

Behind the Curve but Moving Ahead

Advocating for an Open Access Policy as a Late-Stage Adopter

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Open access policies are a well-established practice within the scholarly communications landscape; numerous research universities passed policies more than ten years ago. However, some institutions remain without an open access policy. Such institutions occupy an ambiguous position, as they fortuitously benefit from the ample literature and best practices on open access policies—yet they also face entrenched issues, such as inadequate staffing, siloed research support, and a campus culture averse to open access, which have put them behind the curve on adopting an open access policy in the first place. This study traces the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's recent work developing and advocating for an open access policy, offering a framework other research institutions can follow as later adopters.

Research institutions have been enacting open access policies for upwards of fifteen years, with early adopters like Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology passing open access policies as far back as 2008 and 2009, respectively. According to the Registry of Open Access Repositories Mandatory Archiving Policies, where funders and research organizations can record their open access policies, the bulk of open access policies for research institutions in the United States were passed by 2015 (specifically, fifty-nine of their eighty-one registered policies).¹

Despite this progress, many research universities, including the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte), still lack an open access policy. UNC Charlotte is currently a Carnegie R2 public research university supporting nearly 30,000 students through seventy-seven bachelor's programs, sixty-five master's programs, and twenty-four doctoral programs. As the university works toward a future as a top-tier university with a reclassification to R1 in 2025, supporting more research output, preserving an institutional record of that output, and making it widely accessible becomes an even higher priority.² Support for open access on campus, however, has progressed somewhat haltingly. Although Atkins Library at UNC Charlotte developed and launched an institutional repository in 2019 to help preserve and share the university's scholarly output, participation in the repository has been limited. Faculty have shared anecdotally with library staff impediments they face in using the repository—these include a lack of time to make deposits, an absence of funds to publish their work openly, and a lack of understanding regarding journals' postprint policies related to open access.

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There is nonetheless significant evidence that an appetite for open access does exist on campus. For example, the library's open access publishing fund, which helps campus authors pay article processing charges (APCs) that journals charge to publish articles openly, is intended to last a full year but is typically exhausted within a few months. The fund has been increased significantly since its inception. From an institutional perspective, using the institutional repository at a larger scale is important for fulfilling the mission of the university, which strives for "local-to-global impact that transforms lives, communities, and industries through access and affordability."³ Perhaps most important are the changes in open access practices throughout the broader research community. The August 2022 memorandum from the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), in particular, presents a timely reminder of the research community's growing engagement with open access practices, as the memorandum calls for making all federally funded research openly available to the public without delay and free of charge.⁴

With the memorandum's guidance intended to be fully implemented by 2026, universities like UNC Charlotte that do not currently have open access policies in place have a unique opportunity to take a closer look at their institutional research practices and develop open access policies that better align with the OSTP memorandum's requirements. This article will describe the process of developing and advocating for an open access policy as a later adopter, in the wake of the 2022 OSTP memorandum.

Developing an open access policy at a time when dozens of other universities have long since successfully adopted and implemented their own policies means that ample materials and case studies can be drawn upon as models. At the same time, however, any university that has not yet made progress in this space is likely facing a unique set of limiting factors—such as a lack of faculty awareness or incentives, staff turnover in key areas of the library, and siloed research support on campus—that make positive headway more difficult to achieve. By focusing on UNC Charlotte's process and proposing a framework for this work, this article will suggest practical measures for developing and advocating for open access policies at research institutions with more hesitancy and fewer resources that would nevertheless benefit immensely from an expanded culture of openness.

Literature Review

In describing the impetus for expanding the open access mandate for federally funded research, the 2022 OSTP memorandum cites the immediate public access to COVID-19 research that was available during the pandemic as a "powerful case study on the benefits of delivering research results and data rapidly to the people," stating that it should be available in all fields, "not only to fight a pandemic, but to advance all areas of study, including urgent issues such as cancer, clean energy, economic disparities, and climate change."⁵ The power of open access to accelerate innovation by sharing findings with all researchers speaks directly to the centuries-long practice of writing "research articles for impact rather than money," which began in 1665 with the first scholarly journal, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*.⁶ As Peter Suber details in *Open Access*, scholarly works differ from creative works because researchers are subsidized by university salaries and grants to publish their work freely

and do not have to rely on royalties to earn a living. Researchers are thus motivated to publish less by financial gain than by the possibility of increasing the impact of their work and advancing the scholarly conversation in their various fields.⁷

