Part III: Sharing Scholarly Work: Open Access Knowledge and Practice

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Motivation to share

Geneseo faculty reported many factors that motivate them to share their research. Of the faculty interviewed for this report, 29% indicated that tenure and promotion concerns motivate their publishing habits. However, an equal number of faculty (30%) indicated that they are motivated by a desire to share their work with a broader audience. As one faculty member put it, "You are not in the conversation until your work is published." Sharing research is an integral part of the scholarly process.

Faculty at SUNY Geneseo are seeking opportunities to publish in open access venues and are openly sharing their work either before or after formal publication. By removing barriers to access (such as subscriptions and paywalls), open access publications are available to the widest audience.

Publishing in open access journals

Several faculty have sought so-called “gold” open access publishing opportunities. Gold open access refers to publications that are “born” open access. The publisher makes the articles (or books) open access from the start. These publishers don’t charge subscription fees or access fees for their content, and rely on other funding sources such as advertising revenue, author fees, or funder fees.

As open access advocate Peter Suber states in his book on the topic (2012),

Like conventional, toll-access journals, some OA journals are first-rate and some are bottom feeders. Like conventional journals, some OA journals are high in prestige and others are unknown, some of the unknowns are high in quality and some are low. Some are on solid financial footing and some are struggling. Also like conventional journals, most are honest and some are scams. (p. 49-50)
Of the 87 faculty interviewed for this report, 10% indicated that open access has influenced their publishing decisions (at least in some small way). Although just one faculty member interviewed for this report indicated he will only publish in open access journals, several welcome the opportunity when it arises. Geneseo faculty who consider open access publications have concerns regarding their ability to pay author fees, especially those who do not have their own grant funding. The Geneseo Sponsored Research website indicates that funds may be available for mandatory page charges (common in some fields), but does not currently mention open access author fees.

Although few faculty report that open access issues influence their decisions about where to publish, we know that several Geneseo faculty members have published in gold open access journals (see table 1).

Table 1: Select open access journals that SUNY Geneseo faculty have published in from 2012 to 2013. The disciplinary breakdown represents the larger availability of open access journals in the sciences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Journal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sciences (multidisciplinary)</td>
<td>PLOS ONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Acta Crystallographica Section E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Studies</td>
<td>Communications in Information Literacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geosciences</td>
<td>Bulletin of Geosciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>The Electronic Journal of Linear Algebra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Molecular Biology of the Cell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Journal of Inflammation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>International Journal of Special Education</td>
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Most of the faculty who published in the journals listed in table 1 did not indicate that open access influences their publication decisions. As a result, we can conclude that some Geneseo faculty are choosing an open access journal based on factors other than their accessibility: subject, audience, prestige, editorial policies, etc. The number of open access journals is increasing (Laakso and Bjork, 2012) and open access publications are increasingly appropriate venues for Geneseo authors.

While the majority of open access publication activity is in journals, faculty are exploring open access options for publishing teaching resources, short form works and textbooks. Several Geneseo faculty are working with Milne Library to publish freely available versions of peer reviewed textbooks or brief essays (Milne Library, 2013; Open SUNY Textbook Project, 2013).

In addition to faculty open access publication efforts, Milne Library is utilizing an open access monograph publication platform to publish a series of reprints, the Genesee Valley Historical Reprints (Milne Library, 2013). Titles selected for the series are in the public domain and relate...
Scholarly Publishing Across the Disciplines: Open Access

to the history of the local area. Each book is available for free online or for purchase in print via Amazon.com.

Sharing copies of journal articles: self archiving

While only 11% of scholarly journals use the “gold” open access format (Laakso and Bjork, 2012), many authors are able to make their publications freely available by posting a copy of the article online on their website or a disciplinary open access archive, so called “green” open access. Nineteen Geneseo faculty members interviewed for this project have posted copies of their articles online, or have had publishers post a free copy online on their behalf.

Of the 19 faculty members who posted a copy to a personal website or online archive, only one person mentioned a reason involving the visibility of their work, “In our business we want people to see it.” Others cited funding agency requirements (e.g. NIH) or a desire to introduce students to their research.

Most faculty (55% of those who answered the question) did not know if they retained the permission to post a copy on a personal website or repository, including 8 of the 19 faculty who already had. In the drive to be published, authors tend to sign copyright transfer agreements without carefully reading them or negotiating for increased rights. As one faculty member put it, “They are letting me in, why mess with that?” This can affect the ability of researchers to use their research in the classroom and their ability to re-use figures later on.

