

# Achieving Consensus on the University of Kansas Open-Access Policy

**Ada Emmett, Associate Librarian for Scholarly Communications, University of Kansas**

**Town Peterson, Distinguished Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and Senior Curator, Biodiversity Institute, University of Kansas**

In April of 2009 the University of Kansas (KU) Faculty Senate passed an open-access policy much like Harvard, MIT, and Stanford faculty's, a decision that was expanded and improved in a second vote in February 2010. With these policy decisions, KU became the first public university to pass a university-wide policy of this sort. A long-standing interest in addressing the systemic failings of access to university scholarship prepared KU to develop and support such measures.

The KU open-access policy is not a new phenomenon for the university. Rather, in 2005, KU faculty governance passed a resolution to encourage greater access to scholarship created at the university, under the leadership of then Provost David Shulenburger. KU also made a key early investment in the development of an institutional repository, KU ScholarWorks, which is now serving as the platform for the open-access materials levied by the current policy.

The 2009–2010 policy asserts the rights of KU faculty regarding the provision of worldwide access to their scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. The policy was the product of a broad, collaborative effort by members of the faculty (including librarians), administration, and faculty governance. KU's Faculty Senate is considered a vibrant and healthy institution within the university. In fall 2008, with a short turnaround time, a small but devoted ad hoc subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Research Committee was charged with developing a policy for the Faculty Senate's consideration by the end of the academic year (spring 2009). As part of their work, a Web-based survey was distributed to KU faculty to assess their attitudes about and knowledge of open

access, and two open meetings were held. Hundreds of e-mails were exchanged between ad hoc subcommittee members and faculty interested in or concerned about the policy. Faculty Senators were given an informational presentation on the issues; later, in spring 2009, a draft policy document with a longer informational document was shared with all KU faculty prior to a vote on the Senate floor.

As part of a series of negotiations with the Faculty Senate, the policy was approved overwhelmingly in April 2009, albeit with some revisions to the ad hoc subcommittee's proposals. That policy required that additional information be described, outlined, and presented to the Faculty Senate for approval by spring 2010. As a result, a new and larger implementation task force was formed in the summer of 2009, composed of faculty from a range of disciplines and ranks (including librarians), university administrators, and a representative of the Faculty Senate. All members of the task force were strong supporters of the basic idea of open access, even if not yet well informed of the complex issues.

Starting that summer this new task force worked tirelessly to consult with and inform faculty across campus, seek guidance on policy revisions, and outline an implementation plan. The implementation plan described processes that would be undertaken to carry out the terms of the policy. In an iterative and deliberative process that involved over 200 faculty and administrators in over 20 public meetings (brown bag lunches, open meetings, administrative meetings, departmental meetings, and Senate briefings), faculty were engaged, questions and concerns addressed, and feedback received. The task force then considered, debated, and summarized the input received, and wrote new drafts of the policy and implementation plan. "Early adopter" departments and individual faculty members were enlisted to test implementation processes as well.

A progress report was presented to the Senate Executive Committee and the Faculty Senate, and was received enthusiastically. In February 2010, final drafts of recommended revisions to the policy and the implementation document were provided to the aforementioned bodies. Finally, after some debate on the Faculty Senate floor, the policy was approved as submitted and the implementation document endorsed. With this approval and endorsement, KU's open-access policy took full effect.

One observer recently noted that KU is now the first university to have an

Achieving reasonable levels of consensus across such a diverse faculty required diplomacy, patience, forethought, and careful crafting of presentations and messages to faculty.

Ada Emmett served on the ad hoc subcommittee in 2008–2009, and subsequently led the 2009–2010 implementation task force, which achieved the second and final approval of the policy. Town Peterson chaired the aforementioned ad hoc subcommittee in 2008–2009, during which the original policy was approved, and in 2009–2010 he served as a member of the implementation task force. For information and documentation about the process at the University of Kansas and about the assistance, both informational and in-person, offered to faculty, please see <http://openaccess.ku.edu/> or e-mail Ada Emmett [aemmett@ku.edu](mailto:aemmett@ku.edu).

open-access policy pass twice. The process took two full academic years, and considerable investment of time and effort by members of the KU faculty and administration, including library faculty in leadership roles within the Faculty Senate. Achieving reasonable levels of consensus across such a diverse faculty required diplomacy, patience, forethought, and careful crafting of presentations and messages to faculty.

The KU open-access initiative now is in the hands of librarians and staff at the Center for Digital Scholarship within the libraries, with the Dean of Libraries having been selected to serve in the role of “Provost’s Designate” for policy issues and implementation. The initiative has entered a “build-out” phase, in which more educational efforts aimed at preparing the remainder of the faculty for participation will be combined with implementation of the final details of supportive

technology (e.g., Web interfaces and reporting modules), rights-management and submission assistance for faculty. Open-access policy activities and participation are expected to ramp up dramatically over the coming two years.

© 2010 Ada Emmett and Town Peterson



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>.

**To cite this article:** Ada Emmett and Town Peterson. “Achieving Consensus on the University of Kansas Open-Access Policy.” *Research Library Issues: A Bimonthly Report from ARL, CNI, and SPARC*, no. 269 (April 2010): 5–7. <http://www.arl.org/resources/pubs/rli/archive/rli269.shtml>.