

Leading a Campus-Wide Conversation About Open Access

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Abstract

Open access (OA) scholarship—generally, scholarship made freely available online with minimal copyright and licensing restrictions—is a “hot topic” in academic libraries. Academic libraries are perfectly situated to lead the discussion about open access and are natural partners in campus-wide open access initiatives. In April 2012, Rice University’s Faculty Senate passed an Open Access Policy, directing faculty to place copies of their peer-reviewed journal articles in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive. This paper discusses the successes and barriers to policy implementation, thus far. Despite some setbacks, the library’s involvement with the policy has positioned it to lead campus-wide conversations about open access. In addition to encouraging policy compliance, Fondren’s involvement has invited further conversations about open access and other scholarly communications issues. Further, Fondren’s experience managing an OA policy positions the library to play a large role in upcoming federal public access initiatives.

Keywords: open access, campus-wide open access policy, academic library

Introduction

Open access (OA) scholarship—generally, scholarship made freely available online with minimal copyright and licensing restrictions—is a “hot topic” in academic libraries.¹ Open access gained momentum in the library community in response to the “crisis in scholarly communications,” in which inflating journal prices and declining library budgets (resulting in cancelled journal subscriptions) reduce user access to scholarship (Davis & Connolly, 2007). As a result, it is not uncommon for academic library staff to lead the passage and implementation of campus-wide open access policies, which require faculty to place copies of their work (usually journal articles) in an institutional repository (IR).² As part of OA policy management, library staff are often responsible for publicizing the policy, creating educational resources, soliciting and depositing faculty work, navigating copyright issues, and dealing with discrepancies between publisher policies and the OA policy. Because open access policy management presents new challenges for academic libraries, it is helpful for library staff at various institutions to share experiences. What approaches work and what do not?

Rice University’s Fondren Library played an active role in the passage of the University’s OA Policy and is responsible for its implementation and management. Like many academic libraries, Fondren has encountered a number of barriers to policy implementation. In particular, the library has experienced difficulty raising awareness of the policy and getting faculty to deposit their work in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive, Rice’s IR.

¹ A number of online resources discussing open access are available, including <http://legacy.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm> and <http://sparc.arl.org/issues/open-access>

² Institutional repositories are “. . . digital collections capturing and preserving the intellectual output of a single or multi-university community (Crow, 2002, p. 3).”

Despite these setbacks, the library's involvement with the policy has positioned it to lead campus-wide conversations about open access. In addition to encouraging policy compliance, Fondren's involvement has invited further conversations about open access and other scholarly communications issues. Further, Fondren's experience managing an OA policy positions the library to play a large role in upcoming federal public access initiatives.

Rice's Open Access Policy

Rice University's Faculty Senate passed its Open Access Policy in April 2012. Informed by Rice's Copyright Policy, the Open Access Policy directs tenured and tenure-track faculty to deposit copies of all peer-reviewed journal articles (published since April 2012) in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive—the University's institutional repository (IR). Fondren staff—in particular, the Executive Director of Digital Scholarship Services-- worked with faculty and the University General Counsel to develop the policy and advocate its passage.

The policy provides guidance for designing a workflow for the deposit of faculty publications. The Provost oversees policy implementation, with assistance from the University Librarian. Library staff are responsible for the day-to-day management of activities related to the policy. The policy directs the University Librarian to develop a system that facilitates faculty compliance, with an emphasis on convenience. The policy does not specify any penalty for non-compliance, and provides for faculty to request an embargo be placed on deposited articles or for an article whose publisher does not allow deposit to request a waiver.

Policy Implementation

When considering how to manage implementation of Rice's Open Access (OA) Policy, Fondren researched the experiences of other academic libraries. Although new to Rice, by 2012 open access policies were not new to the larger academic community. Since 2003, more than 135

institutions and 52 funding bodies worldwide have implemented open access policies (University of Southampton, 2012). In addition, there is a large amount of literature available about soliciting faculty content for institutional repositories, which helps with the development of advertising and outreach activities.