Nine faculty members knew that their copyright transfer agreements would allow them to self-archive a copy of an article, but only 2 had actually done so. Geneseo faculty self-archive their work in several ways. Some faculty have posted articles to their Geneseo-hosted faculty websites. Others have posted to disciplinary repositories such as arxiv.org (physics and mathematics), PubMedCentral (biomedical sciences) or the Social Science Research Network. Some have posted copies to academic social networks such as Mendeley, Academia.edu or ResearchGATE.

While many faculty are self-archiving their work, others haven't seen this as a priority. Some faculty cited a small audience as a reason for not worrying about open access in any form. One researcher cited a small community of interest as a reason for not posting his research on a popular disciplinary repository site. Another thought her research was too esoteric that it wouldn’t be of interest to the general public. While it is difficult to predict what the public may be interested in, subscription fees also limit the access of scholars in those small fields. As libraries (including Milne) have been forced to cancel journal subscriptions over the past several years, self-archived copies of peer reviewed journal articles become an important source of information for students and scholars.
Scholarly Publishing Across the Disciplines: *Open Access*

**Changing dissemination methods**

While many faculty admitted to a lack of knowledge about open access, some faculty members' answers to questions indicated misconceptions regarding open access, electronic publishing and publisher’s use of peer review.

Some faculty were comfortable with the transition to online-only publication, “I stopped caring about that - I just care about publishing.” Many emphasized that journal quality and the quality of the journal’s peer reviews process were what mattered, not the method of dissemination. Others expressed concerns about the quality of online only publications, viewing them as second tier.

But the distinction between “print” and “online” publication has blurred and, in some cases, ceased to exist. Some journals that originally published in print now only publish online, and established, high-quality publishers have started new online-only publications. It is possible that the distrust of online-only publications is really a distrust of new publishers. It is currently impossible for researchers to keep track of all the journals in their field, leading to skepticism about unknown titles and concerns about vanity publishing.

**The future of open access at Geneseo**

For several reasons, it seems likely that an increasing number of Geneseo faculty will publish in open access journals or self-archive their articles after publication. Yet-to-be-announced requirements from federal funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation will most likely require grantees to self-deposit their works into disciplinary repositories (Holdren, 2013). The increased number of open access publications (Laakso and Björk, 2012), and the increasing quality of existing open access publications will increase the likelihood that these publication venues will be chosen based on factors other than their open access nature. Particularly, the growth of open access publications in the social sciences and humanities will create new publication venues that may prove beneficial for Geneseo authors. Taking advantage of open access publication can provide benefits to Geneseo authors, including greater citations (Wagner, 2010), and a higher profile for university publications.

Librarians and other library staff can assist faculty in researching publication options, including open access issues and concerns. Librarians can help research journal quality (regardless of dissemination method) and determine the audience of a publication by researching which databases index the title. Sharing information among library staff about the tools and techniques used to research publishers and journals is vital.

Librarians can also help faculty stay abreast of publication news and trends in their fields by sharing information about new publications and links to resources listing known scam and vanity publishers.

Milne Library is partnering with other libraries across the SUNY system to directly assisting faculty publication by hosting open access publication platforms that allow faculty to publish peer-reviewed books, journals and digital collections. The first of 15 peer-reviewed open
textbooks was published by the Open SUNY Textbook Project, led by Milne Library, on October 22, 2013 (Open SUNY Textbook Project, 2013). Milne Library has also assisted faculty in publishing other textbooks and essays in an open access format via our Minerva Press imprint (Milne Library, 2013), and helped local scholarly societies publish open access journals such as Educational Change, the journal of the New York State Foundations of Education Association (http://journal.nysfea.org/). We anticipate that our efforts to publish book, textbooks, journals and short-form essays will increase over the next five years.

In addition to the gold open access publishing efforts described above, Milne Library should explore options for assisting faculty who wish to self-archive copies of their journal articles (green open access). Subject librarians should learn more about disciplinary archives for depositing articles and share this information with Geneseo faculty. In addition, library staff should explore the use of the SUNY repository as a tool to allow self-archiving of faculty publications.

Across campus, faculty are seeking clarification about how tenure and promotion committees value open access and online publications. In addition, the college may want to consider assisting faculty with open access publication fees, in addition to providing funds for mandatory page charges.

Bibliography


