A Thank You to InULA from the Michiana Scholarly Communication Librarianship Conference

CRAIG FINLAY
Scholarly Communications Librarian
Franklin D. Schurz Library
Indiana University South Bend

Over the past three years we have established the only conference devoted solely to scholarly communication librarianship. Small but mighty, the Michiana Scholarly Communication Librarianship Conference at IU South Bend has thus far hosted 17 speakers, 100 attendees and done so without charging any registration fees. And we couldn’t have done it without generous sponsorship from InULA.

The MSCLC came about after a failed attempt to host the ACRL’s workshop “Scholarly Communication: from Understanding to Engagement,” in 2013. We submitted a proposal along with St. Mary’s College but were ultimately unsuccessful. Being a brand new scholarly communications librarian, I was eager to attend as many conferences in my field as possible. And while there is the Copyright Conference at Ball State (which is fantastic), the ACRL workshop (if one is near enough to attend), and the Open Repositories Conference (which was in Indy!), I realized there wasn’t a regular conference reflecting the diversity of scholarly communication and presented by experts in the field.

So, we decided to make one!

At the time I had $1,000 in new faculty money from the university, so I spent that and cobbled together funding from some corporate sponsors and IUSB Academic Affairs. The first year we had three speakers and 25 attendees. The second year, we found ourselves in a quandary, with only the money from Academic Affairs guaranteed. As it happened, though, Naz Pantaloni was
one of the presenters at the first conference, and he suggested I reach out to Christina Wray and InULA. The rest is history.

In 2015 InULA generously gave me $1,000 to sponsor the MSCLC. That year we held a conference with presentations on library-based centers for digital scholarship, altmetrics in the academic library, institutional repositories and fair use in instruction. We were able to almost exactly fund the conference—reimbursements and lodging, food and conference materials. In fact, I think we ended up about $25 under budget.

This year, InULA again sponsored our conference and again we were able to keep it free to attendees. In a small way of saying thanks, I was able to set up a live stream for InULA members to watch remotely. This year’s conference featured presentations on essential copyright knowledge for academic librarians, addressing faculty concerns about predatory journals, passing an open access policy, and student scholarship in institutional repositories. We also featured lightning presentations on mapping scholarly activity, online research collaboration, publishing conference proceedings and creating online research hubs.

Without the generous support of InULA over the past two years, we would not have been able to offer this conference as we have. InULA has funded something unique and valuable. So, on behalf of IU South Bend, St. Mary’s College and all the attendees, we extend our heartfelt thanks.