

May 15, 2019

Provost's Task Force on Open Access and Scholarly Communication

Background

Western's scholars and researchers would benefit from engaging in dialogue about open access and scholarly communication and from exploring how the community might best advance one of the University's core missions: the dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of society.

Scholarly communication refers to "the system through which research and other scholarly writings are created, evaluated for quality, disseminated to the scholarly community, and preserved for future use."¹ There are many issues of import related to scholarly communication including evolving models of publishing and dissemination such as open access (OA), intellectual property and copyright, and the economics of scholarly publishing and access to scholarly information. These issues have significant implications for higher education and research and for Western's scholars and researchers.

Across the globe, funding agencies have adopted open access policies; the Canadian Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications was instituted in 2015. Costs associated with commercial scholarly publications licenses and rising APCs are unsustainable. Open access initiatives in Europe such as Plan S and OA2020 are changing the scholarly communication landscape, as are principle-based negotiations in Norway, Germany (Projekt DEAL) and at the University of California. These and other scholarly communication activities and initiatives take place in an environment that is complex and rapidly evolving, with political, economic, and social dimensions.²

OAC recommended that a Task Force on Open Access and Scholarly Communication, comprised of faculty, librarians, students, staff and administrators, be tasked by the Provost to explore a broad array of issues and recommend key matters for consideration by Western's Senate.

Mandate

The Task Force on Open Access and Scholarly Communication has a mandate to:

- gather information and review the broader context;
- review relevant policies and practices at Western and other institutions;
- consult broadly with the campus community to inform the work of the task force; and
- provide recommendations, for consideration by Senate, on the development of a Western University commitment to the advancement of open access and sustainable scholarly communications and publishing models;

This work will help achieve a better understanding of the needs and perspectives of Western's researchers and scholars with respect to scholarly publishing, and will make recommendations for how Western can move towards more open methods of scholarly dissemination, in order to address financial sustainability and improved access to the scholarly output of Western's researchers. This body of work

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholarly_communication

² For more on these examples and for a fuller description of OA, see "Open Access at MIT and Beyond: A White paper of the MIT Ad Hoc Task Force on Open Access to MIT's Research," https://open-access.mit.edu/sites/default/files/20180906_Provost_OpenAccessTF_WhitePaper.pdf.

will also inform Western's contribution to national and international strategies, negotiations, and initiatives to advance open access and foster a sustainable scholarly communications model.

Specific questions the task force might address could include, but are not limited to:

1. How might Western promote and enable sustainable models of scholarly communication?
2. What resources are necessary to support Western's scholars and researchers in their scholarly communications efforts?
3. How could Western focus or enhance existing services and supports for open access and scholarly communication? These include:
 - a. Providing Western's open access institutional repository, Scholarship@Western
 - b. Providing a publication and production platform for scholarly, peer-reviewed open access journals, Open Journal Systems
 - c. Providing guidance and expertise on author rights, copyright, publications, open access, research/alt metrics, and data management.
4. How should Western best ensure ongoing awareness of scholarly communications and publishing issues among the campus community?
5. How might an open access policy or principles statement or other practices support the adoption of open access by Western University researchers?³

This mandate aligns with a key commitment in Western Libraries 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan - to play a leadership role in promoting and enabling sustainable models of scholarly communication to advance the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge.

Proposed Timeline: Start July 1, 2019 with report due to the Provost November 29, 2019

Proposed Task Force Membership:

- Vice-Provost and Chief Librarian (Chair)
- 1 Representative from the Office of VP Research (nominated by the VPR)
- 1 Associate Dean Research (nominated by the ADR group)
- 3 members appointed by Senate (by Senate Nominating Committee)
- 2 Provost appointees
- SOGS nominee
- UWOFA nominee
- USC nominee

Note: Western Libraries librarians, the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies), and the Vice-Provost (Academic Programs) will be invited to serve as resources to the Task Force as appropriate. The Task Force may invite other individuals to assist with the work of the committee.

Andrew Hrymak, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

³ Such policies are a statement of a university's commitment to OA, and usually recommend that faculty members make their scholarly articles open available. For example, see the Harvard Open Access Policy: <https://osc.hul.harvard.edu/policies/>, MIT Open Access Policy: <https://libraries.mit.edu/scholarly/mit-open-access/open-access-policy/>, or UBC's Open Access Position Statement: <https://scholcomm.ubc.ca/open-access/ubc-position-statement/>