Request for Proposals

Research Agenda on the Research Environment and Scholarly Communication System

1. Overview

1.1 Purpose of the RFP

The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) seeks proposals for the design, development, and delivery of a new ACRL research agenda on the research environment and scholarly communication system. With oversight from the ACRL Research and Scholarly Environment Committee (ReSEC) and input from appropriate ACRL staff, the selected researcher(s) will investigate and write an action-oriented research agenda on the research environment and scholarly communication system.

The final research agenda will provide an overview of trends, identify effective and promising practices, and delineate important questions where deeper inquiry is needed to accelerate the transition to more open, inclusive, and equitable systems of scholarship. This research agenda will be informed by scholarly literature, as well as by advances in practice and the voices of historically underrepresented communities. The research agenda should clearly identify priority areas (6-10) where more research is required to effect change and accelerate the transition to a more open system, with background, rationale, and outstanding questions for each.

Applicants must submit an electronic copy of their proposals (PDF preferred) by **January 29, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. (CST).** Applicants will be notified of their status by March 12, 2018. Work will begin in spring 2018 with a final document of publishable quality, 23-40 pages in length, due by December 4, 2018. It is anticipated that the total amount of time devoted to this project will be no more than the equivalent of a ¼ time release position for the 9-month period.

1.2 About ACRL

ACRL is the higher education association for librarians. Representing more than 10,500 academic and research librarians and interested individuals, ACRL (a division of the American Library Association) develops programs, products, and services to help academic and research librarians learn, innovate and lead within the academic community. Founded in 1940, ACRL is committed to advancing learning and transforming scholarship.

1.3 History of the ACRL Scholarly Communication Initiative

ACRL has long endeavored to help academic librarians accelerate the transition to more open and equitable systems of scholarship. In January 2002, ACRL launched its Scholarly Communication Initiative, with goals of creating increased access to scholarly information; fostering cost-effective alternative means of publishing, especially those that take advantage of electronic information technologies; and encouraging scholars to assert greater control over scholarly communications.

ACRL's most recent strategic plan, the *Plan for Excellence*, was adopted in April 2011[1], and one of four goal areas focuses on the research and scholarly environment. A standing committee, ReSEC, is charged with overseeing and coordinating ACRL's Research and Scholarly Environment Initiative as described in the strategic plan; working with the ACRL Board and other ACRL units in creating a comprehensive effort including coalition building, professional development, publications, research, and advocacy; developing the ACRL research and scholarly communications website; and monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the ACRL Research and Scholarly Environment Initiative.

Among its many activities, ReSEC maintains a scholarly communication toolkit,[2] edits a regular column in *C&RL News*, plans the SPARC-ACRL forum at ALA Midwinter Meetings and Annual Conferences, and provides oversight for two of ACRL's traveling workshops (on scholarly communication and research data management) and input on a third (on the intersections of scholarly communication and information literacy).

The member group which preceded ReSEC, the ACRL Scholarly Communication Committee, led the development of two research agendas in the past:
- *Establishing a Research Agenda for Scholarly Communication: A Call for Community Engagement*, a white paper issued in November 2007 by ACRL's Scholarly Communication Committee. The report results from a one-day invitational meeting to collectively brainstorm the evidence needed to manage and influence the changing system of scholarly communication.
- *Scholarly Communications Research Agenda,* prepared by ACRL's Scholarly Communication Committee. This research agenda was approved by the ACRL Board of Directors in June 2004.

2. The Project

2.1 Objectives and Scope

With oversight from the ACRL ReSEC committee and input from appropriate ACRL staff, the selected researcher(s) will investigate and write an action-oriented research agenda that will provide an overview of trends, identify effective and promising practices, and delineate important questions where deeper inquiry is needed to accelerate the transition to more open,

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[1] Find the ACRL *Plan for Excellence,* updated in October 2017, online at http://www.ala.org/acrl/aboutacrl/strategicplan/stratplan.
[2] http://acrl.libguides.com/scholcomm/toolkit/.

inclusive, and equitable systems of scholarship. This research agenda will be informed by scholarly literature, as well as by advances in practice and the voices of historically underrepresented communities.