Complicating this dynamic, of course, are the for-profit journals that make up today's scholarly publishing landscape. Evaluating the academic publishing ecosystem through economist Michael Porter's "five forces framework" for industry competition demonstrates that academic publishers continue to benefit from a shortage of true competition.⁸ They enjoy a "protected competitive position and high profitability," largely owing to high barriers to entry that result from journal ranking lists and the importance placed on publishing in already-existing, high-impact journals for promotion and tenure, as well as low competition for customers because big deals from publishers often offer complements rather than substitutes that might act as competing choices.⁹ This environment has allowed academic publishers like Elsevier to record profit margins of 36 percent, higher than those of tech giants like Apple, Google, and Amazon.¹⁰ Library collections budgets bear the cost of supporting these publisher profits, often struggling to cover exorbitant and outsized subscription fees to ensure that researchers on campus have access to the literature necessary for their research. The University of Missouri system, for example, compared current subscription fees for health sciences journals against those paid in the 1980s. They found that they paid \$220 for a subscription to *Nature* in 1983; in 2020, the cost if based on inflation should have been \$354.11, but instead was \$40,292.31.¹¹ These massive price increases are also occurring in times of decreasing library budgets. The University of California, San Francisco, for example, found that from 2012 to 2022, prices for health sciences journal subscriptions increased by more than 50 percent, while the library collections budget decreased by 9 percent.¹² This phenomenon has been described as the "serials crisis," in which "runaway cost[s]" for subscriptions far outpace stagnating library budgets, leading many to conclude that the "system as we know it is broken to the point that we can no longer carry out the daily business of the university."¹³

UNC Charlotte is not immune to the serials crisis. Members of the library's Scholarly Communications Committee described the unsustainability of the current scholarly publishing landscape in their Open Access Whitepaper and recommended an open access policy as a part of a "framework for future progress" at UNC Charlotte.¹⁴ Although the efficacy of open access policies in effecting change and actually increasing access to normally paywalled works through deposits in institutional repositories can vary by institution, open access policies are undoubtedly an important tool for fostering open access that institutions—and in particular their libraries—can have a direct hand in creating.¹⁵ The academic library in particular is a "natural hub for OA activities within the academy," and as such it has an important role to play in implementing and promoting open access policies on campus.¹⁶ Academic librarians are particularly well-positioned to "serve as advocates, facilitators, and agents for OA," guiding their constituencies in "understanding and participating in open access, including providing information on OA publications, drafting university open access policies, and training faculty on how to deposit in an institutional repository."¹⁷

Case studies on open access policies show recurrent trends in adoption and implementation. For adoption, common takeaways include the importance of administrative buy-in and support, ample messaging, and faculty champions that advocate for the policy.¹⁸ A 2022 study in which ninety-five R1 and R2 universities were surveyed found that “no institution that had successfully adopted an OA policy did so without having faculty champion(s).”¹⁹ Regarding policy implementation, many institutions encountered low compliance with self-archiving, with successful implementations proactively lowering barriers to faculty deposits either by integrating self-archiving into existing faculty workflows through software integrations, direct library outreach and mediated deposits, or “succinct and targeted” faculty-oriented messaging that clearly explains open access policies and its benefits.²⁰

The breadth of literature on developing and implementing an open access policy provides an invaluable starting point for universities that have not yet passed a policy. At the same time, universities that still have not adopted an open access policy when many others have been in place for over ten years likely face unique challenges that have impeded their progress on this front, including limited staff or resources to support a policy, staff turnover, siloed research divisions, or a campus culture that is less supportive of open access. A presentation from the University of Oregon, for example, described how even after having a resolution supporting open access for twenty years, passing an open access policy in 2021 involved extensive communication and re-evaluation of policy language to respond to faculty hesitancy and concerns about mandates and compliance with journal policies.²¹ Faculty similarly questioned the mandated language at the State University of New York Brockport, with the policy ultimately being passed in 2018 only after language revisions and ample outreach.²²

Despite these challenges, it is becoming increasingly clear that all universities—even those facing challenges that have hindered their progress up to this point—can benefit from exploring the adoption of an open access policy. With a fast-approaching implementation date of 2026, the OSTP memorandum provides a unique opportunity for institutions without an open access policy to create one so that the university’s scholarly communications practices better align with the larger research community’s evolving practices. Although a number of the motivations for adopting an open access policy at UNC Charlotte have existed for many years now—including aligning the university’s research practices with its mission of “access and affordability” as well as responding to the serials crisis by contributing to a healthier scholarly communications environment—the recent OSTP memorandum has provided a clear and time-sensitive impetus to develop and adopt an open access policy.²³ This article seeks to describe the complex and somewhat contradictory experience of navigating open access policies as a later adopter, at once benefiting from the extensive work the open access community has already done in this space while also reckoning with entrenched barriers to adoption. It aims to add to the literature by focusing on later adopters of open access policies, providing a framework and concrete examples for developing a policy and launching advocacy efforts in the wake of the OSTP memorandum and its coming implementation over the next several years.

