

Renewing Our Value: The Library's Role with Online Faculty Evaluations

Maliaca Oxnam and Kimberly Chapman

Annual evaluation processes for faculty are not new to most college and university campuses; however, more and more institutions are exploring the use of campus-wide, online review systems to facilitate their faculty evaluation processes. Use of these systems allows for more consistent reporting to campus administration, allows for the capture of data elements useful for program and accreditation reporting, and greatly enhances the ability to make the work of all faculty on campus more visible.

At first glance, these review systems can appear quite simple. However, behind the user interface the systems are quite complex, ingesting and integrating information from campus data systems into a single interface that summarizes and co-mingles known faculty activities with self-reported activities. Some systems also provide a workflow interface used for recording a faculty member's evaluation and performance rating(s) against the department, college and/or campus criteria. This comprehensive summary of a faculty member's activities is a wealth of information that, for years in the print world, departments and colleges mined to develop statistics and data that could be used to showcase faculty accomplishments to campus and the community at large. These same print reports also provided information that was often compiled for program and accreditation reviews.

Moving to an online system to capture this information provides opportunities to generate auto-

mated reports for these same purposes using faculty activities in the system. These systems often provide department heads, deans and campus administration with reporting dashboards that repurpose the data for use in completing academic program reviews and accreditation documentation. The data in these systems may also be used for purposes such as demonstrating university impacts to the community or providing faculty search tools that can assist with matching inquiries from the local media to appropriate faculty on campus. Because the data can be easily queried and searched, these tools become natural tools for finding collaborators, serving to connect faculty across research areas. Other benefits to these systems include push-button CV generation, including templates for special CV formatting such as the NSF and NIH biosketches needed for grant applications. In addition, the systems can serve as a repository for faculty member artifacts, such as course syllabi and evaluations, presentation materials, examples of student work and any number of other types of support documentation that may be useful to the faculty member in context of documenting their faculty activities and contributions to campus.

Data reported through these review processes and systems is a hot commodity for some vendors, especially those who know the information market. Over the past few years, vendors, including Elsevier and Thomson-Reuters, have made large investments

Maliaca Oxnam is Associate Librarian, Office of Digital Innovation & Stewardship, University of Arizona Libraries, e-mail: maliaca@email.arizona.edu; Kimberly Chapman is Director, Campus Repository Services, University of Arizona Libraries, e-mail: kimberlychapman@email.arizona.edu

in developing products in this market. Analytic and comparative tools such as Academic Analytics, SciVal Experts and InCites, all of which can help campus administrators assess performance of programs and research areas, have gained importance as increasing demands for data is needed to make decisions in a constantly fluctuating budget environment. In further developing these products, the vendors have begun to tap into the developing market for faculty evaluation systems.

There are numerous reasons libraries should be aware of these product developments and how these products may impact scholarly communications as a whole. It is the case that many of these systems are marketed directly to central campus administration bypassing libraries who have traditionally helped to provide similar types data for colleges and departments for their program review processes. These new faculty evaluation and data comparison systems, depending on the size of the institution and the levels of data and services acquired, each cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to the institution and it is more often the case that central administration does not realize that the data being used behind these systems is often drawn from the same source system(s) that the university's library may already be licensing. Purchasing more than one of these types of comparison or evaluation systems, plus the cost of the databases licensed by the library becomes quite costly to an institution very quickly. Involving the libraries in these early conversations can serve to leverage the economic efficiencies by negotiating these products and services as a single contract. Likewise, conversations to foster an awareness and understanding of license restrictions, data ownership, and data sharing and use are critical in the early stages of acquiring these types of products and services for campus.

While this paper is focused on faculty evaluation and faculty activity reporting tools, a nod should be given to other similar tools on the market that are more focused on exposing faculty networks and collaboration opportunities. While our experiences are based on a specific tool, it would be expected that

many of the strategies and opportunities presented in this paper would be similar across the implementation of these various other systems.

The University of Arizona Experience

Libraries are well positioned to play critical roles and provide services with campus administration and campus technology during the selection, implementation, and long-term support of these faculty activity systems. Representatives from the University of Arizona Libraries were fortunate to be involved in early conversations with the Office of the Provost regarding the intent to develop a mandated, online system to facilitate the faculty evaluation process. Long-term, it was desired that the system would also facilitate the promotion and tenure process for the campus. As the conversations and implementation moved forward it was quickly realized that this system, while focused initially on modernizing and facilitating the faculty evaluation processes for the institution, was actually much more inclusive than just faculty evaluations. The system was a faculty activity reporting system, capturing data that could be utilized for university purposes other than solely faculty evaluations. This paper will highlight the Libraries role in these conversations, in order to serve as a model to other libraries hoping to engage with their campus administration around faculty evaluation or faculty activity reporting systems.