The goals of the research agenda are to: a) provide practical, actionable information for academic librarians; b) include the perspectives of historically underrepresented communities in order to expand the profession's understanding of research environments and scholarly communication systems; and c) point librarians and other scholars towards the most important research questions to investigate.

The research agenda should clearly identify 6-10 priority areas where more research is required to effect change and accelerate the transition to a more open system, with background, rationale, and outstanding questions for each. Some potential priority areas could include topics such as:
- Economics and private values in publishing, such as:
  - research impact,
  - funder policies,
  - reward systems, and
  - commodification of knowledge and knowledge workflows.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and intersectionality in research environments, such as:
  - library-led contributions to more equitable research environments,
  - social movements as agents of intellectual priorities and innovation,
  - the social value of scholarship as liberating and emancipatory, and
  - tension between cultural representation/respect and research discoverability/access.
- Data privacy, security, transparency, and ethics.

The successful researcher must take into account established investigation from recognized experts in the priority areas, once identified, but not to the exclusion of other perspectives. Of paramount importance, proposals must address how a process for developing this research agenda would be designed in an open manner and steps that would be taken to include meaningful consultation with representatives from historically underrepresented groups, in order to identify systems of scholarship in areas which may have been previously overlooked. Proposals should explain how the goals of diversity and inclusion would be approached.

For example, an invitational gathering could bring diverse voices together as part of developing the research agenda. In such cases, applicants should include a detailed plan for the meeting with proposed dates, agenda, intended outcomes, preliminary invitation list (with rationale), and costs reflected in a budget (note that the facilitator for such a gathering may be different than the researcher/author). Proposals may describe other approaches, such as interviews, focus groups, or other methods that would enhance openness and inclusion. While the person(s) selected to research and write the research agenda will be responsible for planning and carrying out the inclusive approach, the ACRL ReSEC working group will provide guidance while the design is being finalized.

The ACRL ReSEC working group has conducted exploratory interviews with individuals from organizations representing African American, American Indian, Asian American, and Hispanic

library groups, as well as representatives from historically black colleges and universities, community colleges, technical schools, women's colleges, and various diversity initiatives/units. Those conversations yielded important insights about engagement within these communities in both traditional and nontraditional forms of scholarly communication and research. These insights include definitions and approaches that may be unique to their communities or organizations and informed by local expertise.[3] The successful researcher should incorporate these insights and also include the perspectives of other historically disadvantaged communities as appropriate (e.g., disability rights communities, accessibility advocates, and others) and identify ways of operationalizing social justice and values.

See an outline of the research agenda below in **3.1 Specific Deliverables**.

The researcher(s) will hold at least two live online open forums to solicit input while the draft is in progress (spring and fall 2018) and a formal online presentation once the research agenda is final and published by ACRL in early 2019. These events will be recorded and made available on the ACRL web site. Additionally, an in-person update session may be scheduled as part of the 2018 ALA Annual Conference. (See **3.2 Timeline** for more details on these events.)

2.2 The Audience

The primary audience for this report will be ACRL's membership, which includes librarians and other professionals in all types of academic libraries and those interested in libraries. The ancillary talking points should be directed at other audiences, for use by academic librarians. (See **3.1 Specific Deliverables 6** for more details on ancillary talking points.) Findings of this report should be applicable to all kinds of academic libraries, draw upon scholarly and practice-based literature—both formal and informal—and incorporate perspectives from historically underrepresented groups.

2.3 Background Resources

In addition to scholarly and practice-based literature sources, we expect the report will be informed by these ACRL resources:
- ACRL's *Environmental Scan 2017* and *2016 Top Trends in Academic Libraries* by the ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, available at http://www.ala.org/acrl/issues/whitepapers.
- *NMC Horizon Report > 2017 Library Edition*, available at http://cdn.nmc.org/media/2017-nmc-horizon-report-library-EN.pdf.
- ACRL's Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries (in particular, see Standard 11: Research) http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/diversity.
- The ACRL Scholarly Communication Toolkit http://acrl.libguides.com/scholcomm/toolkit.
- The scholarly communication column from *College & Research Libraries News* http://crln.acrl.org/.

