Open Access to Knowledge: A University Case Study

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Following implementation of an open access policy at Harvard University, faculty on university campuses around the United States may have found themselves discussing whether to also adopt an open access policy and considering how they would do so at their institutions. In February 2008, after the Harvard University Faculty of Arts and Sciences passed an open access policy granting a license to the University to share their scholarly journal articles openly, a ripple effect was set in motion. Access advocates and activists saw this as a harbinger of the emergence of a better access model, one that would give the public direct access to the intellectual content produced by scholars. Also applauding the Harvard policy were academics and librarians on the campus front lines who had for years been engaged in deliberations about the traditional dissemination of scholarly communications and its inherent disadvantages to scholars and institutions. These individuals quickly saw an opportunity to encourage and put into practice newer and complementary methods of dissemination of scholarly information on their campuses.

In April 2009, the faculty at the University of Kansas (KU) passed an Open Access policy in their Faculty Senate. In a second vote of the Senate, in February 2010, the KU policy was further expanded and approved. With these policy actions, emanating from faculty governance, KU became the first comprehensive, public research institution in the United States to pass a university-wide policy of this kind—twice. The KU policy was similar to the policies passed by faculty at Harvard, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and Stanford, all in 2008, and with the passage of these policies, the KU faculty joined the ranks of faculty at private universities to initiate a self-imposed mandate making their scholarly journal articles publicly
available. What can be gained by an examination of the faculty interest in creating change in a system in which they are major stakeholders? What can be learned by examining the history that precedes the passage of open access policies?

The purpose of this paper is to offer “lessons learned” by faculty advocates regarding practical insights for those either already engaged in creating or contemplating the creation of such a policy on their campuses. Although each campus is unique, the public university experience may provide useful information to other university activists in similar environments. It is the authors’ hope that the practical experiences gained by faculty advocates at KU may provide useful information while various methods are being discussed, developed and tested at other academic institutions. We further hope that the lessons learned from the KU experience may be generalized and applied, in principle if not in detail, at other campuses. We will first provide a brief sketch of KU’s ten year history in examining scholarly communication issues culminating in the passage of a faculty open access policy.

As has been discovered on the campuses of Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and the University of Kansas, the practical aspects of creating change in the behavior and understanding of academics related to the creation of open access policies are complex. Stated another way, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings for the open access movement and the pragmatic requirements of reaching open access practices are two different and necessary perspectives. Both views are critical, but the authors’ intentions are to focus on the more pragmatic aspects. Making “vision” a reality is rife with challenges and opportunities for those on the front-lines, and these particular aspects of policy creation and implementation have not yet been fully
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explored in the literature of open access. The work done among faculty colleagues in a specific academic community for a concentrated period of time creates a depth of hard-earned experience that can be shared with others “in the trenches” who aspire to create an open access policy of their own. The experiences gained by those local campus advocates who are directly engaged in the cultural, sociological and psychological aspects of social change can be of significant value to others who may be contemplating similar policy creation or related initiatives.

A Brief History of Open Access at KU

Looking back over the decade preceding the vote on the KU campus where the open access policy was adopted, one can trace an historical progression of activities related to improving scholarly communications and seeking ways to expand access to academic scholarship. Through the first decade of the 21st century, many of the activities prepared KU to design and ultimately implement an open access policy.

1999-2008 Scholarly Communication Reform at KU:

Academic institutions in the state of Kansas have over ten years’ experience in advocating for reform in scholarly communication and, more recently, in open and public access to the results of scholarship. Beginning in the 1999-2000 academic year, through 2008, faculty seminars, conferences and other key events were sponsored by various bodies on the campuses of the University of Kansas, Kansas State University and KU Medical Center. For example:

• In 2000, KU held its first seminar: “From Crisis to Reform: Scholarly Communication and the Tempe Principles,” involving national speakers on key topics. KU’s then-Provost David
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Shulenberger’s paper, “Moving with Dispatch to Resolve the Scholarly Communication” launched KU on the national scene as a leader in the growing conversations about scholarly communication reform.

• In 2005:
  ▪ "The Changing Landscape of Scholarly Communication: The Role of Digital Repositories" Provost Seminar was held, the second in five years, and was well attended by faculty.
  ▪ KU faculty governance passed a resolution to encourage greater access to scholarship created at the University with significant encouragement from Shulenberger.
  ▪ KU went live with its institutional repository, KU ScholarWorks (built on MIT’s open source software, DSpace.)

