OA Policy Development at URI

Andrée Rathemacher

University of Rhode Island, andree@uri.edu
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Andréé Rathemacher • andree@uri.edu
The story of URI’s Open Access Policy really began in March of 2012 when we hired Julia Lovett as Digital Initiative Librarian.

We’d had a DigitalCommons IR since July of 2005, but with no one assigned to manage the repository, it developed in an ad-hoc way, containing mostly:

- Dissertations fed in through ProQuest
- Senior Honors Projects
- Special collections materials
- Library reports and statistics
- One scholarly journal, by happenstance

But little faculty scholarship.
Shortly after Julia came on board, Peter Larsen, one of our public services librarians, was elected Chairperson of the Faculty Senate for the 2012-2013 academic year.

He pledged to make Open Access a key agenda item for the senate.
At Peter’s initiative, in September (9/20/2012), the Faculty Senate established an Ad Hoc Committee on Open Access “to examine and discuss the issues of open access, other universities’ practices, and how these affect URI.”

As you can see, we tried for representation from social sciences, sciences, humanities, and administration.

Peter initially suggested that the committee consider recommending that URI sign the Berlin Declaration, but I thought that we should stick to URI’s motto — Think Big — and try to pass a Harvard-style Open Access Policy. When I presented this idea to the Committee, they agreed.

It’s worth noting that I’d hoped to follow the recommendation of Ada Emmett and others at the University of Kansas and have the push for an OA policy be lead by a faculty member on the committee other than a librarian. See: http://crln.acrl.org/content/71/7/360.full?sid=3466fc9f-d43e-43de-ab4d-dca6aaeb802c>

It soon became apparent, however, that despite the support of other committee members for a policy, I was the de-facto chair of the committee and Julia and I were going to be the force behind our efforts.

The Ad-Hoc Committee met three times during the fall semester and on November 27 submitted a report to the Faculty Senate Executive Committee recommending that the “University of Rhode Island faculty, through a vote of the Faculty Senate, adopt an open access policy based on the Harvard model.”
Julia and I then got to work reaching out to faculty to educate them about the policy. We knew that extended conversations with faculty had been important at other institutions in getting policies passed.

I sent out emails to department chairs, program directors, and deans asking for 20-30 minutes of time at an upcoming faculty meeting.

Since Julia was new, we were able to sell our visits not only as about the policy, but as a way to introduce faculty to DigitalCommons@URI and the library’s digital initiatives.
In scheduling departmental visits, I tried to be strategic and reach out most intently to departments with the largest number of faculty senators.

I also tried not to take “no” for an answer. If I didn’t hear from department chairs, I wrote back a second or third time.

In all, Julia and I visited 21 departments or colleges between September and April.

Before each meeting, I sent faculty Stuart Shieber’s annotated Model Open Access Policy and our FAQ’s for faculty to read.

Julia presented first on DigitalCommons@URI and how it could be used for faculty publications, student work and to host journals and conferences.

Then I explained the policy and asked faculty to support it when it came before the senate.
Faculty concerns

- Will the policy hurt journals by causing cancellations?
- Will a journal not accept my article because of the policy?
- English faculty: What if someone were to translate my article or place it in an anthology?
- Will the fact that the repository contains the author’s manuscript and not the final published version be confusing?

These were the faculty’s primary concerns, but they were really questions more than objections. Overall, we were surprised by how “on board” most faculty seemed to be with the idea of the policy.

They had an attitude of, “Yeah, okay, this makes sense.”
On February 21 (2013), I presented the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Open Access to the Senate.

The policy was set for a vote at the March senate meeting, but we had some last minute drama from a faculty member in English who was also on the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

This faculty member was very concerned about uses of her material that she might not approve of (like translations or juxtapositions) and felt that the policy was moving too fast.

However, her worries did not appear to be representative of the faculty as a whole.

Stuart Shieber graciously agreed to speak with her, and he told me afterwards that it might have helped, a little.

As the result of her concerns, we had already agreed to adopt Harvard’s Terms of Use, which prohibit derivative works (even though the policy itself allows the institution to exercise full rights in copyright).
In addition, instead of putting the policy under the purview of the Provost’s Office as per the Harvard model, we put it under the purview of URI’s Faculty Senate. Stuart helped us work through the language changes.

We also recommended charging the standing Faculty Senate Library Committee with the implementation and overview of the policy.

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Although this faculty member wanted to delay the vote, Peter Larsen and other members of the Executive Committee made sure that the policy was on the agenda for the March senate meeting.

A few days before the meeting, I sent an email to all senators urging them to support the policy.

The policy passed unanimously on March 21 (2013).
For the policy to go into effect, it still needed to be signed by the URI President.

On April 10 (2013), Julia and I met with Lou Saccoccio, URI’s General Counsel, who had two primary concerns.

First, he told us that the President wanted to confirm that there would be an option for faculty to waive out of the policy.

Second, he produced a copy of Harvard’s Assistance Authorization Form (which we also had ready to give to him). He wanted us to be sure to use the AAF in order to get the non-exclusive license to URI in writing for each faculty member. This ensures that the non-exclusive license will survive the subsequent transfer of copyright to a publisher per section 205(e) of the Copyright Act.

On May 2, President Dooley signed off on the policy, and it went into effect.
We did have one kind-of-funny experience during this time.

At the end of April, a junior faculty member in Philosophy emailed me eager to follow the Policy for an article he was about to submit to a publisher.

I sent him the Author Addendum we had drafted. He asked if he could get a waiver if he needed one.

I told him what Julia and I had been saying in every meeting for months, and what we had in our FAQ’s: not to worry, because in the experience of other schools, very few publishers require a waiver.

But as soon as the JHU Press employee saw the addendum, she sent back this response.

So we are somewhat chagrined that our very first article under the Open Access Policy waived out.
With the policy in effect, I’ve created a LibGuide (URL on slide) instructing faculty in how to comply with the policy. We’ve also made some basic decisions, subject to review by the Faculty Senate Library Committee when it meets.

- Assistance Authorization Form (Harvard)
- Author addendum (Harvard)
- Waiver text (Harvard)
- Submission process (by email and harvesting)
- Publisher notification letters (MIT)
- Workflows — TBD
- Outreach to faculty — need strategies

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- Assistance Authorization Form (already mentioned)
- Author addendum (there for author’s convenience, but not push it too hard). Fillable PDF that faculty can download.
- Waiver text (requests sent by email; human mediated like MIT)
- Harvesting – we know that to get articles we’ll have to not just rely on faculty submissions but also harvest from sites like SSRN, ArXiv, PubMed Central, and probably from journals when publishers allow
- (Though like Harvard, I hope we prefer author’s m.s. because we have more rights in that)
- Plan to notify publishers using MIT’s model letter (if publishers on notice about policy, using addendum is less necessary, and as we can see, addendum can draw unwanted attention)
- Julia will have to develop workflows for much of the process for herself and her students.
- We’ll need outreach strategies to educate faculty. Because as Stuart Shieber put it, “The easy part is passing a policy, the hard part is getting your hands on the articles.”

In conclusion, we’re well on our way to implementation, but will be turning to very helpful colleagues like Stuart at Harvard and Ellen at MIT and others for advice and guidance along the way.