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Open Access and Liberal Arts Colleges

EDITOR'S NOTE: Readers of this column are familiar with the development of open access policies and their implementation at research universities. But what about liberal arts colleges? In this issue's column Jonathan Miller explains how a faculty open access policy is both a critical element of information services and an extension of his college's mission.

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Since the Arts & Sciences faculty of Rollins College passed their Open Access (OA) Policy in February 2010, a number of colleagues from around the country have expressed surprise that Rollins should be one of the first liberal arts college faculties to pass such a policy. In fact we were third, after Trinity University in San Antonio and Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, and we should not forget colleges like Gustavus Adolphus in Saint Peter, MN, at which the library faculty as a department passed a policy in support of open access.

The Rollins policy is modeled on the example set by Harvard and others.

Each member of the faculty of Arts & Sciences grants to Rollins College nonexclusive permission to make available the final, peer-reviewed, manuscript version accepted for publication of his or her scholarly articles ... and to exercise all rights under United States copyright law in those works for the purpose of open dissemination. ... The policy will apply to all peer-

reviewed scholarly works, including works jointly authored with persons who are not members of the Rollins faculty of Arts & Sciences, written while the person is a member of the faculty except for any works completed before the adoption of this policy, any works for which the faculty member entered into an incompatible licensing or assignment agreement before the adoption of this policy, and any work for which the author might reasonably expect to receive royalties (including monographs, textbooks, musical, or other creative works.). The Professional Standards Committee will waive application of the policy for a particular work upon written notification by the author, who informs Professional Standards Committee of the reason.¹

Colleagues are surprised because they assume OA is an issue for researchers and the large universities that employ the majority of them. I argue that OA is not just the concern of research universities. In fact, it might be even more relevant for smaller colleges than for larger schools.

Rollins is a largely undergraduate, teaching intensive school with a liberal arts curriculum. This means that, at least in one sense, we need broad not deep access to information. We are net information consumers, rather than net producers. The subscription model of collecting a relatively small number of periodical titles “just in case,” doesn’t make much business sense for a school like us. What we really need is “just in time” access to a broad array of information resources, none of which will be used particularly heavily.

¹ Rollins College Faculty of Arts & Sciences. Open Access Policy. February 2010. http://scholarship.rollins.edu/as_facpub/Open_Access_Policy_Final_02252010.pdf . Accessed October 25, 2010.

Our OA policy is one part of a larger strategy to refocus the faculty and students on a larger world of information and not solely a local library collection. With the enthusiastic support of many faculty, we have repositioned the library as one (we hope important) node in an information network that requires ever closer cooperation and collaboration with other libraries and information providers and which includes local print and digital collections, licensed access to a lot more, and open access to even more scholarly and non-scholarly information. In this model the librarians are the faculty and students' guides and partners in a larger, richer, but more complicated information environment. Placing OA within this multi-part strategy means that the librarians are seen as trusted partners in developing a faculty open access policy.

There are three parts to this strategy that are relevant here:

1. Working politically to create the scholarly communication system we prefer and that meets the needs of the students and faculty at liberal arts colleges.
2. Moving aggressively from print to digital periodicals.
3. Contributing to open access initiatives and exploiting open access resources.

Working Politically

In 2009 I led an effort amongst liberal arts college library directors to protest the Nature Publishing Group's exorbitant increase in the online subscription price for *Scientific American*. We also cancelled our print subscription. This was not universally popular on campus because some faculty used articles from the magazine to initiate class discussion, but it was an opportunity to explain why we thought we had to hold the line on periodical

prices and why OA might help. I have also served on the ACRL Government Relations Committee and the SPARC Steering Committee. Both play leading roles in advocating for open access. My own research concerns the history of copyright policy and libraries and I have looked for opportunities to present that research to my colleagues and have built a reputation as someone with whom they can discuss scholarly communication and copyright issues.

Aggressively Moving from Print to Digital Periodicals.

Obviously, most, if not all, academic libraries are migrating from print to digital periodicals. At Rollins we are doing so for common reasons that include user preference, space, and the ability to link articles to wider information systems thus making them more accessible to our users. But, in response to flat collections budgets over the last few years, we also did a major print periodical cancellation project in 2008-09. We focused on print subscriptions because low use and increases in subscription prices have become unsustainable. Working closely with faculty on this project increased their awareness of just how expensive the annual subscriptions to scholarly periodicals have become. The project was about cuts, but we described it as a necessary pruning. We made sure that faculty understood that if and when budgets improved, we would consider adding subscriptions to digital content. In the meantime we continued to make them aware of OA journals and repositories and made sure to incorporate these open resources, through the Serials Solutions knowledgebase and the work of our liaison librarians, into our systems and services.

Exploiting Open Access Resources and Contributing to Open Access Initiatives

If we encourage our faculty and students to use OA resources as information consumers, shouldn't we also contribute to those resources as information producers? This question is particularly important to those of us who work in liberal arts colleges. The liberal arts originally meant the education appropriate for free men (from the Latin *liber*, free). Liberal arts colleges in the United States have built on this foundation a program of study designed to educate informed citizens and full participants in a democratic society. Rollins' mission is to educate students as global citizens and responsible leaders, and we have a national reputation for community engagement. It is unthinkable that Rollins faculty, and by extension their students, would take advantage of open access to materials produced at the expense of others without also promoting open access to scholarly information that they create.

