

## Adopting and Implementing an Open Access Policy: The Library's Role

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**Abstract:** With the support of the library, the faculty, and the administration, Allegheny College recently adopted the strongest type of open access policy, a mandate for all faculty scholarship to be placed in the college's institutional repository. The library's Head of Technical Services tells how the policy came to be approved and how it is being implemented by the library.

**Keywords:** DSpace, Institutional Repository, Open Access, Publishing Fees

### Contributor Notes:

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About halfway between Chicago and New York City, the county seat of Meadville, Pennsylvania, at the northwest corner of the state, could be said to be where the east coast meets the midwest. Meadville is the home of Allegheny College, a small liberal arts college with a single campus and a diverse undergraduate student population of 2100. Its faculty members, over 90% of whom have terminal degrees, are expected to produce research publications to be awarded tenure.

On March 14, 2013, the faculty of Allegheny College voted to approve an open access policy governing faculty publications. Brian Kern, Head of Technical Services of the College's Pelletier Library, described the implementation process of the brand new policy, along with the story of its origin and evolution.

The Pelletier Library has seven librarians among its 16.5 FTE staff. Its print and electronic monograph collection of 1,040,668 volumes includes over 350,000 unique titles and is supported by 69 endowments and grants. The journal collection, consuming a third of the library's budget and relying heavily upon publisher packages, consists of 12,143 titles (with aggregated collections and free journals, the number rises to over 44,700). However, only 358 of those titles are subscriptions truly selected for the collection. This is only about a third of the number of subscriptions the library had prior to two substantial cancellation projects, forced by budget cuts, in 2004 and 2010 ... with future cancellations anticipated.

Following its second round of journal cancellations in 2010, the library underwent a self-study and identified the need to advocate for open-access as one of its goals.

The Pelletier Library already had a strong commitment to open-source software, including the Sakai learning management system and an open-source electronic resource and serials management system. And the library had already created a DSpace digital repository for students' senior projects and historical documents, such as its prized collection of the documents of the journalist Ida M. Tarbell. Due to concerns for student privacy, the College created what is called a hybrid repository – part open and part closed – so that access to the student publications could be limited to individuals with a valid Allegheny College log-in.

Just around the time that the library was recognizing its commitment to promote open access, the issue began to be noticed by the college's Academic Support Committee, a committee responsible for recommending sabbatical requests and allocating funds for faculty research. This committee suddenly became aware that its guidelines for research funding didn't cover publishers' open access fees, and that many faculty members had been paying these fees out of their own pockets.

So the stage was set, so to speak, to create a true institutional repository of faculty scholarship. The four members of the committee, in collaboration with the Pelletier Library's director, began to draft an open access policy for Allegheny College, using existing open access policies as models. They discussed and agreed upon some implementation details too, but deliberately left them out, to keep the policy simple and help ensure its approval by the faculty.

The committee's first attempt resulted in what is known as an encouragement pledge, the weakest form of open access policy, with no requirement for faculty to submit their publications to the institutional repository; as committee members continued to revise the policy, it grew stronger. The final version was a rights retention policy with a permission mandate, a policy that assumes that faculty authors will retain full rights to their work, and mandates that the authors give the library a copy, along with permission to host the work on the institution's repository and the non-exclusive right to make the work openly available. This is the Harvard-style open access policy, considered to be the strongest type.

The policy only applies to peer-reviewed articles – not conference proceedings, poster sessions, or other non-scholarly content. And it applies only to works written or contracted to be published since the adoption of the policy on March 14, 2013 – although earlier works may also be submitted and, if the author and publisher both consent, made openly available on the repository.

Naturally, publishers that make money on subscriptions and article purchase fees aren't likely to embrace the idea of having the same content offered for free elsewhere. Some publishers restrict open access availability to a pre-publication version of the article – a preprint, the version prior to peer-review, or a postprint, after peer-review but before copy editing by the publisher. But Allegheny College's open access policy doesn't specify which version of the article must be submitted; any version that is allowed by the publisher's contract is acceptable for the institutional repository.

Some publishers set an embargo period during which *no* version of an article can be made open access, and some prohibit open access entirely. Faculty members at Allegheny College are encouraged to try to negotiate with such publishers by submitting an addendum to their contracts. If negotiation fails, faculty are allowed to fill out a form to waive participation in open access. A waiver would most likely be submitted due to publisher restrictions, but any waiver submitted by faculty will be automatically granted, regardless of the reason.

But even faculty authors who waive participation in open access are still required to submit their works to the institutional repository. If an author or publisher doesn't consent to allow open access to an article, it will be placed in the closed archive of the institutional repository – “preserved but not disseminated,” in the words of the policy. In the case of publishers' embargo periods, the articles will be moved to the open section of the repository once the embargo period has expired.