• In 2006, KU Medical Center (KUMC) campus sponsored the “Mass and Matter: public access to scientific information” conference.

• In 2007, KU launched its first hosted journal publications using Open Journal Systems.

• Lastly, in February, 2008, Stanford professor John Willinsky lead a Globalization Seminar at KU entitled “Open Access to Knowledge: What Comes of the Right to Know in Kansas and Kumasi”. (Video presentations of Willinsky’s talks are available in KU’s open repository and linked from the References section at the end of this paper.)

These events illustrate how KU faculty were interested in methods to change the scholarly communication model and to foster greater awareness of the benefits of adopting open access
as an institutional response to recent challenges in this area. The idea for crafting an open access policy for KU was a natural outgrowth of interest, concern and advocacy, fostered over ten years.

Open Access Policy—Phase I and Phase II:

Not long after the Willinsky visit to KU, Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard passed the first open access policy in the United States in February, 2008. This served as an important catalyst at KU and as a result the decision was made among a group of faculty to pursue the creation of a University-wide open access policy. At that time, early discussions began among faculty as well as faculty governance members on how best to leverage the campus’ support of scholarly communication reform efforts and gather other faculty who would be interested in joining forces.

In late Spring 2008, discussions were held among members of the University’s Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FacEx) about the best way initially to introduce and frame the impetus for an open access policy within the faculty governance system.

During the fall and winter of 2008 and 2009, governance representatives met and developed policy drafts, suggested implementation details, and proactively advanced the Open Access message across campus. As part of their work, a web-based survey was distributed to faculty to assess attitudes and knowledge about open access and to gauge faculty awareness of and interest in an open access policy on the KU campus. Two open meetings were convened for faculty to hear about open access and presentations were made in FacEx and in full Faculty Senate meetings.
In April 2009, with the proviso requiring future approval of specific implementation details, the policy was passed overwhelmingly by the Faculty Senate. It was later approved by the Provost and Chancellor in May, 2009. The final sentence of the policy stated:

“Faculty governance in consultation with the Provost's office will develop the details of the policy which will be submitted for approval by the Faculty Senate.”

Thus, in early 2009, KU had achieved a remarkable milestone by being the first public institution where faculty approved a comprehensive open access policy. However, as noted above, there was the provision required by the Senate that implementation details still needed to be described and approved in the coming year as a second phase.

With that requirement in place, a new and larger implementation task force was formed in the summer of 2009, composed of faculty from a range of disciplines and ranks (including librarians), university administrators, and the representative of the Faculty Senate. All members of the task force were strong faculty supporters of open access, even if not yet well informed of the complex issues. Many of the faculty task force members were already practicing some form of open and public sharing of their work. Throughout the summer and into the fall of 2009, this new task force worked tirelessly to consult with and inform faculty across campus, seek guidance on policy revisions, and outline an implementation plan.

The implementation plan that began to unfold described processes that would be undertaken to carry out the terms of the policy. In an iterative and deliberative process that involved over 20 public meetings with over 220 faculty and administrators, university constituents were
engaged, questions and concerns addressed, and feedback received. For example, during the Fall 2009 semester, in efforts to further educate the campus community, the Task Force:

- Held six open “brown bag” lunches and one open meeting for all faculty;
- Arranged meetings with academic departments;
- Prepared and presented progress reports to FacEx, Faculty Senate, and Vice Provosts and Deans’ in the "Academic Council"; and Graduate Student Senates; and
- Held extended discussions with the Information Technology Unit and the KU Libraries to clarify their roles and resources needed.

As the academic year progressed, the task force discussed and summarized the input as it was received and prepared new drafts of an implementation outline and revisions to the policy.

“Early adopter” departments and individual faculty members were enlisted to test implementation ideas and processes as well.

A penultimate progress report and presentation were enthusiastically received by FacEx and the Faculty Senate in November 2009. In February 2010, the final drafts of the policy revision and the implementation outline were submitted. Finally, after some debate on the Faculty Senate floor, the policy was approved as submitted and the implementation document endorsed. With this approval and endorsement, KU’s Open Access Policy, including implementation details, were submitted to the Provost and Chancellor for final approval. The policy then took full effect.