Rollins Open Access Policy

Before we began working on the policy we were given good advice by those who had traveled this road before us. So I pass this on to you:

Find faculty champions for your open access policy. As a librarian, this should be your primary task. Once you have identified your faculty champions, then you can play a role in the background, providing information, answering questions, reassuring faculty that administering the repository is a role the library can perform. Most successful open access policy initiatives have been faculty initiatives. The faculty champions on our campus were both members of the Professional Standards Committee: Professor Thom Moore, a physicist who directs the faculty/student collaborative research program, and

Professor Claire Strom, a historian and journal editor of *Agricultural History*.² Strom drafted the policy, Moore shepherded it through the faculty. Both are active researchers and well respected on campus and beyond.

Develop the policy and the institutional repository simultaneously. This can be expensive in either time or money and could result in a successful implementation of the repository, but no policy. However, that is not necessarily a bad thing. Many colleges and universities have successful repositories of many kinds of materials, including faculty publications, without a formal OA policy. Building the repository at the same time as you press for the policy means that faculty will be able to see practical examples of how their works will be archived and accessed. This can reassure faculty in disciplines that are not already making extensive use of disciplinary repositories or who have a difficult time envisaging a transformed system of scholarly communication in which bound journals on the library shelves do not play a primary role.

Find the message that resonates with particular audiences on your campus. At Rollins, faculty were interested in a more open system with more visibility for their own research and wanted a policy that recognized the diversity of their work and was flexible enough to enable them to get an automatic waiver when necessary (fully half of the publishing output of Rollins faculty is something other than the classic peer-reviewed scholarly article, such as books, textbooks, creative works, or non-scholarly professional or applied

² The Professional Standards Committee has primary authority and responsibility in all policy matters dealing with the criteria and procedures for professional evaluation, professional leave, and research and professional development for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Rollins.

publications.) The Provost was interested in institutional reputation and the Dean of Faculty in the idea of a stable repository of faculty publications.

The policy passed the A&S faculty unanimously in February 2010. The institutional repository site, Rollins Scholarship Online at <http://scholarship.rollins.edu> went live at the same time. We spent the first half of 2010 tweaking the site and loading materials. In the fall of 2010 we received the data on last year's publications, drawn from the annual reports each faculty member submits to the Dean. David Noe, who administers the institutional repository, asked each faculty member to submit their publications that meet the criteria of the policy. He also assists them with submission or the waiver where necessary.

Next Steps

Once the policy has passed and the repository is up and running, your work has really only just begun. The tasks before us at Rollins include the following.

Continuing to populate the repository. A few faculty members have chosen to self-submit but most have not. The reasons why faculty authors submit, or not, to institutional repositories could be the subject of another column.

Passing a similar policy in the other faculty on campus. Rollins has two faculties, the Arts & Sciences faculty of the liberal arts college and the faculty of the Crummer Business School. So far, our early discussions have been very positive and we expect that faculty will look favorably on a similar policy.

Reaching out to journal editors on campus – both faculty and students -- and offering to host their content. Like most colleges, Rollins is home to a number of journal editors. Some are formal, scholarly society efforts, like *Agricultural History*. Others are home-grown products of the entrepreneurial spirit within the faculty, and still others are student publications. Our institutional repository can manage online journals, both open and toll access. So we are approaching the decision makers associated with each journal to determine whether or not they would like the online iteration of their journal to be hosted at Rollins Scholarship Online. This is also an opportunity to discuss the wider issues of open access with people who can have an impact on scholarly publishing on a wider scale than that of individual authors.

Building other collections into the repository. With a small faculty, an institutional repository that only included faculty publications would be very small. But we can consider other collections. Wenxian Zhang, our Special Collections Librarian and Archivist, has proposed creating a repository of theses, which to this date have been housed in bound volumes in our Archives. An investment group managed by students in the Crummer business school is interested in archiving their annual reports online and, in what we hope is the first of many such opportunities, a history professor has approached us to discuss how we might archive student authored multimedia class projects.

We continue to work on other elements of our strategy to move the focus of the faculty and students of Rollins College on a larger information environment. The long-term work of collaborating and cooperating with other libraries in Florida continues, as does the similarly long-term migration from print to digital resources. We also continue in our

political work in our efforts to persuade Congress that passing the Federal Research Public Access Act (FRPAA, H.R. 5037) is good public policy that will improve access to federally funded research for researchers, consumers, and the students and faculty of liberal arts colleges. At least now Rollins can say we are putting our money where our mouth is.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The College's Open Access Policy and institutional repository would not have come to fruition without the sustained effort of many people including Thomas Moore, Archibald Granville Bush Professor of Science and Professor of Physics, Claire Strom, Rapetti-Trunzo Chair of History, Bill Svitavsky, Head of Digital Services & Systems, David Noe, Digital Services Librarian, Peter Suber, Senior Researcher at SPARC, and Jonathan Cadle of Berkeley Electronic Press.