

Topics and Trends in Library Publishing Mission Statements

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Introduction

While previous surveys of the library publishing landscape identify broad trends in the field, the appearance of the Library Publishing Directory in 2014 (and its subsequent 2015 update) gave the first near-comprehensive look at existing services in academic and research libraries. The directory presents several types of baseline data, but some of the most interesting information can be found in the mission statements for the various libraries.

These statements offer the opportunity to compare the public face of these services to some of the specific arguments about the value of library publishing.

- To what extent do these statements present a coherent vision?
- To what extent do they publicize traditional library strengths such as preservation as core to services and reshaping publishing?
- To what extent are mission statements being used strategically the shape external stakeholder and public understanding of library publishing?

Methods

Using the data collected by the Library Publishing Coalition for production of the Library Publishing Directory, I examined the text of the 2014 and 2015 edition mission statements with the aid of the text mining and visualization tool Voyant and through hand coding of particular themes taken from the library publishing literature on reasons for library participation in publishing:

- Preservation
- Support for experimental forms/formats
- Different economic models/sustainability
- Open access
- Support for workflows and collaboration

Basic 2014/2015 Comparison

Total institutions from both editions: 153
Institutions in 2014: 115
Institutions in 2015: 126
Institutions in both editions: 87
Unique institutions: 28 in 2014, 39 in 2015
Institutions with mission statements in both: 80
Revised mission statements in 2015: 52, 32 major

Results

Voyant Text Analysis

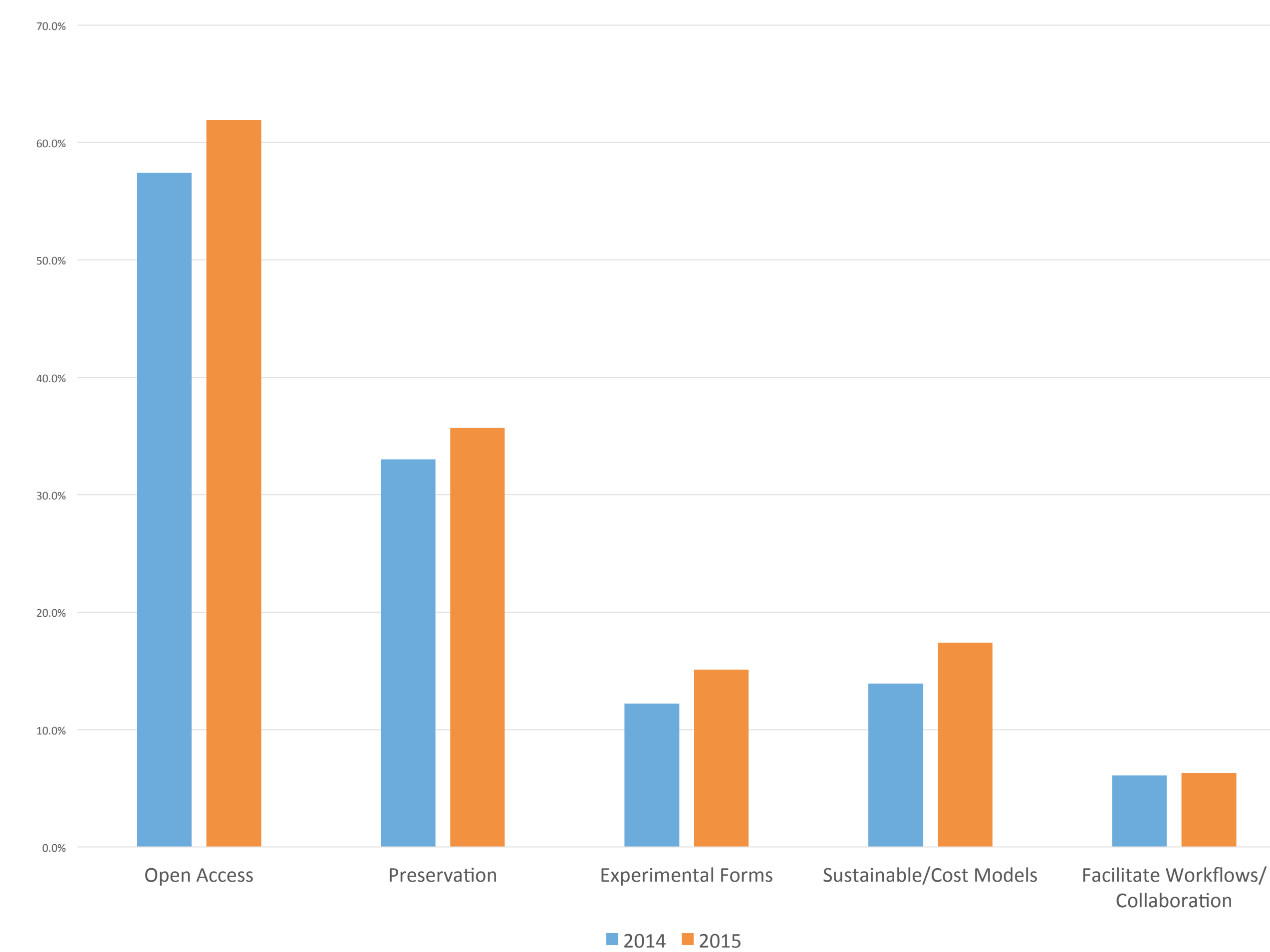
Voyant produces basic word frequencies for groups of texts, allowing application of stop words. These produced the word cloud for the 2015 mission statements and top 15 words for each edition of the directory shown here. While a basic measure that does not make use of stemming here, the shifts in ranking of word frequencies do suggest consolidation emphasis on open access (confirmed in the coding below) as well as an emphasis on “services” and repository functions.



