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## Open Education Policies in Irish Higher Education and the Role of Librarians: Review and Recommendations

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# ‘Open Education Policies in Irish Higher Education and the Role of Librarians: Review and Recommendations’

Aisling Coyne

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MSc Information and Library Management at Dublin Business School

Supervisor: Marta Bustillo Esteban

September 2020

**DECLARATION**

I declare that this dissertation that I have submitted to Dublin Business School for the award of MSc Information and Library Management is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated, where it is clearly acknowledged by references. Furthermore, this work has not been submitted for any other degree.

Signed: Aisling Coyne

Student Number: 10542127

Date: 1/9/2020

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my grandad Michael Sweeney who inspired me to have a lifelong love of learning, reading and challenging my mind. Gone but not forgotten.

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## Abstract

This research aims to highlight the role librarians can play in OER policy, development, design, collaboration, publishing, teaching and management. This research will interview key experts, advocates, and librarians working in this area. Semi-structured interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The main results of the study for policy are that institutional culture and institutional buy-in are of paramount importance, pervading policy discussions, policy involvement, rewards and incentives, OER use and management. Recommendations from the study are that a national OER policy be created with a timeline for compliance to allow autonomy of the institution and consider institutional culture, librarians should be supported to up-skill, we should follow a Team Science model for reward and incentive, and that a national university press is a worthwhile idea in an Irish context.

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## Introduction

This research aims to highlight the role librarians can play in Open Educational Resources policy, development, design, collaboration, publishing, teaching and management. This research will interview key experts, advocates, and librarians working in this area. This research fosters a two-pronged approach on its examination of the current literature and available material. On the one hand, it will critically analyse and evaluate the case for and implementation of Open Education Policy in Irish Higher Institutions. On the other, it will present the case for the involvement of librarians in policy development, implementation and policy sustainability among other roles. It intends to report on findings from research and develop recommendations. Outcomes of this research include the report on findings, literature review, description of methodology and a set of recommendations (Appendices will include interview questions as an Open resource to re-use and re-mix).

This research intends to analyze the role of librarians in Open Educational Resources (OER) policy and how librarians can best advocate and participate in the development, creation and use of OERs. The rationale for this research is that librarians have a background of skills which are gradually transitioning into the digital space organically. Librarians are best placed to offer several services for those developing and using OERs as well as training in information literacy, digital literacy and copyright literacy. The availability and discoverability of OERs is another area where librarians can and are demonstrating value and expertise. Management of OERs and advocacy for their use are other possible roles for librarians.

This research is important for numerous reasons and is pertinent due to the demand for open teaching and learning resources particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, while there is an international and regional call for OER policy, we have a lack of OER policy and

central strategy in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on a national level (although there are some institutions that have taken the initiative and developed their own policies or expanded existing Open policies to include OERs e.g. National University of Ireland Galway and Athlone Institute of Technology). This can provide an opportunity for Irish HEIs to gain insight, examples and support through collaboration. Secondly, we must remain cognizant of the barriers to OER use and be mindful of this when creating and implementing policy. Crucially, we must acknowledge the role that librarians can play in a multitude of OER areas. The areas which will be examined will include advocacy, support, teaching, management, creating value and policy development.

There are several definitions for OERs, but their main characteristics are that they can be almost any material or medium, used for teaching and learning and reside in the public domain or are openly licensed (International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), 2019). OERs are educational content that can be used, shared and modified under open licenses for the purposes of teaching, learning or research through any medium (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 2019). There are five permissions that are core characteristics of OER: retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute (Rhode Island School of Design, 2020). OERs are for faculty, as an alternative to traditional publishing or to create resources, and OERs are for students as they reduce costs of materials and may augment or replace traditional expensive course materials, “studies show that 93% of students who use OER do as well or better than those using traditional materials” (Rhode Island School of Design, 2020). OERs are increasingly important for education and have proven that they provide democratic and equitable access to knowledge (IFLA, 2019). OERs have seen a sudden and dramatic uptake due to the COVID-19 global pandemic to fulfill student needs during lockdowns



with nationwide closure impacting over 60% of the world's student population, and to share information on the virus COVID-19 (UNESCO, 2020; World Health Organization (WHO), 2020). UNESCO have praised OERs for their ability to be used to keep citizens updated and educated about the COVID-19 and allowing learning to continue at a distance. The call for inclusive, equitable and quality Open Educational Resources (OERs) has grown in the last decade (Risquez et al., 2019) as has demands for more flexible education options and Open Education. UNESCO have given OER Recommendations (UNESCO, 2019) which were adopted by UNESCO member states in November 2019. The aim is to enhance cooperation within the OER community to support open teaching and learning. The recommendations examine how to support the use of OER, developing capacity, policy, inclusion and sustainability (UNESCO, 2019). Additionally, the Call for Joint Action encouraged the implementation of the OER Recommendations, development of supportive OER policy, inclusive and equitable access to quality OERs and nurturing sustainability while fostering cooperation internationally (UNESCO, 2019). As a response to the global pandemic, the OER4COVID Initiative aims to establish an online community support network for educators, assess local needs, share OER-enabled online courses, give examples of open technologies, curate openly licensed resources and to build capacity to design and develop OER for local needs.

OERs are designed to be freely used, reused, adapted and shared, creating digital literacy skills and collaboration across disciplines and borders (McAvina & Maguire, 2011). This is an admirable starting point, yet many barriers to equitable, impactful and sustained use are being identified as the use of OERs increases (Czerniewicz and Rother, 2018). As Blake (2003) writes, "One does not get far in contemporary discussions of the university before one is caught up in complex questions of social justice" (pp.215). Open education and OERs are focused

philosophically on removing barriers to education and learning in addition to advancing education and the delivery of such. Open education is a philosophy which prioritises the identification and removal of many types of barriers to education and learning. It may mean high quality educational opportunities freely accessible by anyone regardless of location, enrollment status or ability to pay (Waltz, 2017).

OERs have a range of advantages identified in the literature including expanded access to learning (more options for access, content, delivery), scalability, support for lifelong and non-formal learning, up-to-date information which can easily be made current (unlike traditional textbooks), enhancement of course content, showcasing of innovation and talent within the institution, and continual improvement of resources (Skidmore, 2019; Cronin, 2019; Kruger & Abramovich, 2019; IFLA, 2019). However, OERs are not without specific challenges, chief among them are copyright and legal issues. As a result, knowledge of copyright, licensing, intellectual property rights and laws are necessary for developers of OERs and users (Kruger & Abramovich, 2019; IFLA, 2019). Another pressing issue is that of quality or the perception of OERs as lesser quality than traditional materials (IFLA, 2019; Skidmore, 2019). Furthermore, OERs tend to receive less recognition, incentive and reward for creators than with traditional materials (Cronin, 2019; IFLA, 2019). Additionally, there are numerous discoverability issues, technological barriers to use (access and skills) as well as accessibility issues (Czerniewicz and Rother, 2018; Kruger & Abramovich, 2019).

There are varying challenges to implementing Open Education policy (Kruger & Abramovich, 2019; Riquez et al., 2020; Skidmore, 2019) and there is a widespread lack of open education strategy and policy within higher education (Cronin, 2019). There is a need for Open Access Policy and OER Policy worldwide (Czerniewicz et al., 2018; Cronin, 2019). Devolved

models and ground-up movements appear to have the most success (Aucock, 2014; Thompson & Muir, 2019; Cronin, 2019; Riskey, 2020), however, the need for widespread national, regional and international policy remains. UNESCO (2019), IFLA (2019), and the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (NFETL, 2020) have all created very detailed and nuanced policy development documents. Butcher, Kanwar and Uvalić-Trumbić (2015) for the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO illustrated four key issues in OER policy development: policy on intellectual property rights and copyright, Human Resource policy, Information and Communications Technology policy and OER material development and Quality Assurance policies. The National Forum have also completed a guide to developing enabling policies for digital teaching and learning (NFETL, 2020). This enabling policy guide was constructed through interviews with experts and staff across the Irish education sector, and enabling policies are defined as “those which are implementable, situated in practice and reflective of the higher education institution (HEI)” (NFETL, 2020). However, there is no centralized movement for OERs and as a result, no centralized policy or clear template for their development, management or use. Divergence in thought can be found in almost every direction- from grassroots versus top-down policy, carrot versus stick motivators, and the theory versus reality of implementation and use. While most higher institutions have Open Access policies and repositories, far fewer support the creation and sharing of OERs for practice by teaching staff, and by extension, librarians (Campbell, 2018). Howard and Fitzgibbons (2016) note that librarians should “... be able to adapt and apply their roles and skills in the context of how learners learn, and teachers teach.” (pp.48) and that “... librarians have the opportunity as well as the necessity to embed and expand their skills through partnerships in the digital learning environment.” (pp. 49). Open educator’s use of OER is personal, contextual and negotiated

within supportive or unsupportive institutions (Cronin, 2019). There are no doubt other factors to consider, i.e. that academic staff and researchers may have different knowledge of, opinions on, or methods of using the resources. As Dempsey (2015) mentions, learning, teaching and research practices are evolving, and academic libraries must make choices about priorities, investment, and disinvestment in a complex, continually emerging environment.

The Irish Higher Education Authority (HEA) has functions assigned to it by three pieces of legislation: Higher Education Authority Act, 1971, the Irish Universities Act, 1997 and the Institutes of Technologies Act, 2006. The Universities Act 1997 mentions promoting the highest standards in, and quality of, teaching and research, disseminating the outcomes of research to the general community and facilitating life-long learning (all of which can easily be applied to OERs) (Universities Act, 1997). There are many Open Science innovations (SPARC, 2019; European Commission, 2017) and Ireland has an Open Data Strategy 2017-2022 which aims to generate business opportunities in Open Data areas as well as to contribute to Open Government. Background legislation and new strategies and initiatives for Open Science, Open Data, Open Access exist and will continue to flourish.

Higher education is in a state of flux and has a systemic impact beyond learning, promoting civic engagement, equality and social inclusion (Barnett, 1997). Barnett (1997) asks “which interests do we want our knowledge to serve? What view of knowledge do we want to pass on to students?” (pp. 91). The introduction of a new Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (Gov.ie, 2020) should align our view of knowledge and how we wish to impart this to our students. However, we should “... beware of assuming that the university is uniform and has an integrity *in toto* but, even so, the different disciplines contain their own “customs and traditions” that contain coherent “local practices”...” (Barnett and

Standish, 2003, pp.231). Higher education may not even require a physical location anymore as “A university is no longer primarily a physical site but is a set of open-ended relationships and communications, in “virtual reality”” (Barnett and Standish, 2003, pp. 224). Brophy (2005) notes that higher education may be “physically situated, distributed, remote or virtual- or all of these” (pp.18) and this presents its own challenges. Furthermore, Taylor (2003) explains “There is no single model of a university. Their essential character is that they have students and that the students have teachers.” (Taylor, 2003, pp 290).

Howard and Fizgibbons (2016) rightfully note that the changing roles of librarians in universities mirrors that of shifts in the higher education sector worldwide, and that librarians can be drawn on “to advise on copyright concerns, to identify resources that might support students’ exploration of a topic or to suggest strategies for scaffolding students’ development of information skills” (pp. 50). Brophy (2005) mention how librarians now deliver “an almost bewildering array of electronic information resources, ranging from full-text journal papers through e-books to extensive quantitative datasets and collections.” (pp.17). Institutional repositories could be a solution for OERs, but they may not be within the remit of the librarians and may not involve the library in any real terms apart from physical storage and cataloguing (Wesolek & Royster, 2016). Institutional repositories are now a routine feature of academic libraries, and the conversation is now about purpose, scope, incentives and their role within “green” open access (Dempsey, 2016, pp.52). The national Open Data and Open Science policies aids our institutional interest in our repositories, and there is a growing interest in research information management, data curation and research analytics (Dempsey, 2016). Fister (2016) makes the point that “librarians, as generalists, are often more able than faculty in the disciplines to help novice researchers get a handle on unfamiliar topics and research tools” (pp.56). Fister

goes on to notice that through her review of the literature, it has become clear that “encouraging deeper conceptual learning, designing effective active learning techniques, developing greater coherency in situating information literacy in the curriculum, and promoting transferrable knowledge have been priorities for nearly as long as librarians have offered instruction” (pp.59). Howard and Fitzgibbons (2016) observe that the library “has a central presence in the university, as well as skilled librarians who have expert knowledge of information resources as well as established relationships with the faculties and staff” (pp.57). Librarians have a unique combination of skills which make them a natural partner for collaboration on development, implementation and policy for OERs (Howard and Fitzgibbons, 2016; Dempsey, 2015; Fister, 2015). Librarians may even be best placed to offer peer-review and publishing for institutions (Aucock, 2014; Walz, 2017). Furthermore, over the last two decades library publishing has emerged as a new class of publisher, a ‘disruptor’, as a response to commercial publication and allows scholars to openly license and share their work (McCready & Molls, 2018). Plan S is a European initiative for Open Access publishing that from 2021 requires publicly funded scientific research to be published through Open Access (cOAlition S, 2020). Institutional repository deposits are encouraged by Plan S, and in some funding cases required (cOAlition S, 2020). SPARC (the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) Europe is a not for profit foundation committed to Open Access and Open Science (SPARC, 2020). SPARC Europe collaborates with partners and is driving to make Open the default in Europe. Library publishing can help with making Open the default by increasing institutional Open Access publishing and depositing in Institutional Repositories. The advent of new and emerging technologies post-war prompted Clapp (1946) to ponder the future of the research library. We have found ourselves not

a century later, needing the same examination of skills, roles and the definition of the profession of librarianship.

