
Open Access: Entitlement, Opportunity, or Peril?

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ALCTS CRS Costs of Continuing Resources in Libraries Interest Group
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Faculty sens. battle over open access

By Tirza Austin

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An unforeseen debate erupted at the University Senate meeting yesterday about where faculty members should be encouraged to publish their research.

After more than half an hour of debate, the senate voted against a resolution that called for faculty members to publish their work in free online databases. Despite the potential savings open-access journals could bring to the university, the senate voted the resolution down in a 37-24 decision, due to perceived impositions on academic freedom.

"[The cost of scholarly journals] has to be one of the most challenging issues we have at this university," Senate Chair Ken Holum said.

The defeated resolution, proposed by the senate's faculty affairs committee, laid out four specific suggestions: for university President Dan Mote to advocate for open-access journals on a national level, to urge the libraries to educate faculty on the cost of journals and to encourage faculty to publish their research in open-access journals and deposit findings in open-access databases whenever possible.



Timeline of Events

■ 2005

- Draft resolution from Faculty Affairs Committee to Senate Executive Committee (SEC)

■ 2008

- May: University Library Council annual report referenced 2005 resolution
- Sept: SEC sent resolution back to Faculty Affairs for review



The Resolution

- 1) The President *SHOULD* collaborate with other universities
- Libraries *SHOULD* keep faculty informed and assist in negotiating copyright arrangements
- Researchers are *ENCOURAGED* to publish in OA journals; negotiate to retain the right to post; consider journal price
- Researchers are *ENCOURAGED* to deposit in DRUM



Arguments against Open Access

- Research is already available for free from the libraries
- Resolution would result in decline in outlets for scholarly publication
- Shift cost of publication from library subscriptions to faculty members



Senate Vote: April 23, 2009

- Open Access will kill the journals you need during your career
- Resolution did not address diversity of disciplines
- Language was TOO strong

- 37 against; 25 in favor; 4 abstentions



What Did We Learn?

- Need a clear message
- Focus on one aspect: self-archiving
- Don't assume faculty know about OA
- Senate not the best place to start
- Build support from the ground up



What Did We Learn? *(cont)*

- Take advantage of subject specialist librarians
- Customize message to fit needs and interests of each department
- Start education efforts early and keep at it
- Concentrate on issues of interest to faculty: author rights



What's Happened Since?

- Met with faculty from English Department
- Developed list of FAQs that addressed concerns raised at Senate meeting
- Focused on issues unique to humanities
- Concentrated on self-archiving



“Open access is an important issue, but I’m going to vote against this resolution. My experience at this institution is that when you vote to open up discussions on a topic, nothing happens and it just dies.”



Questions?

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