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# Promoting Public Access Policies: A New Role for Librarians

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## Promoting Public Access Policies – A New Role for Librarians

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### Abstract

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) with its public access policy has joined a host of other granting agencies requiring researchers to provide open access to their research outputs. To help researchers comply with this policy, science librarians at York University have developed a diversified strategy for education and outreach on open access and scholarly publishing issues. Development of a website providing information on policy highlights and resources for enabling open access to research was the first step in this direction. Advocating for institutional support for OA publisher memberships to cover article processing fees was seen as a logical next step to provide more avenues for faculty publishing in OA journals. The recent Compact for Open Access Publishing Equity provides a rationale for this approach.

In this paper we will discuss how we sought to promote these initiatives through online community newsletters as well as through workshops organized by faculty research officers. Faculty uptake of these initiatives will be discussed, based on informal feedback from researchers who have used these subsidies. The launch of PubMed Central Canada has been an added impetus to promote open access among researchers. Explaining the benefits of deposit in subject and institutional repositories is best done by librarians, who understand the scholarly communications landscape. Library professional organizations increasingly view library support of public access policies as one of the future trends impacting libraries. In a special report on library liaison roles, the Association of Research Libraries has underlined the importance of the liaison librarian in promoting new models in scholarly communication. In this context we share our experiences in forging partnerships across the campus to promote public access to research and evaluate the approach we have used in terms of future directions.

### Introduction

Librarians have long been engaged in public policy issues. Advocacy for information litera-

cy, fair dealing in copyright and equal access to information are some of the areas in which librarians have been actively engaged. With the adoption of public access mandates by research funding agencies, universities, and research institutions, librarians are being called to fill a challenging new role--to promote and educate their constituencies on the desirability of open access, as a more equitable solution to providing access to research results. In Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has been in the forefront in mandating public access to research outputs. CIHR supports the work of researchers in universities, teaching hospitals and research institutes across Canada. CIHR policy [<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/34846.html>] on research outputs requires published papers based on funded research to be made freely accessible within six months of publication. This can be achieved by publishing in an open access journal, or in a journal that provides free public access within the stipulated period, or by self-archiving the final peer-reviewed manuscript in a designated repository. The policy applies to CIHR grants awarded after January 1, 2008. With respect to data, the policy states that datasets are to be retained for a period of 5 years and where disciplinary repositories exist, as in the case of bioinformatics and crystallographic data, deposit is a requirement.

According to SHERPA/JULIET [<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/>], a service that provides summaries of the open access policies of research funding agencies, there are to date eight other research funding agencies in Canada besides CIHR with open access archiving policies. Three of these policies also cover articles published in open access journals or in hybrid journals which provide open access for a fee.

Many libraries are weighing funding for article processing charges, especially after the introduction in 2009 of the Compact for Open Access Publishing Equity (COPE) [<http://www.oacomact.org/>], which provides the rationale for this approach. Seven universities and one research center are signatories, including the University of Ottawa in Canada. Two other Canadian universities, Simon-Fraser University

in British Columbia and the University of Calgary, also have centrally managed open-access funds. These initiatives appear to be the answer to the call by Stuart Shieber, who was involved in the formation of COPE, to establish a more equitable footing for open access publishers, who may not be able to access the funding mechanisms available to subscription publishers (Shieber 2009). SPARC (Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition) has recently published a guide [<http://www.arl.org/sparc/openaccess/funds/>] to Campus-based Open-Access Publishing Funds.

### Public Access Mandates – An Opportunity for Librarians

At York University we considered the CIHR policy directed at public access to research outputs as an opportunity to promote open access to faculty and graduate students. Science librarians, who are more cognizant of recent developments in scholarly publishing are a natural fit for the role of promoting open access to the many biomedical researchers who have received CIHR grants. Promoting the policy involves a team of librarians with differing areas of expertise. In addition to the liaison librarian, the metadata librarian may assist researchers in complying with the policy, by training researchers how to deposit journal articles into the institutional repository, YorkSpace. Online videos have been created to demonstrate the use of SHERPA/RoMEO [<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>] and YorkSpace.