The main themes of the literature review are: Faculty and other implementation issues, Collaboration and Policy development and implementation considerations and opportunities. The literature review will explore these themes in depth with reference to the literature throughout. The literature review informed the development of the research questions in an Irish context, which are: “Should we have OER policy, and if so, what should that be?”, and ‘What is the role of librarians in OER policy?’ with the sub question of “Are there barriers to librarian involvement in OER policy, implementation and use?”.

## **Literature Review**

The selection of literature for this research was weeded several times in order to narrow the scope and improve the result of critical analysis. The language that the search was performed in, and results found was English, and studies included were qualitative, case studies, ethnographic and mixed methods. Inclusion criteria was reference to librarians, explored policy, peer-reviewed and OERs. Exclusion criteria was if the study was only about OER development, too broad to relate to this research, outdated or superseded, or included Digital Scholarship Services (as there is no scope to include this). The themes found in the literature review are faculty and other implementation issues, collaboration and policy development and implementation considerations and opportunities.

The topic of OERs is broad and many angles have been examined by researchers e.g. advantages and disadvantages of OERs, policy development, inequalities and so on (Skidmore, 2019; Cronin, 2019; Walz, 2017; Duranceau and Kriegsman, 2016; Risquez et al., 2020). ‘Towards a Devolved Model of Management of OER? The case of the Irish Higher Education Sector’ published in January 2020 by Risquez et al. Was identified as a key text due to its geographical focus on Ireland, date of publication and content. This paper examined the issues in creating, sharing, using and reusing OER in Open Education development in Ireland. Risquez et al conducted a focus group and an online survey for their data collection. The key library finding in this paper is the suggestion that institutional repositories take on a devolved approach and become the infrastructure for OERs. However, this view is not universal, as it may not involve the library in a meaningful way (Wesolek and Royster, 2016). This can be the right fit if the required identified supports and protocols are put into place. Librarians will need to be involved in that process, and their roles will change based on the needs. Librarians play a key role in



disseminating material and managing institutional repositories, and may need more skills for future roles, as Fister (2015) puts it, librarians “will have to acquire new skills to participate in and shape a newly emerging knowledge environment” (pp.36). Dempsey (2015) explains the cultural change that libraries are facing as they move from an outside-in model where the library buys or licenses materials, to an inside-out model where the library supports resources unique to the institution for local and external audiences. *Lato sensu*, librarians who have roles in Open have carved them out for themselves, for example Walz (2017), Aucock (2014) and Dempsey (2015). This has not been without several challenges, as Walz (2017) discussed the wide range of faculty response to everything ‘Open’. Her personal journey into OERs is shared as an insight into librarians working to change the system. Walz found speaking with faculty about OERs unrewarding and uncomfortable, and found creating a culture shift to be difficult. Many faculty members were authors and took issue with creating work without a distinguished publisher attached. The very real and important issue of current opinions on OERs is highlighted in this study and illuminates the work required to be done in advocacy, knowledge building and skills. Opportunities for collaboration are available for those motivated to do so, as Aucock (2014) demonstrates collaborative value in Open Access book publishing, with librarians identified as best placed for peer-review and new opportunities to embed librarians. Similarly, Thompson and Muir (2019) outline a case study of a ground-up initiative along with their motivations and the barriers they found.

Based on the literature search strategy outlined, themes found within the results are firstly, faculty and other implementation issues for OER policy, creation and use. Secondly, the need for collaboration and new librarian roles (from scholarly communications librarians to Open librarians to OER curator librarians), as well as the traditional academic librarian role and

its natural partnership to OER use, development, management and so on. Finally, policy development and implementation considerations and opportunities, with a sub-theme of inequality, access and accessibility.

### *Faculty and other implementation issues*

Faculty (academic staff), management, and institutions all have a culture and status quo which can be challenged by OER policy, implementation and use, and while a precise definition of the term “Organisational culture” is elusive (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013) it remains that no matter how good a workplace's strategies are, “culture can counteract such strategies.” (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013). Organisational culture could be compared to the personality of the organisation, as just like personalities, people in the same organisation can have different perceptions of the organisational culture (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013). OERs and their creation, use, development and incorporation are a disruptor to the status quo (Aucock, 2014). Many opinions on the quality of OERs exist, and as there is no clear policy in many cases, the quality can be variable (Walz, 2017). Hesitation to adopt OERs or to implement OER policy can be seen in all areas to varying degrees and is approached from different angles in the literature (Walz, 2017; Aucock, 2014). Lawton (2016) writes that no matter the sector of librarianship, unprecedented change is occurring in three areas creating constant disruption: disruptive technology (emerging technology, digital teaching and learning and the decline of print), ramifications of financial recessions, and disruptive consumer expectations (people more likely to use search engines than library websites or resources). Faculty tend to have a low awareness of OERs and are often skeptical of open licensing and OER creation and adoption into courses (Walz, 2017; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019; Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016). Questions inevitably arise of “if it’s free it can’t be good” or that quality cannot be guaranteed if “there’s no money to be made”. Why would someone give away for free what they could make money from (Walz, 2017). Furthermore, faculty are generally risk-averse and prefer the status quo (Walz, 2017; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019; Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016). When contemplating

organisational change, it is important for leaders to consider and acknowledge possible subcultural differences (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013). The largely unknown and uncharted territory of OERs can be intimidating to some, while exciting for others (Walz, 2017; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019; Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016). Publishing agreements and contracts also play a role in faculty resistance and preference for the status quo (Walz, 2017; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019; Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016). Kruger & Abramovich (2019) examine the area of health education and OERs, as the benefits of OERs are pertinent for health education as they can contain the most relevant and most up-to-date information where textbooks cannot (areas of health textbooks can be out of date within the time it takes to traditionally publish them e.g Ebola research, COVID-19 and other emerging diseases (Kruger & Abramovich (2019)). Kruger & Abramovich (2019) examine the potential for OER textbooks that can be passed from student to lecturer and onwards, with legal rights for anyone to make improvements. Although, some consideration as to what constitutes staff must be made (such as IFLA and UNESCO pointed out, HR policy is required in OER policies for this reason and for remuneration and ownership questions). The third main faculty issue is lack of development or investment in their institutions. Requiring the faculty to prioritise making a change will no doubt come up against “but we like it that way/this is what works”, i.e. the status quo. However, would a top-down policy requiring adoption nullify this issue, or would an institution-led policy work better considering organisational culture? Proposed solutions vary from faculty-focused review, authoring or course-adjustment opportunities through meetings with librarians (Walz, 2017), a switch of terms to ‘digital delivery’ instead of “self-publication” (Aucock, 2014), the diffusion of innovation theory (Braddlee & VanScoy) and advocacy and support through library (Thompson & Muir, 2019).

### *Collaboration*

The second theme identified ties into the first and is the need for collaboration with libraries and the involvement of a dedicated librarian (or team). Collaboration in general is crucial in any new development but especially in OER policy, implementation and use (Thompson & Muir, 2019). Bradigan and Hartel (2013) state that collaboration is vital, meaning collaborating internally across departments and externally with customers. Sharing knowledge and expertise with partners can lead to increased opportunities for growth (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013). Librarians can help close the gap that has emerged between Open Education and OER (Proudman, 2019; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019). They are capable of advocating for, growing, developing, sharing and managing OER for their institutions (Proudman, 2019; Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019; Thompson & Muir, 2019; Duranceau & Kreigsman, 2016). Libraries are a perfect fit for OER collaboration for several reasons, the highlights being: librarians are highly service orientated, already facilitate access to knowledge, the librarian role has already changed from buyer to creator, curator, publisher, knowledge disseminator, legal advisor and so on (Proudman, 2019). Librarians are leading Open Science in some cases (Proudman, 2019) and have eLearning supports already in place. Librarians have a deep knowledge of copyright and licensing, and already have information literacy and research literacy skills, and librarians are best placed to raise awareness and raise use of OERs (Braddlee & VanScoy, 2019).

A sub-theme is the academic librarian's role and natural partnership to OER use, development, management and so on. Walz (2017) notes that academic librarians usually enjoy participation in institutional governance and can interpret their role to fit program and institutional needs. Furthermore, the move towards innovation and collaboration creates library

opportunities in scholarship, teaching and service. Walz (2017) is an Open Education, Copyright and Scholarly Communications Librarian, and her role has essentially been made by her own decisions and pivots into the sphere of Open Education. This model of developing and creating your role as a librarian to fit the current need is spelled out in a way that is glossed over in other literature. There are various motivations, barriers and implications for librarians in working with OERs which remain important but are of a personal preference, workplace culture and or status quo nature (Aucock, 2014; Thompson & Muir, 2019; Duranceau & Kreigsman, 2016). The case studies of Scottish Universities (Aucock, 2014; Thompson & Muir, 2019) give great examples to follow, and offer their best practice. Additionally, the University of Edinburgh (2016) OER policy appears to be a good example of effective and clear policy that could be replicated elsewhere. “Ground-Up” as opposed to “Top-Down” approaches have been found to work best in Scottish contexts. Equally, there is the role of national, regional or international policy to consider in increasing quality, use and creation of OERs.

*Policy development and implementation considerations and opportunities*

The third theme is that of policy development and implementation, and the challenges and opportunities presented. Butcher, Kanwar and Uvalić-Trumbić (2015) for the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO outline four main policy issues. Firstly, policy and clarity on Intellectual Property Rights and copyright. Secondly, Human Resource policy guidelines for what constitutes part of the job description for staff and its implications. Third, Information and Communications Technology policy regarding access and use, and back-ups. Finally, Quality Assurance and copyright compliance in material development and use. These issues requiring policy are present in the literature, and design and policy considerations need to be made (Cronin, 2019; Skidmore, 2019; Wesolek & Royster, 2016; Jhangiani & Biswas-Diener, 2017; Atenas et al., 2019). The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (2018, 2019, 2020) have reviewed and developed policy guides for digital teaching and learning, as well as and OER development. The forum recognises the vital role that librarians can play in this process and have developed a guide to enabling policies for digital teaching and learning (NFETL, 2020). There is the question of whether grassroots or top-down policy is preferable. On the one hand, a centralised policy can set out specific guidelines and support (UNESCO, 2019), while it can also stifle creativity, make unpopular decisions and risk turning opinion against OERs (Aucock, 2014). On the other hand, considering a timed or gradual introduction of policy could spark creativity, turn opinion and improve policy in the long run (Skidmore, 2019). Following the Open Science supporting structure or the European skills and qualifications matrix for Open Science (Open Science working report by European Commission, 2017) may be possible solutions.

The sub-theme is inequality and the challenges associated (Atenas et al., 2019; Czerniewicz, 2018; Cronin, 2019). From the Global South (South Africa and the Cape Town Declaration 2008 as a great example, Czerniewicz et al., 2018) to Ireland, there are inequalities in educational delivery, access and performance (Cronin, 2019). These social issues of inequality are ever present, and all librarians can do is to try to foresee and mitigate any potential flaw in their development and delivery of Open Education and OERs in keeping with the ethics of librarianship. IFLA (2016) advises librarians to ensure that accessing information is not denied and that equitable services are provided for all people regardless of any factor (age, citizenship, gender and so on). IFLA (2016) recommends that librarians support people in their information searching, assist them to develop their reading skills and information literacy, and encourage them in the ethical use of information (with particular attention to the welfare of young people). Student barriers to access are innumerable and can range from learning difficulties to physical technology access, and these barriers can hamper and hinder student development and outcomes (Feldstein, 2012). The place for policy is to support and advocate for access (Skidmore, 2019; Czerniewicz et al., 2018). Students with any range of disability must be considered in the creation of OERs, and a focus on accessibility is imperative (Skidmore, 2019). Furthermore, the fact that digital strangers exist in higher education and that the confidence and skills required for use of technology are still lacking require serious consideration (Czerniewicz and Brown, 2012). Moreover, access to digital technology, the internet and the reliability of such are serious barriers to OER use and adoption in lower socio-economic areas, as well as globally (UNESCO, 2019). Obstacles to education are innumerable, and while Open Education and OERs strive to remove all of these barriers, we need to be cognizant not to create new barriers and to provide the most accessible content possible.



