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Open Access: Opportunities for Saint Mary's College of California

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Abstract

The term *Open Access* (OA) was coined to describe the electronic distribution of creative works, scholarship and research, unfettered by paywalls and other access barriers. With the advent of the World Wide Web in the 1990s, the concept was introduced as a means of lessening inequality of access to digital information. As the traditional model of for-profit publishing is being challenged and tools for ensuring high quality standards in peer-reviewed OA journals become readily available, the options afforded by OA are germane to the needs of scholars at Saint Mary's College of California (SMC). OA aligns with the mission of the College and many of its current strategic goals.

Introduction

Open Access (OA) refers to a mechanism by which creative works, scholarship, and research are distributed online, free of cost for readers and free of other access barriers. Libraries have embraced OA during the past three decades because it aligns with their values, such as unrestricted access to information. As well, the "serials crisis," which began in the 1990s when prices for library subscriptions to scholarly journals began to drastically increase above the rate of inflation, placed pressure on flat or declining library budgets and forced libraries to make tough choices about cancellations and subscriptions to a limited number of academic and scholarly journals, hampering access to these materials for the students, faculty, researchers, and public that libraries serve (Lariviére, Haustein & Mongeon, 2015). The OA movement was one response embraced by libraries to this "serials crisis". Today, OA has become key to libraries at institutions large and small, and has been tied to other "open" movements that promote free, unrestricted access to educational materials and resources, data, scientific methods to promote reproducible experiments, and other information. These valuable resources benefit students, researchers, and the public at large by being widely and openly accessible instead of restricted to only those who can afford to pay for access.

This white paper briefly describes what OA is, along with its history and recent trends. This paper also reviews what SMC peer institutions and libraries have done in response to OA and the OA movement and makes a case for why Saint Mary's College of California (SMC) should adopt an OA policy. Some of the challenges associated with OA, goals for OA at SMC, how the SMC Library can support OA, and resources needed for OA at SMC are also described. We hope you find this white paper a useful and informative overview of OA and the OA movement.

Definition of Open Access

Open Access (OA) is the system by which research is available freely and without access restrictions online. Research is often confined behind a paywall, which the Open Access mechanism bypasses to allow immediate access to research without said barriers (Suber, 2012). This model allows researchers up-to-date access to potentially crucial research. Practically speaking, open access can be any type of research that is freely and immediately available digitally, such as journal articles and ebooks. However, there are differences in the ways in which OA research is available to users.

OA terminology

There are different types of models for the delivery of OA, and it's useful to know the terminology that is commonly utilized to differentiate OA models and delivery methods.

> **Article Processing Charge (APC)** - A publication fee that may be charged by OA or hybrid journals that can be paid by the author or their institution.
> **Gratis OA** - OA that has removed price barriers. However, there could be permission barriers for this type of OA.
> **Green OA** - OA research can be added to digital repository or a public archive. This version of self-archiving allows authors to share the pre-print or post-print versions of their research (Suber, 2015).
> **Gold OA** - the final, published research is free to read on the publisher's website. In this model, the author retains the copyright and the article is published in an open access journal or a hybrid journal (hybrid journals are journals that contain a mix of paid articles and OA articles).
> **Libre OA** - OA that is free of most permission and price barriers.
> **Pre-print** - Refers to a manuscript that is stored in a repository prior to a formal peer-review.
> **Post-print** - In contrast to a pre-print version, a post-print version of a research article

includes the formal peer-review process, but may not be OA on the publisher's website.

History of Open Access

The growth of Open Access is tied to the rise of the World Wide Web (Public Library of Science, n.d.), where research became accessible in a digital format. The rise of open-access journals was tied to the ability to share research and provided a contrast to the access restrictions placed on journals as publishers began monetizing digital journals. Universities began storing research online, such as in Cornell University's ArXiv (Cornell University, n.d.), and research-sharing repositories such as Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC, n.d.), PLOS (Public Library of Science, n.d.), and DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals, n.d.) were founded. However, it wasn't until the early 2000s that OA was defined and further refined in the research and scientific communities. First, the Budapest Open Access Initiative, which was penned in 2002, defined self-archiving and described the structure of OA journals (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002). Next, the Bethesda Statement on Open Access (2003) asked publishers and libraries to champion the cause of OA. Finally, the Berlin Declaration on Open Access (2003) elaborated on the role of the internet in promoting OA.. Having set the standard for Open Access and defined the terminology, the Open Access movement has since shifted to delivering OA research via tools that can be utilized by libraries and researchers (Knowledge Unlatched, OA Button, and Unpaywall). As OA has become mainstream, the tools are growing to allow OA research to be increasingly accessible.

