OCUL

Ontario Council of University Libraries

OCUL Communities Guidelines

Revised August 9, 2023

July 18, 2013

Purpose

OCUL Communities are virtual groups where staff from OCUL member libraries learn, share, and network with each other around library-related topics of similar interest. Member-initiated and member-driven, Communities are meant to function like communities of practice, providing a forum for exchange and discussion of library and information practice and services. Communities are not intended to be implementation/working groups that fulfil OCUL initiatives or projects.

Governance

In the OCUL governance structure, Communities report to the Council – the 21 library directors of the consortium's member institutions. Communities are approved by the OCUL Council, with changes to terms of reference reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee.

Establishing an OCUL Community

A potential Community must submit a proposal to ocul@ocul.on.ca, which will be reviewed by the OCUL Executive Committee and presented for approval by the OCUL Council. The proposal should include:

- Draft Terms of Reference, including a description of the topic being addressed and anticipated timeframe for the Community, i.e. short-term (a 2-year period) or ongoing (2+ years). OCUL can provide a template for use.
- Proposed activities – describe how Community members will share and exchange knowledge.
- Signatures of, at minimum, 10 library staff from at least one-third of OCUL member institutions, demonstrating support for the proposal.
- Nomination for a Moderator or Co-Moderators for a 2-year term.

Once formed, Community membership functions at the discretion of OCUL member institutions. A Community may include more than one person from a member institution.

OCUL Communities are self-managing, and they work by consensus, with votes undertaken only in exceptional circumstances. Where appropriate, Communities may establish a modified governance structure to support their activities, e.g. more than two co-moderators.

Moderator Responsibilities

- Arranging meetings; soliciting Community members for agenda items.

- Liaising with relevant OCUL committee chairs.

- Preparing an annual report that is submitted to the OCUL Council.

- Corresponding with external groups when necessary.

- Ensuring reports, Community documentation and member lists are current and made available to all staff at OCUL member libraries (e.g. via an OCUL-hosted online workspace such as SPOTDocs).

- Liaising with other Community Moderators to organize joint agendas.

- Soliciting Community members for interest in becoming a new Moderator six months prior to the end of the two-year term.

Reporting

Communities report annually to the OCUL Council, in advance of the yearly spring Directors Meeting. This is a brief report and OCUL provides a template for use.

These reports, as well as other reports as necessary, are provided through the Community Moderator/Co-Moderators. In preparing the annual report, the Community Moderator/Co-Moderators should review both the Community name and statement of purpose to confirm that they reflect the Community's current composition and interests.

In addition to the annual reports, the OCUL Executive Director (or designate) compiles a status report on Communities for the spring Directors Meeting. The status report includes a summary of existing Communities, as well as any petitions for new groups, requests for name changes, and dissolutions.

Communication

OCUL encourages inclusive and two-way communication practices that support effective discussions. A Community's reports, minutes/meeting notes and other related documents should be available to all staff at OCUL member libraries (e.g., via an OCUL-hosted online workspace such as SPOTDocs). In some circumstances, a Community may need and can request a confidential web space to support its work.

OCUL Office Support

The OCUL office provides online communication support for Communities, e.g. listserv management, videoconferencing arrangements and coordination, SPOTDocs assistance. Travel or other meeting expenses are the responsibility of the Community member's institution. Community members carry out the group's administrative work without the support of OCUL or Scholars Portal staff.

Dissolution

Each OCUL Community Moderator is required to indicate in its annual report whether it intends to continue functioning or would like to be dissolved.

If a Community has completed its intended activities or has not been active on its listserv and has not filed an annual report, either the Community Moderator or the OCUL Executive Director, in consultation with the Moderator, will recommend dissolving the Community. The request for dissolution is reviewed and acted upon by the OCUL Council.

Reviewed and approved by: OCUL Executive Committee

Date: October 31, 2023