Background

The Open Scholarship Commitment Implementation Working Group was established in April 2022 to support and advance the aspirational goals laid out in the [Open Scholarship Statement of Commitment](#). The working group is responsible for socializing the policy aspirations, developing an implementation plan, and assessing any outcomes arising from proposed implementations.

During the first year of its three-year term, the working group set out to identify possible implementations in support of the aspirational goals laid out in the statement of commitment. In addition to internally focused brainstorming and idea generation, the working group sought to engage colleagues at academic libraries across Canada who might also be working towards open scholarship initiatives in their libraries. Relevant contacts were selected from a list of previously compiled institutions that had publicly accessible open access or open scholarship policies originating from or implicating the library.

Having identified eight key academic libraries (SFU, University of Toronto, York, McGill, University of Victoria, Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Alberta, and Brock) over the course of the Fall 2022 academic semester, the Working Group invited speakers from these institutions to visit our meetings and respond to six predetermined questions about open scholarship initiatives in their libraries. We received responses from seven of the eight contacted libraries and this document summarizes our takeaways from these interactions.

Policy background and creation

Although the Working Group is primarily interested in open scholarship policies specifically focused on libraries, our interviewees discussed library, departmental, and institution-wide policies. Not surprisingly, policies for libraries started inside the library, usually in collaboration with internal library committees responsible for research portfolios. Policies that extended beyond the library required buy-in and support from the broader university stakeholders, particularly administration and faculty. Even when policies were institution-wide, they tended to have originated from library advocacy efforts.

Many interviewees referenced being influenced by external organizational/institutional policies, standards, or calls to action in the development of their policies. This suggests that libraries are looking to colleague institutions and other open champions, leveraging this work in the development of their policies. Some interviewees even discussed referencing other institutional polices to their organizations as a means of highlighting the need for their own policy, suggesting that they needed to "keep up" with other institutions. This highlights the potentially broader value of library open scholarship polices as they can influence not only the practices of those subject to the policies, but also other libraries and higher education institutions across Canada.

Policy implementation and ongoing support

From our conversations with interviewees, it is clear that for many of them, work associated with the policy was primarily concerned with the creation of the policy itself and the roll out of the policy was secondary. Interviewees did discuss offering professional development sessions on the policy around the time of launch. These sessions were sometimes folded into broader outreach efforts around the organization's institutional repository. Other strategies included relying on institutional communications

channels and liaison networks to spread the word about the policy and relying on library websites etc. to share information about the policies.

Generally, interviewees seemed to fold the policy into their already existing approaches to education and outreach around open scholarship. Notably, one interviewee suggested that the policy itself was more of an advocacy tool than anything else. Her focus was on having something to point to when engaging her colleagues and administration in conversations around the need for greater support of open initiatives. This speaks to a broader observation that the documents we discussed with interviewees, while often framed as policies, are likely more accurately characterized as statements or guidelines, as faculty members are encouraged, but not required to abide by them.

Measuring policy success

None of the interviewees we talked to had a clear vision at the outset of their work for how they would measure the success of their policy. For most, the policy was only a way to get a broader conversation started at their institution and tangible measures of success were not considered. For one library that had an OA policy tied to an OA Fund, they were able to measure success through the use and increase in faculty interest in that fund. However, the OA Fund was not used heavily by librarians and speaks more to support of OA by academic faculty.

None of the interviewees we spoke to considered measuring impact or success among library faculty specifically. In cases where deposit in a library-managed repository was associated with an OA policy, only general deposit numbers by all academic faculty members were captured.

Policy contribution to greater awareness of open scholarship

When asked about the impact of their policy, interviewees had mixed responses. For some, the policy did not result in a noticeable increase in or awareness of open scholarship, while for others, and in particular where the policy was campus-wide, the relationships they built while developing and communicating the policy have resulted in deeper support for open initiatives. A few interviewees noted that their colleagues appreciated the fact that their policy arose from a ground swell of advocacy efforts and was not imposed upon them by senior administration. This led them to feel as though they were reflecting the needs and desires of the community, and not merely implementing a mandate. As a result, these interviewees felt more confident that they were speaking on behalf of the institution when advocating for the policy and its implementation.