Prior to the faculty vote on the policy, the library's director held meetings with faculty and used the library's newsletter to explain and promote open access. Many in the library viewed open access as a way to change publishing models, reduce journal inflation, help the library, and increase public access to scholarly content ... and those arguments were certainly a part of the discussion. But it was the Academic Support Committee that was primarily responsible for influencing the faculty on the issue, by arguing that open access empowered faculty authors to preserve their rights, rather than sign them over to publishers. This approach resonated with faculty, and was likely a key factor in the the policy's resounding approval.

Another contributing factor was the commitment of the College's Provost. When the library offered to set aside a fund of \$3000 to cover open access publishing fees, the Provost offered to match every dollar in the fund and to allow unused funds to be carried over from year to year, a benefit rarely attached to any fund at Allegheny College. The Provost's action sent a strong signal to the faculty that open access would be supported, and the library began to field requests to fund open access fees even before the open access policy was approved.

The library found its major role in open access at Allegheny College to be in its implementation, which is still underway. Implementation consists of two components, a website, created and maintained by the library's director and an instructional technologist, and the DSpace institutional repository, which is maintained by the Head of Technical Services, Brian Kern, with the help of a student assistant to be hired in the fall of 2013.

The website, still under construction at <http://library.allegheny.edu/openaccess> at the time of this presentation, consists of the policy itself, a rationale for the policy, and a frequently-asked questions section, as well as links to informative sites about open access. When completed, it will also include online forms to request funding for open access fees or to waive open access availability for a specific publication, and a program that will generate a contract addendum, to be submitted to publishers, to eliminate embargoes or other restrictions from a contract.



Figure 1. Preliminary design of Allegheny Colleges open access Web page.

The DSpace component at <https://dspace.allegheny.edu/handle/10456/34250> allows searching and browsing of the new “Faculty Scholarship” collection. When completed, faculty who log in will be able to access an article submission form, which will ask for basic citation information, an abstract, and details about publisher restrictions, along with the submission itself. The library will be flexible and accept submitted articles in any format, even on paper, but they expect that most faculty members will submit their material in the preferred PDF format, using the online form.

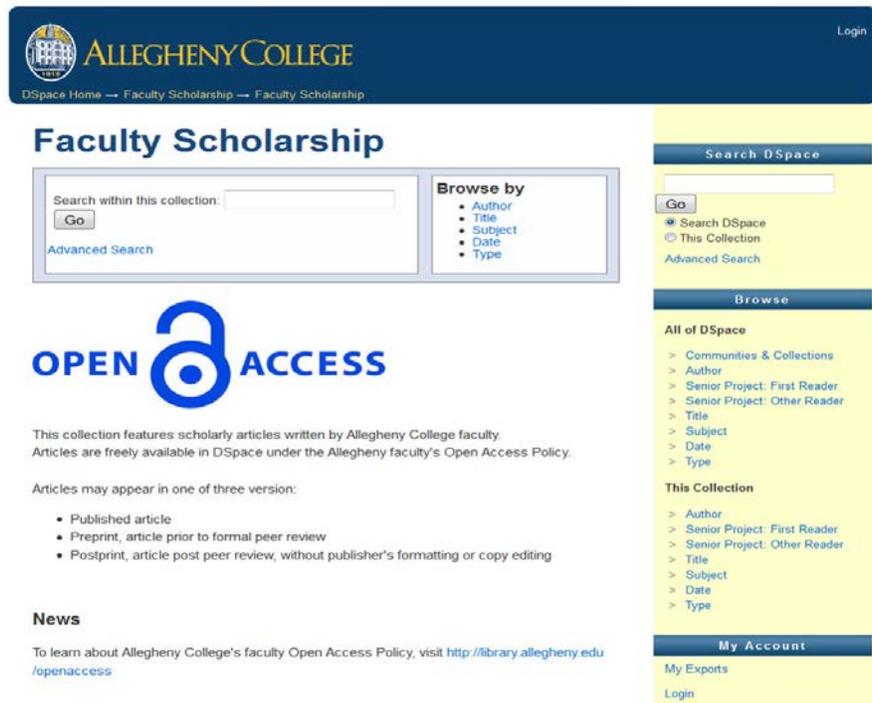


Figure 2. Preliminary design of Allegheny College’s “Faculty Scholarship” Web page.

At the time of this presentation, the library had already received and posted one submission to the “Faculty Scholarship” collection, a student-faculty collaboration published by Elsevier, which was supported by funding from the library’s new open access fund.

Part of Brian Kern’s job is to populate the repository with content. He already used the College’s online newsletter, *People and Places*, to discover new faculty works to place on display; he will now use it to identify faculty authors who have not yet submitted their files to DSpace, send them reminders, and make sure all new faculty publications end up in the repository.