The Open Access policy that was passed by the Faculty Senate and approved by the central administration was the product of a broad, collaborative effort by members of the faculty
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(including librarians), administration, and faculty governance. The process took two full academic years and considerable investment of time and effort by members of the KU faculty and administration, including library faculty in leadership roles within University Governance, particularly the Faculty Senate and FacEx.

Lessons Learned and “Take Aways”:

As noted above, a central purpose of this paper is to offer “lessons learned” – specifically those learned by faculty advocates at KU working together to pass an open access policy—and to provide “take aways”, or practical insights for those already either engaged in creating or contemplating the creation of such a policy on their campuses. Each academic institution has a unique culture, but the experience gained at KU, a public research university, may prove useful to other university advocates in similar institutions. Several cogent observations about the path leading from interest in an open access policy to passage of such a policy can be made at this juncture. Below we offer lessons learned, from overarching philosophical approaches, campus/institutional conditions and processes, task force development and functions, faculty perspectives, and more narrow ranges of recommendations based on the KU experience. These observations are not intended to offer step-by-step procedures for creating an open access policy. Indeed, many of these suggestions, once undertaken, may occur in a simultaneous manner depending on local circumstances, planning strategies, or other variables not possible to predict.

General Philosophy
Several overarching approaches may be considered during the early stages of the discussion surrounding the creation of an open access policy. Those suggested below are intended to offer a context in which to couch open access discussions at individual institutions:

- The open access movement represents a political and social change process comprised of outreach, deliberations, information sharing, education, and negotiations, to identify and solve problems. Varying opinions ranging the spectrum from acceptance to opposition can be expected during the course of deliberations.

- Open access policy creation is best vested in the faculty but each campus possesses its own unique history and culture, and a policy may not be the solution to the particular broad problems and opportunities present on that campus.

- Open access policy passage and implementation is a journey, not an event. Once undertaken, the work represents a process, part of a cultural shift on individual campuses.

**Campus/institutional conditions and processes**

There are campus and institutional conditions and processes that can foster the development of a robust university-wide investigation of the benefits of an open access. The suggestions below pertain to strictly local environments and as with the more overarching approaches, it may be that many of these activities could occur simultaneously. The creation of an open access policy is best commenced and finalized as a faculty initiative.

- Faculty who have become champions of open access principles in their disciplines (via open access journals, self-archiving and other kinds of advocacy for open sharing of scholarship) will make excellent partners while the campus is in early stages of policy creation. During
the process of policy creation itself, advocates at KU found it helpful to identify “early adopter” faculty and departments to test presentations, procedures, and build support.

- It may be advisable to conduct an environmental scan of the strengths present on a given campus that would tend to support advancements in open access efforts. These can be strengths in people, in funding, campus governance structures and mechanisms, or even in institutional history. Proponents of open access should seek opportunities to work directly with governance leaders if such leaders are familiar with and potentially open-minded regarding such an initiative.

- While not possible at all institutions, having an institutional repository, digital archive or some other digital holding space prepared for use is helpful. In Harvard’s case it did not stop the faculty from unanimously supporting the passage of their open access policy. At KU, however, the fact that an institutional repository had been in use by some faculty and departments helped illustrate that the University was already poised to provide a mechanism to share the work openly and had the technical and human resources to support its use.

- It may be that such an open access movement will have its origin among the library faculty on a particular campus, especially since librarians are very much engaged in discussions about reform in the system of scholarly communication. Although librarians on many campuses are faculty (as at KU), other faculty sometimes believe the librarian perspective is biased. It does not help to encourage the old sentiment that “scholarly communication” efforts are purely an outgrowth of a library problem—the “serials crisis”. However, if
librarians and faculty can partner in creating change on campus by working cooperatively on an open access policy, so much the better for both groups.

- Library administrative support is critical to the success of open access initiatives, especially where librarians are at the forefront of local efforts. At KU as on other campuses strong library administrative support was present but found to be most useful “behind the scenes,” offering open access and technical expertise as well as other human resources to aid and sustain the outcomes of a faculty open access initiative.

