

Reshaping Scholarly Communication: Why Faculty Are Adopting Institutional Open-Access Policies

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On 21 May 2012, the Academic Senate of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) voted unanimously to make electronic versions of current and future scientific articles freely available to the public and thus made UCSF the largest scientific institution in the nation to adopt an open-access (OA) policy and among the first public universities to do so. The issues are complex, but our motivation was simple: The predominant system for scholarly communication has become economically unsustainable, restrictive, and critically limited in its ability to disseminate our research.

Our faculty members have come to recognize that although there remains a need to access increasing amounts of scholarly materials, the costs of purchasing such materials continue to rise, largely because of the pricing models of commercial publishers. Traditional fee-for-access publishing models restrict the distribution of scholarly publications to those who can afford subscriptions or per-article download prices. Across its 10-campus system, the University of California (UC) spends about \$40 million per year to access scholarly materials, including the works of UC authors that are submitted to publishers. Many other universities and the public have less access.

UCSF has worked closely with colleagues on other campuses to develop an OA policy that it hopes will be adopted throughout the UC system. The policy is similar to those already in place in more than 140 peer institutions, including Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Duke, and Princeton. Those policies

vary in details, but they operate similarly: By default, faculty members grant their institution permission (through a non-exclusive license) to disseminate the products of their scholarship freely and immediately through an OA repository. Faculty members have the option to deny or delay permission (to trigger a waiver of the license or policy) for any specific work. The implications of a UC system-wide OA policy are vast inasmuch as the UC system generates about 50,000 journal articles each year—more than 3% of the world's published articles. The California Digital Library supports the repository as part of its eScholarship service.

Questions often asked include, "Have we now achieved our objectives? When will faculty and the public see benefits? How have the commercial publishers responded?"

The OA policy has been an overwhelming success. UCSF publishes about 375 peer-reviewed, primary research articles per month; waiver and embargo requests have averaged 18 per month, under 5% of the total output. Thus, 95% of the articles are published in the repository without waivers or embargoes and are immediately and freely available to the public and other scholars. Those percentages are similar to the ones seen by our colleagues at Harvard and MIT.

The policy has markedly advanced our conversations with commercial publishers. When we implemented the policy, we notified publishers about UCSF faculty authors' expectations. Most of the publishers indicated that they would comply with the policy; a few raised objections or asked for additional clarification about what they could do to be compliant. In August 2012, we met with Elsevier executives who came to UCSF to request help in navigating the policy and to talk about our future relationship. We have been in discussions with the Nature Publishing Group (NPG) for more than 2 years—since threatening a potential UC

system-wide faculty boycott of NPG in 2010 when NPG proposed raising licensing costs; the proposed increase has now been shelved. The CEO of Macmillan, the parent company for NPG, visited UCSF to discuss our OA policy, the process of peer review, and commercial publishing more broadly. We have had a similar conversation with the publisher of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. We encourage faculty to ask publishers that do not yet accept our OA policy to modify their author agreements to be compliant.

UCSF faculty members have a new awareness about author rights, access to their own work, and how their choices of where they publish affect those rights and access. More faculty members now understand that publishing and disseminating their scholarly work so that it is accessible to all has tremendous advantages, and they are embracing such OA journals as *PLOS*, *eLife*, and *PeerJ*.

Other institutions are following our lead. The movement toward institutional repositories that enable OA will require some individual sacrifices and inconveniences for faculty at first but will result in far-reaching rewards for academe and society. We have committed to developing a system that minimizes administrative burden on the faculty. We are working with publishers to make automatic deposits into our repository on behalf of faculty as some currently do for PubMed Central. An easy system for managing rapid workflow for deposits, addenda, embargoes, and waivers has been developed.

UCSF's OA policy has changed the culture and expectations at UCSF with respect to scholarly communication. As faculty who provide the content, peer review, and editorship that sustain traditional commercial publishing, we are now creating momentum for a new system that allows us to keep control of our own work and disseminate our research widely. 

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