Figure 1: Word Cloud of 2015 Directory Mission Statements (Not Stemmed)

| Top 15 Words 2014 | | Top 15 Words 2015 | |
|-------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|
| publishing | 112 | publishing | 146 |
| scholarly | 106 | access | 126 |
| university | 105 | open | 119 |
| research | 101 | university | 114 |
| access | 95 | scholarly | 110 |
| open | 92 | research | 109 |
| digital | 89 | digital | 92 |
| library | 55 | services | 67 |
| faculty | 51 | scholarship | 64 |
| services | 48 | library | 62 |
| libraries | 46 | faculty | 61 |
| support | 46 | repository | 57 |
| repository | 44 | journals | 56 |
| scholarship | 40 | libraries | 51 |
| journals | 35 | support | 49 |

Figure 2: Percent of Institutions Mentioning Key Themes in Mission Statements



While Voyant does not provide an internal stemming or lemmatizing function, the relatively small size of the set of texts made it easy to identify variants on words and some related sets of terms. Some such sets of words that did not make their way into the top 15 for each year are listed below. They suggest two consistent themes in the statements: education, a key library-related mission distinct from traditional publishing, and publication as a means of promoting scholarly work. Interestingly, even as the number of institutions and statements grew from 2014 to 2015, there was a steep drop in focus on “dissemination” and a small one in “copyright.”

| Word Set | 2014 Total Frequency | 2015 Total Frequency |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| copyright/s | 12 | 10 |
| disseminat- | 59 | 39 |
| educate teaching student | 60 | 82 |
| impact promote showcase visible | 37 | 51 |

Hand-Coded Themes

In addition to greater overall numbers of library publishers highlighting library functions or values as part of their missions, the overall percentages of institutions mentioning these areas also went up for open access*, preservation, support for experimental forms, and a focus on sustainable or novel cost models.

This suggests some consolidation of library publishing focus on these issues, although open access remains the only theme in over 50% of missions.

Facilitation of workflows and collaboration around publishing was mentioned by a much small number of institutions, and grew in representation the least.

**open access” includes both “gratis” and “libre” OA for my purposes, in part because it would be difficult to distinguish how the institutions use the term

Conclusions

If any library value is consistently represented in these statements, it is open access. There also seems to be some consolidation around preservation as well as sustainability and support for experimental forms as elaborated reasons for library publishing, although to a smaller extent than might be expected given their prominence in the published literature and in conference discussions.

More generally, close examination of the mission statements reveals a diversity of approaches to publishing in libraries and to communicating sense of purpose. In general, this diversity can be imaged on two axes: one from missions that are purely descriptive of services to those that are more aspirational; one ranging from those that focus on traditional publishing roles to those that emphasize novel and library-specific roles and strengths in publishing.