In educating researchers on how to comply with the policy, we adopted a progressive, multi-faceted approach. We spoke to members of the Senate Committee for Library and Information Technology; we wrote articles in newsletters for faculty introducing the concept of open access and the library's role in promoting compliance with CIHR policy. We attended grant funding information sessions, which provided us with useful information on the grant application process and opportunity to liaise with researchers. We consulted with the CIHR Delegate for York University on the best approach to take to educate faculty on the policy provisions.

The launch of PubMed Central Canada (PMC Canada) [<http://pubmedcentralcanada.ca/index.html>] has provided an added incentive to promote CIHR policy. Part of the PMCI (PubMed Central International) network, in which nation-

al versions of PubMed Central can share content, PMC Canada will be the national archive for health and life science literature (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1 PubMed Central Canada website

In the future this national archive will be available to other research organizations besides CIHR. Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) institutional repositories [[http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/institutional\\_repositories/canadian\\_projects-e.html](http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/institutional_repositories/canadian_projects-e.html)] were previously considered as alternative locations for depositing CIHR funded articles. PMC Canada will now be the primary location for depositing manuscripts of these authors. It will provide a bilingual interface and deposit mechanism for Canadian researchers. It is expected that other Canadian funding agencies such as NSERC (National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada) and SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) will follow suit with public access mandates of their own.

As members of the York University Libraries Scholarly Communications Committee, two of us, Fernandez and Salmon, are responsible for creating a web page to keep researchers up to date with developments pertaining to CIHR policy. The website has been included under representative documents in a recent ARL SPEC Kit on Public Access Policies [<http://www.arl.org/bm~doc/spec-311-web.pdf>]. Our website includes a weblog informing faculty of ongoing developments in scholarly communication including York University Libraries' initiative for subsidizing article processing charges (APC) for selected open access publishers. The Scholarly Communications Initiative [<http://scholcom.yorku.ca/>] is accessible as part of the Digital Initiatives at York webpage available from the

main library website. A screenshot of the site is shown in Fig. 2.



Fig. 2 Scholarly Communications Initiative website

A recent article by Greyson et al. on university supports for open access reports the results of a survey of Canadian libraries and research administration offices (Greyson 2010). The results indicate that libraries are more likely than research administration offices to see themselves being involved in the education and promotion of open access. Moreover, library respondents reported higher levels of expertise than research administrators with respect to an understanding of open access. The study also calls for greater synergy between libraries and research administration offices.

At York University we work with research officers to organize workshops to highlight the CIHR policy on research outputs and explain how researchers can comply with its requirements. Our workshops are offered in collaboration with the research officers of the Faculty of Health as well as the Faculty of Science and Engineering. Archived versions of the workshops are deposited in the YorkSpace institutional repository and linked to the faculty research website. We have conducted a series of workshops that involved demonstrating how to determine and interpret publisher copyright and self-archiving policies using the SHERPA/RoMEO database and how to deposit into the YorkSpace institutional repository. Other content covered included open access publication options, author rights and York University Libraries' support for covering article processing charges. Useful databases such as Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) [<http://www.doaj.org/>] and Ulrich's were recommended for

choosing an open access journal for publishing. In addition, sites such as the PMC [<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/journals/>] publisher list and Highwire Press [<http://highwire.stanford.edu/lists/freeart.dtl>] were highlighted for journals providing open access after an embargo period. SHERPA/RoMEO now includes a dropdown box to check for CIHR compliant journals as well as publishers. Databases such as Web of Science and Scopus also allow searching by funder making it easier for researchers to find funded research publications. The SPARC Canadian Author Addendum [<http://www.carl-abrc.ca/projects/author/EngBrochure.pdf>] is recommended for retaining author rights to self-archive as shown in Fig. 3.



