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Adopting an Open Access Policy at a Four-Year Comprehensive College

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THIS CHAPTER OUTLINES THE STEPS TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT AN open access policy at a public, midsize, four-year institution. There is no "one size fits all" in policy-making, but the authors intend to provide motivation for others to continue to work on policies that can enhance the scholarly profile at their schools.

Peter Suber provides an excellent history of the open access movement.[1] The online world is full of compelling questions about the viability and future of open access.[2] There is growing energy and momentum by policy-makers at local and global scale to balance open access with other needs. Social justice issues related to digital have-nots, those without university support, and those in underserved areas of the world keep moving open access forward.

A review of the literature shows that there are many issues involved with successfully creating and implementing an open access policy. Kern and Wishnetsky (2014) share the history and motivation behind the open access policy and institutional repository at Allegheny College, and discuss the long process they went through to get faculty buy-in for their policy. Their policy calls for a review and report process three years after adoption.[3] Johnston (2017) examines the issues around open access policies and academic freedom,[4] while

Wesolek (2014) adds that the best way to get faculty to comply with an open access policy is to make it as easy as possible for them. At Clemson University, the library does this by harvesting work from Digital Measures, the faculty reporting system, into their institutional repository, Digital Commons.[5] Harnad (2015) argues that the only way to ensure global access is to mandate "repository deposit as the sole mechanism for submitting publications for performance review, research assessment, grant application, or grant renewal."[6]

KINDS OF OPEN ACCESS POLICIES

The Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University provides a core foundation of background information for those working on open access policies. It is recommended as a starting place for anyone interested in researching good practices.[7]

There are many characteristics that can be used to describe and classify open access policies. At a basic level they include:

Mandatory vs. voluntary—policies can be characterized as being mandatory or voluntary for authors. Mandatory policies are included in a growing number of grant, government, and other funder specifications, although their enforcement can be uneven.

Weak vs. strong—open access policies can be viewed along a spectrum from weak to strong. Aspiring to adopt a strong open-access policy is preferred whenever possible. However, a weak policy may be better than no policy at all in some circumstances, providing a starting point and thus planting a stake on which to build a stronger policy in the future.

Opt-in vs. opt-out—opt-in policies allow authors to choose if they wish to include their materials in a repository. Opt-out makes it mandatory that authors deposit a copy of their work in a repository, but grants a waiver for those who do not wish to deposit their work. The Berkman Klein Center's "Good Practices for University Open-Access Policies" web page indicates that opt-out policies are preferred when possible. Opt-in policies instruct authors to opt in to sharing article postprints and other content.

OPEN-ACCESS POLICY ADOPTIONS AT TWO SUNY CAMPUSES: STONY BROOK AND BROCKPORT

Over 160 institutions in North America had open access policies as of 2018, according to the Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (ROARMAP).[8] However, it is critical to recognize that the culture, process, and

stakeholders at each institution will be different and must be acknowledged and respected. In what follows, we will touch upon the adoption of an open access policy at Stony Brook University (a campus of the SUNY system), and then we will report in greater detail on our own experiences in adopting a similar policy at another SUNY campus, the College at Brockport.

Stony Brook Takes the Lead

In February 2017, after eighteen months of planning and consultation, the Senate at Stony Brook University unanimously passed an open access policy.[9] It followed similar policies at MIT[10] and other schools. The policy was supported by the new Stony Brook provost and was heralded at the spring SUNY librarians' conference as progressive and forward-thinking. The Stony Brook dean of libraries presented an outline of the policy at the SUNY Board of Trustees meeting in April 2017.

This was followed by a SUNY University Senate resolution on April 17, 2017, that also encouraged other SUNY campuses to consider implementing open access policies. Over the next year, a SUNY-wide Open Access steering committee composed of a variety of representative stakeholders, including faculty, librarians, students, university governance, SUNY administrators, research foundation staff, chief academic officers, and others, worked on a resolution to take to the SUNY Board of Trustees.[11] A draft of the SUNY Board of Trustees policy invited local campus input. Libraries forwarded positive points to be included, as well as a concern that tempered full support with a request to slow down the statewide implementation date for six months to a year. The SUNY Board of Trustees resolution presented a rationale that balanced author ownership with the growing need for open access to scholarship and creative endeavors.

The Board of Trustees' policy built on previous efforts and provided additional incentives for SUNY scholars to make their work accessible to wider audiences. These efforts aligned with a growing number of federal and private agencies that required grant-funded work to be openly accessible. This policy also helped to showcase SUNY scholarship at a global scale and to enhance scholarly communications. The SUNY open-access policy was passed in March 2018.

Brockport Up Next: The Saga Continues

The College at Brockport has had a robust instance of an institutional repository (Digital Commons @Brockport) since 2012. The repository houses masters' theses, as well as student conference materials and a limited collection of faculty/staff scholarship. Inspired in part by Stony Brook and others, Brockport seemed poised to take on the creation of an open access policy for faculty and staff. A small group of librarians modeled their effort after Stony Brook,

MIT, and others, and first sought confirmation of support internally from other librarians. Although supportive, few comments were received from librarians; their suggestions were quickly incorporated.

Initial Resolution

When the open access policy was presented to the Brockport College Senate, it met with a resounding thud. The faculty were skittish, they didn't like the mandated language, and they questioned both the motivation and need for such a policy. Those in the humanities were the most concerned. Our proposed policy was referred back to the College Senate's Policies Committee, which was, fortunately, chaired by a librarian.