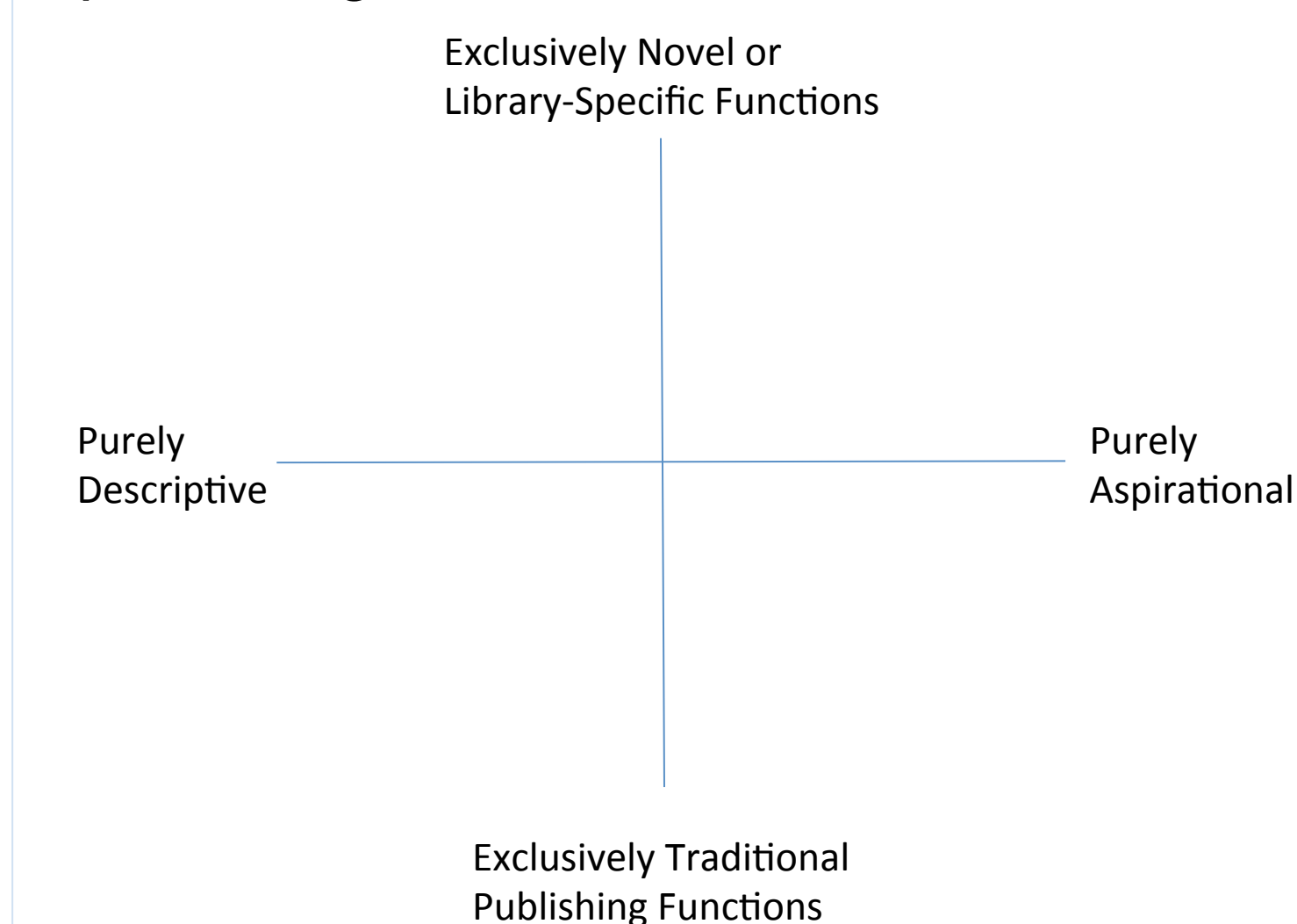


Figure 3: A Heuristic Topic Space of Mission Statement Contents

It is likely that any statement will need elements that range across this space. However, entire statements that fall on the “purely descriptive” side may be missing a rhetorical opportunity to frame expectations and desires for internal and external audiences.

Acknowledgments

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