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Robert J. Engeszer

*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

Cathy C. Sarli

*Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis*

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## Libraries and Open Access Support: New Roles in the Digital Publishing Era.

\*Robert J. Engeszer, MLS, AHIP

Associate Director, Translational Research Support, Bernard Becker Medical Library, Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine.

Cathy C. Sarli, MLS, AHIP

Scholarly Publishing and Evaluation Services Coordinator, Bernard Becker Medical Library, Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine.

\*Corresponding author:

Robert J. Engeszer

Bernard Becker Medical Library

Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine.

660 S. Euclid Ave. Campus Box 8132, St. Louis MO. 63110

Email:engeszer@wustl.edu

Phone: 314-362-4735

Fax: 314-362-4129

### **Introduction**

The emergence and growth of Open Access (OA) publishing stands as one of the most significant changes to the world of scholarly communication since the migration to digital publishing began over a decade ago. In simplest terms, the definition of OA put forth by Peter Suber in 2004 is still quite accurate – *“Open access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions.”*[1] With an overriding goal of using the Internet to remove barriers to accessing scholarly and, in particular, peer-reviewed scholarly works, early proponents seized upon the potential of OA to transform the scholarly communication process and asserted that sharing of scholarly works would spur innovative scholarly practices, accelerate discovery of research findings, and enhance access to scholarly the scholarly record.

The benefits of OA appear to be mutually beneficial to all of the major participants in the scholarly communication process. Authors could reach a wider audience and share their scholarly works with scholars and the public. Enhanced transparency of research findings would allow funding agencies to report on benefits and return on investment to taxpayers and governments. At the same time, university libraries would be afforded relief to their collection budgets as publishers adopt alternative business

models that shift subscription costs from institutional subscribers to a system of fees paid by the author, the author's institution, or the funding agency supporting the work.

But despite all of these advantages and while making great strides over the past decade, OA has yet to establish itself as the predominant model of scholarly communication. Significant barriers still exist to achieving that goal. Publishers are resistant to change of longstanding cost recovery models, authors are apprehensive about publishing in journals that could negatively impact tenure and promotion decisions, and both groups are wary of the implications that OA can have on copyrighted material.

Academic libraries have a vested interest supporting open access publishing and are playing significant roles in its growth and progress. The fundamental mission of any library is to connect people with information and the goals of OA make librarians a natural advocate for promoting greater access to scholarly works. How advocacy and support for OA has evolved illustrates the creative ways that libraries are adapting to the changes in scholarly communication process and their relationships with publishers and authors, and the dissemination of information.

### **Libraries and Scholarly Communication**

Academic libraries have been involved with issues that fall under the broad category of "scholarly communication" for decades. While many of the initial support programs developed by libraries focused on fair use and copyright restrictions, the scope of activities has since expanded to include topics such as author rights, promoting the use of institutional repositories[2] and, most recently, using publication metrics and other indicators to analyze the impact of research.[3] Interest and demand for information in all of these areas has led many academic libraries to establish formal scholarly communication programs with dedicated librarian positions to develop support programs. For many libraries, initiatives related to OA are a logical extension of their scholarly communication programs which reflect the particular interests, needs and prevailing attitudes of the institution. In the case of OA this is particularly true as its perception as a global movement has created equally passionate advocates and critics within the academic

and publishing community. From this perspective, serving a credible source for useful and objective information is a valuable role for libraries to play and serves as a foundational element of many scholarly communication programs.

The education and guidance libraries provide on OA has assumed many forms. In a 2010 presentation, Brian Rosenblum listed specific ways that librarians are currently supporting OA practices and policies and advising faculty in their roles as instructors, authors, and publishers:[4]

- Assisting with rights and permissions;
- Maintaining scholarly communication Web sites;
- Organizing workshops on copyright issues and digital scholarship;
- Advocating through university governance and administrative channels, to shape discussions of open access policies;
- Educating and training other librarians and students.

Educating others is a traditional role for libraries to assume with a growing number taking a more proactive role in promoting the benefits of OA. Supported by initiatives such as the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) developed by the Association of Research Libraries and the Harvard University Office for Scholarly Communication, academic libraries are developing mechanisms and services to reduce some of the barriers to OA publishing that confront authors. SPARC has developed numerous education resources including webcasts and podcasts covering a wide range of OA related topics such as author rights, open access funding mechanisms, and public access mandates. At the local level, libraries such as Becker Library at Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine have established support programs to educate authors on retaining the rights they need to reuse and disseminate

their work and providing guidance on alternative and less restrictive licensing models such as Creative Commons.

### **Reducing Barriers**

While education and awareness serves as the foundation for OA support at a majority of academic libraries, a growing number are addressing barriers that authors face when considering OA as a publishing option. These barriers can be financial, institutional, and sometimes, depending on the subject discipline, cultural. It is in this area that libraries are demonstrating their commitment to OA by devising creative strategies and solutions to reduce these barriers in significant ways.

### **Campus-based Funding Support for OA**

Perhaps the biggest barrier that authors face when choosing to publish in an OA journal is the cost. A large number of “gold” OA journals require authors to pay a fee to publish an article. Many funding agencies allow for use of funds to defray article publication charges but the pressures to stretch limited research dollars make this choice unappealing, if not impossible for many authors. To address author inability or reluctance to pay for article publication charges, campus-based open access author funds are being considered by some academic libraries. The Compact for Open-Access Publishing Equity (COPE) is one example of how academic institutions and libraries are committing to OA by establishing funds to subsidize article publication charges. To date over fifty academic institutions are participating in COPE either as signatories or supporters.[5] Established OA publishers such as PLoS and BioMed Central also provide substantial discounts to authors from institutions that purchase supporting memberships with a number of libraries subsidizing these memberships on behalf of their institutions.