Fig. 3 CARL-SPARC Author Addendum

These workshops raised several questions from researchers, such as whether items deposited in YorkSpace are permanent. We explained that all items deposited into YorkSpace will be migrated and archived into perpetuity. In response to the question of post-prints needing verification we could assure them that there would be a link to the published version in the record. We were also able to provide a list of APCs from different publishers as requested by one participant. Other needs that surfaced were the lack of open access journals in particular disciplines and the need for clarity in some publishers' policies towards self-archiving. While we have been able to assuage some concerns, publishing in a journal of their choice is ultimately a researcher's personal decision. Increasing reputations of open access journals from Public Library of Science such as *PLoS ONE* and the number of their peers publishing in these journals can certainly help to convince researchers to publish in these open access journals. By including a metadata librarian on our team we were able to explain the importance of metadata in increas-

ing visibility and developing a template specific to CIHR researchers.

### Advocating for Open Access Publishers

Subject librarians have a role to play in understanding alternative publishing models in scholarly publishing and advocating for them. Thanks to librarian advocates, York was one of the first libraries to support Bioline International [<http://www.bioline.org.br/>], a project that has been providing open access to journals from developing countries for over a decade. York science librarians have also been vocal in their support of open access publishers, particularly BioMed Central (BMC) [<http://www.biomedcentral.com/>], Public Library of Science (PLOS) [<http://www.plos.org/>], and Hindawi Publishing Corporation [<http://www.hindawi.com/>], and have persuaded library administration to provide author support for publishing in these journals. Using an incremental approach, BioMed Central (BMC) membership was initiated in 2005, followed by Public Library of Science (PLOS) membership and, more recently, a trial membership of Hindawi. Faculty requests have been the most important driver for membership. But we also monitor usage of these journals as well as the number of researchers taking advantage of these memberships. Public Library of Science and BioMed Central journal usage logs are available to check the most read journals. BMC also provides reports of article submissions and acceptances for York authors so that we can monitor fund activity. A list of publications by York authors in BMC journals is publicly available from the publisher's website. Apart from listing publications of York authors, Hindawi prominently displays York affiliated editors and reviewers on its website as a form of promotion.

Subsidy of article processing fees can help level the playing field for open access publishers, who lack subscription income and must charge author fees to ensure sustainability. Stuart Shieber, who advocates for this approach, insists that universities and funding agencies already underwrite the costs of publishing in subscription journals (Shieber 2009). An Ithaka study on the sustainability of Hindawi provides a rationale for support of this publisher. A recent article in *Learned Publishing* [<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/alpsp/lp/2010/0000023/0000002/art00004>] asserts that open access publishing can be a viable solution

for society publishers (Cooney-McQuat et al. 2010), while noting that the number of societies publishing with BioMed Central has recently doubled. According to Donald King there are potential savings to be obtained by moving to 100% federal funding of all articles written by US scientists (King 2010).

We have conducted a survey of campus authors in library supported open access journals, in order to assess satisfaction with these journals. The results show that faculty researchers appreciate the financial support towards article processing charges, even if it is only a subsidy as in the case of Public Library of Science (PLOS) journals. The survey results demonstrate that open access publishing is largely accepted by departmental Tenure and Promotion Committees, and that while researchers do consider tenure and promotion, their primary consideration is impact. They are aware of the high visibility available with these journals and the increase in impact. As a result we are seeing a substantial increase in the number of articles published by York faculty in these journals. However our allocations for these funds have not been utilized by some authors, especially those who have other sources of funding. Our results indicate that there is also need for promotion of this initiative.

### Evolving Roles of Liaison Librarians

An appreciation of disciplinary approaches to publishing can provide better understanding of researchers and their needs. It can also help to more closely align liaison librarians with the research, teaching and learning processes of research institutions. Kara Malenfant in a recent article discusses the integration of scholarly communication activities in the work life of liaison librarians at the University of Minnesota. This involved a transformation of roles and a change in primary responsibilities and "loosening their ties to the activities that traditionally defined them" such as collections and reference. Among other things she encourages libraries "to use a political lens to build coalitions outside the library" (Malenfant 2010).