Once it was known that the Office of the Provost was seriously exploring options for moving to an online evaluation system, it was not too difficult for the Library to offer its services in supporting the campus conversations and to demonstrate that the Library was a key partner in helping to move the initiative forward for the institution. As a starting point, the Libraries had expertise in contract negotiations with several of the companies providing these online systems. In addition, as experts on searching the scholarly record, we were well positioned to provide analyses of potential data sources for purchasing bibliographic citation data that could be fed into the system. Pre-populating the system with bibliographic citation data to reduce the amount of time required by each faculty member

in submitting their performance evaluations supported a leading goal of reducing the time of the faculty member in submitting data to the process.

Once the Libraries had established itself as a key partner, much of the first year was spent in consultation with other key partners and stakeholders on campus. The discussions focused on developing requirements for the system, identifying goals to be achieved, and writing a project proposal to be funded by campus. During these initial conversations, it was beneficial to the campus administrators to have the Libraries involved. As the Libraries are well-versed in scholarly communications, licensing and copyright issues, the Libraries were able to recognize point-of-need learning opportunities for the project members and higher administration whereby the Libraries could further establish its role as a steward of information for the campus. Quickly addressing and educating the project members across a wide variety of topics was beneficial to ensuring that areas such as long-term data stewardship, copyright and licensing issues were recognized and addressed.

These conversations also opened the door to introduce the idea of campus-wide use of faculty identifiers such as ORCID, ResearcherID, Scopus Author ID, and the like, to the campus administration and to the administrators of our campus systems of record. While it has taken more than two years of reinforced conversation, these administrators are now much more aware and better versed in understanding the potential campus benefits for capturing and storing some of these types of data in the campus systems,

as well as the complexities involved with utilizing and maintaining this type of data for purposes of business analytics and campus reporting.

In Spring 2013, The University of Arizona offered a Call for Proposals for a faculty activity reporting system that would facilitate the annual faculty evaluation processes and long-term have the capability of handling the more complex promotion and tenure processes for the campus. By summer, the Office of Provost selected the Faculty180 system offered from Data180 for implementation at The University of Arizona. The system would be implemented under the direction of a tri-unit ownership arrangement as described in table 1.

Throughout the selection process, the Libraries continued to prove its value to the campus by demonstrating both its understanding and management of large projects with complex information systems. The effectiveness of these contributions resulted in the University administration selecting both the project manager and the deployment manager for the campus implementation from the University Libraries.

On the surface, the project seems rather straightforward: import profile information, course data, grants data and scholarly citations from campus data and other systems for each faculty member; then provide an orientation to how to utilize the system and voila! the campus would have a new faculty reporting system in place. However, as with any project, these steps were greatly simplified and the complexities of working with each campus data system and providing customizations for each college and department on campus became its own mini-project.

TABLE 1
Ownership Arrangement

Unit	Areas of Responsibility
Office of the Provost, Vice-Provost for Faculty Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandates and Policy as related to Faculty Evaluation Processes • Mandates and Policy as related to Promotion & Tenure Processes
University Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stewardship for the scholarly record • Project management of campus implementation
University Information & Technology Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical system support • Data integration with other campus systems

Taking data from campus systems that were designed to meet their own unique business needs and were not intended to ever be reviewed or utilized by the faculty members (or even units) directly posed challenges. As each data system's data was brought into the faculty reporting system, inconsistencies with data policies and data entry were uncovered requiring campus-wide attention, analysis, and corrections. On the backside of the system, the implementation involved working with the HR system for personnel information, the Sponsored Projects system for funded grants and proposal data, and the Registrar's system for course data. The implementation also included importing scholarly citation datasets from PubMed and importing data from the campus implementation of the SciVal Experts system.

It was recognized that, if given the choice, most faculty members would rather not participate in any annual evaluation process, and had little desire to change from their current paper-based practices to a new online system. Given this context, a very high-touch, high-involvement implementation approach was designed for the campus rollout. The process involved working with deans, department heads, faculty, departmental administrative support personnel, and leaders of the various campus data systems. The process included consistent messaging about approaches to transitioning into the system and the benefits of using the system, both for units and for individual faculty. In addition, because the University has a strong tradition of shared governance, it was emphasized that moving to the online system was not changing any unit's policies and processes about data required for faculty reviews, nor imposing uniform approaches, requirements, or timelines for each unit. The implementation team worked with each unit to review their paper-based documentation and processes, to ensure that elements specific to each unit could be captured and replicated in the system as closely as possible as to what faculty would expect to see on their paper forms.

For the University of Arizona implementation, the project manager and/or the deployment manager met with the college administration to determine

whether the college wanted to hold the development of the unit's system customizations and evaluation processes at the college level or allow customization at the department level. If customizations at the department level were being allowed, meetings were then held with the department head and any support staff being assigned to the project. The customizations were then discussed, implemented in the system and the department head was asked to examine and test the system before giving approval that the system was appropriate for use by the faculty of that department. Once approved, an orientation was held for all faculty members (usually at a department meeting). These orientations were often followed by some combination of optional hands-on training session(s), office hours where the implementation staff would be available for drop-in consulting, and/or individual consultations as requested by faculty.