**Task Force lessons**

Once discussions have progressed to a more concrete and less theoretical point, a natural next step has been the creation of a committee, task force, or other entity, charged with managing more focused discussions on campus. Several specific suggestions concerning the creation, staffing and work of such a group are provided below.

- The formation of a task force (or working group or committee) to develop an open access policy and implementation details is often an early step, and a very important one. The careful choice of membership and framing of the charge are critical components to later success. At KU, for example, when such a task force was formed, it was important that a specific charge and time line be given, and that clear and achievable goals were stated. It is equally important that such an endeavor has upper-level campus administrative support from the beginning. For example, the Provost at KU was approached with the idea of forming such a task force early in the process in order to gauge the level of support that could be expected from that Office.
As noted above, having the task force vested in the faculty has proven to be advisable at KU. At the very least, such a body should be led by a faculty member who possesses exceptional “people skills,” since such skills form the bedrock of the outreach-related work that will be undertaken by the group. In addition, task force leadership must possess an excellent grasp of the central open access issues and be prepared to tailor the messages for the specific audiences to be addressed within the academic community. They should in essence, “play well with others” and be receptive to hearing advice from other experts.

Having a carefully selected group of faculty and administrators serving on the task force at KU was extremely helpful. Those task force members brought their disciplinary and administrative expertise to the discussions, thus allowing greater anticipation of and then preparation for concerns that would be raised from other corners of the campus.

Suggestions about the work of the Open Access Task Force:

While the task force will proceed at its own pace once it has been formed, it is generally advisable to proceed slowly to allow time for faculty and administrators to have questions addressed and concerns dispelled. During their work, the task force should plan for several informational meetings to introduce open access concepts to interested parties on campus. In these meetings at KU, for example, members of the task force remained open-minded about the opinions that were expressed and the revisions that unavoidably arose to any policy and implementation drafts presented during the process. Further, revisions were made many times before final documents were shared.
with KU faculty governance for review. The creation of such documents was viewed as an iterative process as faculty groups, individuals and the task force members weighed new information that came along as the process unfolded.

- Depending on local circumstances, campus meetings may be held in informal forums, departmental meetings, and meetings with deans and chairs, governance-sponsored venues, or in other appropriate sessions. Whenever possible it is recommended that the task force meet with faculty in face-to-face venues. For example, KU’s brown-bag lunches and departmental meetings were quite successful and resulted in very productive discussions. Such meetings served to lend a significant degree of credibility to the task force’s efforts and provided additional legitimacy to the initiative in the eyes of faculty governance and central administration, an important fact that should not be underestimated. In all arenas, it is advisable to create an environment conducive to learning about open access for all participants. Administrators, for example, may see the advantages and liabilities associated with open access in different ways than faculty responsible for teaching, research, and service. Tenured faculty may express very different ideas than those who have not yet earned tenure.

- Having some advance knowledge of faculty concerns and addressing those first represents a positive way to commence meetings. If at all possible, try to learn ahead of time about or anticipate faculty concerns in the various disciplines, their publishing habits, and their publishing venues. For example, the concerns of faculty in some science disciplines may be far different from faculty in the humanities. In addition,
faculty who primarily publish scholarly articles may present very different comments from those who serve as editors of academic journals. Faculty will speak from their particular disciplinary perspective and will express opinions or have questions from those positions. They may ask how an open access policy at their institution will impact the following areas: academic freedom; copyright; peer review processes; rights management issues; the need for a mediated approach to posting their work; time it takes to participate in the policy; and how to opt-out of the policy. There may be other questions posed that reflect the values or concerns endemic to specific campus locations. The point is that the task force members should anticipate very robust (and even at times heated) discussions with faculty and administrative colleagues concerning nearly every imaginable aspect of open access and how policy requirements may be manifested in a particular campus environment.

- While no single approach can be reproduced in every location considering an open access policy, participation in such a policy must be as simple as possible for faculty. Details of the policy should allow, for example, for a fully staff-mediated submission process for faculty and robust assistance to those wishing to participate (retaining rights, sending in their papers to the University or opting out.) At KU, for instance, with an institutional repository, efforts were made to adjust the support given to faculty in the submission process. After the institutional repository was established in 2005, faculty were originally required to submit work on their own, although assistance (and training) was provided and help with issues related to copyright retention was freely
offered. Library administration quickly realized that its role as catalyst in the open access initiative required a significant shift in the service model it had been providing to faculty.