### *Literature Conclusion*

The need for policy has been recognised at an international level for five years (Butcher, Kanwar and Uvalić-Trumbić, 2015). Practically every implementation of Open Education policy (library involved or not) has been experimental (Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016). UNESCO, SPARC Europe and Plan S (through cOAlition) are all working on improving access to education through Open Access, Open Science and OERs. These organisations have highlighted policy considerations and have set internal timeframes and milestones.

Librarians as advocates, collaborators, managers and teachers of OER is a growing movement that is mainly grassroots. The best examples of Scotland show a ground-up grassroots approach is best for adoption and innovation. Cross-department and multi-disciplinary works are ideal in their context (Thompson & Muir, 2019; Aucock, 2014). However, other examples exist of top-down policy that has also been successful (Cox and Trotter, 2016; Mwinyimbegu, 2018). There are pros and cons to both methods, and that must be weighed in an Irish context, while considering organisational culture.

Librarians that are motivated in Open Education and OERs now find themselves with a need to set up new procedures, departments, even new roles to hire with an already heavy workload and static budgets. Other library staff may be unmotivated, content with the status quo and unwilling to up-skill (Walz, 2017). The theory versus reality of implementation highlights the hurdles, teething problems and issues faced by those further along the journey (Cronin, 2019). Legal issues, digital literacy inadequacies and copyright issues remain pressing concerns (UNESCO,

2019). In addition, there is no central roadmap for what to do next, in what order, with what policy. There are many examples and case studies, mainly from an institutional standpoint as a brave venture into the area. What do the librarians and users in the institutions think of these mavericks? How have their experiments worked out? What example is best for Ireland to follow?

Libraries as natural partners (Proudman, 2019) to the implementation and development of policy is crucial, and this research aims to provide recommendations for librarians in Irish Higher Education Institutions. Ireland has the benefit of learning from the progress of others and the research aims to interview experts, advocates, and librarians to gain insight into the lessons that can be learned.

## Method

### *Introduction*

This research aims to examine a multitude of variables and focuses on the individual's perspective, and therefore phenomenological qualitative research is being employed. Emerging theories and concepts will be examined, and the findings will be the study of the individual as the individual in the context of their life through the constructionist research paradigm. The central research questions are "Should we have OER policy, and if so, what should that be?" and "What is the role of librarians in OER policy, creation, and use?". Followed by the question of "Are there barriers to librarian involvement in OER policy, implementation and use?". The literature review has demonstrated a variety of approaches and developments, as well as some large initiatives to promote OERs, Open Access and Open Science.

Using an interpretivist constructionist paradigm, the researcher intends to investigate the nature of reality for the participants through building theory of why and how people are thinking. The epistemology of constructionism is that knowledge is constructed by engaging in building, sharing etc. (Cohen et al, 2018). The researcher is not separate to the participant as they are inherently involved, and the researcher bias is something the researcher must be constantly aware of. The researcher and the participants will co-construct knowledge, and as such, the participants can be seen as co-researchers (Cohen et al, 2018). The research epistemology guides what you can say about the data and informs how meaning is theorised (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The axiology and values of constructionism are that reality is shades of grey, not black and white. Context is key. Multiple realities exist and reality needs to be interpreted to be understood (Cohen et al, 2018). The aim is to gather contextual, real-world knowledge amongst these advocates, experts and librarians. Semi-structured interviews will be employed as the data

collection method. Semi-structured interviews are less controlled and more interpretive, and it is imperative that the researcher reflects on their participation and perception and how they might have created bias or influenced the results (Cohen et al, 2018). The interviews were intended to be face-to-face and one-on-one, however, the COVID-19 global pandemic did not allow this. The alternative is a Zoom or Microsoft Teams one-on-one online interview. The interviews are intended to last about an hour, however, as the format allows, there may be variation in length as the conversation and interview develops. The interviews will be recorded with a Galaxy S smartphone, and the audio files will be stored on an external hard drive for the next two years (researcher), as well as being transcribed and will be stored in the Dublin Business School system. The interview guide, information sheet and consent forms can be found in the Appendix.

The participants have been chosen by a combination of the following: availability, expert knowledge, advocacy in the area, grassroots involvement with Open Education, connections to higher education institutions and or organisations. Answers will be recorded by note-taking and audio recording. Transcribed interviews will be coded according to Braun and Clarke's 6 Steps, then themes will be developed from the codes. Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) will be used to analyse the data and interpret meaning. The researcher will actively choose, reflect and re-read the data in order to generate the themes.

### *Participants*

Purposeful sampling was employed as particular participants were selected based on merit in either expert knowledge or advocacy or both. The researcher was limited by their own knowledge of experts and advocates in the area and after exhausting leads, their supervisor suggested a contact, as did two interviewees. The leads the researcher had exhausted were mainly due to timing of the research taking place over summer holidays (many contacted were on annual leave) and the global pandemic among other unknown reasons (some did not respond). In total, 24 people were contacted to be interviewed for this research and a total of 6 participants were interviewed (meeting the appropriate sample size for interviews). These interviews will have to take place online due to COVID-19, although the researcher would have preferred face-to-face interviews for subliminal social cues, micro expressions and to not rely on internet speed for connection. The population that the participants were drawn from were of Irish and European descent, worked in a HEI (mainly as librarians, although not all), and were advocates for the Open movement. The participants were selected for their availability and the circumstances of participation were free, no reward, willing and available. The gender split of the participants was 4-2 in favour of women, creating a 2:1 ratio. As all participants are actively engaged in the area of Open, they each had personal expectations for the research which may have informed the answers they gave. The fact that the interviews are to take place online means that internet connections may affect the outcome of the interviews and the depth of answers given. Although not required, due to the nature of the Open movement and the inclusivity it encourages, the researcher acknowledges that there was no person with a disability, or person with a learning difficulty, or person from a minority background that participated in the study. If a representative sample was the aim, the researcher would endeavor to include such persons as their insight

would be invaluable. Participants will be made anonymous; any identifying information will be removed, and examples may be deleted from transcripts for confidentiality purposes.

## *Design*

Initial plans for this research included a survey which would be disseminated to various Irish HEI faculty and librarians asking several questions about OERs and Open Education Policy in their institutions. This data collection method was abandoned because of scope and time limitations, COVID-19 and the initial literature review found that researchers in this area had a divergence of response to surveys- some were very against OER and others very enthusiastic. Additionally, previous researchers have found adequate response numbers to be an issue, as the pool of participants is already quite small (Walz, 2017; Aucock, 2014).

Case study approaches have been found in recent research (Thompson & Muir, 2017; Duranceau & Kriegsman, 2016) and leaders in the area in Scotland have identified benefits and challenges to policy through case study (e.g. University of St. Andrews, University of Edinburgh). The case study approach was not taken as the researcher could not narrow down an Irish institution best suited. This approach may be taken in future, and/or the research results can inform this.

Analysis of the interview will be based on language, observations and textual analysis initially, then by codifying the transcribed interview and developing themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The research aims to get contextual reality-based ideas and examples of what a librarian's role could be; how that is happening, why that is happening, and what needs to happen to facilitate more of it. This evidence can be gleaned from interviews with experts and or advocates in the area of Open Education and or librarianship. Cohen et al (2018) note that a researcher must consider the nature of their study, as well as the paradigm which informs and ontologically underpins the planning and conduct of research, reflecting on the nature of knowledge and the nature of being. The research paradigm chosen is constructionism (Cohen et al, 2018). The ontology (meaning what is the nature of reality) is that reality is created by people in social ways

and is a product of mutual understanding (Cohen et al, 2018). The epistemology (meaning how do we know things) is that knowledge is constructed, and we know by engaging in building, sharing and so on. The researcher is inherently involved in the process of constructing knowledge and is not separate to the participant in this regard (Cohen et al, 2018). The researcher and the participants will co-construct knowledge, and as such, the participants can be seen as co-researchers (Cohen et al, 2018). The axiology and values are rationality, human, constructive and contextual, as reality is shades of grey not black and white. The constructionist paradigm recognises that there are multiple co-existing realities, and that reality has to be interpreted to be understood (Cohen et al, 2018). The theory of language is also constructionist, recognising that the researchers own values and experience will shape how they see and read the data. The researcher assumptions from their discipline, literature review and experiences will be reflected upon throughout.

The research design is to use semi-structured interviews as they are especially useful in research questions where the concepts and relationships among them are relatively well understood, such as in typological analysis Given (2012). The researcher could have used structured interviews but did not based on the research paradigm and personal preference for a more relaxed approach. The researcher could also have used unstructured interviews but did not as the researcher aimed for a thematic analysis of the data and required similar questions to be asked of all participants. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy of asking participants pre-determined but open-ended questions. There is no fixed range of responses to each question. Some questions may ask for relatively concrete information such as “What is your educational background?” as an opening question. Semi-structured interviews use a variety of probes that elicit further information or build rapport through the researchers use of



active listening skills. Follow-up questions, paraphrasing, reflection, and neutral probes like “could you tell me more about that?” are employed using this interview style.

An interview guide was written in advance (available in the appendix) so that the researcher may move back and forth between questions or ask them in order. Topics of interview guide are based on the research question and the tentative conceptual model of the phenomenon that underlies the research. The resulting text is a collaboration of investigator and informant (Given, 2012). The interviewer must avoid leading questions e.g. “what was the benefit of..”, instead phrasing should be something like “how would you evaluate..”, as the later doesn’t lead the participant to only provide one kind of evaluation. The development of rich data depends on the researcher's ability to understand, interpret, and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by the informant. The interviews will be recorded using a Samsung Galaxy S smartphone and the researcher will take notes throughout each interview, taking note of any particular non-verbal answers and attitudes. The audio will not record posture, facial expression etc. Also, once transcribed, intonation of speaker, errors in speech, accent and so on will not included (indicating the importance of written notes by researcher, although subjectively assessed aspects of conversation are not accurate). The recorded interviews will be transcribed from audio to text, removing filler words and marking pauses. What is said before and after recording starts and stops will be removed as it will be of a personal nature and can affect confidentiality of the participants. It is important to be consistent throughout the transcription, to check and review for errors from recordings and for consistency across interviews. The transcriptions will then be coded, and themes will be generated according to Braun and Clarke's 6 steps (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### *Materials*

The research used an interview guide as the material for data collection. A copy of this guide as well as the information sheet and consent forms the participants received can be found in the appendix. The research used a Samsung Galaxy S smartphone to record the interviews to facilitate transcription and analysis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews necessitated internet access for both the researcher and participant. Unfortunately, due to poor signal, the researcher's internet signal was not always reliable and did pose as a barrier to an uninterrupted discussion. As a result, the best place for internet signal in the home was selected where the acoustics were appropriate. The environment was stripped of any distracting decoration and the researcher would appear in front of a cream wall facing the laptop camera in lieu of face-to-face interviewing. The lighting was considered, and in one interview had to be adjusted due to a bulb burning out. Privacy was a primary concern; the room was on the second floor and undisturbed by the other occupant.

### *Procedure*

The participants were contacted using the researcher's student email. The email heading and content were adapted from the information sheet. Each email was addressed to the full name of the participant, and participants were informed of their rights, the purposes of the research, an explanation as to why they are being contacted in summarised form. Attached to the email was the consent form and information sheet (see Appendix). Participants were told that the aim of this research is to make recommendations on the role of librarians in Open Education Policy and that they were selected because their opinion and knowledge are valuable for this research. Participation is completely voluntary and will be entirely confidential with participants being anonymous. Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process. The data retention policy is two years and under freedom of information legislation participants are entitled to access the information they have provided at any time. Participants were encouraged to ask any questions or queries they may have. Participants responded to the email indicating their interest in participating, and a time and date for the interview was negotiated. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were decidedly online, although face-to-face would have been preferred for both the research paradigm and active listening. The interviews were scheduled using a platform of the participants preference (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams). The participants were asked to sign and return the consent forms to the researcher. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to confirm that they had read the information sheet, signed the consent form, and that they were consenting to be recorded for the purposes of research and would be anonymised. Everything from that point was recorded, and the interview began naturally as pleasantries had been exchanged. The first question on the interview guide is intended as an interview icebreaker, as it

allows the participants to begin on a comfortable topic they know intimately—” how did they come to work in their area?”. The follow-ups for further information on that question are also intended to build rapport and participant confidence. The interview guide served to lead the participant through various areas of the research topic. As the structure of the interview allows, some questions would be answered by previous questions, or brushed upon earlier in the interview. In some interviews the guide was followed directly, in others it was used more organically to prompt new areas of discussion as the topic had been covered neatly in the researcher and participants opinions. The constructionist epistemology was considered throughout by employing active listening. The researcher took short-hand notes throughout the interviews as a means of consistently practicing active listening. Key words, inclinations and observations were recorded in note form to aid paraphrasing, summarising and deciding which questions to continue with next. These notes would also aid thematic analysis of the data. The interviews were scheduled to last one hour and averaged around that time with the shortest at 45 minutes and the longest at 80 minutes. Once the interview was complete, the recording and note-taking ceased. Participants were curious about the research and looked forward to the results. Pleasantries were once again exchanged, and the participants were thanked for their participation in the research. Whichever platform was used was closed, and the consent forms collected.

