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In the Test Kitchen: Developing a Recipe for a Faculty Publication Fund

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NUTRITION INFORMATION

In 2014, University of Northern Colorado (UNC) librarians led the effort, in collaboration with the Office of the Provost and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP), to develop a fund that provides financial support to faculty for costs related to publishing their research and scholarship. A review committee disburses funds according to specified guidelines. As the fund has matured, these rules have evolved in response to changes in faculty needs, publishing business models, and institutional culture. The fund began as a six-month pilot that initially covered only journal article fees and has since expanded to include books and conference proceedings. To date, the committee has disseminated over \$56,000 and funded approximately sixty published works. This recipe assists readers to establish, lead, or evolve a faculty publication fund initiative at their institutions.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Collaborate with library administrators and other campus leaders to establish a publication fund initiative similar to the one described at UNC.
- Determine an appropriate scope for their publication fund, whether it will

focus support on open access (OA) publications or allow for the funding of hybrid and traditional publishing models.

- Create guidelines for evaluating publishers and reviewing applications.
- Administer the fund as committee chairs and members.
- Encourage OA publishing by campus faculty.
- Support faculty in disseminating their work.

NUMBER SERVED

This campus-wide fund serves as many faculty members as the budget allows. At UNC, an average of 10 faculty receive funding annually, with a yearly budget of \$10,000 (there is a \$1,500 annual cap per applicant). During the initial six-month pilot program, 6 faculty received funding. Anticipate serving a smaller number of faculty during the pilot period of the initiative.

COOKING TIME

Allow at least 6 months for the initial planning stage of a faculty publication fund, particularly if the library partners with another campus unit. Once the fund is established, the time commitment will vary. For the committee chair, this will involve time spent pre-

paring for and holding meetings, publicizing the fund, reviewing applications, and writing annual reports. For committee members, it will mainly include attending meetings and reviewing applications. Administrative support staff may spend time receiving and distributing applications, attending meetings, and arranging fund distributions and award letters.

During active periods, the time commitment may vary from one to 2 hours per week for committee members and support staff to up to 4 hours per week for the committee chair; these will be interspersed with periods of little to no activity. The committee will likely need to meet for two or three face-to-face meetings per year, with the rest of the work occurring online.

DIETARY GUIDELINES

The main purpose of the fund is to support faculty members who incur costs related to publishing their research and scholarship. The fund encourages faculty to publish in OA venues by reimbursing costs for article processing charges in OA journals, although it also covers non-OA publication costs such as book indexing. It also serves to educate faculty and help raise awareness about the

changing scholarly publishing landscape and best practices for evaluating publishers.

At UNC, the fund ties to the library’s existing, ongoing work supporting and facilitating scholarly communication initiatives on cam-

pus. This includes adopting a library faculty OA resolution; advocating for a campus-wide OA resolution that the Faculty Senate adopted; hosting speakers, workshops, panels, and film screenings to promote OA; raising awareness of scholarly communication issues; and

educating faculty about the different types of scholarly publishing models. By initiating and administering a publication fund, librarians use a proactive strategy and become campus-wide leaders. The successful establishment of the fund highlights librarians’

University of Northern Colorado Faculty Publication Fund Committee Application Rubric for Journal Articles

Name of Applicant:

FPF Committee Reviewer:

The Budgets and Contracts Coordinator will screen applicants and will share only complete applications submitted by the deadline with committee members for their review.

Weighted Criteria

Criteria	Rating	Points	Any additional comments
Faculty rank	Untenured professor – 3 Associate Professor – 2 Full Professor – 1		
First-time applicant for this award?	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Has UNC as co-author/s? (Applies for student or faculty co-authors.)	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Evidence of non-profit publisher?	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Not hybrid open access journal*	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Publisher allows for posting in institutional repository. (See Sherpa Romeo.)	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Publisher fee structure is sustainable for authors and libraries.	0–\$1,000 – 4 \$1,001–\$2k – 3 \$2,001–\$3k – 2 \$3,001 & above – 1		
Is this the final publication? (addressed in application)	Yes – 1, No – 0		

*A hybrid open-access journal is a subscription journal in which some of the articles are open access. This status typically requires the payment of a publication fee (also called an article processing charge or APC) to the publisher in order to publish an article open access, in addition to the continued payment of subscriptions to access all other content.

Figure 1: Sample Rubric for Review of Journal Article Publication Funding

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roles as experts in scholarly communications and publishing. In advocating for sustainable business models, librarians can positively influence the larger publishing ecosystem. Collectively, librarians following this recipe can make a positive impact that extends beyond their individual institutions.

