

Faculty Senate Library Committee 2015-2016

**Review of
First Three Years of University of Rhode Island's Open Access Policy**

March 30, 2016

The purpose of this document is to provide details on URI's Open Access policy, review the impact of the policy in its first three years of existence, and discuss ideas for the future.

Outline

1. Description of policy
2. Description of implementation
3. Benefits of policy
4. Costs of policy
5. Ideas for future

With questions, please contact:

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1. Description of policy

In March 2013, the University of Rhode Island became the 8th public institution in the United States—and the 41st institution worldwide—to pass a university-wide, permissions-based Open Access Policy. The Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences first developed this type of policy in 2008, with the goal of “disseminating the fruits of its research and scholarship as widely as possible.” (<https://osc.hul.harvard.edu/policies/fas/>) By adopting the URI Open Access Policy, the URI Faculty granted each scholar at the University:

“ . . . permission to make available his or her scholarly articles and to exercise the copyright in those articles. More specifically, each Faculty member grants to the University of Rhode Island a nonexclusive, irrevocable, worldwide license to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to each of his or her scholarly articles, in any medium, provided that the articles are not sold, and to authorize others to do the same.” (http://uri.libguides.com/OA_policyolicy/text)

In plain language, the Policy enables the University of Rhode Island—and by extension, all its faculty members—to exercise all rights under copyright for scholarly articles authored by URI faculty. The most tangible outcome is that all faculty members can and should deposit an Open Access copy of each published article in URI’s institutional repository, DigitalCommons@URI. They can also take advantage of the other rights of copyright holders—such as distributing their work to colleagues or students, and posting it on their personal website and social media. Although the Policy requires faculty to deposit their articles, it is non-coercive: Any faculty member can obtain a waiver to the Policy for any article, for any reason.

It is important to put the Open Access Policy in context and understand why the University needs such a policy. In our current system of scholarly publishing, academic authors usually sign over their article’s copyright to a journal upon publication. The journal then determines exactly what can be done with the article: who can read it, how it can be accessed and reused, and what rights the author now has. After accepting scholarly work that university faculty have authored and peer-reviewed for free, publishers then sell the content back to academic libraries. Traditional journals operate on a subscription-based model where only people affiliated with subscribing institutions can access the content. Now, more journals are moving towards an Open Access model, where the content is freely available online to be read and re-used according to liberal terms of use (Creative Commons licenses). Federal grant funding agencies are establishing their own Open Access policies, requiring awardees to make the results of their research openly available as a condition of the grant. We are making progress, and the URI Open Access Policy represents a broader movement to provide open access to scholarship while ensuring academic authors retain the rights to their own work.

2. Description of implementation

The University Libraries have taken the lead on the day-to-day implementation of the URI Open Access Policy, while the Faculty Senate Library Committee has overseen the implementation plan, made decisions, recommended changes as needed, and reviewed the

Policy. In addition, the Open Access Policy Designate serves as an official liaison for the Policy to the Faculty Senate, and is charged with issuing waivers to the Policy.

After the Policy passed in March 2013, the OA policy team laid the foundation for implementation. Prof. Andrée Rathemacher, Head of Acquisitions in the Libraries, had been the lead advocate for the Open Access Policy. She then served as the first Open Access Policy Designate and the Chair of the Faculty Senate Library Committee in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. She quickly completed a number of tasks which were then reviewed and approved by the Library Committee, such as:

- She created a website with comprehensive information on the Policy (<http://uri.libguides.com/OAP>) and a generic email address for Policy business.
- She notified as many publishers as possible about the OA Policy, sending letters to 508 individuals at 457 publishers with the text of the Policy, a sample addendum to the publishing agreement, and an FAQ document. This notification gave publishers a fair chance to require a waiver for URI faculty articles, and to protect URI faculty in the unlikely event a publisher claims breach of contract.
- She drafted the Open Access Policy Terms of Use, modeled after Harvard University's language.
- She created the Assistance Authorization Form which each faculty member must sign the first time he or she deposits an article; the form grants permission to the Libraries to upload articles to DigitalCommons@URI on their behalf.
- She created an Addendum to the Publication Agreement which faculty members can use to explicitly notify publishers of the Policy each time they publish.