### *Ethics*

Participants will be anonymous, and the researcher will develop a code for their name, occupation and any identifiable details and exclude such from any submitted thesis. Situations in which confidentiality may have to be broken include: if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed. Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process. The data retention policy is two years as this research may be published. Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained for a period of two years by Dublin Business School. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legislation participants are entitled to access the information provided at any time.

Participants gave consent to be recorded, anonymised (for the possibility of identifying person from information) and for their quotes to be used in the research. There is a small risk of coercion by the researcher in the form of leading questions. Bias is the largest ethical issue associated with this research, and the potential for bias is considerable. Moreover, the interviewees may themselves give biased answers or hold biased views which distort the research. Participants expectations will be considered, as the topic is important to them. Maintaining a habit of self-examination of bias and reflection can aid the researcher in acknowledging and avoiding bias.

### *Data analysis*

The form of analysis is Thematic Analysis as suggested by the guidebook and aids the analysis and discussion of the data by identifying meaning across a data set. Thematic analysis is an umbrella term for a set of approaches to analyse qualitative data that share a focus on developing themes (patterns of meaning) developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Language is not a transparent reflection of experiences, and semantic and latent coding will be performed on the data. The research questions evolved and were informed by the data. Central research questions are quite broad, with narrower question which informs the broader one. Decisions were made before analysis that the themes would closely mirror those of the literature review, which changed after analysis. The themes were revised several times. Themes were generated by capturing important pieces of the research to answer the research questions. The two main themes were informed by number of mentions throughout the data set, while the final theme was decided upon by the researcher through select data extracts. A rich description of the data set was decided upon, which may lose some depth but retain the overall richness. Deductive reasoning was used, and semantic and latent coding was performed as it identifies and includes underlying ideas, assumptions and conceptualizations that could be shaping and informing the semantic (explicit) content of the data. The epistemology is constructionist, and examines how events, realities, meanings, experiences are outcomes of society. Meaning and experience are produced socially and reproduced instead of existing within the person. Does not focus on motivation or individual theories but aims to hypothesise the sociocultural contexts and structural conditions that allows the conditions for responses that are being analysed. The researcher is active in the process, analysing and identifying codes and themes in the data, selecting the themes and reporting upon them. Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) is considered to be very

flexible and accessible technique. It is a foundational method for qualitative analysis- identifies, analyses and reports on patterns and themes in the data. The six steps used are: familiarise yourself with the data; Create initial codes; Search for themes; Review and refine themes; Define these themes and name theme; Produce a report on the themes supporting them with quotes. This process is not linear, it is recursive. The researcher reflected on their bias, assumptions and the embedded assumptions in the data.

## Results

This research aims to answer the questions “Should we have OER policy, and if so, what should that be?” and ‘What is the role of librarians in OER policy?’ with the sub questions of “Are there barriers to librarian involvement in OER policy, implementation and use? The results of the semi-structured interviews were anonymised and any identifiable information was removed. This included the names of higher education institutions, countries, dates of landmark library changes, dates of work experience and the places of work of the participants. Each participant began the interview with the ice-breaking question about how they found themselves working in this area. Due to confidentiality and privacy reasons, these answers were heavily redacted and only one-liners remain. The purpose of this question was to ease participants into the format and allow them to begin on a topic they have intimate knowledge of. This question also served as a background to their motivations to work in the area of Open and how they found jobs within the area. The context of how the participants came to work in the area of Open is important because it informs their motivations, philosophies and drive. The interview guide for the semi-structured interviews can be found in the Appendix.

The transcripts of the interviews were then coded, and themes were developed using Braun and Clarke’s Thematic Analysis. The data was coded using the 6-step method from Braun and Clarke (2006). The researcher actively familiarised themselves with the data and decided upon codes throughout each interview transcript. Then the codes were compiled into an excel spreadsheet, and the themes were decided upon based on codes and data extracts. The main themes identified throughout the data set are: Institutional Culture, Policy and Collaboration, and The Changing role of the Librarian. There is a subtheme of Inequality, Accessibility and COVID 19.



### *Coding*

The semi-structured interview data was transcribed as outlined in the previous chapter. The researcher is using the data analysis method of reflexive thematic analysis, and the data was coded using the 6 steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first of the six steps is to familiarise yourself with the data and identify items of interest. The transcriptions and the interview notes were read desparately and then together before coding. The second step is to generate codes. The researcher used a mix of semantic and latent coding throughout the data corpus as the method allows. The codes were then used in the third step, generating initial themes. The researcher created initial themes and reviewed and reflected on the themes in conjunction with the research questions, the data itself and the codes, completing step 4 reviewing the initial themes. Step 5 defining, and naming themes was practiced several times before deciding on the final themes and completing step 6, writing the report. The process of thematic analysis is not linear or straightforward, it is a recursive process and the researcher reflected on their bias and assumptions throughout. The researcher actively engaged with the data, actively read and re-read the data and finally developed the themes which will be discussed below.

*Transition from codes to themes*

The researcher created an Excel spreadsheet with the codes and participant numbers. From there, initial themes were created. Excel was used to tally the code frequencies, theme frequencies and then to add quotes to each example. Initially, the themes were 'Context is key', 'Nuance of Collaboration' and 'The Changing Role of the Librarian'. These themes changed several more times before the researcher actively decided to rename the first two themes as 'Policy and Institutional Culture' and 'Partnership and Collaboration', keeping the initial third theme as is and developing a final theme of 'Inequality, Accessibility and COVID-19'. These decisions were because the new themes went further in explaining the data and through reflection the researcher decided to change them. Some examples of the frequency and relevance of codes under the themes include: the word 'support' and 'advocacy' appearing most often across each interview and captured by the theme of the changing role of the librarian; 'context', 'culture' and 'structures' were common phrases across the data corpus and captured by the theme of policy and institutional culture; mentions of 'team science' and 'rewards and incentives' were present in the majority of interviews and captured by the theme partnership and collaboration.

## *Themes*

The first theme is 'Institutional Culture, Policy and Collaboration'. This research expected lengthy interviews about the complexities and variables involved in policy but did not anticipate the level of institutional culture examples. It was demonstrated to the researcher by every participant that institutional culture is potentially the most important consideration when creating local policy. Through data collection, the researcher was pointed to some excellent papers on institutional culture and policy: 'Geronimo's Cadillac: Lessons for Learning Object Repositories by John Casey (2007); 'Institutional Culture and OER Policy..' by Glenda Cox and Henry Trotter (2016); 'The role of Libraries and Librarians in OERs in Tanzania...' by Chausiku Mwinyimbegu (2018). The findings will be discussed in conjunction with this literature in the Discussion chapter. This theme encapsulates all discussion on policy, the context in which policy is needed and created, and highlights how important institutional culture is. Rewards and incentives, carrot versus stick approaches, and top-down versus bottom-up policy development are discussed.

This research has identified that collaboration and partnership were ways forward for librarians in the area of OERs in the literature review. As such, the topic of collaboration was extensively mentioned by all participants. Inter-disciplinary collaboration, HEI-wide collaboration, national collaboration and international collaboration were all discussed along with the nuance of each. The participants mentioned 'Team Science', SPARC initiatives, the 'digital commons network' and the idea of local 'champions'. All participants advised following an example of either their own previous work (with Institutional Repositories), following an existing structure (like Team Science), or collaborating locally (champions), nationally (champions) and internationally (digital commons). Examples of successful OER policy

developments including reward and incentive are discussed in terms of collaboration and partnership, as the previous theme discusses rewards and incentives in terms of policy.

The second theme is the 'Changing role of Librarians'. The research and literature review had informed the researchers opinion that the role of librarians in the area of OER policy and use was something to be examined. Many differing approaches of individual actions were discussed in the literature review, and the data collection process was intended to investigate this area. As Clapp (1946) found, librarianship is questioned, and the roles thrown into flux with the advent of new technology. Nearly a century later, we are once again facing the existential threat of becoming obsolete in the face of new technology. Once again, our role must pivot and change. But how? What should we be doing? How should we be getting involved? Is the area of OER policy and development an area we should be operating in at all? This theme aims to answer these questions with examples from the data and will be further explored with the literature in the Discussion chapter. The new younger librarians coming into the profession are discussed, along with skills, library publishing, university presses and Plan S.

The sub-theme is 'Inequality, Accessibility and COVID-19'. Inequality is one of the driving forces behind culture changes like the Open movement. Access, accessibility and equity are all cornerstones of Open and as such need to be acknowledged in any OER policy or when creating OERs. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has pushed a move to OERs and digital teaching and learning as schools and HEI had to close nationwide. This new semester will see more blended courses and online modules as a result of the virus, and we may face further lockdowns. Some benefits and challenges to OER and digital teaching and learning are examined through the lens of inequality, access and COVID-19.

### *Institutional Culture, Policy and Collaboration*

As explored in the literature review, there is a divergence of thought on which type of policy to develop (carrot or stick, top-down or bottom-up) and UNESCO has highlighted the four key policy requirements for OERs (clarity on IPR and copyright, HR guidelines, ICT policy, and materials development and quality assurance policy). The discussion of what type of policy works best was littered throughout the data corpus. These opinions are shaped by the participants' institutional culture and their experience both in previous roles and in their current position. Their experiences and opinions inform how they approach changing culture and policy development. The researcher identified that institutional culture and the importance of institutional buy-in and funding as the main challenges to OER policy development. Institutional culture affects how institutions work and how they manage new developments. Policy has a direct effect on how academic staff will perform their duties. If OERs are required to be developed as part of your role, that is what you must do. What type of policy should we be aiming for? Some examples of OER policy were highlighted by the participants as useful guides for potential Irish HEI policy. Additionally, there was a variety of opinions on policy in an Irish context, with one participant wondering if we need a policy at all.

Participant 1 sees policy as a back-up, a support tool that can be relied upon to assist developers of OER and to change culture. In participant 4's opinion, the role of policy is to "support and guide" and "it won't serve its role unless it's developed collaboratively". There was some discussion amongst the participants on 'top-down' policy. Participant 2 believes that ideally policy should come from the government, "driven from the top" as "there will need to be some coercion", but that there is a timeframe attached to national policy so that "institutions can work liberally and pick" how they implement that policy. Participant 3 believes policy must be top-

down and government led as well, citing higher education research that “tells us that all institutions should have a policy and that policy should be based on certain principles and those principles should be in line with international guidelines”. They go on to refer to a paper by John Casey called Geronimo's Cadillac in relation to policy: “if it doesn't fit with their needs, then it's not going to be used” and highlights the need for an implementation plan for any policy, lest we repeat our history: “Ireland's Open Access Policy in 2012, a national policy we have, which was the best in Europe apparently, but we had no implementation plan”. Participant 3 also notes that the current situation is that people choose whether they make their material available, “it's user generated content”, and that if they were to be coerced into it “with a big stick” then they will “do the minimum to make it appear as if I'm doing it”. Participant 1 found that “top down is basically not working”. This view is enforced by their experience as a national leader in their country, where they collaborated on a national level and found themselves held-back by the process: “I think national level is good, but there needs to be quite a huge level of independence in that”. In particular, the role of funding and funders is crucial in their opinion: “you need funders to say, this is what you have to do”. Participant 3 mentions that they were taught “a very good lesson by our HR people” that you have to build as many benefits into a policy as possible, show people how it works for them and “even if you have a stick, keep it well hidden” as you have to “win hearts and minds”. Participant 5 however, was adamant that participation in OER creation should be mandatory based on their experience with introducing and managing their Institutional Repository. In their experience, participation should be linked with promotions, funding and their academic role. Participant 5 is fatigued with how little has happened in the area and wants the policy “to have teeth” as it so happens their institution has had an OER policy for over a decade which they do not use “we've never enforced it”, to the point where they ask

“maybe do we need a policy?”. However, they ultimately think policy should be a mixture of top-down and bottom-up and that it is needed but “we have a fair bit of policy floating around” and that policy should be to “develop the rewards and incentives to make it worthwhile” but that each institution needs to “genuinely decide is that what we want to do?”. Participant 6 is a member of an institution that has recently developed a new five-year strategy in which OERs were involved. The benefit of working this into the institutional strategy in their opinion is that “we have a few milestones” and “in five years we will have ticked boxes or achieved certain goals”. They think that “we'll always struggle if we just tell them from a policy you must” and that would result in a “compliance culture”. They hope to see bottom-up movements grow and that “we do get the policies that support this and put resources in place”. They see the role of policy as top-down, putting resources, incentives and rewards in place as well as setting expectations “from the institution's point of view or a funding point of view”. Ultimately, they think “it is too early” for a complete institutional policy: “policies more generally that promote accessibility... the benefits, but clear open educational policy, I think it might need another year or two”. Participant 4 stressed that “Open really needs to be accepted, understood and embedded at an institutional level” but that it is so “institution specific” and that many are “resource constrained”. They mention a case study paper (Mwinyimbegu, 2018) about OER policy in Tanzanian University libraries in which institutional culture is found to be of paramount importance when developing and implementing policy, and they say “it's about working within an existing institutional culture and structure and figuring out the best way”. In their experience, they found that “the lack of policy in this area of open speaks very loudly to staff”, in that while some may be motivated to create, share and use OERs without policy, others will think “I'm not sure if we're allowed to do that, where would I put it? And, you know, what if I do it wrong? I'll

probably get in trouble with the university”. They acknowledge that “obviously it's difficult to develop policy and strategy” and that “there are so many pitfalls”. Emphasising that this is about culture change, they used the analogy of successful social change and the practice of different people working on different parts of a problem at once: “if you look at successful social movements for change, you'll find that they basically have people working on all those fronts... it's usually a multi-pronged effort”.