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[3] For more, see ACRL's Diversity Standards: Cultural Competency for Academic Libraries Standard 11: Research http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/diversity.

- Past SPARC-ACRL forums held in conjunction with ALA Annual Conference and ALA Midwinter Meeting.
- An internal report by a working group of ReSEC which summarizes conversations with representatives of historically underrepresented communities, to be provided to the selected researcher(s).

3. Project Deliverables

A final document of publishable quality, 23-40 pages in length (not including references, annotated bibliography, and talking points), will be submitted by December 4, 2018. It will be published by ACRL (CC-BY-NC) as a free PDF download on the ACRL website and for sale in print in the ALA Store in early 2019.

3.1 Specific Deliverables

The following section describes the anticipated research agenda. For details about the project proposal specifications see **4. Proposal Specifications**. The researcher(s) awarded this work will be responsible for adhering to the timeline and outline described below and following the instructions in **2.1 Objectives and Scope**.

The final research agenda will contain these broad sections:
1) **Executive Summary.** A brief overview of trends, effective and promising practices, and major questions to investigate. 2-3 pages.
2) **Introduction**: A high-level look at the trends in the research and scholarly environment that concern academic libraries and librarians in the broader context of academia, and identification of current academic library responses to the trends. 5-10 pages.
3) **Effective and promising practices.** This section provides recommendations on actionable steps that academic librarians can take to accelerate the transition to and build capacity for more open, inclusive, and equitable systems of scholarship. 5-10 pages.
4) **Priority areas**: The bulk of the report will highlight future-focused outstanding research questions. For each priority area, provide specific research questions, including sample options for investigation, and, at a high level, possible research designs. The discussion of each priority should be a few paragraphs in length. Key research questions should address challenges that the higher education sector is facing, including but not limited to those suggested in **2.1 Objectives and Scope**. We anticipate that this section may include 6-10 priority areas where more research is required, with background, rationale, and outstanding questions for each.[4] However, the selected researcher could make the case that there are fewer or more based on the literature. 10-15 pages.
5) **Conclusion.** A brief summary of major findings and recommendations. 1-2 pages.
6) **Ancillary and supporting materials**: In addition to the main body of the report, the successful applicant will develop materials that will aid and encourage discussion and use of the research agenda, including:

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[4] As an example of the type of discussion we imagined for each priority area, (in terms of format, length, and tenor), see the 2017-2021 National Research Agenda by the Young Adult Services Library Association, available at http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/research/researchagenda.

- An annotated bibliography of sources used to inform the research agenda.
- A set of talking points, one page each, for academic librarians to use in conversations with three distinct audiences: higher education administrators; researchers as authors; and scholarly publishers of books and journals, research analytics companies, digital curation service providers, and other vendors disseminating scholarly work outside of the traditional scholarly publishing bounds.

In addition to these components of the report itself, when submitting the revised draft of the report (due October 1, 2018), the researcher(s) should submit a brief memo to ReSEC and the ACRL Board of Directors with recommendations on how ACRL can encourage the community to implement the effective and promising practices, influence other stakeholders via the talking points, and investigate the outstanding research questions.

The researcher(s) will communicate regularly with ACRL ReSEC, which will be sharing updates with the ACRL Board. The researcher(s) will work with ReSEC and ACRL staff to seek feedback on drafts through venues such as online open forums and a possible in person update session at the ALA Annual Conference in June 2018. For more on conference locations and specific points of communication, see **3.2 Timeline**.