Faculty perspectives about open access:

The vast majority of the faculty the KU task force talked with were supportive of the principle of open access to scholarship. Whether a policy was the right choice, what a policy might say or require, and what its consequences would be, were separate questions. Much of the advocacy work involved addressing misunderstandings, alleviating concerns and providing information to faculty. As a result of the work done at KU, faculty and librarians from other campuses around the country have asked about concerns that were raised at this institution. Subsequently, the information provided below represents a sample of some of these faculty concerns and are offered here as additional lessons learned during KU’s process.

In general, comments from faculty were received throughout the process. Although none were against open access principles, some did not like the idea of an open access mandate: that is, an actual or perceived requirement to participate in an open access policy. (It was quickly learned that that words like “mandate” and “compliance” are so unpleasant to faculty that they were soon dropped from use). On the other hand there were faculty who wanted a policy with more “teeth.” Many comments were in the form of questions about copyright, e.g., “You mean if I sign the standard publisher agreement I often don’t own any rights to my work?” Faculty members were concerned about the amount of time it would take to participate in the policy (securing rights, submitting the work, for example). There were other comments about the
need for a mediated approach to submission (i.e., if someone else was submitting their work instead of the faculty member herself). There were misperceptions about whether “open access” circumvented the peer review process or traditional publication model. Many of the comments and questions were discipline specific. Below the issues raised by KU faculty humanists, social scientists, and scientists are outlined.

- At KU humanists tended either to be disinterested in the issues of open access or they had significant concerns. For example, some did not want their scholarly papers sitting in the same digital “containers” (collections for example) with non-scholarly papers. Some wanted a clearer description of what was meant by “scholarly papers.” There were questions about what kinds of scholarship an open access policy would cover. Some faculty also felt that any urgency about or lack of sustainability in the current access models in the scholarly communication system was not their problem. Humanists often misunderstood that the policy would not impact the publication of their monographs. Some were also concerned about the damage that an open access policy (and other kinds of open access, for example open access journals) would do to the small, niche, humanist journal publishing. In addition KU faculty journal editors brought concerns to the task force. There was a common misunderstanding of the difference between the application of the open access policy for KU faculty-authored journal articles and KU journal publishing policies and publication agreements with non-KU authors.
The social scientists, on the other hand, articulated the fewest concerns. They understood the positive scholarly and social impact that sharing their work openly and publicly would have on their discipline and on behalf of other scholars around the world. Similar general misperceptions were common however, the rights issue being the one most often mentioned. It was also learned that some social science scholars use Social Science Research Network (SSRN), which shares openly scholarly articles published in some social science disciplines. Because of this, some faculty wanted a provision in the implementation plan that would allow item records to be deposited into KU’s institutional repository and point to the SSRN open version of their paper, rather than providing a second open version. In some disciplines at KU (like Law), the download counts from SSRN are very important for tenure files (something that a task force member pointed out early in the process.)

In general, the science faculty offered little resistance although, again, rights management issues were the largest area of misperceptions and concerns. Those faculty members that receive National Institutes of Health grants had similar concerns about having a second copy of their work in the KU institutional repository when another copy was placed in PubMed Central. The biologists working in the field of systematics and taxonomies had problems with the work of record being the “author final draft.” In their discipline the exact date of official publication and version was critical. Researchers get credit for
describing/discovering new species, for example, and the date stamp on the official publication is critical in establishing their role in that discovery.

Conclusion:

The history of creating and passing an open access policy at the University of Kansas involved significant efforts on the parts of numerous individuals over more than a decade. Achieving reasonable levels of consensus across such a diverse faculty required diplomacy, patience, and careful crafting of messages to faculty and administrators. Much of the early history involved educating important sectors of campus about the issues that continue to challenge faculty and administration in higher education: expanding knowledge, shrinking budgets, and emerging technological modes of discovery and delivery of scholarly information. It is the authors’ wish that the experience gained at the University of Kansas, shared in this paper, will provide some preliminary insights and useful suggestions to those colleagues already engaged in discussions about open access policy creation or about to embark on such discussions. It is our hope that this work eventually becomes part of a body of literature that analyzes the growth of the open access movement on university campuses world-wide.
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