Process Overview

At Atkins Library, work related to scholarly communications and open access is spread across several units, including Collection Services, Public Services, and Digital Scholarship and Innovation. In 2019, when our institutional repository Niner Commons was established, we brought these disparate areas together, forming the Open Access and Scholarly Communications Committee to ensure that the policies and messages about scholarly communication and open access publishing were uniform and communication to the campus was coordinated. The committee's required members included the copyright and licensing librarian, head of library technology and innovation (who created the institutional repository), collection development librarian, and engineering librarian (also heavily involved in open access and open educational resources). In addition to these required members, other volunteers interested or working in this space joined the committee, including subject librarians, e-resources librarians, and our diversity resident librarian.

Over time, the committee and its membership continued to evolve, becoming the Scholarly Communications Committee and developing subcommittees and project-based groups to address various aspects of scholarly communication needing attention, such as the Open Educational Resources Subcommittee and the Niner Commons Subcommittee. The committee charge was updated to encompass all types of scholarly work, and with staff changes and turnover the member makeup has changed slightly, with required members including the copyright and licensing librarian, digital scholarship librarian (who manages the institutional repository), associate dean for collection services, collection strategist, and engineering and open education librarian.

One of the committee's important projects was researching the successes other universities had as they were moving toward supporting a more open scholarly communications ecosystem on their campuses. Findings from this inquiry included the importance of passing open access policies and supporting open access publishing through education and funding. This research led to the committee publishing an Open Access Publishing Whitepaper in 2021 that outlined several steps we planned to take to increase open research on our campus. These steps included the following:

1. Continue advocacy for open access publishing on campus to lead to changes in the Promotion and Tenure process that supports publishing open access.
 - a. Mandate faculty to deposit articles in Niner Commons, with the ability to opt out. This action will need to be taken up and voted on by the Faculty Council (the main faculty governance body on campus).
 - b. Present the ideas outlined in this paper in various venues, including Faculty Council. Collect feedback from departments and update as necessary.
2. Continue to hold information sessions and provide support to faculty depositing articles in Niner Commons.
3. Encourage faculty to publish in open access journals by:
 - a. Securing funding for APCs from sources outside of the library.²⁴

In the fall of 2022, the Scholarly Communications Committee created a working group to tackle the second item on the list: mandating faculty deposits in Niner Commons, with the ability to opt out. We felt that an open access policy would establish a baseline understanding of open access on campus and could position the university to build on open access efforts in the future. The working group tasked with these duties included the copyright and licensing librarian, digital scholarship librarian, engineering and open education librarian, and the associate dean for collection services. The goal of the working group was to create an open access policy for the campus addressing the importance of faculty depositing their scholarly articles into Niner Commons, modeling similar open access policies we had identified through our research that had been adopted at large research institutions ten to fifteen years prior.

Based on a review of these other institutions' policies, the working group initially decided to model our policy after Harvard's Open Access Policy, which passed unanimously in 2008 and has served as the basis for many other institutions' open access policies.²⁵ After creating a proposed draft of our local policy, we decided the next logical step would be to work with the university's Office of Legal Affairs to ensure that it would meet the legal standards of the university. UNC Charlotte's copyright policy states that, as a condition of employment, faculty grant a license to the university to use their scholarly work for non-commercial and educational purposes.²⁶ Since the copyright policy is overseen by the Office of Legal Affairs and has potential areas of overlap with the proposed open access policy, it was important for the working group to get both input and buy-in from the Office of Legal Affairs early in the process. In meetings with the Office of Legal Affairs, members of the working group explained the importance of the open access policy for improving the scholarly communications ecosystem both nationally and at UNC Charlotte specifically. Office of Legal Affairs attorneys were enthusiastic and supportive, providing input on the proposed policy language and suggesting how it might be linked with existing campus policies to increase its impact in the future. The Office of Legal Affairs also offered to partner with the library in its promotion of the policy on campus to demonstrate support for the policy beyond the library.

While the Office of Legal Affairs was reviewing the policy, we also decided to reach out to colleagues at other institutions in North Carolina and the Southeast who had long-standing open access policies to learn how they implemented these policies and how they encouraged compliance with them. Based on these conversations, it appeared that in general, these institutions took very little direct action to require faculty to deposit their articles, even where their policies technically mandated it. A recurring theme of these conversations was the continued difficulty of receiving deposits, with universities who integrated deposits into existing faculty workflows having the most success. At two of the three institutions we consulted, the identification and deposit of articles was done manually by a single staff member who was in charge of populating the institutional repository. This setup made it impossible to ensure all faculty scholarship was being added to the institutional repository per the requirements of the policy. At the third institution, we learned the policy approved by the faculty was more of an agreement to participate instead of a mandate, which they felt led faculty to be more proactive in self-

depositing their materials. They also had an automatic system in place that integrated into existing workflows and software faculty were already using, which reduced the amount of work for the library to identify and reach out to the faculty about article deposit.

