

Engaging in 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 major focus of many 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 engage in campus-wide conversations about open access and upcoming federal public access initiatives, and has invited further conversations about other scholarly communications issues.

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 major focus of many academic libraries. Increasingly, academic library staff are actively engaged in 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). 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?

Like many academic libraries, Rice University's Fondren Library has encountered a number of barriers to policy implementation. In particular, the library has experienced difficulty raising awareness of the policy and encouraging the deposit of faculty scholarship in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive, Rice's IR. Despite these setbacks, the library's involvement with the policy has positioned it to engage in campus-wide conversations about open access and upcoming federal public access initiatives, and has invited further conversations about other scholarly communications issues.

Policy Implementation

Modelled after policies at institutions such as Harvard and MIT, Rice University's Faculty Senate passed its Open Access Policy in April 2012. 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's IR. (Rice University Faculty Senate 2012)

When considering how to manage implementation of Rice's OA Policy, Fondren researched the experiences of other academic libraries. Although little of the literature addresses implementation workflow, it does show what sort of activities are required. Advertising and outreach activities require ongoing engagement with faculty, subject knowledge, and coordinated promotional activities (Bailey 2005). In addition, library staff must possess of institutional repository software and scholarly communications issues, such as rights management. Staff must also keep up with the fast-changing (and often nuanced) nature of the open access environment. (Salo 2008, 108; Buehler and Boateng 2005, 293) As library staff moved forward with policy implementation, they found all of this to be true. 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 flexibility and a willingness to quickly adapt to a fast-changing environment.

Before promoting faculty compliance with the OA Policy, the library first developed the infrastructure necessary to implement the policy. A central website-- <http://openaccess.rice.edu/> -houses tools related to submitting articles and requesting waivers (should a publisher not allow a copy of the work to be deposited). Documents related to faculty publication metadata guidelines, publisher self-archiving policies, and library publications harvesting and deposit workflows are housed within Fondren's Digital Projects Wiki, which can be found at <http://bit.ly/1hhdujL>.

Barriers to Policy Implementation

Fondren staff hoped that once the appropriate infrastructure was in place, faculty would rush 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 has experienced difficulty raising awareness of the policy and difficulty encouraging the deposit of scholarship in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive.

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. Inconsistent promotion of the OA policy by library staff has not helped. Although a number of approaches to sharing information about the OA policy have been tried, including hosting drop-in informational sessions held in conjunction with International Open Access Week, mass and targeted mailings, post-print solicitations, and departmental presentations, they are done sporadically and are not pursued in an organized manner. Different outreach efforts often present different types of information about the policy, ensuring that few faculty receive all information necessary to thoroughly understand the policy, its benefits, and how to comply.

Moving forward, efforts are being made to develop a more organized, focused outreach program to promote the OA policy. Library staff from different departments will collaborate to develop talking points and other resources, ensuring that a cohesive message is presented. Although activities still need to be flexible enough to quickly change if unsuccessful, a coordinated outreach effort will help to ensure that complete information about the policy, its benefits, and how to comply can be easily discovered.

Even when they do learn about Rice's OA policy, many faculty are still hesitant to comply. Discussions with Rice faculty reveal that their concerns with policy compliance are no

different from faculty at other institutions. Faculty 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 and Connolly 2007; Kim 2010, 1909)

To address faculty concerns about time and effort required to deposit work in the IR, Fondren staff deposit most faculty publications. Library staff solicit 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, 2) Library staff routinely contact faculty with requests for post-prints, but response rates remain low. As a result, the contents of the faculty publication collections in Rice's IR do not represent the full scope of faculty scholarship.

Moving forward, it is hoped that, with the increased promotion efforts, that the library will see a modest increase in the number of faculty who deposit their own publications or who respond to requests for post-prints.

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 engage in 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.

Discussions about the OA policy naturally lead to conversations about other scholarly communications issues, such as authors rights and copyright. In these discussions, faculty often share their frustration with keeping 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.

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 (Holdren 2013). 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.

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 hesitation depositing work in the Rice Digital Scholarship Archive. However, the library's work with the OA Policy is helping to situate it as a key player in discussions of campus open access issues. In particular, 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 and engaging the campus community.

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