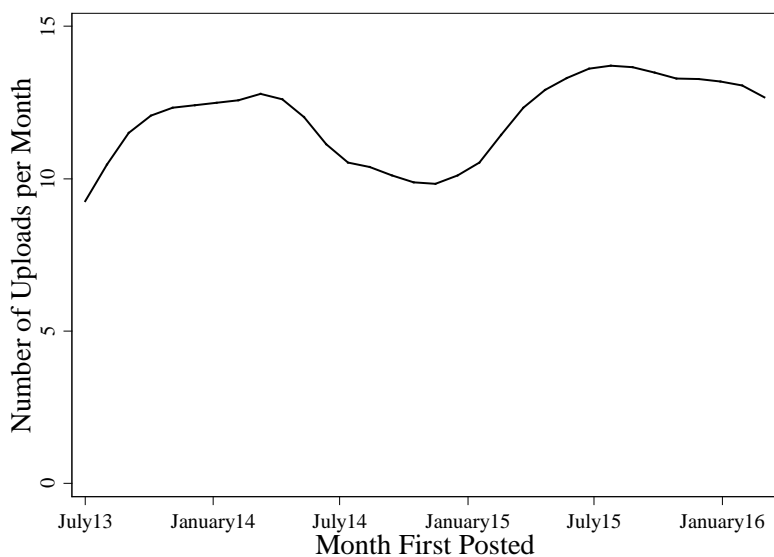
The Faculty Senate Library Committee in 2013-2014 made a number of fundamental decisions about the OA Policy implementation. The Committee established that even though the Open Access Policy grants the University rights to *any* version of the article—including the final published version—we will join with other Open Access Policy institutions in only depositing the author manuscript. Our goal is not to alienate publishers. The only exceptions to this rule would be cases where a) the journal allows use of the published version, and b) the license for the published version is more permissive than the OA policy Terms of Use. In other words, the exceptions are usually fully Open Access journals with Creative Commons licenses. The Committee also established that the definition of “faculty” under the OA policy covers all URI faculty except for those who are not full-time faculty.

In 2013, Prof. Julia Lovett implemented a number of changes to DigitalCommons@URI to customize the display of Open Access Policy articles. The repository now has a section for each department's faculty publications, as well as a section for *all* Open Access Policy articles. Each OA policy article has a customized cover page that includes a link to the OA policy Terms of Use and a statement about the article version.

Over the past three years, the Libraries have established basic procedures, policies, and workflows for the daily business of the OA Policy. Routine tasks now include: answering

questions from faculty, issuing waivers, collecting signed AAF's, identifying published articles, requesting copies of articles from faculty, depositing articles into the repository, and tracking workflows and Policy statistics. Of these, identifying published articles and collecting copies from faculty have been the most time-consuming tasks. Currently, a graduate student works on this piece of the OA Policy for approximately 5 hours per week. She checks a wide range of databases to identify URI scholarly articles and emails faculty to request a copy of the author manuscript (the final submitted version of the article). Besides our graduate student worker, the Digital Initiatives Technician (Erin Mullen) works on OA Policy tasks such as fielding OA Policy emails, filing Assistance Authorization Forms, and uploading new articles to DigitalCommons@URI. Prof. Julia Lovett, Digital Initiatives Librarian and current OA Policy Designate, oversees the implementation, answers in-depth questions from faculty, and processes waiver requests.

To date, 109 URI faculty members have participated in the Open Access Policy and 370 articles have been deposited. The figure below shows the average number of OA uploads per month over time. About 12 uploads occur each month and this has been mostly constant in the nearly three years of the policy.



The library staff requests OA uploads from faculty by email and our “return rate” on articles--the number of total articles deposited vs. the number of requests sent--is currently around 31%. This rate has been increasing steadily, up from around 20% a year ago. We have issued 10 total waivers to authors of articles wishing to not comply with the OA Policy.

