

# **They're Gonna Find Out I'm a Fraud: Imposter Syndrome in Open Education Advocates**

Heidi Winkler, MSIS (she/her)  
Sabrina Davis, MLS (she/her)

Texas Tech University Libraries

# They're Gonna Find Out I'm a Fraud

- Literature Review
  - Early imposter phenomenon work
  - Imposter phenomenon in academic librarians and scholarly communication librarians
  - How does this translate to Open Ed advocates?
- Tips and Tricks for Open Ed advocates who experience feelings of imposter phenomenon
  - Talk about it!
  - Formal/informal mentorship
  - Interrogating the culture
  - Be good to yourself

# In the beginning...

- Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes first introduced the term “imposter phenomenon” in a 1978 article addressing the prevalent and intense feelings of “intellectual phoniness” in a sample of high-achieving women.
- Self-described imposters often fell into one of two family history groups:
  - Those women who have not been identified as the “intelligent” sibling and no matter their academic achievements are never acknowledged for being bright in their own right.
  - Women who are told by their families that they are superior to their peers with regard to intellect, talent, and personality, and that there is nothing they can’t achieve if they just set out to do it.

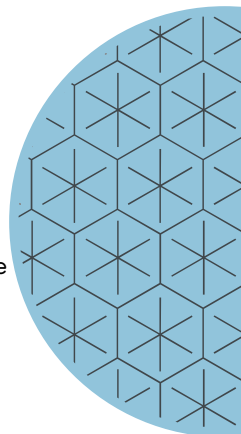
Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The imposter phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 15(3), 241–247. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0086006>

# Imposter Phenomenon in Academic Librarians

## ● Literature

- Clark, M., Vardeman, K., & Barba, S. (2014). Perceived Inadequacy: A Study of the Imposter Phenomenon among College and Research Librarians. *College & Research Libraries*, 75(3), 255–271. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl12-423>
- Lacey, S., & Parlette-Stewart, M. (2017). Jumping into the Deep: Imposter Syndrome, Defining Success, and the New Librarian. *Partnership: The Canadian Journal of Library & Information Practice & Research*, 12(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.21083/partnership.v12i1.3979>
- Lee, E., & Morfitt, P. (2020). Imposter Syndrome, Women in Technical Services, and Minority Librarians: The Shared Experience of Two Librarians of Color. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 37(2), 136–147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07317131.2020.1728125>
- Andrews, N. (2020). It's Not Imposter Syndrome: Resisting Self-Doubt as Normal For Library Workers. In the Library with the Lead Pipe, N.PAG. <https://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2020/its-not-imposter-syndrome/>
- Martinez, & Forrey, M. (2019). Overcoming imposter syndrome: the adventures of two new instruction librarians. *Reference Services Review*, 47(3), 331–342. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-03-2019-0021>
- Barr-Walker, Bass, M. B., Werner, D. A., & Kellermeyer, L. (2019). Measuring impostor phenomenon among health sciences librarians. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 107(3), 323–332. <https://doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2019.644>
- Owens, E. (2021). Impostor Phenomenon and Skills Confidence among Scholarly Communications Librarians in the United States. *College & Research Libraries*, 82(4), 490. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.82.4.490>

**There's not a lot but....**



# Here's what we learned...

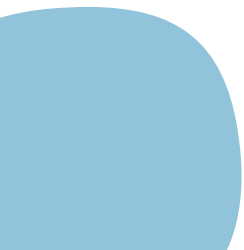
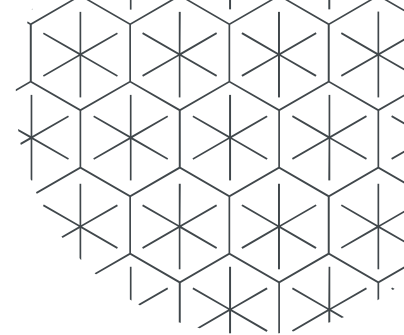
- Many academic librarians have feelings of imposter phenomenon
  - 1 in 8 librarians reported these feelings in a survey conducted by Clark, Vardeman, & Barba (2014)
- Some common reasons for these feelings
  - Lack of experience or training
  - New to a position
  - New tech in the workplace
  - Lack of clarity in scope of position
  - Being the newest and/or youngest
  - Unsure of how to make professional contributions
  - Underrepresentation in the profession
  - Overall culture of the library organization

# Scholarly Communications Librarians

## Why focus on Scholarly Communications Librarians?

OER/OE responsibilities are sometimes additions to what those in these positions are already doing.

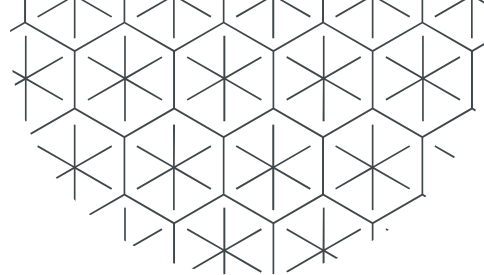
- Areas of knowledge for a Scholarly Communications Librarian
  - Institutional repositories
  - Publishing
  - Copyright
  - Data management
  - Assessment and altmetrics
- Like other academic librarians, Scholarly Communications Librarians have factors that impact their confidence
  - Too many responsibilities
  - Need more time and experience
  - Lack of training
  - Lack of practice



# How does this translate to Open Ed Advocates?

- Many responsible for Open Ed initiatives are academic librarians
- Areas of Knowledge are similar to Scholarly Communications Librarians
  - Copyright (Open Licensing)
  - Publishing (Open Access and OER creation)
  - Assessment
  - Outreach and Marketing Strategies
  - Project Management
  - Advocacy to multiple campus stakeholders

We know that imposter phenomenon affects academic librarians in general, as well as Scholarly Communications Librarians. **What effect does it have on Open Ed advocates who are also librarians?**



# Tips and Tricks

Further research is needed but here are some tips and tricks that we think can help Open Ed Advocates who may struggle with imposter phenomenon

---





# Talk about it!

Getting together with your fellow Open Ed practitioners and talking openly about what you experience and feel can help ease feelings of IP.





# Formal and/or Informal Mentorships can help


- Both within and outside of the Open Ed realm
- Ask for feedback on what you're doing and how you're doing
- Venting really is kind of therapeutic





# Let's fix the culture

If you're in a leadership role in your institution, interrogate whether your organization values competence or confidence. Who gets rewarded for being confident and ambitious, and who gets punished? Are people allowed to be themselves, or must they project an air of perfection to seem "professional"?



Tulshyan, R., & Burey, J.-A. (2021, February 11). *Stop telling women they have imposter syndrome*. Harvard Business Review.  
<https://hbr.org/2021/02/stop-telling-women-they-have-imposter-syndrome>



# Sometimes, it really is just A LOT of work

Many librarians wear multiple hats so it can be difficult to juggle all of the responsibilities

- Maintain a work-life balance that works for you
- Remember to be kind to yourself
- “It’s a marathon, not a sprint.”



# Thanks



Jennifer Adcock, RPG Designer

@JenKatWrites

You know who doesn't get impostor syndrome? Cats. Not only does every cat know they're a cat, I think every cat believes firmly, with conviction, that they are the best possible cat, the prime example of a cat, the most cat a cat could be.

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by **Slidesgo**, including icons by **Flaticon**, infographics & images by **Freepik**