Participants 2, 3 and 6 all highlighted the University of Edinburgh's OER policy as a good example of what we should be striving for. Participant 6 stated “I like one-page policy documents, there are some good examples from Edinburgh” mainly because “people might actually look at them if they're not long and scary and boring and so on”. Participant 3 liked Edinburgh's policy because it was “really fully embraced. It wasn't just a kind of bolt-on” and it was “presented in a very, very proud way” with huge enthusiasm and institutional buy-in.

The data set illustrates the variety of opinion on even the minutia of policy for OERs. Some participants spoke from experience of changing cultures, while others looked at other movements, the Open movement or their own institutional strategy and culture for inspiration on how to move forward. Ultimately, top-down and government led policy is the common denominator. It allows for resources, funding, rewards and incentives to be put into place along with expectations and potentially milestones or checkpoints for institutions. Participant 1 remarked how national policy can hold back leaders while growing those who are further behind from their experience, while Participant 5 mentions how they have policy which they haven't enforced illustrating the Geronimo's Cadillac example from Participant 3. The policy must fit the needs of the institution and fit into the institutional culture, as echoed by Participant 4. Participant 2 views top-down policy as a driving force to motivate institutions to advance in the



area, but that a timeline should be provided to allow for some institutional autonomy. Participant 5 rightly asks the institution to decide what is important to them first, and Participant 6 thinks it's too early for clear policy because we haven't decided what is important to us yet. The need for bottom-up approaches and or a multi-pronged approach is also discussed as the way forward. A combination of top-down government led policy, coupled with timelines and milestones, with independence and autonomy for the institutions is positioned as the best way forward for Ireland as it allows the leaders to continue to lead, and the late adopters to gain support, resources and potentially collaborate. At the moment, with no centralised movement in Ireland or any government mandated policy on OER, early adopters will advance and may be subject to the setbacks that participant 1 experienced. Finally, as mentioned by all participants, institutional buy-in is necessary for success. The idea of rewards and incentives being included in policy is mentioned and will be further explored below.

### *Partnership and Collaboration*

Partnership and collaboration are woven throughout each interview, as it is both realistic and the ideal way forward. Inter-disciplinary collaboration on policy were identified as marks of success by the participants. Following existing structures, movements or models was encouraged by each participant, with every participant mentioning team science at least once.

SPARC initiatives, the digital commons and the idea of local 'champions' were discussed through the lens of participants experience, with some having a very fixed idea of how to proceed and others advocating a collective collaborative effort. Collaboration is seen as the best way forward. However, as participant 4 puts it “so much depends on context”. The institutional culture plays into the types of partnership and collaboration that may occur. If your institution is supportive you may be able to start pilot projects, apply for funding and have a fair amount of autonomy like Participant 6 in their institution. Linking OERs into their institutional strategy aided their applications for funding and projects. Open as the default is, as participant 4 says “a big culture shift” and with any big change you need strategies for doing so. The fact of the matter is that early adopters exist and participants 2, 4 and 6 aim to connect and support these early adopters through collaboration. Participant 6 and their institution aim to connect Open enthusiasts and are interested in creating a platform “where they can exchange ideas and experience”. Participant 4 thinks early adopters can be aided to “influence their peers” and that to encourage academics beyond a policy was difficult, which highlighted how valuable getting Open into your institutional strategy is: “you can pin your policies on it and drive programs and initiatives”.

Participant 5 thinks that librarians should be more visible and “should come outside the library” and work in the community as currently “we sit behind out library desks and wait for

people to come to us”. Participant 6 echoes this by saying “it's really important at this point that we connect with everyone on campus”, and that the library “should be involved and could lead” with the right allies on campus and that “collaboration is key”. Collaborating with and supporting early adopters, working with the community outside the library and promoting collaboration between Open enthusiasts make sense as next moves for the library in any institution. Participant 5 thinks that collaboration can be really useful if it is “genuine collaboration” and the people involved really believe in what they're doing. Crucially, participant 5 points out that “you need to make sure all stakeholders are present”. These stakeholders may vary according to what is being done, but the point that stakeholders are involved is very important, especially in cases where funding is required. Participant 5 tries to think “what's in this for the institution?” and create their plan and case accordingly. Participant 4 agrees that this is important and thinks “all levels and areas of the university may be affected” and that can even include trade unions, a diverse range of staff and students as well as management, and that therefore “all kinds of people need to be involved”. Crucially, participant 3 points out that “a bunch of other people like student counseling services, disability services... [and] possibly the international office” should also be involved. Participant 4 also thinks that a “continual ongoing sense of community” is required as you are changing culture, finding the limitations and dealing with various stakeholders. Participant 3 believes that success is “really dependent on special relationships between people and communication to make that work”. These relationships could be fostered through collaboration, or through the platform that participant 6 and their institution suggest. Participant 1 spoke at length about the Open Science movement in Europe and how there is a lot of funding and policy for Open Science. Team Science is a movement underneath Open Science whereby all members involved in research are acknowledged and rewarded. The

idea is to incentivize and reward, as well as to demonstrate what is done with public money.

Participant 1 thinks that Team Science is the way forward for OERs, rewarding and incentivizing creators and those who supported and assisted their creation: “where everyone is important to bring a project from the beginning to success”. Participant 3 thinks Team Science is a good model to follow as well and asks, “how is Irish education viewed internationally?” as we have a reputation for Open Access which allowed us to get involved in various European projects.

Participant 3 thinks we should leverage that reputation and build on it with OERs: “we do the exact same thing. Build a reputation... both individually and collectively as a nation”. This would show that Irish education is committed to Open Access and OERs and can benefit the nation and individual institutions by allowing more collaboration and involvement in projects as well as potentially attracting more students from elsewhere. Participant 1 remarks that “when you collaborate with higher institutes, then you're much stronger towards publishers or funders or government” and that this should also apply to rewards so as not to “kill careers of researchers” who want to leave the institution they work in, and so that everyone is “rewarded equally”.

Librarians assisting research is a traditional role, but participant 2 and 4 think that librarians could be embedded in this process. Participant 2 suggests “librarians could be parachuted into research groups” and participant 4 would like to see some examples of how other libraries and librarians are working in this area as “sometimes you can really unlock a sense of what might be possible” this way. Participant 2 puts it simply, “why don't we get together?” and thinks there should be “college, university, whatever-wide academic working groups” and that the library should be involved or embedded in these groups. The idea of 'champions' on a local or even national level working together is something that participants 1, 5 and 6 all mentioned.

Champions are a part of the Team Science model, and the idea is to have a champion in each

involved institution for nationwide collaboration. Participant 5 states that champions are “really important” and that “there has to be something in it for the person”, so there has to be an incentive to get involved, a reward for taking the time, and recognition for quality. Participant 6 thinks that “you need your local champions” then you need strategy, then to implement local practices while rewarding those involved. Participant 1 notes that “it's still the individual actions that make this a success” and that we should be collaborating because we have skills, researchers have skills, and together we can create better content. Collaboration and partnership are definitely what librarians should be aiming for and getting involved in. This will be further discussed in the discussion chapter.

### *Changing role of Librarianship*

As explored in the literature review, there are some examples of new librarian roles within an institution (for example, Open Librarians, OER Librarians and so on). The participants shared some common ideas for roles: mainly advocacy, support, copyright and creation. The participants were asked about the skills that librarians should gain for these roles. Some suggested skills were marketing, project management, communication and advertising. Technical skills were debated, as participants 1 and 2 think they are worthwhile developing, and participant 5 thinks working with a qualified professional is preferable to developing those skill sets. The theme of the changing role of librarianship is discussed under the headings: Librarian roles and OERs, Skills and CPD, Library Publishing and Darwin's Librarian.

*Librarian roles in OERs*

Some of the current roles of librarians working in the area of Open were discussed in the introduction and literature review. From the data corpus, some current and future roles will be examined. The most common roles suggested by the participants were dissemination, 'support' and 'advocacy', for example Participant 1 thinks that the role for librarians is to facilitate and “be that back-up”, and Participant 6 thinks advocacy is most important “telling people why this is a good idea”.

When considering what librarians should be doing in Open, participant 6 says “we should look at our strengths, which is the discoverability of resources, making them available”. Participant 1 agrees that we should “make it easy to find”. Participant 5 echoes this “we obviously have a role to play in dissemination”. Participant 4 reinforces this view “the set of skills that are required in order to help support the use of OERs overlaps tremendously with the skills of librarians”. The role of dissemination of materials is a traditional one and can be seen as the most obvious role for librarians in this area. Making the materials available and making it known that these materials are available in the first place are also key roles. As participant 4 says “it's part and parcel of what librarians do around information”. Participant 2 says that we should “give them [OERs] ISBNs and everything, make them available through the library website as well”. Participant 1 agrees and fought with their communication department to put OERs, research information and data management on their library website “because of Open Science we thought it was really important to put it all there on the website”. To add on to that role, participant 3 sees “a huge role for linking... research and teaching”, i.e that OERs created by lecturers are incorporated into course materials and accessible through the library and the library website. Participant 3 would “love to see OERs linked to research and vice versa”.

Advocacy was the most common answer for future roles for librarians in OERs, as participant 2 put it “just getting awareness” and “converting people to the cause” because we should be “encouraging folks to go Open and supporting the use of Open in whatever form possible”. All of the participants spoke about advocacy as important. Participant 5 spent a lot of time doing advocacy, and thinks “we need to spend out time on things we're good at, and that's good at talking to people, communication with people, explaining ideas and concepts, and assessing what researchers and teachers need”. Participant 5 remarks that librarians should be “marketeers” because “you're going against the grain”. Communication comes in again, as participant 2 says “you have to convince and convert them”. Participant 3 says “somebody needs to go out and interface”.

Participant 2 thinks that librarians should assist creators of OER by “lifting it, making it a bit snazzier, changing the design, proofreading it and making their work consistent”, as well as try their hand at OER creation, “try and create material which is more support”. This brings in Participant 3's ideas about supporting research by providing “a data dictionary or something that explains what is going on” and creating simple plans like data management plans for publishing open access materials. Participant 3 explained that some OER creators are very unsure of what is possible, and some think they cannot brand their materials “are you mad? This is about impact for you”. Impact is certainly something that librarians can assist with, along with advising on creation. In particular, the knowledge librarians have around copyright is valuable. Participant 3 highlights that copyright can be challenging “you can have all kinds of different ownership issues, even in one video”. Copyright assistance is a role for librarians which was discussed in the literature review.