After consulting with the Office of Legal Affairs, reviewing the campus copyright policy, and learning how other institutions were handling the parameters outlined in their open access policy, we made several edits to our original policy. The proposed open access policy is currently written as follows, although future review by additional stakeholders could lead to further refinements in language:

The Faculty of UNC Charlotte is committed to disseminating the fruits of its research and scholarship as widely as possible. In keeping with that commitment, the Faculty adopts the following policy: As a condition of employment, each Faculty member grants to UNC Charlotte permission to make available his or her scholarly articles and to exercise the copyright in those articles. More specifically, each Faculty member grants to UNC Charlotte a nonexclusive, irrevocable, worldwide license to exercise any and all rights under copyright relating to each of his or her scholarly articles, in any medium, provided that the articles are not sold for a profit, and to authorize others to do the same; this license includes the right to make the author's final version of the article available to the public in an open-access repository. The policy applies to all scholarly articles authored or co-authored while the person is a member of the Faculty except for any articles completed before the adoption of this policy and any articles for which the Faculty member entered into an incompatible licensing or assignment agreement before the adoption of this policy. Faculty members may submit a waiver of application of the license for a particular article or delay access for a specified period of time upon express direction by Faculty members.

Once we completed our draft of the open access policy, it was time to start presenting it to the faculty, with the hope of getting it approved by the Faculty Council in spring 2024 and with full implementation starting in fall 2025. We modeled our outreach plan based on a previous project where the library required faculty support. Specifically, the library asked the Faculty Council to vote to approve the plan to move 70 percent of our print collection to an offsite storage facility. The plan easily passed the Faculty Council because the library had presented the plan to the faculty through various venues over a two-year period including at department meetings, webinars, and campus communication channels.

Our first step toward presenting the policy to the faculty was creating a presentation that we could give in various venues to spread the message as far and wide as possible. Based on previous experience with other library initiatives, the more faculty know about changes or policies for which the library is seeking approval, the more likely it will be passed in the Faculty Council with little or no pushback. The need for ample outreach and information-sharing when trying to pass an open access policy is well-documented in case studies from other universities as well, so we especially prioritized this work.²⁷

When we initially created the presentation, we began with a clear, succinct description of the serials crisis, complete with data visualizations showing the academic publishers' profits; we even worked with our graphic designer to create a graphic illustrating how publishers profit from the free labor of faculty authors and peer reviewers. Unfortunately, as we started scheduling presentations, we realized that

although this information is important to share with faculty, it really did not address the main goal of the presentation, which was to inform faculty about the open access policy and explain why we needed it on our campus. We also found that the literature in this area demonstrates the importance of framing open access policy advocacy in terms of benefits to the researcher and the institution as opposed to the benefits for the scholarly communications landscape.²⁸ Additionally, as we started to schedule the meetings we realized we were unlikely to get more than ten minutes to present, so we needed to streamline the presentation to cover only the most important topics. Accordingly, we focused on the basics, including what an open access policy is and how it aligns with both the OSTP guidance and UNC Charlotte's already existing copyright policy. As a later adopter of an open access policy, we also included a visual timeline of when other universities adopted their open access policies in an effort to demonstrate that such policies are common and that we would merely be bringing our institution in line with our peers if we were to adopt a policy. Importantly, we updated our presentation the more we presented it to respond to common feedback and ensure that it thoroughly addressed the questions we were receiving when presenting it. For example, at earlier presentations, faculty had asked if an open policy meant that they could only publish in gold open access journals; accordingly, we added a slide better describing the difference between green and gold open access and explaining that our proposed policy would support green open access. For our initial presentations, we attended faculty meetings where we were able to be added to the agenda with the help of certain subject librarians, specifically our science and computer science librarian, who was keen to have us come talk to their faculty.

After these initial presentations, we presented to the Faculty Advisory Library Committee (which includes faculty representatives from our five colleges), the College of Computing and Informatics, and the Department of Biological Sciences by the end of the spring 2023 semester. With our proposed spring 2024 deadline approaching and the difficulty we were encountering in scheduling time to present at faculty meetings in different departments and colleges, we decided to create other materials that we could share with the campus through various other outlets, including the following:

- A one-page informational document sent directly to faculty by subject librarians and included in the Academic Affairs Newsletter
- A recording of our presentation posted on the library's website and linked in the informational document
- An FAQ about the open access policy, including the feedback form

As part of the process of getting any sort of measure passed by the Faculty Senate, proposals need to be presented to the Faculty Executive Board. The library currently has two representatives on the Faculty Executive board, including the library faculty president, so we utilized their connections to get on the agenda in fall 2023 to present the policy. With their approval, we now plan to bring it to the full council for final approval in the spring 2024 semester.