To better inform and include the college community, the library hosted a number of events promoting open access. Open Access Week in October included daily articles on the online college web page, webinars, and a campus town hall meeting hosted by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. The town hall meeting included faculty from both the sciences and humanities and provided the most substantive conversation to date.

Revisions and Getting Buy-In

Some faculty were concerned about the opt-out language in the policy, which seemed to limit author choice. Some felt there might be punitive repercussions for those choosing not to deposit their work in the repository. Others suggested that the language felt like a top-down mandate, rather than an invitation to increase faculty and institutional profiles. From the town hall meeting, a small group that included librarians and faculty from the English, history, and one other department modified the opt-out policy to an opt-in one and helped revise the wording to soften the tone and make it more inviting. The library was advised that faculty preferred to be gently wooed and personally invited to have their work included in the repository. Revisions were done over winter break and were shared again with librarians and with the Library Advisory Council, consisting of instructional faculty and student and librarian representatives. The group was able to increase faculty buy-in and confidence by explaining and providing the publisher policies from Sherpa/Romeo[12] for journals where our campus faculty frequently publish their articles.

Try, Try Again

Additional fine-tuning was done and the revised proposal went forward in spring 2018 for possible adoption. After passing through two more vetting opportunities for questions, the policy was sent for a full reading, followed by a two-week period before a second reading, and finally a vote. It was a cold,

gray, wintry day in April. The docket was full. Two nonvoting library staff were present to answer questions. The resolution passed handily with no questions from the floor and three nays. The College Senate voted to adopt the open-access policy on April 16, 2018.

The result seemed anticlimactic, given our college's history of spirited debate and lingering doubts from some. The more encompassing March resolution had passed unanimously by the SUNY Board of Trustees, although this was not widely known by the majority of local college senators. This parallel development can only help with policy adoption.

Creating a communication plan to share the good news came next. An impromptu "Thank You" display in the library thanked the college community for their support during this year-long effort. An article on the college's online web page announced the results to the campus. Tasks associated with implementation, including educating the campus community and inviting article deposits, are continuing as part of ongoing communication.[13]

The open access policy for journal articles had been developing on our campus alongside an active SUNY- and CUNY-wide open educational resources (OER) funded initiative. The two projects reinforce and energize each other in several respects, such as informing colleagues about Creative Commons licensing and so on. The open access policy added momentum for creating a scholarly communication team in the library to respond to faculty requests for assistance. The policy helps faculty authors ensure that their scholarship is accessible for students. It also enables student coauthors to learn about digital rights management early in their careers.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are some of the lessons we learned along the way:

1. It is impossible to over-communicate. Clear, on-point messaging needs to be delivered at faculty meetings, open forums, and in hallway conversations. We tried to develop a short elevator pitch of 3–5 points for librarians early on. It met with mixed results, but it was a good way to develop our thoughts. Campus governance (Senate president, union leadership, etc.) were key people to include in the conversations on our campus.
2. Getting buy-in from the college administration helps to ensure support at all levels. You should seek written letters of support if this might be helpful. You should also recognize that the process takes time and should not be rushed: six months to a year seems to be the minimum.
3. Using formal and informal channels helps. Although e-mail was the primary communication vehicle, face-to-face communication was also

important. Keeping people updated cannot be stressed enough. Many libraries have a web page or LibGuide[14] for open-access policy details. Be sure it is kept current and up-to-date.

4. Encouraging champions increases stakeholder voices. The head of the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Center proved to be a generous ally. Faculty inclusion is vital.

5. Social media was a limited part of our campaign, but could be increased for others. The Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)[15] and other online sources offer a variety of materials about open access that can be remixed and reused. We used library displays, door hangers, Open Access Week activities, and every other opportunity we could to help spread the word.

6. Seek support from those who have already adopted open access policies. They can be very helpful for advice and support at critical times.

7. Document the journey so others can learn from you. Add successful policy adoptions to the ROAR registry, and consider joining the Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions (COAPI).[16]

8. Build in assessment timelines for review and updating (e.g., two to three years).

9. Take time to celebrate your success, express gratitude to everyone, and start the implementation workflow planning early.

CONCLUSION

Bringing open access to scale at a statewide system level will play an important role in its further development. Our campus is grateful that the chancellor and the SUNY Board of Trustees are in alignment in supporting open access. This should make work much easier for other SUNY campuses, including some of which have not yet implemented a repository. The opportunity to work with other campuses in education surrounding policy-making, implementation, and assessment provides another portal to widen the impact of open access. It may also provide a path for developing future models for funding.

Next steps include helping to blaze a trail for others. We have successfully broken ground on our campus and hopefully are creating a way for future policy-makers to continue to push forward with open policies.

The future of open access is moving ahead with hopeful signs of change. Open access publishing is colliding with the open access movement more generally and is forcing a rethinking of openness in education and beyond.[17] Both for-profit and not-for-profit entities are developing new publishing and educational technologies that will impact access. These are exciting times for all.

NOTES

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16. SPARC, "Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions," https://sparcopen.org/coapi/.

17. Zachary J. McDowell, "Disrupting Academic Publishing: Questions of Access in a Digital Environment," *Media Practice and Education* 19, no. 1 (2018): 52–67, doi:10.1080/14682753.2017.1362173.

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