### *Skills and CPD*

There was an array of opinion on which skills a modern librarian should have. Participant 1 thinks that management and leadership skills are the most crucial, but that “management aspect is lower and the leadership skills are more important”. Participant 2 thinks that communication and soft skills are important “you can't just demonstrate your technical mastery, you have to get people on board” and that “you need to be a good communicator”. Participant 3 thinks there is a “whole mix of skills” required, and they have found that “project management skills” and “skills in writing proposals” have really benefited them in their role. ICT skills beyond the basic level of understanding were debated between participants 1, 2, and participant 5. These views are reinforced by the participants backgrounds, experience and personal opinions. Participant 1 thinks “one of the things that is really necessary is technical skills” and knowing how data moves around in a digital world in order to “be able to understand how to make it better find-able and accessible and reusable”. Participant 2 thinks that to get into technical skills you should “ideally first have an aptitude for it. You have to be willing to get your hands dirty”. This is contested by participant 5 who says “librarians are not trained to be IT experts” and that it strays from our very important skill set into an area we are not trained for (while that may not be true for today's graduating librarians, it is true of many working in libraries today). Participant 5 has found that “the difference when you get somebody who knows about coding and all the rest, it's just extraordinary”. It may be that librarians should refine and build on what they've been trained in, but in a digital world librarians can only hide from technical skills for so long. Participant 5 does note however, that “librarians of the future may not even be trained in librarianship”. This was evident in participant 1's institution, where no new hires have been trained in librarianship for the last decade as “it's all learned on the job”. Participant 1 has found that “recruiting researchers,

former researchers and then putting them on the job... they have the skills to really train themselves on the job very quickly". This may be alarming to some but taking a step back to look at what makes librarians unique may not give many concrete answers. What participant 1 envisioned as a librarian's role in this environment is a start to finish involvement whereby researchers "know that they have all the information". One would think that cataloguing was a unique librarian skill that would be difficult to learn on the job, but that may be less required as well. Participant 1 explains that in their institution has a vision of a "library without a catalogue" and that they no longer catalogue themselves, instead using the world catalogue. The reason that participant 1 and their institution have this radical vision is because they believe it is "less relevant for researchers to look in our own catalogue... because it's such a small part of everything that could be found". This is a very interesting opinion that speaks to the value of Open and the global community of research rather than a collection of physical resources in a physical space. Additionally, teaching and learning skills are more and more required of librarians in information and digital literacy, and as participant 3 says "I think a lot of us in libraries were thrown into teaching. We have no backup really in this, and we need to understand about assessments and about engagement". Maybe what participant 5 said may come true "maybe you need communications and marketing and teaching qualifications more [than librarianship training]".

Participant 5 thinks that "professional development is something that should be ongoing throughout your entire career" and participant 4 thinks "it's potentially true that professional development would be necessary to kind of make some of those links". Participant 2 agrees that "filling in CPD is good" but that "it shouldn't be forced or anything". Participant 2 and participant 3 both mention the Open Librarianship module offered at Dublin Business School as

potential CPD for librarians, with participant 3 saying “continual professional development is really important in this area” and “there needs to be a series of really specialised CPD”.

Participant 4 notes that “the good thing is there's so many good models of librarians and professional paths for librarians and OER from the US, from Canada, from elsewhere”. The crucial factor in CPD for participant 3 is that “I don't think it's something that people should go off and do themselves” but that it should be recognised within the library organization, as perhaps “an add-on to their professional qualifications and say I am qualified to teach in the area that they get their level of training” for example. Participant 4 agrees and says that “if we view this as just an individual development effort, those individuals will be continually frustrated”. As a final point on CPD, participant 6 asks if we as librarians should “offer CPD to our user base?” which is an interesting idea which may require librarians to have teaching CPD or qualification add-ons as described by participant 3. CPD in multiple areas may be needed depending on the size and type of library, and this should be further explored on an institution to institution basis.

### *Library Publishing*

Library publishing as a movement was described in the literature review and the participants were asked how they thought library publishing will develop. Participant 3 thinks that “open access publishing is vitally important, both for the library and the Academy, both to support research and for soapbox”. Participant 1 agrees and thinks that “we should look at more innovative ways of open access publishing”. Participant 5 thinks “library publishing is a great thing. I think we should be doing a hell of a lot more of it”, and that “library publishing is the future”. Plan S and its aims were mentioned by participants 2 and 5. Participant 5 states that “Plan S is the first major blow that's been struck” and that they were “so impressed by Plan S”. Participant 2 is adamant that “the whole academic publishing area is a scam” and participant 5 describes it as “vanity publishing” and “academic ego”. Participant 2 says “if we are publishing, we should be publishing open access” and that “library publishing can exist, and you need policies for it. You need institutional support, and it needs to be encouraged”. This area is especially interesting because as participant 6 explains, “We've seen libraries change... from an outside-in to an inside-out model” I.e. that collections were previously developed by buying in resources and materials, and that now with institutional repositories and library publishing we are moving to developing collections from within. This ties in interestingly with Participant 1's institutional vision of a library without a catalogue, in a world where everything (possible) is open access, what will future library collections be? It is ultimately a question of funding, as participant 5 puts it “okay, where's the money?”. Participant 3 states “this is the same old story. It's been like this for as long as I've been in the profession”, while participant 6 thinks we should think about “what the cost savings to the library will be” and that “there are disruptive elements in all of this”.

There are interesting examples of library publishing explained by participants 1,3,5 and 6. Participant 6 mentioned a project where the library “got everyone in a room and within one day they wrote an open textbook... the library did all the editing and so on” and that this shows “how when you get the right people with a bit of time in one room what can happen”. Participant 3 thinks we could use library publishing as “an educational resource in its own rights” by engaging students in the process, giving them the “life skills by publishing” and “actually doing it”. Participant 6 is interested in engaging students in the process too, “so, giving you as a masters student... publish the distilled findings of your dissertation in a student journal-- I think this would be brilliant”. Participant 5 explained how their institutions journals are “published at no cost to anybody” and they have some successful examples of journals in their institution. Participant 1 gave the example of the “incubator model” that they used to get new Open journals in their institution off the ground. Unfortunately, they didn't receive enough support and “basically we're winding it down at the end of this year”. Participant 4 asks “does everything need to be peer-reviewed?” when it comes to library publishing, which is an interesting question. Participant 5 notes that “you'd have to print on demand as part of the publishing activity” and that “there's always questions of cost and people say these things have to be paid for” but points out that “the taxpayer pays for most of what we do. The taxpayer should get something back as well”.

Participants 1, 5 and 6 all mentioned University Presses. Participant 6 explains their institution doesn't have a university press but that “there is interest and there have been discussions” but that they would be “skeptical when it comes to university presses” because any Irish HEI won't “become Oxford”. Participant 5 remarked how impressed they were with a Finnish University buying a publishing house “it's really worth doing. The one thing I've always

thought is that Ireland should have a national university press”. This idea of having an Irish University Press is intriguing, and as participant 1 explains “as a university, we think you're too small to make it really successful” but that “on a national level maybe it could work”. The finances are important again, as participant 1 asks “do the finances work?”. A national university press is an idea that will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

*Darwin's Librarian*

Libraries will have to evolve in the role they play in research, how involved they want to be in Open and may in some cases dramatically evolve, as outlined by Participant 1 and their institutions vision of a library. Participant 3 thinks “the library needs to evolve” and “Open access needs to be mainstreamed within the library”. Participant 2 thinks “we've done well to survive Google and all that, but we keep having to move into new areas” and that “I think of all the areas, this is the next big growth area for librarians to get into”. Participant 5 thinks “our role is to see the future, see which way they should be going and help them to get there”. Participant 2 remarks that “we are constantly reinventing ourselves” but that the library can be “the glue that binds everything together”. Participant 5 mentions that people often say there will always be a library, but that “there won't always be a library if we don't justify ourselves”. Participant 5 thinks there will be a learning area, a space for study, but “there may not be a library, no”. Participant 5 also thinks that “we've faced an awful lot of change and open access and open education would save us if we embrace it quickly”. Participant 3 notes that there is a “tendency to specialize within libraries, and that's not a bad thing” as there are special units within a library where people can go for expertise in an area (for example repository management, teaching and training and so on). Participant 3 remarks that “it's not just for Christmas, it's for life”, and that specialisation will need to continue in certain areas with conservation, history and geography specialists. Although this is institution specific, as there may be small libraries with one librarian taking on many roles while there are large libraries with departments. Participant 3 is a big believer in involving those on the front lines of library service, the “foot soldiers”, and that they should be equipped with the skills and knowledge needed, knowing they can ask for support and guidance.

Participant 1 found that the people who have worked in the library for a long time in a pre-digital era are more focused on the content “they want to tell the story of the content”. Participant 2 notes that there is a status quo mentality within libraries “we don't think it's broken, so it doesn't need to be fixed”. Participant 3 experienced this and found “a lot of librarians thought in the beginning, a lot of the senior librarians got a bit put off, this is difficult. It's not easy, this is about changing culture”. Participant 5 thinks that younger librarians are “very risk averse, which I find quite strange”, while participant 2 thinks that the younger generation coming up and being “accustomed to open” will help find creative solutions. The mix of new and older librarians in an institution seems to be the norm, and it is a question of, as participant 3 put it “the library has to ask, what are librarians required to do now?”. This is a very important and timely question, which will be discussed further in the discussion chapter.

Participants mentioned that the next generation of librarians have a vital role to play, and their roles and skills will decide what a librarian is over the next decade. Ultimately, participant 3 wants to see their job disappear into 'what a librarian is'. To remove the need for their specialty in Open and have that become mainstream, “you'd end up with people like myself eventually killing ourselves off”, and that all librarians would have a foundational knowledge of Open and “know how to support it”. Participant 1 recognised the need for passion and dedication to the movement to drive things forward “you really depend on people with an ideal and most of the time they are the younger people”. This applies to both younger librarians and academics as Participant 1 also says that it is usually the “idealist lecturers who share their work” in their experience. The new frontier of Open illuminates the status quo present, the collaboration required and the need for strategies to move forward productively.



*Inequality, Accessibility and COVID-19*

Some participants spoke about inequality throughout their interviews from a variety of perspectives. In particular, participant 2 and participant 4 had the most to say about inequality. Participant 4 explains “there is always inequality among students in education systems” and Participant 2 remarks that “access is shaped to begin with”. Students access is shaped by many variable factors from their financial background to whether they must work while studying, to whether they have the equipment and internet access necessary. Participant 6 tells us that “it's the extra dimension”. As Participant 4 puts it, inequality “operates in so many ways, many of which may be hidden, unless actually explored in depth”. Inequality is ever present, and only through acknowledgement, recognition and attempts to diminish inequality will we make a difference. A concerted effort is required, and we should remain cognizant of barriers to access and accessibility issues.

*Inequality, inequity and access*

Participant 4 explains “we're talking about open in terms of improving access, proving the effectiveness of education. and improving equity. I mean, why are we doing this if we're not talking about improving equity?”. Participant 4 continues “equity means that we're improving access so we can reduce inequity in Irish society and globally”. Participant 1 says that open access “only works if everyone can access it. If there's still boundaries or thresholds... then you should do something about it”. The philosophy of Open speaks to how important reducing inequality, inequity and improving access and accessibility are. Participant 5 mentions that “we forget how privileged we are sometimes” and Participant 6 notes that “a lot of assumptions that we probably have, we need to rethink”. These statements describe this theme in a nutshell. As a European country, we have many advantages, privileges and ongoing projects, for example Participant 1 remarks “Open Science is nice but it's a rich country thing at the moment”. The simple fact of the matter is that internet connections, and sometimes even electricity can be sporadic and unreliable for many worldwide. One of the key pillars of the UN's Sustainable development agenda is providing meaningful, inclusive and universal access to the internet (especially as the UN have declared that access to the internet a human right) Examples of the impact that Open Institutional Repositories have had on individuals were discussed by Participant 5. The example may be too specific and may identify the participant, but the key point Participant 5 made about it was “they might only be able to access the internet once a week or something, and they are able to access this resource. It's phenomenal, it's life-changing”. Participant 1 gives an example of a colleague from Africa remarking how they could never have OERs as “internet connections are so poor, there's no way we can have open access to the things that are out there because we would go into debt”. One would love to think that these issues are

not faced by those in Irish society, but they are. Students may be homeless, living in direct provision, living on a halting site, or living in very basic accommodation with many others. These are very real situations faced by an unknown number of students in Ireland. Participant 6 notices that “I think we haven't really heard the student voice much” and that “we learned quite a lot about how important access is to the success of students, especially from certain backgrounds”.

### *Accessibility*

Participant 2 rightly points out that “our folk access internet through the mobile. So, if you're thinking about designing OERs, you have to consider what your users will be accessing them from”. This is an important point because user experience is key, and as they mentioned earlier, student access is shaped to begin with, and we should always be aware of that.

Participant 2 continues that “phones are the most common denominator” and that user experience and user access are key considerations. Participant 1 notices that one boundary is language, and that we operate in an echo chamber of English language sources and content “we have no idea what's published in Chinese, whether it's good or not”. Another boundary is accessibility for those with alternative needs. Participant 3 spoke at length about accessibility, noting that “open educational resources are really in the, I won't say stone age, but maybe the bronze age”. By this the participant means that we aren't really being innovative enough about how to increase accessibility. Participant 3 continues “what we're still doing is we're reproducing a lot of the older ways of doing things online”, we aren't innovating enough in this area.