INGREDIENTS & EQUIPMENT

- Funds provided by a source such as the Office of the Provost

- A committee chair, faculty committee members, support staff, and ex-officio administrator
- A website, such as a LibGuide, with information about the fund, review committee membership and review procedures, application guidelines and procedures, and advice for evaluating publishers
- An online application form and rubrics (one for journals, one for books; see figures 1 and 2)

- A private online space for committee members (such as SharePoint) to store and access documents, applications, meeting notes, annual reports, and other relevant materials

PREPARATION

- Initiate discussions with library and campus leadership about the desirability and feasibility of establishing a faculty publication fund.

University of Northern Colorado Faculty Publication Fund Committee Application Rubric for Books

Name of Applicant:

FPF Committee Reviewer:

The Budgets and Contracts Coordinator will screen applicants and will share only complete applications submitted by the deadline with committee members for their review.

Weighted Criteria

Criteria	Rating	Points	Any additional comments
Faculty rank	Untenured professor – 3 Associate Professor – 2 Full Professor – 1		
First-time applicant for this award?	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Has UNC as co-author/s? (Applies for student or faculty co-authors.)	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Evidence of non-profit publisher? (i.e., university press)	Yes – 1, No – 0		
Publisher fee structure is sustainable for authors and libraries. This includes negotiated subvention fees, image fees, other.	0–\$1,000 – 4 \$1,001–\$2k – 3 \$2,001–\$3k – 2 \$3,001 & above – 1		
Quality of application* (thorough justification for funds is clear, responded to requests for clarification if applicable, well-written)	Scale 1–5		
Total points	17 points possible		

*Note: successful applicants must score at least a 3 for quality of application in order to receive an award.

Figure 2: Sample Rubric for Review of Book Publication Funding

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- Research publication funds at institutions similar to your own to gather ideas and best practices for funding models and fund administration.
- Provide collected information and recommendations to library and/or campus administrators responsible for establishing the fund.

COOKING METHOD

1. Create a committee in partnership with a campus administrator and set up a space such as a Sharepoint site for accessing and storing committee materials.
2. Determine the scope and parameters of the fund, application and committee procedures, criteria for reviewing applications, and processes for awarding funds.
3. Create informational materials and an application form for potential applicants and make these accessible on a website or LibGuide.
4. Publicize the fund to the campus community.
5. Review applications and award funds based on the established set of eligibility criteria.
6. Review and adjust award criteria, processes, and guidelines to best accommodate faculty needs and budgetary constraints. Adaptations may include setting a cap on fund amount per faculty and creating deadlines rather than a first-come, first-served rolling application process.

ALLERGY WARNINGS

Even if the library administers a fund, it is

ideal for the money to originate from an outside source, such as the Office of the Provost. Especially for funds that focus on promoting OA publishing, this is important as it signals high-level campus support and an acknowledgment from administrators that publishing models must evolve to be sustainable. It indicates that the institution recognizes scholarly publishing costs to be a larger issue, one that does not only affect libraries.

Some institutions employ a model where an individual administers the fund and makes award decisions. This is to be avoided if possible. It is better to leverage a committee in order to build community, get campus buy-in, ensure a fair playing field across disciplines, and integrate different perspectives on how best to administer funds.

In the first year or two, consider a lower fund allocation than you might ultimately like. Do not bite off more than you can chew; it will take time for a critical mass of faculty to learn about the fund and start applying. UNC administrators perceived faculty demand to be low due to a large pool of unspent funds after the first year and subsequently cut funding levels to meet that perceived demand. A smaller, fully spent initial fund may convince administrators to gradually increase, rather than drastically decrease, funding.

Set aside time to promote the fund through a variety of channels. In addition to online outreach such as email, the chair and committee members may wish to speak to leadership

groups at the college and department level (an administrative partner can be useful for expediting invitations). Other options include writing an article on the fund and its impact for a campus newsletter or magazine. Include credit to the funding source and quotes from faculty on the importance of the fund and from librarians on publishing funding intricacies and sustainability of models.

Due to the complex nature of publishing models, prepare to take the time needed to adequately research and answer complex questions from faculty and administrators about appropriate uses of the fund. Be ready to make updates to the fund criteria and review procedures as a result of these conversations. Finally, prepare to be flexible and deal with situations you might not have anticipated, such as orienting new research office staff members to the committee’s work and processes.

CLEAN-UP

As an ongoing initiative, the publication fund will require periodic evaluation and follow-up measures, including the following:

- Review and revise procedures and guidelines as new questions and situations arise.
- Revisit the purpose of the fund with newly hired administrators as turnover occurs.
- Write annual reports outlining fund usage as well as any issues that arose during the funding period and how the committee dealt with them.

