Rice University Open-Access Mandate Position Paper

C. Bronk, G. Henry, S. Lowman, M.Y. Vardi

Feb. 12, 2012

Background

Since 2003, more than 135 institutions and 52 funding bodies world-wide have implemented open-access mandates for research publications, ensuring that the results of published research are available to society at no cost to end users (http://roarmap.eprints.org/). Open access is defined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative as, “free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these publications, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited” (http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read). US Research universities that have passed open access mandates include: Harvard, Duke, MIT, Princeton, Emory, University of Virginia, and many others.

After a visit to Rice, Hal Abelson, MIT Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and a fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, was inspired by Rice's existing copyright policy that ensures that, while Rice faculty member own their copyright, Rice retains the right to use these works, “on a royalty-free basis solely for the University’s education, teaching and research activities” (Copyright_Policy No. 334 : Rice University. http://professor.rice.edu/IndependentPage.aspx?id=2757). He returned to MIT and took a proposal to their faculty senate; on March 18, 2009, MIT faculty unanimously passed their open-access policy (http://libraries.mit.edu/sites/scholarly/mit-open-access/open-access-at-mit/mit-open-access-policy/). Many Rice faculty already comply with open-access mandates from funding bodies such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. The National Science Foundation (NSF) has given indications that it, too, may implement an open-access mandate, requiring all publications resulting from NSF-funded research to be made available via open access. It is now time to implement an open access policy for faculty publications at Rice.

Managing Open Access Publications

Implementing an open access mandate requires that the institution commit to managing these publications in a manner that will support compliance with the resulting policy. The Rice Digital Scholarship Archive (RDSA, http://scholarship.rice.edu) is Rice’s institutional repository, providing the infrastructure to support the long-term preservation and access to faculty publications. Publications managed in RDSA are readily discoverable on the Web by search engines and generally rank highly in Google Scholar search results since Google recognizes the integrity of publications in institutional repositories. Fondren Library is committed to maintaining RDSA to ensure that the publications are fully managed, backed-up regularly, distributed for preservation purposes, and migrated over time. The digital versions of the university's doctoral dissertations and Master's theses are currently managed through RDSA and are available as open-access publications. Both the technical
infrastructure as well as support services for archiving faculty publications are provided by Fondren’s Center for Digital Scholarship.

Certain disciplinary communities, such as Physics, Math and Computer Science, have established repositories where publications are available as open access documents; an example of this is the arXiv repository at Cornell University (http://arxiv.org/). ArXiv has proven that open-access publishing does not forgo rigorous peer review; alternatively, many reviewers can read pre-prints of the papers and comment prior to final publication. ArXiv is more than 20-years old and contains over 700,000 articles. PubMed Central is the open-access repository for all publications resulting from NIH-funded research. These repositories demonstrate the viability of open access in sharing knowledge while maintaining academic integrity.

Rice and Open Access

Rice has already established a favorable reputation in the area of open access educational materials through the Connexions project (http://cnx.org). Recognized as a leader in open-education resources, Rice is well positioned to move forward with an open-access mandate for faculty publications, further demonstrating leadership in making knowledge available to the world at no cost. As stated above, Rice’s copyright policy already supports this next move to an open-access publication mandate. The Rice Digital Scholarship Archive has been established since 2005, thus providing a proven platform and infrastructure for supporting the implementation of a mandate. Fondren library is ready to assist faculty with getting publications into the repository so that this is not an unduly burdensome activity. Library staff will actively work with the faculty to ensure that the repository interface meets their needs.

The current existence of both a copyright policy and an established institutional repository position Rice well-ahead of other institutions at the time they approved their open-access mandates. It is strongly recommended that Rice faculty now pass an open-access mandate for faculty publications.

Proposed Policy

The following resolution is proposed:

The Faculty of Rice University is committed to disseminating the fruits of its research and scholarship as widely as possible. In keeping with that commitment, the Faculty adopts the following policy: The current Rice copyright policy governing faculty publications will be followed, with the additional provision that Rice University will make those publications available for open dissemination. The policy will apply to all scholarly publications written while the person is a faculty member, except for publications completed before the adoption of this policy. The Provost or Provost’s designate will waive application of the policy for a particular scholarly publication upon written notification by the author, who informs Rice of the reason and thereby opts out.

To assist Rice in distributing the scholarly publications, as of the date of publication, each faculty member will make available an electronic copy of his or her final version of the publication at no charge to a representative designated by the Provost's Office in an appropriate format (such as PDF) specified by the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office will make the scholarly publication available to the public in an open-access repository, the Rice
Digital Scholarship Archive. Upon request, the scholarly publication will not be made available to the public for an agreed upon embargo period.

The Office of the Provost, in consultation with the Vice Provost and University Librarian, will be responsible for interpreting this policy, resolving disputes concerning its interpretation and application, and recommending changes to the Faculty. The policy is to take effect immediately; it will be reviewed after three years, with a report presented to the Faculty.

The Faculty calls upon the Vice Provost and University Librarian to develop and monitor a plan for a service or mechanism that would render compliance with the policy as convenient for the faculty as possible.