

Postprint Repository Services: Context and Feasibility at the University of California

Final Draft (3/31/05)

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Executive Summary and Recommendations For Action

The University of California's Office of Scholarly Communication (OSC) promotes and encourages Universitywide planning and action as necessary to develop scholarly communication systems that are economically sustainable and that leverage Internet technologies to support innovation in all forms of scholarship.

The landscape of scholarly communication and publishing includes significant recent attention to technologies, policies, and business models that allow or encourage open access to research results. A key set of questions appear at the intersection between publisher policies on transfer of copyrights and the knowledge and behavior of authors with regard to their intellectual property. At the center of the intersection is the publicly accessible "postprint" and its standing as a viable additional copy of research results that retains quality control (peer-review) of the published record while overcoming significant barriers to access and impact.

In August 2004 the OSC set out with the generous support of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to better understand the context for, and to assess the cost, viability, and potential use of a repository for open-access distribution of UC faculty article publications. In particular, it pursued six research objectives that collectively would provide baseline data about:

- the number and proportion of UC faculty articles that can be made available for simultaneous distribution in an open-access postprint repository; that is, articles that appear in journals whose publishers do not prohibit open-access postprint distribution;
- faculty attitudes toward managing copyright in their work as a means of enabling its open-access distribution.

Findings are detailed in the Results section of this report. The research demonstrates that UC faculty contribute heavily to the published scholarly journal literature. UC faculty published 3.8% (26,000) of the 680,000 articles in a sample of 4,300 scholarly journals indexed by Thomson Inc.'s ISI services in 2003. 76% of those publications are in journals that do not preclude simultaneous open-access distribution of some form of the research results, for example, via an open-access postprint repository. UC faculty contribute in similar proportions to open-access venues as they do to subscription-based journals publications.

UC faculty also make substantial current use of collections of publications on personal and departmental websites, with 18% and 11% of those sites hosting postprints respectively.

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges the efforts of study team members Dayna Holz, Ellen Meltzer, and Laura Fosbender, and comments and suggestions from Dan Greenstein and Catherine Candee.

The study presents three cost scenarios and ten high-level cost elements for postprint repository services. Using these elements it estimates fourfold and sevenfold increased costs for services at particular higher levels of assistance to depositing authors.

Crucially, the study also shows that UC faculty are concerned about copyright and the implications that copyright ownership has on the economics of and ultimately on their access to published research. Faculty mastery of the nuances and the details of copyright, publishing, and open access issues is varied, but it is translated into action by a sizeable proportion and there is a tangible desire to know more by an even greater majority.

Summary Recommendations for Action

Recommendation 1. The University of California should develop and encourage widespread faculty adoption of a postprint repository that leverages the existing infrastructure of and is managed by the University's eScholarship program.

Recommendation 2. The evolution of the core information management environment of the University, including a framework for managing copyright, should be explicitly assessed and articulated because it is directly relevant to the cost, adoption rate, and impact of a postprint repository service and similar publishing innovations.

Recommendation 3. The Office of Scholarly Communication should analyze the potential demand for repository services within the core information management environment described above and develop cost scenarios that acknowledge their interdependence. Further, it should develop and practically assess marketing opportunities to ensure widespread adoption and use of the repository by UC faculty.

Recommendation 4. Critical business, technical, and impact issues should be evaluated formally by the OSC as the repository is developed. Evaluation of these issues will inform the repository's continuation and sustainability planning and the more general community-wide discussion of open-access approaches to scholarly publishing.

Recommendation 5. Widespread faculty acceptance and use of the repository will require the coordinated actions of diverse university constituencies. The Office of Scholarly Communication should be advised by a group able to inform and monitor repository progress, and to mobilize action or influence thinking in those constituencies.

Recommendation 6. The repository's success will depend on how well it integrates with repositories at other institutions and supports the development by scholarly publishers, academic societies, and universities of new scholarly information policies and resources.

Recommendation 7. The Office of Scholarly Communication should formally document and evaluate the repository's development to provide a route-map for others interested in hosting similar initiatives.

[The full report is available at http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/responses/materials/UC_postprintstudy_final.pdf]