Findings and Issues

We learned much from the initial stages of our open access policy advocacy. Once we identified our goal and the relative simplicity of the policy's concept, our next steps seemed intuitive and familiar. Although some projects can make use of experience and templated organization, our work needed many iterative steps. We created multiple versions of slideshows for slightly different audiences, as well as multiple versions of educational materials that we could offer online as reference points, and on several occasions we reassessed how our internal processing methods might affect how faculty could interpret what we were asking them to do. For example, our slide deck began as a more comprehensive presentation with background context about the last thirty years, including journals moving to online, the serials crisis, and the beginnings of the open access movement, followed by our plans. The audience in the beginning was the library staff; we then dropped some context for people outside of the library who would not know or possibly care about the serials crisis and history of journals. We are asking them to do something specific, and so we were trying to shave anything unnecessary to get to the point. After we winnowed the slides down for faculty groups, we simply reordered slides based on prioritizing concepts (like green or gold versus OSTP memo versus policy details) based on the nature of the groups: subject department faculty, deans council, and academic affairs leadership.

As various faculty audiences listened to our proposal, we heard a few common concerns. Foremost in their minds was how much labor would be required to submit their work to fulfill our goal of depositing all faculty journal scholarship in the institutional repository. This was an expected concern because faculty everywhere understandably value and guard their time. Our internal processes impact this issue, so we have been adamant that whichever solution the library is able to render, ultimately faculty will not need to submit anything to the repository. At most, we will send them an automated email informing them of our intent to deposit one of their works, and their only labor will be to email their postprint or request an opt-out waiver if they so choose.

Another concern faculty have voiced is the potential need to change their author contracts with publishers. They have repeated on several occasions the worry that publishers might not allow for changes or will refuse to publish their work if we deposit it in our institutional repository. We have reassured these faculty that this practice is common at many universities with no publisher pushback. Our goal is to make this process seamless for the faculty, so we tell them that their normal publishing contracts and choice of venue should remain unchanged. The idea that we are introducing a new place to deposit and disseminate their work without any need for different behavior on their part does sometimes seem difficult for them to believe, but that is only because the publishing process can be so isolating and they perceive the power as being very one-sided. We have learned to take careful consideration and use a thoughtful tone to reassure people that what we are asking is legitimate and will not put them at any future risk.

We have also learned to be much clearer about what we are asking faculty to do with this policy. Although we are only seeking their support to automatically deposit their work in our institutional

repository on their behalf, our background discussion on green and gold open access can mislead some people to think we are asking them to change their publishing habits to include choosing gold open access and then be responsible for paying publishers' often-exorbitant APCs themselves. Such an arrangement would understandably raise alarm bells, but fortunately we are able to reassure them that not only can they publish how they wish, but the policy can also help create another global access point to their work, even if they cannot afford to publish gold open.

Because we do not want to put any burden on faculty to deposit their work themselves or be responsible for organizing and archiving their own manuscript versions, we are proposing a system that is largely automated. The library staff who support the institutional repository will be the workhorses of this system, making sure that metadata and files are added correctly. This automation is a crucial element of the library service that will support the open access policy; without it, the number of articles we are able to archive will likely remain small.

To obtain the automation we desire, we hope to obtain software systems that currently exist—but these are somewhat expensive considering our consistently flat library budget. For this reason, we hope to partner with other divisions within the university (the Division of Research being a potential partner) to share in the licensing costs. Challenges involved in bringing an attractive cost-sharing proposal to these divisions include the cost of existing software programs that they use currently but that are not suitable for our purposes, as well as their own flat budgets, leadership changes, and campus siloes in which inertia makes it hard to break through for collaboration. We are also evaluating other automation tools and practices currently in use by other institutions that have implemented open access policies.²⁹

Our work passing and implementing an open access policy is currently in progress, with an anticipated completion date of fall 2025, which lands immediately before the OSTP memo's 2026 implementation date. Ideally we would be able to share results of this case study after our policy's full adoption and implementation, but we recognize that the OSTP memo provides a unique, time-sensitive opportunity for other developing research institutions to add urgency and relevance to open access policy advocacy. Accordingly, this case study focuses on the early stages of developing and advocating for open access policies.