3.2 Timeline

ACTION	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	DEADLINE
Proposals due	Prospective researchers	January 29, 2018
Researcher(s) selected and applicants notified	Working group	March 12, 2018
Project begins	Researcher(s)	March 13, 2018
ACRL Online Open Forum (to share progress update with broader community, solicit feedback)	Researcher(s) & ReSEC Chair Patricia Hswe	Late April 2018
FYI update submitted to ACRL office (for review during ACRL Board Meeting at ALA Annual Conference)	Researcher(s)	May 24, 2018
Possible presentation and discussion at ALA Annual Conference (New Orleans, LA)	Researcher(s) & ReSEC Chair Patricia Hswe	June 24, 2018
First draft due to working group	Researcher(s)	August 1, 2018
Feedback to researcher(s)	Working group	September 1, 2018
Revised draft and advice memo due to working group/ACRL Board	Researcher(s)	October 1, 2018
ACRL Online Open Forum (to share draft and progress with broader community, solicit feedback)	Researcher(s) & ReSEC Chair Yasmeen Shorish	Mid October 2018
Feedback on revised draft to researcher(s)	Working group and community at large	November 1, 2018
Final report due	Researcher(s)	December 4, 2018
Public release of final report	Working group	January 15, 2019
ACRL Presents Webcast	Researcher(s) & ReSEC Chair Yasmeen Shorish	February 2019

4. Proposal Specifications

4.1 General Instructions

The successful applicant or team of applicants will demonstrate strong research and writing skills. Preference will be given to applicant(s) with demonstrated experience communicating about the scholarly communication and research environment.

The proposal must comply with the content requirements detailed in this section. The applicant(s) must submit a complete response that provides proof of experience and qualifications to complete the required activities and the project's estimated costs. Applicants should include a letter of support from the applicant's employer indicating support for the time release from other duties to complete this project. If the applicant is a doctoral student, he/she should send a letter of recommendation from a faculty member who agrees to supervise work on this project.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 Letter of Application

a. Describe the particular qualifications, knowledge, and experience you bring to this project.
b. Indicate ability and willingness to adhere to the timeline described in **Section 3.2** above.
c. Indicate availability to present at possible forums/conferences. See **Timeline** in **Section 3.2**.
d. Provide a brief description of your (and, if applicable, your company's) experience doing research in the field of academic libraries and higher education and your familiarity with research done in the field of scholarly communication.
e. The letter of application must be signed by one or more individuals qualified to perform the work described. Individuals signing the letter must indicate position title. A contact person for further information must be identified.

4.2.2 Proposal Narrative

The proposal should include a 1,000- to 1,500-word narrative describing your plan to analyze the background material provided above and other significant literature. Address how you would synthesize major ideas and themes to identify trends, effective and promising practices, and priority areas where outstanding research questions remain.

Explain your approach to designing and implementing a diverse and inclusive process. If this would be via an invitational meeting, include a detailed plan with date, agenda, intended outcomes, and preliminary invitation list (with rationale). If via another mechanism, please explain.

4.2.3 Personnel

Identify all personnel to be included in the project by name, title, and the estimated amount of time devoted to each project task. It is anticipated that the total amount of time devoted to this project will be no more than the equivalent of a ¼ time release position for the 9-month period. The response must include curricula vitae or résumés of all project staff.

4.2.4 Project Plan and Schedule

Submit a coherent and detailed work plan that adheres to the timeline as described in **Section 3.2**.

4.2.5 Budget

The budget for the proposal must contain itemized detail—including the estimated amount of time devoted to each project task—to show how cost is determined. If an invitational meeting is proposed, costs for participant travel and lodging, meeting room, AV, supplies, and meals should be included.

4.2.6 Letter of Support

Unless self-employed, a signed letter from the applicant's employer or faculty advisor granting support for time release from other duties, or project supervision as appropriate.

4.2.7 References

Provide complete contact information (name, address, email contact, and telephone number) for three references familiar with your qualifications and experience relevant to the purpose of this work. References must be provided for each individual if submitting as a team.

5. Submission Deadline

An electronic copy of the proposal (PDF preferred) is due by **January 29, 2018, at 4:00 p.m. (CST).** All costs for the applicant's response preparation are the responsibility of the applicant and may not be charged to the budget for the project.

6. Selection Process and Criteria

The contractor will be selected from the proposals submitted to this RFP. A team of appropriate ACRL staff, member leaders, and the ACRL Executive Director will review the responses. The ACRL Executive Director will make the selection based on the following criteria.

6.1 Completeness of Proposal

Proposals must address all elements requested in this RFP. See **Appendix A: RFP Checklist**.

