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OA Week Panel Opening Remarks

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Hello and welcome

a. My name is Andrea Wirth and I am the Scholarly Communication Librarian here at UNLV, and one of the moderators for the panel session today. I am a member of the Scholarly Communication Initiatives Department (SCI for short).

b. SCI is responsible for managing Digital Scholarship@UNLV, which is an open access repository of faculty and student scholarship and a publication platform for open access journals and conferences managed by academic units at UNLV. Additionally, SCI services include outreach, training, and consultation on and resources in support of open access, article processing charges, scholarly identity, research data management, authors’ rights, metrics of scholarship, journal evaluation, and more.

c. On behalf of my colleagues in SCI, I welcome you to the first event of International Open Access Week at UNLV. The SCI department is pleased to offer three events this year: Today we have this panel session, followed by our second event, an awards reception celebrating a major milestone for Digital Scholarship@UNLV as well as the growing uptake of open access here at UNLV and we will be giving out open access related awards to UNLV community members. On Wednesday, we are offering a screening of the new documentary Paywall, the Business of Scholarship followed by a discussion of the movie.

d. So, why celebrate open access week? In its 10th year now, International Open Access Week is a global effort to inspire conversation about open access and help “to make open access the new norm in scholarship and research” (SPARC).

e. Open access is defined by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) as “the free, immediate, online availability of research articles coupled with the rights to use these articles fully in the digital environment” (2018). Open Access does not have to be limited to articles, however. There are open access books, conference proceedings, master’s theses, doctoral dissertations, and grey literature. Additionally, open data, open educational resources, open source software, and Creative Commons licensing are all part of a broader push for open sharing of knowledge.

2. Introduce the topic/theme/speakers

a. In this panel session, our topic is the intersection of open access and scholarly publishing with diversity, equity, and inclusion. And I would like to take a few moments to tell you how the SCI department arrived at this topic. Then I will introduce our panelists and my co-moderator, and we can get started on the panel discussion.

b. The official OA Week theme is “Designing Equitable Foundations for Open Knowledge.” Given UNLV’s recognition as the campus with the most diverse student body, and the library’s recent “affirmat[ion of] its commitment and dedication to diversity, inclusion, equity, and cultural awareness,” via its 2017-19 strategic framework, along with the SCI department’s increased outreach efforts in regard to open access, we knew this was a timely and important topic for the libraries and the campus. In addition, those of us who champion increased access to knowledge that open access promises, had begun hearing in
professional circles concerns that some aspects of “open” may either be creating their own inequities or perpetuating those that persist in traditional publishing. Two specific examples I have come across repeatedly are expensive article processing charges acceptable only to those with support for payment, and concern over lack of diversity in peer review. So with these issues at the forefront, there is a growing effort to make positive change so that open access does not exclude or discourage any scholar’s participation, and in fact models and encourages diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of open publishing.

c. The challenge of addressing this topic locally quickly became apparent. While the library has staff knowledgeable about open access and others leading in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion, we were hard-pressed to come up with internal experts who could address the intersection of open access and scholarly publishing with diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, we know we have amazing faculty leaders and authors on this campus who are experts in their fields and are also concerned with addressing the under-representation of women and minorities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (or STEM disciplines) in particular. We have asked our panelists to speak from their experience and observations in publishing and share their ideas for designing equitable foundations for open knowledge. Hence our speakers today who I will now introduce to you.

d. Sarah Harris is an Associate Professor in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the College of Engineering here at UNLV. Her areas of expertise include digital design, computer architecture, embedded systems, and robotics. She has published numerous articles and conference proceedings and is the co-author of the textbook Digital Design and Computer Architecture. Prior to her time at UNLV, she was a faculty member at Harvey Mudd College and received her Master’s and Ph.D. from Stanford University.

e. Starr Hoffman is an Associate Professor and Director of Planning and Assessment here in the UNLV Libraries where she coordinates assessment and data reporting across the UNLV Libraries to support decision-making, improve services, and lead strategic planning. She also is the author of numerous articles and book chapters and edited the book Dynamic Research Support in Academic Libraries. Prior to joining UNLV, she worked as the head of the Journalism Library at Columbia University. She received her Master’s and Ph.D. from the University of North Texas.

f. Kimberly Kendricks is the Director of Interdisciplinary Collaboratives in UNLV’s Faculty Excellence Initiatives where she works with faculty and staff on interdisciplinary initiatives that advance research, scholarship, and creative activity at UNLV. Her research includes using mathematical theories and applying them to real-world problems in robotics and gait analysis and has numerous articles and conference proceedings on those topics. Additionally, she has published on the topics of student success and mentoring programs for minority STEM students. Prior to joining UNLV, Kimberly held several leadership positions at Central State University in Ohio. Kimberly received both her Masters and Ph.D. from Auburn University.

g. I would also like to introduce my co-moderator, Leah Howd. Leah is the Libraries Design Lab Specialist, in the Knowledge Production Department. Among many other responsibilities and interests, Leah is becoming the library’s expert on Creative Commons licenses. The SCI department is small and we very much appreciate Leah and the Knowledge Production Department assisting us with this event.
3. Leah and I have a set of questions that we have shared with the panelists ahead of time and will alternate asking those. We will save about 15 minutes at the end for open questions from you and further discussion.