## **Institutional Repositories**

For authors seeking to enhance the visibility of their work to the broadest possible audience, self-archiving through an institutional repository (IR) represents a less costly path to OA. Often described as a form of “green” OA, institutional repositories can contain many types of documents including preprints, postprints, or both. While most institutional repositories do not require peer-reviewed materials they generally host published materials including the final, peer-reviewed manuscript submitted to a non-OA journal. Libraries are at the forefront of advocating for and supporting IRs and the benefits to their authors of self-archiving. The number of academic libraries who maintain an IR on behalf of their institutions has grown dramatically over the past decade. According to the *Directory of Open Access Repositories*, in 2011 there were over 2,200 open digital repositories worldwide.[6] While the benefits of greater discoverability, accessibility and flexibility in the types of material that can be stored are compelling to many authors, the growth in the adoption of self-archiving practices has been slow. The lack of time, resources, and concerns about copyright issues are often cited as reasons for lack of IR participation by faculty.[7]

Libraries are taking a leadership role in reducing barriers to IR participation. At Washington University School of Medicine’s Becker Library staff members assume responsibility for copyright clearance, metadata creation, and submission of all materials to the Digital Commons@Becker IR (<http://digitalcommons.wustl.edu/>) on behalf of authors. The library’s “full service” approach has greatly enhanced faculty interest in using the IR and allowed staff to shift the focus of their efforts from training faculty in the mechanics of building a collection for themselves to collaborating with faculty and research groups to enhance the visibility and scope of their work.

## **OA and Public Access Mandates**

One approach to encouraging OA used by a growing number of institutions, funding agencies, and research programs is the adoption of self-archiving and/or public access mandates. In the biosciences, the

mandate most familiar to authors is the Public Access Policy (PAP) implemented in 2008 by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The NIH PAP requires authors to submit the final, peer-reviewed manuscript version of their NIH-funded works to PubMed Central (PMC) upon acceptance of publication in a journal, with public access to the full text available within 12 months of publication. Works in PMC are protected under copyright laws and access to the works is governed under fair use. While the specific intent of the NIH PAP represents a narrower component of the overall OA movement, its immediate impact on scholarly communication cannot be understated. For many libraries, the NIH PAP provides an opportunity to introduce a number of often misunderstood scholarly communications issues, including OA, and serves as justification for expanding support services that include guidance with compliance and direct submission services to PMC on behalf of authors. One year following the launch of the NIH PAP, almost half of the 123 member institutions of the Association of Research Libraries reported having support programs already in place and the success of these programs has been clear. [8] As one of the more established library-based NIH PAP service programs in the country, Becker Library has provided more than 1,500 individual consultations and over 100 formal presentations and workshops since the program began in 2008. In conjunction with these activities, Becker Library also offers extensive web-based guidance and documents for NIH-funded authors and support staff. These efforts are representative of support programs libraries provide to assist authors with public access mandates.

The impact of the NIH PAP continues to be felt throughout the federal government and has been the impetus for further initiatives. In 2013, the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) directed all federal agencies with more than \$100 million in R&D expenditures to develop plans to make the published results of federally funded research freely available to the public within one year of publication. As with the compliance support programs for the NIH PAP, efforts are currently underway at many academic libraries to support authors in complying with the OSTP directive.

Government mandates for public access to taxpayer funded research is a highly visible, and much debated, aspect of the OA movement. While not as prevalent, OA mandates by academic institutions are equally controversial and libraries are playing prominent roles in supporting these types of initiatives.

In February 2008, Harvard University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences passed an OA policy granting a license to the university to share their scholarly journal articles openly in an institutional repository and mandating faculty to submit their works. Consequently, other academic institutions in the United States considered similar initiatives. By 2011, 122 institutions worldwide had implemented some form of open access self-archiving mandate.[9] Libraries actively participated in discussions and policy formulations at many of these institutions and while few issued required mandates, most implemented resolutions that highly encouraged authors to consider OA options for dissemination of their scholarly works, as with the resolution passed by the Washington University in St. Louis Faculty Senate in 2011.[10]

### **Libraries as OA Publishers**

The growing acceptance of OA publishing has also afforded libraries with opportunities to assume the role of publisher. While library publishing in itself is not a new activity, the greater availability and affordability of digital publishing platforms are providing libraries the option of working with campus authors to explore new methods of communicating and disseminating their research results. Open source and commercially available publishing platforms are being used to publish OA books and monographs, create OA versions of out-of-copyright works, and to start “in-house” scholarly journals that highlight the works of institutional authors including faculty and students. [11, 12]

### **Conclusion**

Since OA was first introduced ten years ago, traditional publication modes have been supplemented with publishing in OA journals. While many authors recognize the benefits of OA, some authors are deeply vested in traditional publishing practices. Academic libraries often walk a fine line between promoting OA while supporting authors who prefer to publish in non-OA publication modes. Despite this challenge,

academic libraries are taking a proactive role to by developing service programs to reduce barriers faced by authors and utilizing technology and licensing alternatives to promote accessibility to scholarly works. Libraries have a vested interest in ensuring continued access to the scientific record and are devoted to efforts to increase awareness among authors of the various issues that have an impact on scholarly practices to provide opportunities for dissemination of the scientific record without barriers.

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