Often, through these consultations and training sessions, it became obvious that the library liaisons to departments and colleges could provide support opportunities through additional workshops on disciplinary databases or the like, so communication strategies involved passing information back to our liaisons when appropriate. While it was most often the case in our experience, that the project manager and deployment manager were more accessible and able to jump in to address some of the support requests in a more timely way than our liaisons, particularly because of the multiple questions specific to the implementation that could be asked during training and consultations, there are opportunities with implementation of these systems that librarians at other institutions could take advantage of in order to provide support to their colleges and departments.

How Librarians Can Be Involved

Librarians have unique skill sets that range from project management to instructional expertise. We work with library patrons of all types, demonstrating patience and a great depth of understanding for our different constituents. Librarians possess analytical and communication skill sets important for problem-solv-

ing, and holding effective trainings and consultations. We are knowledgeable across a breadth of scholarly communication and copyright issues. In addition, the importance of our incredible attention to detail, and our ability to work with a variety of different systems and different types of metadata, are unique ways in which librarians can contribute to these types of projects. As described by the brief overview of the situation and experience at the University of Arizona, below are other general areas and examples of how libraries could support faculty activity reporting systems on their own campuses.

1. Project Management

Most libraries have expertise in leading projects. While a library may not want to offer to lead the entire implementation project due to resource constraints or variance in local approaches, a library may be able to offer project management expertise around smaller components of the overall system, such as analyzing bibliographic data, or developing help guides or tutorials.

2. System Integration and Metadata Support

Most faculty activity systems integrate with one or more campus systems to pull in personnel, course and/or grants data from campus systems. Assisting with cross-walking the metadata and faculty identifiers across these systems and ensuring the data pulls and imports are happening accurately can be complex depending on the systems. Equally important can be assisting to identify the source of errors which can require a very detailed analysis of data elements across systems.

3. Contract & License Negotiations

This is a very obvious way for the libraries to assist the campus with finding economic efficiencies. By leading or contributing to negotiations, the Library could potentially save the campus many thousands of dollars depending on the vendor and what products are already licensed by the institution.

4. Scholarly Communications & Data Use Rights

Educating faculty and campus administration about topics ranging from publicly posting open access articles to copyright on article abstracts, all the way to interpreting licenses or advocating for the ability of the institution to retain its ownership of the faculty activity data gathered by the system are all important, but easily overlooked, elements for a campus implementation.

5. Stewardship for the Scholarly Record

Some libraries may be able to position themselves as the stewards for the scholarly record of faculty activities that is created. As the system is adopted, it is important to ensure the appropriate stewardship of the faculty data. Some disciplines have sensitivities even to their published scholarship, and such sensitivities need to be stewarded to ensure appropriate use of the data long-term.

6. Training & Workshops

Librarians are experienced with providing workshops and training sessions for faculty and staff. The familiarity with faculty areas of research and knowledge of campus cultures positions the library well for providing more meaningful hands-on learning sessions than could be provided by a vendor. If the campus implementation team doesn't need assistance, reaching out directly to colleges and departments to offer workshops on how to gather a faculty member's citations for import to the system, or a session on scholarly communication issues to be considered when posting full-text materials (e.g. publications, course syllabi, examples of student work). Some systems offer collaborator search tools or faculty finders. The library could offer workshops focused on search tips and techniques to maximize use of these tools for finding collaborators across campus.

7. Help Guides & Tutorials

Regardless of what other support mechanisms are in place, many faculty want to know that

there are help guides and tutorials available at the time of need. For the University of Arizona, having a “Getting Started...” Guide and a guide for “Importing Citations from Google Scholar” were very popular for our campus roll-out. Librarians can easily lend their expertise in helping develop these simple materials. For those libraries with the expertise and resources, helping to develop brief video tutorials would be welcomed by those users who want a more audio-visual learning experience.

8. Training Spaces

Although many of the orientations will be held in department meeting rooms, it may be the case that some units need a larger space or a meeting room with better projection and display capabilities for purposes of training on the new system, than may be available in their own units. If the library has suitable space available, it may consider offering that space to the campus team for holding trainings, consultations hours, etc.

In summary, libraries can take advantage of these new faculty evaluation and faculty activity reporting systems to renew the library's visibility on campus, add value to campus efforts, and leverage opportunities for providing support. While at first it may seem strange for a library to be involved with such a central campus activity, the skill sets of librarians and the overlap with recording the scholarly record actually provide a synergy whereby the library can engage with faculty across campus in new and exciting ways.