As previously mentioned, one advantage of doing the work of promoting a campus open access policy now is that we are ten years behind the average early adopter campus, which allows for us to look to many other schools for examples, interview staff on their processes, and learn from their successes and failures. In addition, federal funding policy and campus copyright policy are now in better alignment, which will help with the goal of making scholarship more openly accessible. We are hopeful that as we progress in our advocacy work, both of these positive factors will aid us in overcoming the challenges identified here and help bring our goal of a campus open access policy to fruition.

Although it is outside the scope of this case study, a potentially fruitful area of exploration would be analyzing the different circumstances and challenges early adopters of open access policies faced versus institutions currently considering open access policies. Although our work engaged with early adopters

of open access policies by considering how we could learn from their best practices, integrate their successes into our outreach materials, and challenge ourselves to consider what about our campus culture prevented us from passing an open access policy earlier, systematically evaluating the environmental differences universities faced passing open access policies ten years ago versus now was not the purpose of this paper. Such a study, though, could be helpful to institutions as they begin work on their own open access policies, and it is an analysis future authors could explore.

Next Steps

To cross the finish line, we need to do more educational outreach to broader groups of faculty. We plan to create a one-page document for faculty who were unable to attend the departmental or committee meetings where we made our presentations to explain the proposed open access policy, why they should care, and what we are asking them to do. After we have done the work of informing faculty thoroughly, we will present the policy as an agenda item for vote at a Faculty Council meeting.

We still need to identify and obtain funding for technical solutions to implement the automated processes that will enable us to fill the repository more thoroughly and comprehensively. This step does not present a particularly difficult hurdle intellectually, but, as with anything that relies on money, it can present logistical challenges.

We are also taking an opportunity to employ the work of a graduate fellow from our library school fellowship program to help us develop an author toolkit resource. This toolkit will be a useful resource for faculty who wish to become educated on the various issues and opportunities they might encounter in the course of publishing their scholarship. Although individual authors face many different circumstances depending on their disciplines and publishers, this toolkit will emphasize that all authors benefit from depositing their work in the institutional repository and using the stable link to the institutional repository for further dissemination of their papers.

Finally, we are looking forward to finding and connecting with “open access champions” on our campus to help us promote our open access goals. Initially, we will identify these individuals with help from our subject librarians, as well as drawing from the faculty who use our library’s open access fund. Our aim is to engage faculty who can help us disseminate our message and offer feedback on our progress. To create a culture of open access on our campus, we need faculty who can lead the way in meetings and venues where library staff are not traditionally present or involved.

General Framework for Open Access Policy Advocacy

Developing an open access policy in 2023 is a different task than it was in 2013, when a groundswell of support for open access led to many initiatives being passed in quick succession. Being a later adopter offers definite advantages and resources, such as peer institutions and literature to learn from, as well as some potential roadblocks, such as campus culture or issues with staffing and resources. We propose

the following framework for universities developing an open access policy, which we have used at our institution to launch our advocacy work and ensure momentum. Especially as a later adopter, we have found this framework has structured our work to leverage the broader library community's insights and practices while adapting them to our specific campus's needs and constraints.

Establish a Working Group in the Library

Developing an open access policy and advocating for it across campus is a considerable task that requires extensive research, relationship building, and outreach. Having a strong team to spearhead these efforts is critical to ensuring that your advocacy work has impact and maintains forward movement. At Atkins Library, our open access policy working group consists of four key members who represent different stakeholders and specialties: the associate dean for collection services, who can speak to open access funding and the impact of open access on collections; the copyright and licensing librarian, who advises on author rights and was critical in evaluating various open access policies when developing our own; the engineering and open education librarian, who often works directly with faculty and understands their priorities and concerns; and the digital scholarship librarian, who manages the institutional repository and can speak to the logistics of supporting deposits. Although the library's Scholarly Communications Committee had discussed an open access policy for years, staff turnover and workloads had not easily and immediately allowed for people to actually commit to this initiative. Ultimately, circumstances aligned that allowed this subgroup to come together and dedicate the time needed for this extensive work.