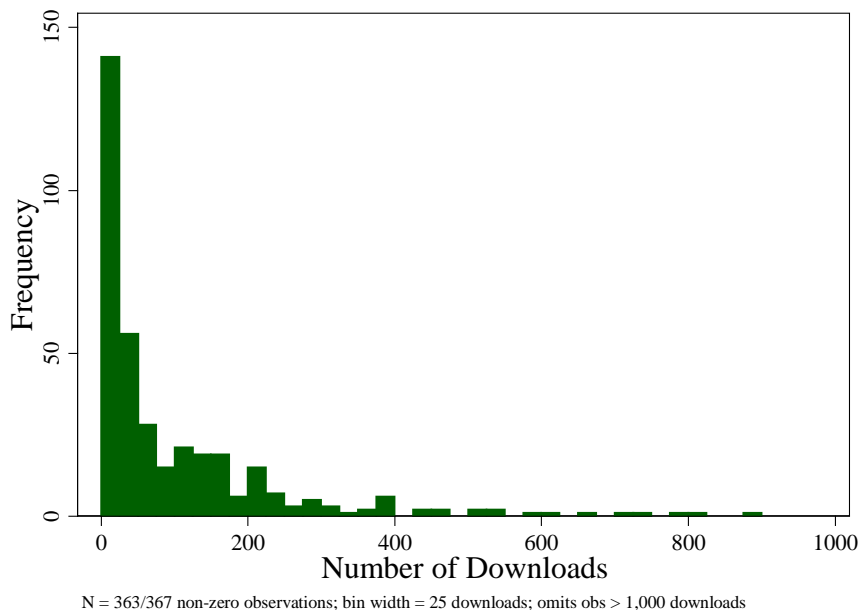
3. Benefits of policy

Benefits of the OA Policy can be divided into direct monetary benefits and non-monetary benefits of information dissemination. Prior to adopting the OA Policy, publication rights would need to be checked before uploading an article to Digital Commons. This was a manual process

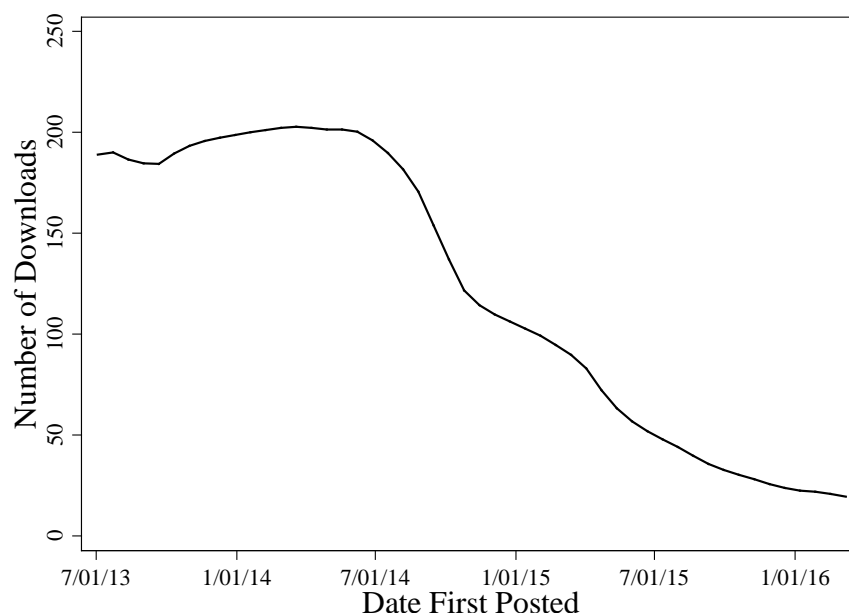
performed by an undergraduate hourly employee of the library. Julia Lovett, who supervised the employee in this position, estimates that approximately 10 hour per year were spent performing this task. The OA Policy obviates this task, and thus saves approximately \$1800 per year (\$9per hour).

