest Research Group). OPIRG is a non-profit, student-funded, and student directed organization which encourages and supports research, education, and action on social justice and environmental issues.

Records for over four hundred books have been added to the Library Catalogue and cataloguing of audio-visual materials and periodicals has begun. OPIRG's resource collection remains housed in their office (Alumni Student Centre, Room 204, www.opirg.brocku.ca), however their materials may be searched remotely through the Library Catalogue.

The Library has a similar arrangement with the CTLET for their collection on university teaching, and with Rodman Hall for their collection of art exhibition catalogues. Currently, Library staff have catalogued over 80 titles for the CTLET and over 5,000 art catalogues for Rodman Hall. Having records for these materials in the Library Catalogue will help to promote these unique collections to Brock faculty, students, and staff.

For more information about this project, please contact Pat Longo, Head of Collections Services at plongo@brocku.ca

Spotlight on Research

Dr. Melanie Pilkington, Department of Chemistry

Interviewed by Ian Gordon

Melanie Pilkington is an Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry, and Tier II Canada Research Chair in Novel Hybrid Materials. Recently, Ian Gordon interviewed Melanie about her research and use of the Library's SciFinder Scholar™ database.

What are your research interests?



My research is centred on a variety of materials chemistry frontiers including the design, synthesis, and characterization of molecule-based materials.

We are targeting compounds that have potentially useful magnetic and electronic properties that can be switched off and on by heat and light. We anticipate that in the near future, the realization of dual property electronic and magnetic materials will give rise to completely new fields of research as well as new technologies and commercial products. Applications range from the development of new generations of molecule-based superconductors, to the forefront of memory storage devices and displays.

How do you use SciFinder Scholar?

SciFinder Scholar™ has revolutionized the way scientists and health researchers do research. When I was a graduate student, I would spend days painstakingly going through print volumes of Chemical Abstracts™. Now, I have answers to complex problems in minutes. It has increased the rate of research, collaboration, and discovery. I use this database to track citations, ensure relevant research is cited, quickly identify plagiarism, and to confirm the authenticity of research.

For grant writing, SciFinder Scholar™ makes searching for the latest in methodologies, citations, and advances in research simple. In addition, this resource allows me to quickly identify potential collaborators in emerging fields and stay abreast of ground breaking research. The wealth of interdisciplinary information is simply amazing.

How is SciFinder Scholar useful for your students?

My students regularly use SciFinder Scholar™ to carry out and develop their research projects. They can keep up with their fields of interest and discover what our competitors have recently published. Students also use it to explore new ways of creating and analyzing new and emergent compounds.

For graduate students, many of whom take directed reading courses, this resource allows them to explore background readings,

“Without access to SciFinder Scholar, my research group would not be able to carry out competitive research and retain our reputation for research excellence.”

reflect on topics, and locate articles of direct relevance. In my mind, SciFinder Scholar™ is essential to research, writing, teaching, and the development of research proposals and novel ideas.

Any further thoughts on SciFinder Scholar™?

The fact that Brock had access to this database was a major factor in my decision to accept a position at the university. It offers a unique opportunity to drill down through interdisciplinary, applied, and theoretical research. Without access to SciFinder Scholar™, my research group would not be able to carry out competitive research and retain our reputation for research excellence.

SciFinder Scholar™ (MEDLINE® 1949+ and Chemical Abstracts™ 1907+) is an interdisciplinary science database that allows researchers to track ideas through the maze of over 30 million articles, patents, reports, and conference papers. SciFinder Scholar™ is currently available on Library workstations – in the fall, SciFinder will be available to Brock students, staff, and faculty, from their desktop.

Spotlight on Research highlights the use of Library resources by Brock researchers. If you would like to be featured in this column, please contact Justine Cotton at justine.cotton@brocku.ca.

Faculty and the Learning Commons

Justine Cotton

Construction of the Learning Commons is moving towards completion and the doors will soon be open to the Brock community. The design of the Learning Commons has focused on promoting and facilitating the collaborative, informal learning that takes place outside the classroom. In the dynamic new design, students will have access to a variety of learning spaces and support for their academic endeavours.

The benefits for students are clear, but how the Learning Commons might enhance the teaching and research of Brock faculty members requires some exploration. From a research perspective, the Learning Commons will be a venue for research workshops as well as a space to highlight faculty publications and achievements. At the main floor Help Desk, Brock faculty will be able to initiate contact and consult with the Subject Librarians regarding their research needs.

From the perspective of teaching, there are some significant advantages for faculty. The Learning Commons will feature instruction rooms and a second e-classroom for Subject Librarians to host research seminars for students. According to Dr. Maureen Connolly, Director of the Centre for Teaching, Learning, and Educational Technology (CTLET), the convergence of services for students will offer tremendous support to faculty: “Faculty members will be able to refer students to the Learning Commons for assistance with research, study skills, and essay writing...areas of their education that might need additional



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Dr. Maureen Connolly

support.”

Having the services in one location will simplify referrals and increase the visibility of these forms of assistance. There will also be an opportunity for graduate students to serve as mentors to undergraduate students.

In addition, Maureen notes that the development of the Learning Commons is an opportunity to consider a greater variety of approaches to collaborative and active learning: “It is a chance to build more self-directed and independent learning activities into the curriculum.” As students work in a self-directed style, more flexibility might be built into contact hours with their professors.

In effect, The Learning Commons will be a place where faculty and the Library can come together to further Brock's research goals and to support the scholarship of our students.

Learn more about the theory behind the Learning Commons...

To learn more about the Learning Commons and how it relates to teaching and learning, please attend the CTLET's Best Practices Day on **May 6, 2008**, where Michael Ridley, CIO and Chief Librarian at the University of Guelph, and Dr. Nancy Schmidt, Co-director of the Learning Commons at Guelph, will speak about the Learning Commons' function as a transitional platform for re-imagining approaches to teaching and learning.

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