Create a Workable Timeline

We found that creating a timeline was a critical starting point for this work. All members of the open access policy working group have substantial responsibilities, so creating a general timeframe with regular meetings helped ensure that we prioritized this work. At the same time, we wanted to ensure that the timeline was not rushed and that enough time had been allowed for outreach and successful implementation. Accordingly, our timeline for this work is as follows:

- Fall 2022: Research open access policies, reach out to other universities to learn more about their policies and implementation, and draft policy language
- Spring to Fall 2023: Present on an open access policy to colleges and departments
- Spring 2024: Bring the policy to Faculty Council for a vote
- Fall 2024 to Spring 2025: Set up logistics for policy implementation, including waiver process, support materials, and an outreach plan, while also exploring and advocating for software and tools to help automate this process
- Fall 2025: Implement the open access policy

Learn About Successful (and Unsuccessful) Open Access Policies

The great advantage of being a later adopter of an open access policy is that there is ample material describing various institutions' successes and failures with passing and implementing an open access

policy. Reading this literature has been critical, especially in highlighting the importance of securing administrative buy-in, conducting extensive outreach, and anticipating specific areas of faculty concern. Additionally, resources like the Harvard Open Access Project have offered detailed guidance on the practicalities of developing and advocating for an open access policy.³⁰ Equally helpful in this process has been speaking to peer and aspirational universities about their experiences with open access policies. We conducted several informational interviews to hear directly from other librarians about how they successfully advocated for open access policies, as well as what their implementation has since looked like.

Identify Roadblocks to an Open Access Policy and Identify Solutions

As our working group continued discovery and research on open access policies, we took time to better understand why our campus did not already have an open access policy. Evaluating potential roadblocks and constraints is an important exercise in any project, but it is especially important for universities who are later adopters of open access policies, as the delay suggests significant or at least existing issues with which your advocacy work will have to engage. In our case, staff turnover within the library in positions related to scholarly communications impeded progress, especially as open access publishing initiatives at our campus are primarily situated in the library. Additionally, creating an open access policy was not a priority at the UNC system level as it has been at other systems like the University of California.³¹ Within the UNC system, which comprises sixteen public universities, only two to date have open access policies: UNC Chapel Hill, which passed theirs in 2016, and UNC Greensboro, which passed a policy in 2013 that does not actually require deposit of faculty works.³² The absence of an overall support or framework at a system-wide level has meant that any progress on open access policies is necessarily reliant on efforts at the individual system institutions. Accordingly, at the start of our work we were sure to build a strong internal working group to support our initiatives. Another potential constraint for this work that we identified was the lack of an especially active relationship with other stakeholders on campus who could benefit from an open access policy, such as the Division of Research. Part of advocacy planning thus involved reaching out to these stakeholders to strengthen our relationship and create more allies and supporters of the policy.

Find a Policy That Closely Matches the Values of Your Institution

There are various potential open access policies that an institution might consider, including both opt-in and opt-out options and covering a range of different approaches to rights retention.³³ When we were drafting our open access policy, we began by reviewing a wide variety of examples from our peer institutions. We also consulted with our Office of Legal Affairs to review language and ensure that the policy aligned with the already existing copyright policy that all faculty agree to as a condition of employment with the university. Ultimately, we based our policy on the Harvard model, as we felt that their emphasis on access and dissemination matched the values of our institution, which center on “access and affordability.”³⁴ Additionally, the Harvard model policy included a clear opt-out waiver process.

Secure Buy-in from Library Administration

After doing extensive exploratory research on the topic, we met with the library dean to present our draft policy and advocacy plan. The dean was supportive, arranging for us to present the open access policy to the Faculty Advisory Library Committee to jumpstart our outreach efforts and receive feedback. As we continue our outreach efforts, we are working with the dean to set a schedule for in-person outreach opportunities with various colleges, departments, and stakeholders. As mentioned in numerous other case studies, securing support from library administration can be especially helpful to successful advocacy efforts, and we are looking forward to working more with our dean on these efforts.³⁵

Create Multiple Avenues for Communication

Our initial advocacy efforts have demonstrated the importance of developing multiple avenues for outreach and communication as we aim to reach as many stakeholders and faculty members as possible with information about the open access policy. We began our outreach efforts by presenting at various committee, college, and department meetings. However, we quickly realized that not all faculty members will be available to attend these various meetings, and with their busy schedules, it is not clear how many will be able to fully and carefully review various meeting minutes. Accordingly, in addition to our in-person presentations, we are also creating a range of materials related to the open access policy, including a one-page flier on the highlights that can be easily shared by liaison librarians, along with links to a more in-depth video explaining the policy and an online toolkit with multiple resources and explanations of open access and the open access policy. By advertising these resources via the liaison librarians as well as our various library marketing channels—including a daily academic newsletter, our website, and digital signage—we hope that faculty on campus will be well aware of the policy and empowered to reach out to us with any questions before bringing the policy to vote.

Importantly, outreach materials in all forms—including in-person presentations and digital resources—provide information on how open access policies have been successfully implemented elsewhere, most notably in several data visualizations that show when both peer and aspirational universities adopted their policies. Here, again, is an advantage that later adopters of open access policies can leverage when conducting advocacy work.