- Archive all pertinent documentation in a private online space for use by the review committee.
- Update the public fund website to ensure information is current and accurate.
- If institutional funding is tight, prepare persuasive talking points and statistics for administrators prior to each round of funding.

To keep the work of the committee running smoothly, maintain continuity of committee membership and a leadership succession plan. Ideally, the committee chair has previously served for one year as a member to ensure familiarity with procedures and guidelines.

As with any new initiative, it is important to assess a publication fund to ensure it is meeting its intended purpose and addressing faculty needs. The committee can do this informally on a semi-annual or annual basis by examining issues that have arisen and reviewing whether they are adequately addressed by revisions to procedures. A more formal approach could take the form of a survey requesting feedback from faculty who have applied or been funded. Whether or not the fund is fully expended at the end of the funding cycle can provide insight into whether demand is being adequately met and if the fund is being successfully promoted to faculty.

Over time, be ready to become the go-to people to answer questions about the fund from faculty across campus. Keep an open

mind toward learning about the many gray areas surrounding the publishing field, as unanticipated scenarios will inevitably arise. Maintain a flexible and creative approach tailored to your campus culture to support faculty in the evolving publishing landscape and help expedite contributions to the body of open access scholarship.

CHEF'S NOTES

At UNC, the seed for a fund was planted well in advance of its launch. After a librarian received an inquiry from a faculty member about the possibility of institutional support for the payment of journal article processing charges, discussions occurred between the UNC Libraries' dean and the assistant vice president for research (AVPR) regarding the feasibility of establishing a fund to assist with these costs. Due to librarians' expertise in scholarly communication issues, the AVPR felt that the library would be a logical partner in this endeavor. This initiative was a grassroots effort, directly resulting from a strong relationship between a subject liaison librarian and a campus faculty member.

Following these initial conversations at the administrative level, the UNC Libraries' associate dean brought the idea to the Scholarly Communication Committee, a group of library faculty charged with planning scholarly communication-related programming and initiatives. A sub-committee was tasked with gathering information about existing publication funds at other institutions in order to generate a set of common practices

for administering a fund. The group sent a brief survey to a number of peer institutions requesting information about their funds and collected data about funds at additional institutions from publicly available information online. Group members recorded information about the application and funding processes and other criteria or stipulations related to funding.

The data was compiled into a report outlining possible funding models and recommendations for fund implementation, which was passed on to the AVPR for review and consideration. The AVPR was convinced to proceed with the creation of a fund at UNC, with the Office of the Provost providing an allocation of \$30,000. This amount proved to be too high for the initial stages of the fund, and only around \$10,000 was expended during the first year. Following a year-end review, the AVPR renewed the fund with an allocation of \$10,000.

The AVPR made the decision not to limit funding to strictly OA publications, as was the case for most of the other funds the group had studied. While many institutions established their funds as vehicles for promoting and facilitating OA publishing, the AVPR did not want UNC's fund to exclude faculty who did not have the option or desire to publish their work in an OA venue. However, the majority of funding—approximately 57 percent—has gone toward OA publication fees. While the fund does not overtly promote OA publications, weighted scoring rubrics favor

publishers that demonstrate sustainable publishing costs and/or permit posting in an institutional repository. This scoring system also aims to “level the playing field” for junior faculty and first-time applicants.

The UNC Faculty Publication Fund Review Committee consists of two library faculty and three faculty members from various colleges. The AVPR serves as an ex-officio member, and the grants and contracts administrator in ORSP provides administrative support. Committee members serve three-year terms and the AVPR appoints a new chair every two years. The process for receiving and reviewing applications and awarding funds includes the following steps:

1. Prior to each application deadline, a call for applications is announced via the university’s daily email newsletter.
2. Faculty download the application form from the fund website and submit their completed form and supporting materials to the grants and contracts administrator, who ensures these are complete and meet

eligibility requirements before posting them to the review committee’s Sharepoint site.

3. Committee members have two weeks to review applications, fill out the review rubric, and submit their funding recommendations to the chair. Recommendations may either be “for funding” or “against funding” with reasons(s). The chair must receive a minimum of three votes before forwarding a final recommendation to the AVPR.
4. The committee chair receives confirmation from the AVPR of funded applications, and the grants and contracts administrator notifies applicants of the result of their funding request.
5. The grants and contracts administrator arranges payment to successful applicants. Awardees may choose from three payment options: charge the publication fee directly to their individual university credit card, request that a check be sent to the publisher, or request retroactive reim-

bursement for charges made to a personal credit card.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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