Trends in Open Access

The business model for the publishing world is antiquated. Research institutions and professional societies traditionally published their own works, edited them in-house and were shared widely. As the costs of publishing skyrocketed, these institutions could no longer keep pace with demand as their disciplines expanded. Publishing houses recognized the profitability potential. Vendors charge researchers for the right to publish their work, continue to use faculty/researchers as reviewers (guaranteeing high standards of review), bundle the work and charge these same researchers' institutions millions of dollars for access via subscriptions. A shift away from the profit-centered model to OA brings expensive subscription costs/paywalls down and opens research findings to any interested party. Where scientists in economically developing countries may have been prohibited access due to high costs, OA affords the opportunity to build on each other's work and reduce the unequal access to materials and research.

Two events with global ramifications are the University of California system's recent decision to discontinue its subscription to the journals of the scientific research publisher Elsevier (Kaplan, 2019) and the subsequent signing of a Transformative Agreement with Cambridge University Press (University of California, 2019b). A transformative agreement essentially changes the contract between an institution and a publisher from a subscription model to an OA model.

On the international stage, two organizations represent the global impact of the OA movement. The first, the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), is an international, online directory that has come to represent independent, open access to peer-reviewed journals of high standards and quality. Sponsors and member institutions support the DOAJ via donations; there are over 13,000 journals with 4 million articles and 130 countries participating in this consortium. Sponsors include large-scale publishers such as EBSCO, Springer Nature, SAGE, Wiley, and Taylor & Francis.. The committee behind the DOAJ concentrates on best practices, has a global reach, and provides freely available metadata (Directory of Open Access Journals, n.d.). While the emergence of such organizations bodes well for the OA field, there continues to be growth in predatory journals, illegitimate journals that charge APCs without proper editorial review. As a guideline for individuals and institutions to ensure the quality of a journal being considered for article submission, the DOAJ committee devised the Think.Check.Submit Initiative (Think, Check, Submit, n.d.) which provides useful tools.

A second global challenge to the traditional business model for research publishing can be found in Coalition S. This group, led by the Science Council of Europe and the EU Commission's Envoy on Open Access, has devised what they call Plan S, a commitment to ensure all research supported by the coalition is published in OA journals with "full, immediate" access (Enago Academy, 2019) or on compliant platforms from January 1, 2020. To date, eleven European countries have signed the commitment.

Open Access and Peer Institutions

When it comes to OA, there have been a number of developments at SMC's peer institutions in the last few years that may be of interest.

At the University of San Francisco (USF), the library supports a USF Scholarship repository. Also, the USF Faculty Association Policy Board passed an OA policy in spring 2017, becoming the second OA policy to be passed at a private institution in California (Caltech has a similar policy), and the first by any Jesuit college or university in the nation (University of San Francisco, 2018). Passage of the policy coincided with increased usage and visibility of the USF

Scholarship repository, which provides free, immediate online access to USF community members' scholarship, creative work, and research.

At Santa Clara University, Scholar Commons, an SCU institutional repository, houses research materials and scholarship, and the SCU Library has included a commitment to OA in the library's strategic plan 2017-20 (Santa Clara University Library, 2017).

The University of San Diego mentions OA collections in its strategic plan, as a means for expanding the library collections (University of San Diego, 2015, p. 3) and several other libraries at institutions such as Pepperdine, Seattle University, and the Claremont Colleges support and promote OA through institutional repositories, promotional events during OA Week (a yearly celebration typically held during the third week of October), OA guides, support for OA journals, undergraduate student research, and addressing OA in their libraries' strategic plans.

Open Access at Saint Mary's College

Adopting OA at Saint Mary's College aligns with the College's Strategic Plan, particularly with Goals 1, 2, 3, and 6 (Saint Mary's College of California, 2015).

For Goal 1, "Discovery in Dialogue," OA raises the academic profile and distinction of our faculty and students. By increasing the visibility and impact of the work of our faculty and students, and providing worldwide discoverability of their scholarly and creative works through OA, Saint Mary's Digital Commons is the ideal archiving repository platform to support open access, scholarly communication, and the College's goal of being "nationally recognized for academic excellence."

For Goal 2, "Access to Success," OA supports the student lifecycle and contributes to student success (retention, persistence, and graduation) by providing free, unrestricted online access to scholarly research in their fields.

For Goal 3, "From De La Salle to Lasallian," OA expands the responsibility for a Lasallian higher education and promotes inclusive equity, social justice, and the common good. As SMC faculty, staff, and students publish in OA forums and use OA books and journals, we fulfill the SMC mission and Lasallian commitment by becoming an ambassador of inclusive equity, social justice, and the common good.