6.2 Proposal Narrative

Evidence that the individual(s) submitting understands the scope and intention of the project and will work within the project guidelines as described under **Sections 2** and **3**. Evidence of a well-reasoned approach to designing the research agenda and the consultative process.

6.3 Project Personnel

Evidence that the individual or team submitting has the experience, expertise, research ability, and credentials to complete this project. Subcontracting any or all of this work to individuals not included in the proposal will not be permitted without prior written permission.

6.4 Project Plan and Schedule

Evidence that the individual (or team) submitting has a coherent, detailed, and robust work plan that adheres to the timeline in **Section 3.2**.

6.5 Project Budget

A clearly described and itemized budget as described in **Section 4.2.5**.

6.6 References

References from three individuals familiar with your and each individual on your team's qualifications and experience relevant to the purpose of this work.

7. Contract for Services and Payment Schedule

ACRL will prepare a letter of agreement with the contractor(s) that includes the specific responsibilities and timetable for the project. The Association will also clarify a schedule for payment that will be negotiated between the contractor(s) and ACRL. Subcontracting any or all of this work to individuals not included in the proposal will not be permitted without prior written permission.

8. Ownership of Materials

This project will be conducted as work for hire. The research agenda report and all materials developed to support it, under the terms of the project agreement, become the property of ACRL. ACRL reserves the non-exclusive rights to copy such material and to publish, disseminate, and otherwise use the materials developed under the terms of the agreement in print or electronically. ACRL will publish this work with a CC-BY-NC license as a free PDF download on the ACRL website and for sale in print in the ALA Store.

The contractor agrees that as a work for hire ACRL will have all rights to publish the work first and make use of the findings in many venues and products. The contractor will not have

exclusive speaking, marketing, or consulting rights for the products, concepts, or techniques developed for this project. While ACRL holds the first right of publication, we are happy to work with the selected researcher(s) to publish subsequently in other venues, and after the report has been widely disseminated the researcher may incorporate findings from the research into his/her presentations and writings as long as clear attribution is given to ACRL.

9. Submission

Please submit a PDF (preferred) or MS Word version of your response to the RFP **by 4:00 p.m. CST, January 29, 2018, to:**
>Sophie Skinner
>Program Coordinator
>ACRL/ALA
>50 E. Huron St.
>Chicago, IL 60611
>sskinner@ala.org
>312-280-2512

A confirmation of receipt will be sent upon receipt of submission; if you do not receive this please call to ensure the proposal is not caught in a spam filter.

All proposals are confidential.

9. Notification

Applicants will be notified of their status no later than March 12, 2018.

For questions contact:
>Kara Malenfant
>Sr. Strategist for Special Initiatives
>ACRL/ALA
>50 E. Huron St.
>Chicago, IL 60611
>kmalenfant@ala.org
>312-280-2510

Appendix A: RFP Checklist

_____ Letter of application.
   a. Describe the particular qualifications, knowledge, and experience you bring to this project.
   b. Indicate ability and willingness to adhere to the timeline described in the S**ection 3.2**.
   c. Indicate availability to present at possible forums. (See details in S**ection 3.2**.)
   d. Provide a brief description of your (and, if applicable, your company's) experience doing research in the field of scholarly communication.
   e. The letter of application must be signed by one or more individuals qualified to perform the work described. Individuals signing the letter must indicate position title. A contact person for further information must be identified.

_____Proposal narrative.
   a. 1,000 to 1,500 words.
   b. Describe plan to analyze background materials and significant literature.
   c. Address synthesis of major ideas and themes to identify trends, effective and promising practices, and priority areas where outstanding research questions remain.
   d. Describe design of an open process and steps to include meaningful consultation with representatives from historically underrepresented communities.
   e. Describe potential challenges and how these would be addressed.
   f. Identify all personnel to be included.

_____ Coherent and detailed work plan that adheres to the timeline.

_____ Budget with itemized detail.

_____ Letter of support from employer or faculty advisor, unless self-employed.

_____Curriculum Vitae (and additional CVs or résumés for subcontractors or members of the submitting team, if applicable).

_____ References (and additional references for each member of the submitting team if applicable).