Timeline: Open Access Policy Adoption

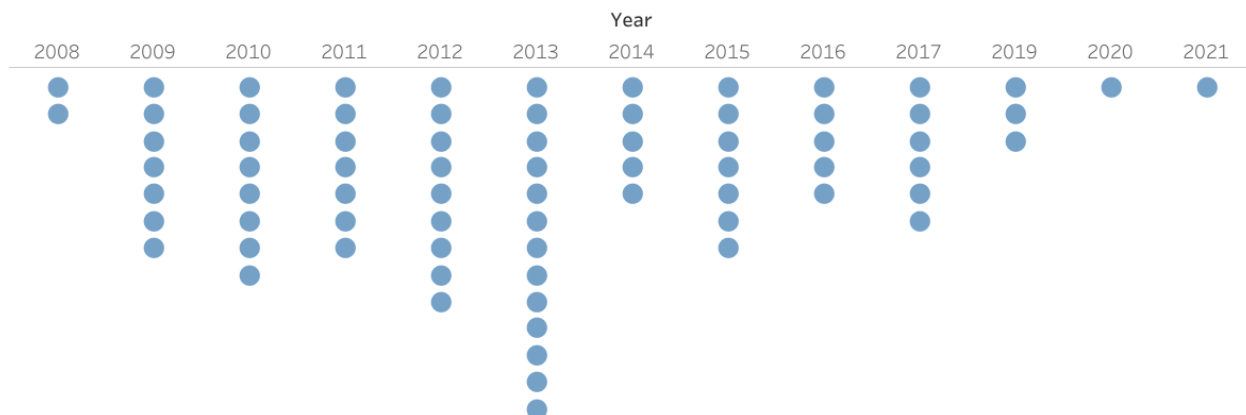


Figure 1. Data visualization of when other universities adopted open access policies, used in outreach materials for our open advocacy work. Data sourced from ROARMAP, <https://roarmap.eprints.org/cgi/search/advanced>.

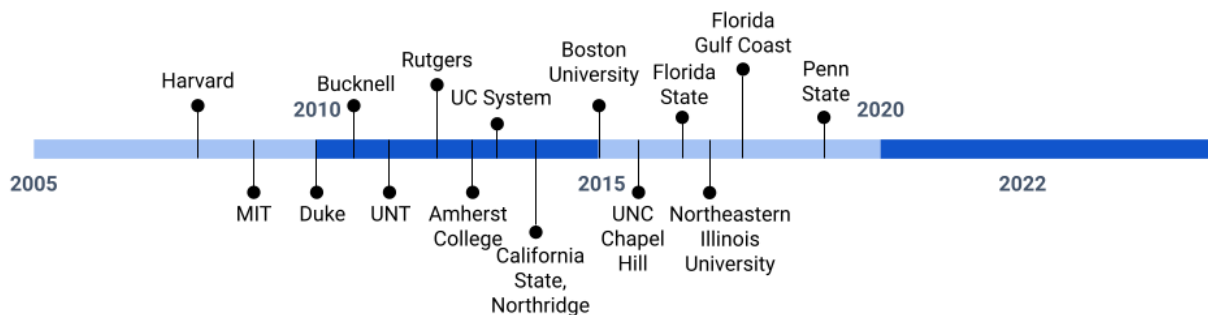


Figure 2. Timeline of when peer and aspirational universities adopted open access policies, used in outreach materials for our open advocacy work. Data sourced from ROARMAP, <https://roarmap.eprints.org/cgi/search/advanced>.

Identify Champions from Outside the Library

As our outreach efforts progress, we are also working on identifying “open access champions” who can help advocate for the policy and answer questions from their peers. Numerous other case studies mention the importance of champions in pushing a policy forward, making the development of these relationships an important part of any outreach plan.³⁶ Fortunately, we have strong relationships with several faculty already active in our institutional repository, as well as faculty members suggested by various library liaisons as potential partners.

Conclusion

Open access policies that require authors on campus to deposit scholarly work in a university's institutional repository have become commonplace over the last fifteen years at research-intensive institutions. Although universities that do not yet have an open access policy likely face structural or cultural constraints that have prevented progress on this front, they are also in a unique position to leverage the wealth of knowledge and best practices available on developing and implementing an open access policy. In addition, the recent OSTP memorandum presents an opportunity for late-stage adopters to more effectively advocate for open access policies on campus, highlighting the policy as an important measure for better aligning local practices with the broader research community.

At UNC Charlotte, as part of our larger initiative to support open access publishing on campus, we have developed and executed a plan to pass an open access policy on our campus. The plan has required a significant amount of outreach in hopes to prepare the faculty to eventually vote on the approval of the policy through Faculty Council. We hope the roadmap we have provided in this case study will help other libraries begin the process of successfully passing open access policies on their campuses and grow the availability of open research online.

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