For Goal 6, "Strengthening Foundations in Affordability," OA ensures Saint Mary's financial stability by providing affordable and equitable access to scholarship in the SMC community. As OA removes the pricing barriers for high-priced scholarly journals, our faculty and students

benefit directly from accessing scholarly and peer-reviewed OA content that is free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. Over time, SMC's expenses on non-OA journal subscriptions would be reduced as more research is available open access.

Challenges of Open Access

There are some potential challenges that SMC would face regarding OA initiatives. The quality, stability, relevance, and credibility of OA content needs to be evaluated and monitored. Potentially unvetted sources and predatory publishers should be identified or avoided. SPARC Europe (2019) highlights the need for researchers to maximize the dissemination and impact of their research, and for readers to access the full corpus of research in their fields; at the same time, the organization acknowledges the complexities of intellectual property rights, copyright issues, licensing conditions, and budget management. Although OA materials usually adopt some sort of Creative Commons license (a copyright licensing model free of charge to the public) to allow creators and copyright owners to designate which rights they reserve or waive of their works, Creative Commons licenses could be overly complicated for some users and misused by others (Creative Commons, 2019).

While OA is free for readers, it is not free for publishers. SMC needs to assess the efforts spent on managing the discovery of vast and growing number of OA materials (versus paid resources), as well as funding the costs (for example, article processing charges) that may be associated with publishing in some OA journals. While large research universities (such as the University of California) have more leverage in negotiations and could terminate their subscriptions with big publishers (University of California, 2019a; Louisiana State University, 2019), it would be difficult for SMC to reduce our dependency on publisher-proprietary and subscription-based journals in the short term.

Goals for Open Access at Saint Mary's College

We have established four major goals needed for Saint Mary's to implement OA campus-wide. Our first is to adopt an OA policy that supports faculty depositing pre-prints or post-prints in Digital Commons, an open-access repository and archive. Along with faculty scholarship, an OA policy could require adding all theses and dissertations in Digital Commons. The creation of an OA policy will align with the College's Strategic Plan by ensuring that faculty publications are openly available, where applicable. This would have the added benefit of increasing content in our Digital Commons, adding to the college's academic profile. Our second goal is to support Saint Mary's College faculty in establishing an understanding of OA publishing models and copyright. Our third goal is assisting faculty in choosing discipline-appropriate OA journals to

submit and publish. Our last goal is for the Rank and Tenure Committee to consider the weight given to all peer-reviewed, open access publications in the hiring, promotion, and tenure process.

Library Support for Open Access at Saint Mary's College

As we move forward with campus OA initiatives, the Library can implement steps to provide support to faculty. This support includes adopting OA initiatives as part of the SMC Library's strategic plan, adding full-text (OAI-compliant) faculty scholarly work into the SMC Digital Commons and including OA in the Library Collection Development Policy, increasing the visibility and impact of OA materials in our collections. We also plan on educating faculty on eprint archiving (pre-print, post-print or published versions), and promoting the use of OA books and journals by identifying scholarly resources in our library collections and OA archives or repositories on the web. The library has knowledgeable staff with OA expertise and can prepare supplementary documentation through library research guides, highlighting campus resources and conversation tools to engage in OA conversations with faculty and administrators. Lastly, the library can seek funding to establish OA initiatives and create targeted faculty outreach plans to recruit early adopters.

Resources Needed for Open Access at Saint Mary's College

In order to move forward with OA initiatives, we have identified resources that will aid in the success of OA at SMC. These resources would ideally come with full support from the provost and college administration. One need that has been identified has been to adopt a Saint Mary's College intellectual property and OA policy. This policy would encompass copyright and digital repository guidelines, as well as provide information on author rights. The college would also need to find funding to support OA publishing fees. In addition to this infrastructure for long-term support for OA, it will also be helpful to develop assessment plans to measure OA impact. Finally, it will be crucial to partner with faculty governance to encourage departments to consider open-access publication in their promotion and tenure decision making.

Conclusion

Open Access is no longer an abstract concept in higher education. This white paper is provided to guide Saint Mary's College faculty and administration away from asking "Why should we do OA on this campus" and instead ask "How can we support faculty with OA on our campus?" OA

does a very simple thing: it makes research accessible so scholars around the world can read it and build on it in their own research. The trends in OA show that institutions are critical of high subscription fees (and are taking action to combat them), authors are becoming more familiar with OA options for publishing, and OA publishers are gaining ground in making research accessible. Our peer institutions are also providing guidance to their faculty and students through OA, something that the Library at Saint Mary's College is equipped to support. We have the opportunity at this institution to gain equal footing with our peer institutions, especially with administrative support. While there are some challenges to instituting OA at Saint Mary's College, the benefits of becoming an OA campus, for faculty and for students, will be significant.

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