A survey of the literature, and discussions with colleagues at other institutions, reveals that many academic libraries rely on reference librarians to provide support for OA policies. Of course, this is a natural role for such librarians. Reference librarians have long been considered natural partners for institutional repository projects, as their expertise in outreach and subject areas enables them to solicit repository content from across campus (Bailey, 2005). Although reference librarians are a natural fit for OA policy implementation, Fondren was also aware of limitations on staff time. Much of the literature that discusses use of reference staff concedes that existing staff have little time to devote to OA concerns. Reference librarians are already “stretched thin,” with time already committed to library instruction and other activities. Many schools that ask reference librarians to manage OA policies are unprepared for the additional time and effort. Implementation of OA policies requires knowledge of institutional repository software and scholarly communications issues, such as rights management, and staff must keep up with the fast-changing (and often nuanced) nature of the open access environment (Salo, 2008, p. 108; Buehler & Boateng, 2005, p. 293). In addition, an unanticipated large amount of time and effort is required for marketing the OA policy and IR and encouraging faculty to deposit material (Buehler & Boateng, 2005, p. 299). In part because reference staff are often unable to devote the time necessary to address the many issues related to OA policy implementation, Fondren decided to create a new position whose primary focus (at least initially)

was on the OA Policy. Although other library staff would certainly continue to be involved with OA issues, the day-to-day operations related to an OA policy are managed by one person.

The job description for the Scholarly Communications Liaison is purposefully designed to be flexible to meet unknown future needs. As a member of the Digital Scholarship Services department, this new position serves as the primary point of contact for scholarly communications issues, such as open access, authors' rights, and copyright. The liaison develops educational resources on a number of scholarly communications issues, and works with faculty to resolve differences between Rice's Copyright and Open Access policies and publisher requirements. In particular, this position is responsible for facilitating faculty compliance with Rice's Open Access Policy by soliciting and depositing faculty peer-reviewed articles.

Because Fondren had never before conducted activities similar to the implementation of the OA Policy, practically every activity has been experimental. It quickly became evident that such work requires one to be flexible and willing to quickly adapt to a fast-changing environment. Those involved with OA policies must also be resilient. There will, inevitably, be a number of failed attempts to solicit faculty participation. In order to move forward, one must learn from past experiences and be willing to try new solutions.

Before promoting faculty compliance with the OA Policy, the infrastructure necessary to implement the policy had to first be in place. Resources created for the larger Rice community are located on a central website: <http://openaccess.rice.edu/>. There, users can access tools related to submitting articles to the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive—options are available for faculty and staff who prefer to submit material themselves and for those who prefer library-mediated deposit. Should a faculty member seek a waiver for a specific publication, a webform is used to process the request. The simple form requires the author to provide the article and journal title, as

well as the reason for requesting a waiver. Upon submission, an email with the provided information is sent to Fondren staff, who retain a copy for library records.

Documents related to the management of the policy are housed on the Rice Digital Projects wiki. This allows for easy editing, which is important because work with the OA Policy is constantly evolving. The OA information benefits from being housed on a larger wiki, as it enables linking to useful information on digital project best practices, such as scanning, preferred file formats, quality control, and file naming. The Scholarly Communications Liaison works closely with other Digital Scholarship Services staff to develop customized submission templates for the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive in an attempt to simplify the submission process. Drawing upon Fondren staff metadata expertise, metadata guidelines were developed to assist those that prefer to submit their own material and to ensure consistency in library-mediated deposits. The guidelines are housed on the wiki, and can be accessed by any IR user. The wiki also contains information on the general workflow for capturing and depositing faculty publications. In addition, the wiki contains information to supplement SHERPA/RoMEO, an online database useful for determining publisher policies on self-archiving (University of Nottingham, 2014). This information, in particular, will be of great use should Fondren add additional staff or student workers to OA Policy management. Please see <http://bit.ly/1hhdujL> for all wiki pages related to Rice's OA Policy.

Barriers to Policy Implementation

Fondren staff hoped that once the appropriate infrastructure was in place, faculty would flock to deposit their material in the IR. Unfortunately, Fondren's experience with open access policy implementation is no different than those of other libraries. In particular, Fondren

experiences difficulty raising awareness of the policy and difficulty getting faculty to deposit their work in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive.