Participant 3 had witnessed some exciting developments at a conference “they had an avatar, an animated avatar that would appear on let's say their repositories and would automatically sign the paper that someone who was deaf was reading”. Obviously, a deaf person can read, but as Participant 3 explains, this gives the person another dimension and “this is giving me ideas of how things could be much more accessible for students with disabilities and better for everybody”. We should be more aware and cognizant of accessibility and issues around access.

*COVID-19*

Participant 2 remarks that “the COVID pandemic has demonstrated the need for the internet to be a public utility... and the need for more democratic access to educational resources”. Participant 3 notes that there is “a lot of pressure at the moment because of the pandemic and so on, and [they're] under pressure to make courses available on open access”. Participant 4 says that “what's happened since COVID-19 started is that inequity has been exacerbated because students are forced to rely on their own equipment, their own access to wi-fi, their own access to time and space and quiet to work”. As Participant 2 continues, “the fact of the matter is COVID has highlighted that there is a massive gap between the haves and the have nots”. The availability of technology, the internet and most importantly some space and privacy to work may be hurdles to education for some throughout the pandemic. Participant 2 continues “do you have a printer? Is there one laptop between the entire family or poor internet?”. All these factors are necessary to consider. In addition, as Participant 4 points out “many of them have lost their jobs” and that students may need to take a break from their studies and using OERs may mean that “students won't have a break in their access”. To sum up, Participant 6 says that “looking at students and access and all the implications or inequity is something that will get a lot of attention, especially in the times we live in now”. The global pandemic has certainly not made it any easier to remove barriers to education and may have created new ones.

## Discussion

### *Introduction*

This research aimed to highlight the role librarians can play in OER policy, development, design, collaboration, publishing, teaching and management. The research intended to analyse the role of librarians and how they can best advocate, support and participate in the development, creation and use of OER. The rationale was that librarians have a background of skills which are transitioning to a digital environment, and that they may be best placed to offer several services. The research questions were “Should we have OER policy, and if so, what should that be?” and “What is the role of librarians in OER policy?” with the sub-question of “Are there barriers to librarian involvement in OER policy, implementation and use?”. These questions are discussed through the findings and literature of the research. The research questions are answered by the participants through thematic analysis of their interview. Themes are fully discussed, and recommendations are presented.

Institutional culture is identified as the most important factor in OER policy development, implementation and use. The University of Edinburgh OER policy is suggested as a good example to follow. Top-down national OER policy is suggested as a next step, following previous Open Access policy developments. Team Science and the rewards, incentives and recognition it provides are suggested as a model to follow. Collaboration is key, all stakeholders must be engaged, and the library may need to increase its visibility and perceived value and impact. The changing role of the librarian is examined, and the roles of advocacy, support, dissemination, reviewer and creator are suggested. CPD should be provided for librarians who wish to up-skill in required areas (which should be negotiated within the library and not something an individual must attempt alone). Library publishing is praised by the participants,

they also mention Plan S, and the idea of a national university press. A national university press could see increased collaboration and advancement in the area of OER while designating 'champions' in each involved institution. Inequality, access and accessibility are key considerations, especially during the global pandemic. Should we have OER policy? Yes, it should be national, short, clear and concise (the example of University of Edinburgh) and have a timeline for implementation so that institutions can work it into their strategic plans and pin expectations, milestones and achievements to it. What is the role of librarians in OER policy? The role of librarians is varied, and individual librarians can play to their strengths in areas such as advocacy, support, dissemination, advisory (copyright and other legal issues), creation and management. Skills can be developed; some may be required as we advance in this area. CPD should be offered to librarians, and potentially professional add-on qualifications in teaching, IT and soft skills. Are there barriers to librarian involvement in OER policy, implementation and use? Yes, there are various barriers, chiefly institutional culture, the status quo in libraries and no clear roadmap for what to do next. Library visibility, perceived value and impact all play a role in how the library is viewed within the institution and can limit library involvement.

### *Discussion of findings*

The first theme generated by the researcher was Institutional Culture, Policy and Collaboration. The idea of institutional culture and collaboration hold the theme together through a discussion of policy and nuance. This theme covered the importance of institutional culture and evidenced how prevalent the discussion of context, culture and support affecting policy, librarian involvement and potentially creating barriers to involvement was throughout the data set. The pervasive effect of institutional culture was not expected by the researcher in such volume. The importance of context in this largely unexplored area of organisational change cannot be understated. Geronimo's Cadillac (Casey, Proven & Dripps, 2006), suggested by participant 3, offers a great analogy for providing policy and technology to an area that is not ready for it. The central theme of that paper is that the most challenging aspect of e-learning is change management, even though it is not perceived that way (Casey, Proven & Dripps, 2006). Casey, Proven & Dripps (2006) found that legal issues (such as copyright in the context of OERs) can act as a lightning rod that brings many ownership, policy and problems with understanding to the surface. The local context and culture must be considered, as Participant 4 stated, context is key, and policy won't serve its role unless developed collaboratively. This means involving all areas of the higher education institution that are stakeholders, including, as Participant 3 pointed out, the disability services, the international office and the student counseling service. Casey, Proven & Dripps (2006) explain that educational institutions are complex entities, and introducing change can bring hidden issues to the surface. Institutions must first be analysed and understood before attempting to implement change. Senge and Sterman (1994) propose a 3-stage process to better understand an organisation, and remark that flaws in organisation must first be recognised before they can be corrected. One suggestion may be Klink & Jochems (2004) suggest having 4



perspectives: organisational context, strategic plans, pedagogy and technology. All of these perspectives will play a role in how policy is developed, implemented and ultimately how the policy will be used. Cox and Trotter (2016) examined how institutional culture, structure and agency affect OER policy in South African universities and found it is not always clear what type of policy would work best in a given institution. Some policies act as 'hygienic' (mandated, requiring adoption) while others act as motivators (incentivising). Cox and Trotter (2016) found that the success of OER policy is mediated by existing institutional structure, prevailing culture and academics agency. Thus, consideration of these factors will give insight into how and whether policy should be developed. Ultimately, Cox and Trotter (2016) found that for sustainable engagement with OER, advocates must take a nuanced and often multi-pronged approach to policy. The research question "Should we have OER policy, and if so, what should that be?" has been reviewed with the literature and the results of data collection. The findings reveal that institutional culture plays such a crucial role that it must be considered first and foremost. For this reason, the researcher suggests a top-down national policy (as advocated for by participants 2 and 3) in the model of Ireland's Open Access Policy, with a timeline for implementation, allowing for various institutional cultures to decide how they want to implement the policy. This approach should allow institutions that are leaders to demonstrate their experience to those starting in this area. The University of Edinburgh OER policy document was praised by participants 2, 3 and 6 as an example to follow. This clear, short and concise policy document is ideal as a base policy and allows creativity and flexibility for institutions. This particular example of Scottish policy is relevant because Scotland has a similar population and culture to Ireland, thus following their lead is advisable. Tying OERs to institutional strategy is something that participant 6 found worthwhile and applicable to their institution. This approach

allows milestones and timelines that will demonstrate value to the institution while driving adoption. Thoughtful leadership on the part of librarians along with cultural reinforcements promote success (Bradigan and Hartel, 2013). The analogy of social change given by participant 4 illustrates that different people need to work on different areas at once in a multi-pronged effort. This is exemplified by Mwinyimbegu (2018) examining the role of librarians with OER in Tanzania, selecting 3 different institutions with different cultures. Their study found that the lack of awareness of OERs was a major challenge to librarians, and that creating awareness among all areas of the institution was needed. Oakleaf (2010) notes that librarians work in an environment where needs, stakeholders and services are constantly changing and their value as contributions may not always be clear, therefore librarians should demonstrate library impact and value on research and the institution. As Lawton (2015) discusses, positioning of the library is important and determines how resources are allocated, how the library is perceived and how the library fits within the organisation. Similarly, Cox (2018) notes that a strong position in the institution is vital and affects recognition, resourcing and prospects. Peet (2020) discusses that funders, government and so on all look for demonstrations of the library value and each have their own agendas, therefore librarians should be innovative. Wilkin (2015) believes libraries should connect their activities to the mission of the institution and develop metrics to assess impact and value. Mwinyimbegu (2018) recommends that librarians promote awareness, integrate OERs into collections and library websites, as well as information literacy training and using Institutional Repositories for OERs and promotion. Mwinyimbegu (2018) states “the importance of librarians in OER cannot be over emphasied”.

Partnership and collaboration are fundamental in OER policy development, and the participants highlighted Team Science as a model to follow for rewards and incentives. Rewards

and incentives should decidedly not be localised, as this could hinder academic movement between institutions and have the potential to be disadvantageous, as mentioned by participant 1. Context again is key, and librarian visibility and involvement are necessary. The involvement of any and all stakeholders in collaborative discussions is expressed as the only genuine collaboration by participant 5. Genuine collaboration between stakeholders that believe in what they are doing is an ideal goal and may require librarians involving themselves at the outset. Librarians could measure their visibility using Chapter 7 of *The Invisible Librarian* (Lawton, 2015), and use Chapter 8's Visibility Improvement Plan to improve visibility and impact. This assessment would illuminate barriers to involvement, institutional culture issues and awareness issues. The involvement of counseling, disability, and international offices is recommended by participant 3 and is an example of how varied stakeholders may be. These offices deal with specific student issues and therefore have a wealth of knowledge and strategies that could be collaborated on to develop OERs. Participant 3 also asked how Irish education is viewed internationally, and this is an interesting and astute point, as our reputation in Open Access, Institutional Repositories and Open Data precede us. OERs have the potential to attract more students, as the delivery of education moves into a digital space. Finally, the idea of 'champions' locally, nationally and internationally is decidedly the best way forward, as it allows support, advocacy and collaboration to happen in an accountable way. These champions should themselves be supported by their institutions or governments and rewarded and incentivised. The supporting structure for engaging researchers at all levels (European Commission, 2017) provides an illustrated look at the who, what and how of supporting structure (Figure 4.3, p.24). The digital commons, SPARC Europe initiatives and examples of best practice from around the world can be used to inform and support librarians and their efforts moving forward.

The changing role of the librarian was the second theme generated from the data collection. Roles and skills are highlighted. Support and advocacy were the main roles that the participants discussed, and the research backs this up (Mwinyimbegu, 2018; Skidmore, 2019; Cronin, 2019). The main area of contention in the data regarding skills is whether librarians should be developing technical skills. Participants 1 and 2 think they should, ideally if they have an aptitude for it, whereas participant 5 thinks that it is preferable to work with trained and qualified IT professionals than to develop IT skills themselves. Librarians should be supported in attaining or developing skills, as well as recognised for the value and impact they create through their work. Casey, Proven & Dripps (2006) remark that the role of librarians has been downgraded in favour of IT services, and that the library must be engaged with the changing model of education. Librarians have skills and roles in areas others do not, namely customer service and community roles (Aucock, 2014). Embedding librarians in the community, as well as embedding librarians in policy are strategic and sustainable aims, ensuring the continuation of the profession and the full use of librarian skill sets. Embedding library services in the research community also fosters an environment which facilitates collaboration (Aucock, 2014). Library publishing is a movement described in the literature review and discussed by the participants. Publishing requires creativity and consideration of the necessary elements required to publish a document (e.g peer-review, availability, cataloguing, copyright and so on) in order to instill trust and produce high-quality resources (McCready & Molls, 2018). Participants 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 agreed that library publishing is a good thing that should be continued. University presses were discussed by participants 1, 5 and 6 and it was gleaned from the discussion that a national university press would be preferable for Ireland due to our size and could promote our national reputation. Darwin's librarian was the title for the last section of discussion under this theme and

encapsulated the status quo in libraries as well as the difference of opinion on younger librarians. Participant 3 in particular would ideally like to see Open specialisation integrated into what a librarian is, and thus see her niche job disappear into the profession. Collaboration is again crucial to librarian roles, intervention and skill development.

Finally, inequality, accessibility and COVID-19 is the sub-theme of the interviews. Student access and accessibility are the foremost considerations and should remain as such (Czerniewicz & Brown, 2012; Czerniewicz & Rother, 2018; Atenas et al., 2019) Innovation in the area of accessibility is mentioned by participant 3, and more should be done to consider unique Irish student issues with access and accessibility. This is especially pertinent due to the online delivery of education necessitated by COVID-19. Student outcomes should not be disadvantaged by the method of delivery, and OERs have some potential benefits including no break in access, cost-free and institution or course specific. COVID-19 has demonstrated the inequality present in our society, the haves and the have nots. The philosophy of Open (Walz, 2017) is that as many barriers as possible should be dismantled in the aim of providing knowledge, and as librarians we endeavour to serve out community as best we can. Awareness, innovation and collaboration on inequality are continually required.