In addition, the OA Policy addresses the exorbitant cost of open access through journals. Publishing articles as “Gold”-level open access can cost thousands of dollars per article – a cost that falls on faculty or universities. The cost for Elsevier journals ranges from \$500 to \$5000 per article, and averages about \$2500. As of March 7, 2016, there have been 370 published articles uploaded to Digital Commons. If instead of URI’s OA Policy these articles were published as “gold” open access, that would have cost about \$925,000 (=370*\$2500), or about \$300,000 per year. While it is true that URI authors would not have paid that enormous sum and instead would have left their scholarship behind a paywall, this number gives a sense of the value that URI’s OA Policy provides.

In terms of non-monetary benefits, researchers value the influence their work can prospectively have on others. To this end, we can examine the number of downloads of published articles uploaded to Digital Commons. Combined, the articles deposited in the OA archive have been downloaded approximately 42,500 times. The average number of downloads per article was 114.8, the median was 42, and the maximum was an astounding 2,666. The figure below presents a histogram of the number of downloads per article (removing articles with zero downloads and downloads above 1000).



While it is natural for some articles to be downloaded more than others, some of the variation in download frequency is driven by how long the article has been on Digital Commons. The figure below shows the average number of downloads by date of upload.



For articles uploaded prior to July 2014, the average number of downloads is around 200. For articles uploaded within the past six months, the average is considerably lower, around 30. Thus, if a researcher at URI uploads their published article to Digital Commons, they can on average expect their article to be downloaded about 200 times after one and a half years. There is no real monetary value we can place on a single download, but downloads represent the dissemination of information, a public good highly valued by URI researchers.

4. Costs of policy

The costs of the policy have been negligible since its implementation because of its reliance on existing infrastructure and expenses.

With regard to the cost of the repository (Digital Commons), the repository was implemented in 2006 before the OA Policy was in place and is, thus, not included in the cost analysis of the OA Policy. Salaries of those involved with the implementation and maintenance of the OA Policy are as follows:

- Librarian \$1500/year
- Assistant \$1800/year
- Student \$5000/year

Total cost for salaries is \$8300 per year which covers day-to-day operations including finding, requesting, and uploading OA Policy articles; answering questions; generating waivers; promoting the OA Policy; and tracking usage metrics. However, with or without the OA Policy, salary cost would be unchanged. In fact, prior to implementation of OA Policy, uploading

faculty work into Digital Commons required more time and effort because each publisher has a unique policy with regard to uploading copyrighted content onto Digital Commons; each faculty publication required research to ensure copyrights were not being violated.

5. Ideas for future

Section 3 of this report detailed several metrics in terms of uploads and downloads. However, there is no sense of how this compares with other universities. We recommend future Library Committees seek similar information from other universities to gauge URI's progress.

A second idea the Library Committee proposes is to conduct a survey of faculty about the OA Policy. One important dimension to survey faculty about is barriers to participation. Anecdotal evidence suggests several faculty are concerned about breach of contract with journals. Other related questions brainstormed were:

Do you know about the OA Policy? Do you know about the Digital Commons? Have you accessed the Digital Commons site? Do you have a Digital Commons site? Have you referred someone to your Digital Commons site or someone else's site? Do you use Research Gate or have a personal website (i.e. Weebly) that you upload academic papers to? Does this option seem less problematic than Digital Commons and why? As an editor or peer reviewer, have you ever been pressured to reject a paper due to the open access policy at the university the research comes from? If you have a site, how do you use the download statistics (the example was given of a pre-tenure professor including top download award in annual review materials)?

The results of survey could help guide outreach efforts by library staff to increase participation, which will ultimately help URI and its researchers save money and disseminate information.

Lastly, we propose that URI's administration could greatly facilitate OA compliance. An easy step would be for department chairs to collect a list of publications every year and give this to library staff. This would reduce the costs of finding publications to solicit for depositing in the OA archive. A more effective step would be to require OA Digital Commons links to appear on annual review materials. Not only would this ensure faculty would comply with the OA Policy, but it would likely improve review as articles for review would be one click away.