# How to make a manifesto… and not:
# Principles of the Scholarly Commons as Case History

Daniel Paul O'Donnell
T17 Global is Local
FSCI Online
August 11, 2020

# Bibliography

Champieux, Kramer, et al. 2016. "Finding the Principles of the Commons: A Report of the Force11 Scholarly Communications Working Group," Collaborative Librarianship. 8.2. https://bit.ly/GiL-Champ2016.

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# What to do? What to do?

- We've discussed Global Inequity and how this impacts Scholarly Communication
- The homework was to review some manifestos
- The question we are discussing today is "What can we do/can be done to improve things"?
  - Having discussed the issues Gimena has reviewed, what do we do about them?
- In the last section of the course, we will break into groups to come up with concrete proposals for post-FSCI action
  - Article? Working Group? Something else?

# But first an example

- But first I want to discuss an example of the process:
  - One that shows how and how not to work for action in Open Science
- The project, "Principles of the Scholarly Commons," is related in that it provides a framework for understanding what the goals of Open are and how equity might play out
- But it also also generally a good model for exploring what does and does not work when you are trying to provoke action

# Principles of the Scholarly Commons: History

- Documented in two articles
- Started from a question by Sarah Callaghan at Force 2015 Oxford
  *What would research communication look like after a clean start?*

Research communication carries with it the weight of 350 years of tradition, still using work-arounds for technological limitations from many centuries ago. What would research communication look like if we threw everything out and started again, given current technologies? I'd propose bringing people together for a day's workshop where we'd start with a blank page, and design something different that would meet the needs of researchers and users of research. At worst we'd have a better understanding of what it is research communication needs to be able to do. At best, we might even come up with something revolutionary!

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# History (con't)

- With funding from the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (Maryann Martone, PI), a Force11 Working Group was established to

  "Define and promote a set of high-level principles and practical guidelines for a 21st century scholarly communications ecosystem — the Scholarly Commons"

- Method was two workshops (invited) with direction from the Force11 Scholarly Commons working group.

# First workshop: Madrid, 26-27 Feb 2017

- Workshop organised around 12 interactive sessions, led by YKON a Helsinki-based collective of artists, scholars, and game designers who develop facilitation models.
- Overall charge was to "start from scratch" and design a scholarly communication model that would "maximize the accessibility and impact of scholarly works using today's technology," but freed from historical constraints.
- Expected focus on technology, but attendees stayed very high-level.

# First workshop: Madrid, 26-27 Feb 2016

- After considerable work, consensus-building, and subsequent revision, a set of 18 "principles" were developed under 4 heads:

**I. Equitable**
a. Wherein, people are its most important resource.
b. Everyone's participation is supported and rewarded.
c. There is credit and universal attribution for all activities.
d. The Commons acts as a skills and knowledge-based marketplace.
e. The Commons is diverse and inclusive.
f. No metrics or rankings are negatively built into the Commons.

**II. Open**
a. The Commons is open by default, with its content and standards free to read, reuse, and remix by humans and machines, unless there is a compelling reason to restrict access.
b. Content is FAIR
c. A publisher in the Commons is any entity that will ensure that outputs are FAIR.
d. All outputs are considered published when they are made available according to the principles and standards of the Commons.

**III. Sustainable**
a. There is global commitment and participation in the Commons long-term viability and preservation.
b. All activities and outputs that take place in in the Commons remain in the Commons.
c. Use of the Commons cannot devalue the Commons.
d. There is an expectation of service by the Commoners to support research and scholarship in the Commons.
e. The Commons itself is continuously required to respond to the requirements of their Commoners.

**IV. Research and Culture Driven**
a. The Commons is enabled by technology, funding, and business models that are free to evolve over time.
b. Incentives, including funding, align with producing the best scholarship and supporting the overarching purpose of the Commons.
c. The forms of scholarly output will be optimized for broad and reusable dissemination.

# Second Workshop, San Diego, Sept 2017

- Goal of the second workshop was to put the principles "into a larger framework—a conceptual map of scholarly communications…. [and] compare the community's vision of the Commons against our current state of 'chaotic innovation'.
- Ask two questions
  - Do these [the 18 Madrid principles] resemble the principles of the Commons we are seeking?
  - Are these statements we can envisage acting on in order to realize, build, and grow the Commons?