Faculty Not Aware of the Policy

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to increasing faculty awareness of the OA policy is that the library must compete with other faculty priorities. Faculty are already inundated with commitments to teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. No matter how well a campus initiative or event is publicized, few manage to draw the attention of faculty. This is particularly true if the initiative is one that does not require faculty action (faculty are not penalized if they choose not to comply with the OA policy).

Despite difficulty promoting other library initiatives and resources, a number of approaches to sharing information about the OA policy have been tried. Drop-in information sessions were held in conjunction with International Open Access Week. Mass emailing and individual mailings about the policy occur throughout the year. Staff contact individual faculty, soliciting post-prints. The Scholarly Communications Liaison schedules faculty meeting presentations and workshops to answer questions about the policy and solicit C.V.s for library-mediated publication deposit. Fondren staff continually seek innovative opportunities to increase awareness of the policy and OA in general. However, the results have been similar to those at institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University. A study of Carnegie Mellon faculty found that approximately half of respondents had not heard of the school's open access policy or institutional repository. In addition, faculty were unaware that the library harvested content for deposit and could deposit faculty work, when requested. (Covey, 2011, pp. 8-9)

Although some of the barriers to awareness are a result of the academic environment (and are, thus, perhaps inevitable), there were at least two key missed opportunities for Fondren to

publicize Rice's OA Policy. First, there was no campus-wide announcement when the Faculty Senate passed the OA Policy in April 2012. A well-organized "media burst" could have a significant impact on faculty awareness of the policy. Secondly, the hiring of someone new to campus to manage policy implementation created an additional barrier to "getting the message out." The Scholarly Communications Liaison lacks the relationships with key campus faculty and staff that would permit identification of early adopters of the OA Policy. This situation is not unusual with IRs and OA policies, as these specialized areas tend to attract new hires—who lack the institutional network (Salo, 2008, pp. 107-108). While those new to the institution may possess the enthusiasm needed for such work, it may not make up for the lack of faculty relationships that can only be developed after years in the library. Fortunately, the reference librarians and Digital Scholarship Services staff graciously help make connections. However, they cannot be expected to devote too much additional time to do the work of a position hired to relieve them of just these activities.

Perhaps a more realistic approach to OA Policy management is to acknowledge that it is a team effort. Although the day-to-day management of the policy and depositing publications in the IR can be efficiently accomplished by one person, effective outreach is probably best accomplished with a collaborative team approach.

Faculty Unwilling to Deposit Articles in the Institutional Repository

Even when they do learn about Rice's OA policy, many faculty are still unwilling to comply. A number of issues influence faculty willingness to deposit their work in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive. Discussions with Rice faculty reveal that their concerns with policy compliance are no different from faculty at other institutions. Faculty are "deeply embedded" in the traditional activities of the university and their scholarly fields; changing such engrained

beliefs and actions is very difficult. Often, faculty focus on getting published in the “right” high-impact journal. For many, public accessibility of the work is of minor concern. (Davis & Connolly, 2007)

Faculty that are actually aware of OA policies offer a number of reasons for not depositing work, including not wanting to make any version other than the published version (version of record) available. Often, publishers only allow the posting of the final manuscript—the post print (often a Word document)—that is submitted to the publisher after peer-review. Many faculty are hesitant to post post-prints because they do not look like the final, published version, and there may have been additional revisions included in the version of record. In addition to concerns over the version of record, faculty also report a fear of work being plagiarized, copyright issues, and the time required to add content to the IR. (Davis & Connolly, 2007; Kim, 2010, p. 1909) Despite reassurances that most concerns can be resolved, many faculty continue to avoid making their work available in the IR.

To address faculty concerns about time and effort required to deposit work in the IR, Fondren staff deposit most faculty publications—both solicited and unsolicited. The Scholarly Communications Liaison solicits faculty C.V.s for review, and deposits all applicable articles. In addition, tools such as Google Scholar are used to harvest content from publisher and faculty websites and external repositories. Harvesting faculty publications is not unusual in academic libraries. Most IR deposits are mediated by library staff rather than by authors. (Covey, 2011, p. 2) At Rice, the University Copyright Policy gives the library authority to harvest and deposit publications: “the University retains the non-transferable, perpetual, non-exclusive right to use such works on a royalty-free basis solely for the University’s education, teaching and research activities (Rice University, 2004).”

