

Session 1: Understanding social and structural norms that shape academic institutional collaboration

4 May 2021

This is the first of three sessions in the OCLC-LIBER Workshop Series on Social Interoperability: **Building Strategic Relationships to Advance Open Scholarship at Your Institution**

Session goals

- Gain additional understanding of why the typical “complex adaptive system” of higher education is so challenging.
- Introduce a framework for understanding the institutional stakeholders needed in open scholarship
- Begin applying this framework to your local environment

Required reading

- Bryant, Rebecca, Annette Dortmund, and Brian Lavoie. 2020. [*Social Interoperability in Research Support: Cross-Campus Partnerships and the University Research Enterprise*](#). Dublin, OH: OCLC Research. <https://doi.org/10.25333/wyrd-n586>, pages 1-15.

Overview of “complex adaptive systems”¹

1. **Nonlinear, dynamic behavior.** The behaviors in the university can appear random and chaotic. Individuals in the system may ignore stimuli, remaining oblivious to activities outside of their immediate purview, reacting infrequently, inconsistently, and perhaps overzealously when they do take notice.
2. **Independent agents.** Individuals, and especially faculty, have a lot of freedom to be self-directed: in research, teaching and course development, and behaviors. Their behaviors are not dictated by the university, and in fact, the independent agents may feel free to openly resist institutional initiatives.

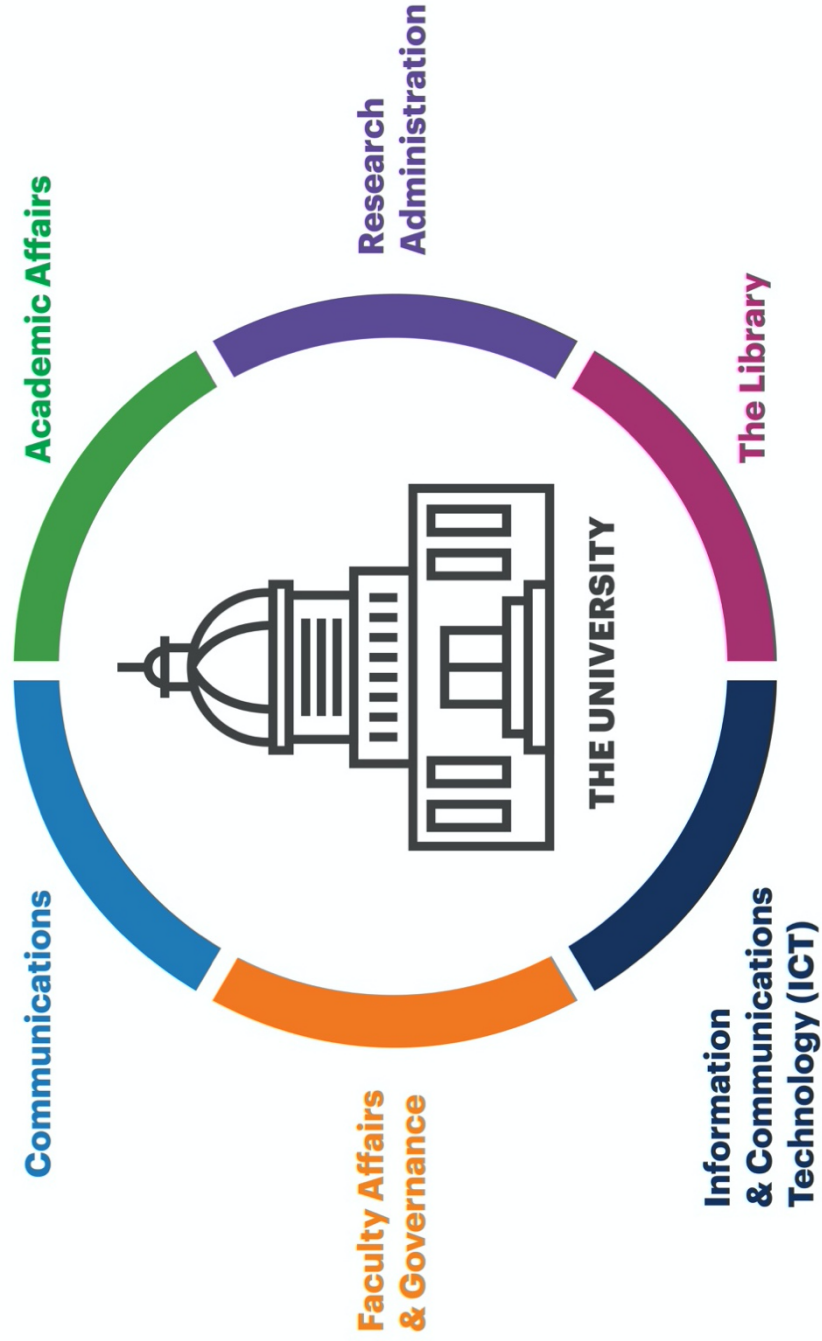
¹ Adapted from Rouse, William B. 2016. *Universities as Complex Enterprises: How Academia Works, Why It Works These Ways, and Where the University Enterprise Is Headed*, 5-9. New York: Routledge.

3. **Goals and behaviors that differ or conflict.** The interests and needs of the independent agents acting within the university are highly heterogeneous, leading to internal conflicts, professional discourtesy, and sometimes outright competition.
4. **Intelligent and learning agents.** Not only are people independent agents, they're also smart independent agents, who can learn how the complex university works and adapt their behaviors to achieve their personal goals. With such heterogeneous goals across the enterprise, individuals can end up working at odds with each other.
5. **Self-organization.** While universities have established hierarchies (like colleges, schools, and departments), there can also be self-organized interest groups that arise to meet evolving needs. This can also lead to duplication of effort and services, as a group working to address a problem may be unaware of similar efforts and act independently instead.
6. **No single point(s) of control.** Universities are characterized by a significant degree of decentralization where units, as well as individuals, operate in a federated manner with a high degree of autonomy. Universities are not sites where mandates usually work; they aren't characterized by a command-and-control system. Instead, they work through incentives and inhibitions. This can also mean that centralized efforts are more difficult.

Worksheet 1: Mapping of Institutional Stakeholders at Your Institution

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A Conceptual Model of Campus Research Support Stakeholders



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