# Subsequent developments

- Immediately before San Diego workshop, members of the Working group were asked to write a critique of the Madrid Principles.
- I wrote two blogs pointing out some problems with the Madrid 18:

# Subsequent developments

- Why this number? Are there really eighteen principles to the Commons? Or did we just happen to think up eighteen? How do we know we are not missing some?
- Why this distribution? Why are the RC (i.e. "Research Culture") principles under RC? Do they follow naturally from the idea that the Commons must be driven by research, or are they there because "Research Culture" seemed as good a place as any to put them? Why are the "E" (Equity) principles under E and "O" (Openness) Principles under O?
- What about the mix of scopes and types within the "principles"? "The Commons exists independently of the technology, funding, and business models that support it" (RC1) seems like a different type of claim than "In the Commons, incentives… are designed to reward behaviours that support the best scholarship" (RC2): the first seems like a genuine principle; the second more like good practice.
- Is there not an inconsistency to the kind of entity they define? Sometimes the Commons defined here seems like a consensus among like minded people (e.g. E1); other times, it seems like a club with implicit officers and rules—or at the very least, peer pressure (e.g. S4). When you review the more detailed descriptions we have, you find more and more profound issues like this: there are rules about how one must be identified (perhaps implying some kind of enforcement mechanism); there are rules about what kind of reward systems must be in the Commons and about how there are to be no metrics or evaluations, and so on.

# Subsequent developments

- Also developed a smaller set of "generative" principles that could explain all the non-contradictory elements from Madrid:

  P. The Scholarly Commons is a consensus among knowledge producers and users that
  P1. research and knowledge should be freely available to all who wish to use or reuse it;
  P2. participation in the production and use of knowledge should be open to all who wish to participate;
  P3. our practices should be such that there are no systemic barriers and disincentives to prevent either free use or open participation.
  R. On the basis of these three principles there are four basic rules to the commons:
  R1. Participation and access are the only intrinsic reward systems within the Commons. The Commons does not itself have systems for rewarding participation in any other way;
  R2. The Commons does not require the use of any specific technology, approach, process, or system;
  R3. The Commons does not prevent the development of either external systems for either reward or specific technologies, processes approaches, and systems, but such rewards, technologies, processes, approaches, and systems cannot be part of the definition of the Commons;
  R4. Commoners may not participate in external activities that hurt the viability of the commons.

# Subsequent developments

- But not quite happy: wasn't sure that everything was fully generative
- But more importantly: not sure what the point was

  "I.e. if the Commons were a consensus that Scholarly Communication should be open and equitable, how was that different from what we now had among Open Access advocates of various stripes? And why would groups that currently don't believe that (in their practices at least) find our 'new' Commons something that challenged them?
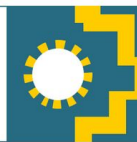
# Subsequent developments

- Subsequent discussion produced the following:

P. The Scholarly Commons is ~~a consensus~~ **an agreement** among knowledge producers and users that

P1. research and knowledge should be freely available to all who wish to use or reuse it;

P2. participation in the production and use of knowledge should be open to all who wish to participate;

P3. our practices should be such that there are no systemic barriers and disincentives to prevent either free use or open participation.

R. On the basis of these three principles there are four basic rules to the Commons **that must be observed in order to claim compliance**:

R1. Participation and access are the only intrinsic reward systems within the Commons. The Commons does not itself have systems for rewarding participation in any other way;

R2. The Commons does not require the use of any specific technology, approach, process, or system;

R3. The Commons does not prevent the development of either external systems for either reward or specific technologies, processes approaches, and systems, but such rewards, technologies, processes, approaches, and systems cannot be part of the definition of the Commons;

R4. Commoners may not participate in external activities that hurt the viability of the commons.

# Subsequent developments

- Since then, the Principles working group went on to
  - Develop a website (https://www.force11.org/scholarly-commons)
  - Translate the Principles into some languages
  - A call to action
  - Subsequent work on technology to check openness ('Decision Trees')

# Why is this in anyway interesting?

- Raised this history and these principles for two reasons
  - First is that you probably haven't heard of these
    - Call to action went nowhere: other than decision trees I'm unaware of pickup of the principles along the lines of other Co-eval Force11 projects such as Data Citation/FAIR data
  - Second is that it is worthwhile discussing why that is and what lessons we can learn from them for our own thinking about how to move forward on important issues

# So what happened

- I think two things happened to the Principles to make them less effective than they could have been
  1. Although the principles are written as something that is ascribable "an agreement" — i.e. a "join us" — we never treated them as such.
     - We defined our initial task as"Define and promote a set of high-level principles and practical guidelines for a 21st century scholarly communications ecosystem — the Scholarly Commons"
  2. After we wrote that they were an agreement, we just put them on the web — didn't require action
     - Once they were published we asked people to test them, not apply them.
     - Failed to emphasise that these are a commitment, not a description.

# Applying to Globalisation

- In some ways, there's less danger of this with Global Issues
  - Not going to ask people whether they are in favour of diversity and inclusion, but rather assume they are
- But at the same time, we can fall into the description vs. call-to-action trap
  - Describing the problem is fine
  - But action requires commitment
- As we think of our work for the rest of this class, I'd like you to keep these issues in mind
  - If we want to *do* something, let's make it actionable!

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