Another way to build up the repository is with previously-published articles that can be added to the open archive without violating any publisher contracts. A system developed by Stephen X. Flynn of the College of Wooster helps to identify them, utilizing Google Scripts and the SHERPA/RoMEO database of publisher permissions and restrictions to create a spreadsheet of an institution’s faculty publications.<sup>1</sup> Using this system, Kern discovered over 60 articles that could be added to the institutional repository right away.

It is also necessary to create metadata for each submission. Each article will have a citation page created for it, and subject headings assigned. The repository must also be told what restrictions and embargoes are placed on access to the content.

Unfortunately, the version of DSpace currently in use at Allegheny College is unable to display the metadata while withholding the content, resulting in a rather unsatisfactory display of search results.

The screenshot shows the DSpace repository interface for Allegheny College. The header includes the college logo and name, a 'Login' link, and a breadcrumb trail: 'DSpace Home → Senior Projects → Browsing Senior Projects by Title'. The main heading is 'Browsing Senior Projects by Title'. Below this is a search bar with a 'Go' button and a 'Search DSpace' section with a search input field and a 'Go' button. There are also links for 'Advanced Search' and 'Browse'. The 'Browse' section lists categories like 'All of DSpace' and 'This Community' with sub-items like 'Communities & Collections', 'Author', 'Senior Project: First Reader', etc. The main content area shows a list of items, each with a message: 'Item Details Withheld' and 'Please login to view full item details.' The pagination shows 'Now showing items 1-5 of 2621' and a 'Next Page »' link. The 'My Account' section at the bottom right includes 'My Exports' and 'Login' links.

Figure 3. Display of closed archive publications in the institutional repository, with metadata suppressed.

Using additional gateways into DSpace can resolve these problems with metadata display, but the latest release of DSpace is supposed to alleviate this problem by itself. This most recent version also provides more automated features, such as automatic monitoring of embargo expiration dates.

It is also important to make the metadata to be discoverable by Web searches in general, and there are three ways to make that happen. The first way is to turn on the feature in DSpace which permits search engines to index the site with the use of Web crawlers. The second is to use Google Scholar metadata mapping, dividing the elements of the citation into separate fields which correspond to the data fields used by Google Scholar. And the third is to conform to the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) interoperability standard, which allows an institutional repository to share files and data with other libraries' institutional repositories, catalogs, or discovery platforms.

The library uses the first two methods to expose its metadata out to the world at large, so its data is discoverable by Google and other search engines, at least. But conforming to OAI standards would have permitted access to all the files, including those which are supposed to be restricted. Again, this problem should be resolved once the library upgrades to the latest release of DSpace, allowing Allegheny College to comply with OAI standards without compromising the security of its closed archive.

Mr. Kern closed with what he felt he had learned through the process:

- Open access should be viewed as a movement to educate faculty about their rights when they author a journal article ... not about helping libraries or patrons.
- Funding to cover open access fees is an important way to get faculty on board with open access.
- Establish an implementation plan even before the policy is passed.
- Be flexible in helping faculty understand and comply with the policy, and keep the submission process simple.
- Publicize the collection and make it available any way possible.

To a question about a benchmark figure for the number of articles he hoped to have deposited, Mr. Kern said that, based upon publication figures from previous years, he expected it would be about 40 articles per year. Asked if there was a sustainability plan for the repository, Kern replied, not yet.

Mr. Kern was asked if the library provided any guidance to faculty about avoiding "predatory" open access journals; he responded that this would be done informally, if a faculty member asked for guidance, but there was no formal plan to steer faculty toward or away from publishing in any particular journals.

An audience member asked whether they used Creative Commons licensing; Mr. Kern responded that they had not. Asked if any faculty members were concerned about the ability of anyone to access and copy their content, Kern responded that the only concern he'd heard had come from humanities department members, who feared that their work being diminished in value by being openly available, and therefore be less likely to be included in anthologies.

Another audience member asked if any faculty members were considering publishing their own open access journals; Kern answered that Allegheny College produces one journal – in print -- edited by a faculty member who is set to retire soon. If someone else takes over the journal, it may become electronic, and if it does, it will probably be open access.

Asked if he thought the senior projects collection would ever become openly available, Kern replied that there was a concern not only for student privacy, but also about the possibility of plagiarism. Another audience member then discussed the problem of restricted metadata, and mentioned that he had recently heard from a library with a repository of student writings, which was considering providing the students' contact information and letting them decide, on a case-by-case basis, whether to share their writing. Kern replied that he felt certain that his repository's metadata issues would be resolved in the next year, and that, in fact, the main push to do so was coming from Allegheny College's admissions department, which viewed the student project collection as a valuable recruitment tool.

## References

1. Flynn, Stephen X. "Kickstart your Institutional Repository with Content from Publishers." Poster presented at Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) 2013 Conference, Indianapolis, IN, April 11, 2013. <http://www.sxflynn.net/journal/2013/4/14/kickstart-your-institutional-repository-with-content-from-pu.html> [accessed July 12, 2013].