Other open scholarship initiatives

All the interviewees we talked to are still engaged in open scholarship initiatives both within the library and beyond. Many mentioned ongoing efforts to keep their policies relevant and build upon relationships with other potential campus collaborators, including research offices, institutional presses, liaison librarians, and library administration. Outreach through various workshops, training sessions, and speaker events continues to be central to advocacy efforts. For those who have more mature policies, some spoke of needing to revisit and revitalize them, suggesting that policies should not be considered as static documents.

Institutional context

Several interviewees raised issues unique to their institutional context that impacted their ability to support and advance open scholarship. For example, one interviewee discussed the impact that severe budget cuts had on the library and how this led to fewer resources and capacity to put towards anything that wasn't deemed "essential". Others talked about positive steps being made to hire new positions, or to bring in people with expertise in areas like metadata or knowledge exchange into the open scholarship conversation. Various organizational considerations including reorganization and strategic planning were also discussed considering how they surfaced open scholarship as an area of focus for either the library or broader institutions.

Conclusion and takeaways

Connecting directly with our peers at other academic libraries provided an important opportunity to challenge our assumptions, anticipate potential hurdles, and recommit to the underlying values that brought us to this work in the first place. While each interviewee provided their unique experience and perspective, looking at the experience holistically, we have come away with the following conclusions:

- While our invitation was premised on the desire to have a conversation about open scholarship activities happening within the library and directed towards library work, it was common for interviewees to reframe the conversation around the library's role as service provider and shift focus to discussing their support for open scholarship initiatives among academic faculty and students. This suggests that library workers have a strong sense of their role as service providers and research supporters, but may be less used to thinking of the potential impact of open practices on their own work.
- Many interviewees discussed internal open policies primarily as advocacy tools and as such monitoring compliance or formalizing assessment did not feature as part of policy implementation. One institution did mention reporting out after passing a policy, but the shape and extent of this reporting was developed after the fact.
- Open scholarship policy creation is often folded into broader scholarly publishing initiatives and supported through library-wide, or sometimes even institution-wide committees; however, ongoing support and implementation of the policy is often consolidated into one position or unit, usually situated within the library. As a result, in several cases, the energy or excitement that went into policy development was difficult to sustain after the policy was released. Where there is broader support of open scholarship, either at the library or institutional administrative level, policies are more likely to be deemed successful and receive more support.
- Each organization faces unique administrative, cultural, and resource challenges and these circumstances will impact how successful a policy implementation can be. Institutions that take the time to socialize a policy will likely find that it receives more support from both the administration and staff level.
- All of the people we spoke to are professional librarians with faculty status at their institutions. It is important to recognize that library staff within different employment categories have differing levels of professional autonomy available to them and that this will inevitably impact

their ability to implement open scholarship within their work. Those with greater autonomy will likely be called on to lead culture change within their organizations.

In addition to the above general conclusions, we would like to note practical takeaways that can be implemented as we proceed with our work. Several interviewees noted the value of training and professional development with an emphasis on how to engage in open scholarship practices. Regularly offered programs aimed at developing core competencies (similar to POSE) or workshops on current open scholarship tools and trends (e.g., open data) were well-received and attended. In some cases, these offerings served alongside resource lists and outreach toolkits that support librarians wanting to promote open scholarship practices in their liaison areas. Successful communications and outreach strategies for connecting with librarians included frequent, repeated, varied and/or "personalized" messaging via branch visits, liaison librarian meetings, blog posts and emails to new hires. One full circle initiative aimed at faculty involved a "listening tour" to solicit feedback on general thoughts and perceptions around open access; the responses were then analyzed and disseminated in a report with accompanying recommendations.

Although many interviewees noted the potential value of embedding open dissemination practices in tenure, promotion, and study leave policies, the practice of directly emailing newly published librarians, or posting regular calls for deposits via liaison listservs and other internal communication channels, were commonly credited as resulting in librarians submitting their work the institutional repository.