### *Discussion of potential problems with research*

Some potential problems with the research were highlighted in the Method chapter under Ethics. There is a potential for researcher bias in data analysis, especially as reflexive thematic analysis was used, giving greater researcher autonomy and decision-making. Similarly, the expectations and/or bias of participants may have impacted the answers they gave in the interviews. Furthermore, this research only used and included literature written in the English language which has an inherent bias towards Western thought and philosophy. An actual problem that the research encountered was the impact of COVID-19 and the various lock-down's that occurred. The first lockdown in March 2020 closed libraries, schools and HEIs immediately, and the researcher did not have time to go to the college library beforehand as they were at work. This meant that the researcher had to rely primarily on online resources and Open Access articles. While in keeping with the theme of Open to use mainly Open sources, it was a disadvantage to not have access to physical library collections for this research. The internet connection the researcher had access to was not very reliable for video calls as they live in a rural area without broadband. The interviews took place on Zoom or Microsoft Teams, and at times in each interview, the internet connection would either drop or delay for a period of time. This was very disruptive to the interview style, conversation flow and ultimately the answers that some participants gave as some connection issues persisted for a period of time. Moreover, some participants had shorter interviews as a result of poor internet connection. The reliance on internet for data collection was a big problem for the research, and if the research were to be attempted again every effort would be made to have in person and face-to-face interviews. Ideally, the semi-structured interviews would have taken place face-to-face for the following

reasons: awareness of non-verbal body language, building rapport, and to avoid relying on rural internet for interviews.

### *Strengths and weakness of research*

A strength of this research is that all of the participants are advocates for Open and spoke from their personal experience of how they came into the area. Another strength of this research is the range of expertise the participants had. Unfortunately, a weakness of the research is that many examples given could not be shared for privacy and confidentiality reasons. The pool that the participants were drawn from is a very small one, and any mention of dates, projects, specific examples or names had to be removed otherwise they could potentially be identified. This was particularly exasperating for the researcher as the examples given were fantastic and could have created some very interesting discussion. However, overall, the use of such important voices is a strength of the research, even if they are anonymised, as their meaning and ideas can be distilled without specific examples.

An effort was made to have a gender balance in the participants, but it became clear to the researcher that this may not be possible when they noticed the majority of participants selected were female. It was very difficult to gain participants for data collection, as COVID-19 meant everyone's schedules had changed. A considerable number of people contacted for participation were unavailable, on annual leave or did not reply. The participants were those who responded with availability and it just so happened the gender ratio was 2:1 in favour of women. Furthermore, no participant was involved who had a disability or was from a minority background, and the researcher would like this to be noted as part of the research was on accessibility, access and inequality and it may have been valuable to have a voice to represent that more inherently. A gender balance and inclusive participants are not essential as the researcher was not aiming for a representative sample, but an attempt was made nonetheless.



### *Ideas for future research*

The researcher feels very strongly that there should be more research done in this area. In particular, this research should be replicated from the point of view of IT and HR. Librarians are not the only faculty members who should be included and who should figure out their roles. IT plays a massively important role in OERs for many reasons, but chiefly that these people have the skills to tell you what is and isn't possible and can be crucial assets (as Participant 5 found). Those in IT have their own set of skills and possible roles to play and should thoroughly investigate lest they be a simple service to the collaborative nature being proposed. Similarly, HR must figure out their roles and should definitely be included. Both of these professions were highlighted as crucial policy areas by IFLA and outlined in the literature review. The researcher recommends that future research by these departments could re-use and re-mix the interview guide as an Open resource.

Initially, plans for this research included a survey. Further research using surveys as data collection would be ideal to find out what general attitudes are present in Irish HEIs. The survey could assess current levels of involvement of librarians more accurately than interviews and could highlight institutions that are leading and those that are following or inactive in the area. Furthermore, the survey could assess attitudes for national approaches, such as the national press suggested by this research.

The researcher believes that much more research and innovation needs to happen in the area of accessibility and OERs. The researcher feels we are barely scratching the surface of what is possible and is very interested in European developments in this area as a result. The researcher would like to see an examination of the various potential accessibility issues for Irish students with OERs. Students with dyslexia for example, could be accommodated by making all

OERs available in the Open dyslexia font (Open Dyslexia, 2020). Deaf or hearing impaired students could have the avatars that Participant 3 mentioned that sign the reading so you can have that extra dimension, much in the same way you can have subtitles on a video, it aids understanding. Students who speak Irish as their first language may be accommodated by subtitles or audio in Irish for similar reasons, and this could be applied to any mother tongue of a student. There are so many potential areas to explore and we should be aiming to break down as many barriers as we can. The impact of poor internet connection and access to technology is something that COVID-19 is demonstrating to students and teachers alike. The researcher would like to see further examination of the effects of this on the class of 2020 and 2021 in all levels of education. Unique Irish inequality such as those in direct provision, those in halting sites, those who are homeless should also be examined and suggestions made for how to overcome these challenges.

*Implications of results*

The implications of the results are that Ireland as a nation has a wealth of experience and knowledge in Open and can leverage that with the skill sets of librarians to collaborate nationally on OER policy and a national university press. As a small nation, it is crucial that we collaborate and build on what we already have, as well as collaborating with regional and international partners. Ireland has an opportunity to lead and set an example of what can be accomplished with sensible, clear and concise OER policy with devolved implementation tied to a timeline. Institutional culture is a key consideration, and the national policy method will allow individual institutions the autonomy to decide how to integrate and implement OER policy into their institution and strategy. The potential for reputation building is immense, as well as the potential cost savings for both students and libraries (as they move to an inside-out model). The environmental impact of increased OER use is that ideally less resources are published as monographs, and more resources are digitally available.

### *Conclusion and Recommendations*

The main findings of the research were that Ireland should have a national OER policy which is short, clear and concise with a timeline for implementation in individual institutions. This will allow institutions the autonomy to implement the policy and make decisions. Following Scottish examples (University of Edinburgh) is suggested as Ireland has a similar population size and culture. The role of librarians is varied, and individual librarians can play to their strengths in areas such as advocacy, support, dissemination, advisory (copyright and other legal issues), creation and management. Skills can be developed, and some may be required as librarians advance in this area. CPD should be offered to librarians, and potentially professional add-on qualifications in teaching, IT and soft skills. There are various barriers to library involvement in OERs, chiefly institutional culture, the status quo in libraries and no clear roadmap for what to do next. Library visibility, perceived value and impact all play a role in how the library is viewed within the institution and can limit library involvement. Recommendations from this research are that we introduce national policy, a national university press, the Team Science model for rewards and incentives, and that librarians be involved in all policy discussions as their wealth of skills are beneficial and necessary. This research is pertinent as Ireland has an opportunity to advance in OERs, and with the global pandemic of COVID-19, online and remote delivery of education may continue for some time. The opportunity to build Ireland's reputation is palpable, we can lead and partner with early adopters to create a new culture of knowledge sharing and discoverability. On a final note, inequality, access and accessibility are paramount considerations and we should endeavor to innovate in these areas.

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## Appendix

### *Information Sheet*

#### **‘Open Education Policies in Irish Higher Education and the Role of Libraries: Review and Recommendation’**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not to take part.

#### **WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?**

My name is Aisling Coyne and I am conducting this research for a MSc in Library and Information Management at Dublin Business School.

The aim of this research is to make recommendations on the role of librarians in Open Education Policy.

#### **WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?**

Taking part will involve agreeing to a one-on-one and face-to-face (COVID-19 permitting, otherwise on Zoom or Skype, or whatever platform you prefer) interview for approximately an hour, at a time and on a date that suits you.

Topics will be about Open Education, OE policy, skills required, your opinion, making Open the default, collaboration and library publishing.

This interview will be audio-recorded using a Samsung Galaxy S smartphone and notes may be taken (if in person, otherwise interview will be recorded on Zoom/Skype/equivalent). These files will be saved to the private Dublin Buisness School One Drive. Dublin Business School will retain coded transcripts as an appendix to the dissertation.

#### **WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?**

I have selected you as an expert and/or advocate in the area of Open Education and libraries. Your opinion and your knowledge are valuable for this research.

**DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?**

Participation is completely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse participation, refuse any question and withdraw at any time without any consequence whatsoever.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?**

Benefits are furthering this exciting field of research and potentially developing a framework for libraries to engage and lead Open Education.

If you decide to remove yourself from the research due to any risks you find, that is completely your prerogative.

**WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?**

Your interview will be entirely confidential. Participants will be anonymous, and the researcher will develop a code for their name, occupation and any identifiable details and exclude such from any submitted thesis.

Situations in which confidentiality may have to be broken include: if the researcher has a strong belief that there is a serious risk of harm or danger to either the participant or another individual (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, concerns for child protection, rape, self-harm, suicidal intent or criminal activity) or if a serious crime has been committed.

Non-anonymised data in the form of signed consent forms and audio recordings are collected and retained as part of the research process.

## **HOW WILL INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?**

Note-taking and audio recordings will be stored on the private Dublin Business School One Drive for the next two years (researcher), as well as being transcribed and found in the appendices of the dissertation and in the Dublin Business School system.

Records will be kept secure using password protected files and encryption when sending information over the internet.

The data retention policy is two years as this research may be published.

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained for a period of two years or until after my degree has been conferred.

A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legislation you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

## **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

This study may be published through Open Access.

Further, excerpts from this research may be published and/or expanded upon in future. Additionally, these excerpts may also form the basis of conference papers, other publications and teaching use.

## **WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?**

Ms. Marta Bustillo Esteban, Dissertation Supervisor for Dublin Business School.

[martha.bustillo@dbs.ie](mailto:martha.bustillo@dbs.ie)

**[THANK YOU]**

## Consent Form

### **‘Open Education Policies in Irish Higher Education and the Role of Libraries: Review and Recommendation’**

Consent to take part in research:

I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

I understand that participation involves approximately 60 minutes of my time in a one-on-one face-to-face interview (or digitally).

I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation, or potentially conference presentation or published papers.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's Dublin Business School One drive (private) and Dublin Business School until the exam board confirms the results of the dissertation at minimum, and two years at most.

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.

I understand that under freedom of information legislation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

For further information or any questions, please contact:

Ms. Aisling Coyne, [10542127@mydbs.ie](mailto:10542127@mydbs.ie)

Ms. Marta Bustillo Esteban, Dissertation Supervisor for Dublin Business School.

[martha.bustillo@dbs.ie](mailto:martha.bustillo@dbs.ie)

Signature of research participant:

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**Signature of participant**

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**Date**

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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**Signature of researcher**

-----

**Date**



## Interview Guide

### [Introductions, review of consent and information sheets]

#### [Background and Relevance]

How did you come to work in your area?

- a. What is your educational background?
- b. Are there any key skills required for your role that are developing?

#### [Librarians and OER policy]

How would you evaluate the current involvement of librarians in OER policy?

- a. Should librarians be involved?
- b. What would your ideal scenario look like?
- c. How would you approach making steps towards your ideal scenario?

#### [Skills]

How would you evaluate upskilling in this area?

- a. Are there any particular skills required?
- b. Should CPD be offered in this area, in your opinion?

#### [Making Open Default]

Making Open (Access/Education/Scholarship) the default in Europe are aims of SPARC Europe and the European Union. How would you like to see this movement develop?

- a. How can librarians assist in making Open the default?
- b. Are there any examples of Open policies that stand out to you?
- c. Where do you see Open (Access/Education/Scholarship) in 5/10 years' time?

**[Policy and developments]**

In your opinion, what is the role of policy in making Open the default?

- a. Are there any obvious pitfalls/challenges?
- b. Inequality and potential disadvantages to education?
- c. Improved access and outcomes?

**[Collaboration]**

How would you evaluate the role of collaboration in policy development?

- a. Collaboration between stakeholders/academic staff/librarians?
- b. Establishment of other services

**[Aims, goals and opinions]**

How would you like to see Open Education Policies develop in higher education institutions?

- a. Are there any obvious pitfalls/challenges?
- b. What recommendations would you make to higher education institutions about Open Education?
- c. What recommendations would you make to Irish librarians and libraries that want to be involved in Open Education policy?

**[Library Publishing]**

Over the last two decades library publishing has emerged as a new class of publisher, a 'disruptor', as a response to commercial publication and allows scholars to openly license and share their work (McCready & Molls, 2018). As an alternative to mainstream publishing, how do you think library publishing will develop?

- a. How important is equitable publishing?
- b. How important is accessibility?