Years ago, it was believed that implementation of OA policies would increase author deposits. However, the passage of OA policies and mandates have yet to dramatically change author deposit. (Covey, 2011, p. 2) Without faculty participation, library staff can only deposit material that is already made publicly available elsewhere. Faculty are routinely contacted with requests for postprints, but they rarely provide the requested material. As a result, the contents of the faculty publication collections in Rice's IR do not represent the full scope of faculty scholarship.

It is not likely that—as more faculty become aware of the OA Policy—that there will be a dramatic increase in the number of faculty who deposit their own publications. Time and effort for deposit will always be an issue. It is possible, however, that awareness of the policy may result in higher response rates to post-print solicitations, offering broader coverage of faculty scholarship.

Successes in Policy Implementation

Despite these significant barriers to implementation, Rice's Open Access Policy continues to provide a number of opportunities for Fondren to lead campus-wide conversations about open access and other scholarly communications issues. Fondren's role in OA policy implementation has helped to develop additional library resources and positioned the library to play a role in new federal public mandates.

Faculty concerns about the OA policy invite conversations about other scholarly communications issues, such as authors rights and copyright. In these discussions, faculty reveal their struggle to keep up with scholarly communications issues and the lack of available resources. Faculty and staff want to know where they can go to find needed information. Often, it is not until faculty are in the process of publishing or applying for a grant—and, thus, faced

with a looming deadline—that they find that they do not know how to address specific scholarly communications issues. As more faculty express this shared frustration, Fondren staff are in the process of developing new resources to meet faculty needs. Some library resources may already exist (e.g., workshops, libguides). In such cases, Fondren staff must work to increase awareness of such resources. The expertise is in place; the library just needs to find new, innovative ways to share resources with the University community.

Fondren’s work with the Rice OA Policy has also placed the library in a position to play a key role in new federal public access initiatives. In February 2013, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) released a memo entitled “Increasing Access to the Results of Federally Funded Scientific Research.” It directs all federal research agencies to develop and implement open access plans over the next several years. In an effort to prepare for new funding rules, Fondren created a Public Access Working Group. The purpose of this working group is to conduct an assessment of Fondren’s ability to meet new federal public access requirements and offer recommendations for Fondren to prepare for the directive. As the assessment progresses, it is clear that Fondren’s engagement with Rice’s OA Policy has helped develop many of the workflows and resources needed to accommodate proposed models for funding agency public access policies, positioning it to play a major role in supporting institutional compliance.

Perhaps most importantly, Fondren’s role in the OA Policy has helped to further an understanding, at both the library and across campus, that open access plays a large role in a number of aspects of the academic environment, and continues to quickly grow. It is not just limited to a single department or position. While faculty may not be interested in an OA policy, they are greatly interested in issues such as research workflow, publishing, and tenure and promotion. Central to all current discussions of each is how to respond to calls for more open

access to research. As open access continues to gain momentum, Rice's Open Access Policy can serve as one way of initiating campus-wide conversations.

Conclusion

Since the passage of the Rice Open Access Policy two years ago, Fondren Library has encountered numerous barriers to policy implementation and management, including difficulty raising awareness of the policy and getting faculty to deposit their work in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive. Many days, it seems like the library's efforts are futile. However, slowly, the library is gaining recognition as a leader in discussions of open access issues. In addition to managing the deposit of faculty publications in the institutional repository, Fondren's involvement has invited further conversations about open access and other scholarly communications issues. Fondren's experience managing an OA policy positions the library to play a large role in upcoming federal public access initiatives. For these reasons, there is a strong argument to continue actively engaging faculty in discussions about the OA Policy and other aspects of open access. Moving forward, momentum must not be lost, and library staff must be flexible and willing to pursue new, innovative methods of reaching faculty.

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