Liaison librarians are best placed to support researchers in complying with public access mandates because of their long exposure to the concepts of open access, such as its potential for increased citations and knowledge of the open access publishing environment. This can also

be an opportunity to introduce open data principles and licensing issues surrounding data. The subject liaison can help to inform faculty of discipline specific resources while also getting to know and understand scholarly practices in the discipline. Knowing the concerns of scholars can inform future library-based initiatives. *Research Library Issues* in 2009 published a special issue on liaison librarian roles. One of the contributors, Joy Kirchner, explains how the University of British Columbia has initiated a scholarly communications project by integrating liaison roles and engaging major stakeholders on campus. Ensuring compliance to public access mandates was one of the targeted areas (Kirchner 2009). In a forthcoming Association of Research Libraries report [<http://www.arl.org/rtl/plan/nrnt/nrntbios.shtml#williams>] by Karen Williams on transforming liaison roles, we can look forward to a larger exploration of some of these ideas.

At York University Libraries, liaison librarians use various approaches to educate themselves regarding faculty concerns. Each faculty council has a librarian representative. Apart from creating visibility at meetings, this is an opportunity to reach out to faculty and promote library services. We are achieving some success by personal communication. Attendance at departmental events provides a more direct approach and can be used to publicize author subsidies of open access journals rather than through e-mails and faculty newsletters, which are seldom read. At the library level, we have to ensure that all open access journals get catalogued and are included in our e-resources database to ensure visibility and usage. Creating an awareness of OA journals by forwarding press releases on impact factor or highlighting important articles from these journals are some of the ways we are promoting open access publishing.

There are other examples of how the liaison approach can work in outreach to researchers. One of the authors of this article (Nariani) uses innovative methods such as a blogroll to identify funded papers published by neuroscience researchers. This has allowed the librarian to develop a presence on the neuroscience research website. In recognition of his liaison work, he was invited to co-publish with a researcher on a systematic review paper. Documentation on open access has been targeted for graduate students. We have developed an information

page on PMC Canada for our subject resource guides, which are moderately well used by students, and for inclusion in our e-resources database. Research officers can provide links to this page from the faculty research website. To mark the occasion of the official spring launch of PMC Canada a campus celebration [<http://www.yorku.ca/health/events/?Event=19540>] is planned that will be hosted by the York University Libraries.

### Concluding comments

Public access mandates have provided the impetus for developing partnerships with researchers and research offices on campus. It has also provided an opportunity for libraries in creating awareness and educating researchers on changes in scholarly publishing. While experience has shown that not all librarians are enthused by this opportunity, moving out of our comfort zones and reaching out to campus stakeholders can enlarge the role of liaison librarians to engage with the research process. With more public access mandates on the horizon we foresee an expansion of our activities.

We are evaluating our approach to funding article processing charges with a view to developing a policy recommendation. We hope that surveying York authors and assessing author uptake will provide a rationale to library administration for increasing additional author support. We expect to study the publishing patterns of York researchers in other OA journals to determine the level of support needed. Usage and citation data may also be needed to show value to campus stakeholders.

We have the following recommendations for science librarians based on our experiences.

1. If your library cannot afford a large commitment try an incremental approach to OA author funding based on faculty publishing patterns in your institution.
2. Advocating and mobilizing opinion for consortia agreements to include support for alternative publishing and self-archiving is needed. ASEE engineering librarians have included self-archiving rights in their punch list [<http://depts.washington.edu/englib/eld/punchlist/PunchlistRevision2005.pdf>] of best practices for electronic resources. Librarians need to pursue this further to get these concessions for our re-

searchers.

3. Make open access a priority and seek campus opportunities to demonstrate its value. Be nimble and creative in finding ways to interest faculty in library initiatives concerning scholarly communication.

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