

2017-04-03

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Version	
Citation (published version):	Stephanie H. Wical, Gregory J. Kocken. 2017. "Open Access and Promotion and Tenure Evaluation Plans at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire." <i>Serials Review</i> , v. 43, Issue 2, pp. 111 - 119.

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/31328>

Boston University



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To cite this article: Stephanie H. Wical & Gregory J. Kocken (2017) Open Access and Promotion and Tenure Evaluation Plans at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire, *Serials Review*, 43:2, 111-119, DOI: [10.1080/00987913.2017.1313024](https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2017.1313024)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00987913.2017.1313024>



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Accepted author version posted online: 09 Jun 2017.
Published online: 09 Jun 2017.



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Open Access and Promotion and Tenure Evaluation Plans at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire

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ABSTRACT

Department and program evaluation plans at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire were examined to see if these documents provide evidence that could be used to justify supporting the publication of peer-reviewed open access articles toward tenure and promotion. In an earlier study, the authors reveal that faculty members at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire are more unaware of open access publishing than their counterparts at larger universities. These findings dovetail with other studies that show that faculty members are reluctant to publish in open access journals because of concerns about the quality of those journals. The existing body of scholarship suggests that tenure-line faculty fear publishing in open access journals because it could adversely impact their chances of promotion and tenure. The authors of this current study sought to determine if department and program evaluation plans could influence negative perceptions faculty have of open access journals. The implications of this study for librarians, scholarly communication professionals, tenure-line faculty, departments, and programs are addressed.

KEYWORDS

open access publishing;
scholarly communication;
university promotion and
tenure evaluation plans

Introduction

The library profession has a growing body of scholarship about perceived and real obstacles to the adoption of open access (OA) publishing and institutional repositories. In June of 2010 in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jennifer Howard (2010) observed that “junior faculty members concerned with tenure and promotion tend to be wary of repositories” (n.p.). Research suggests that tenured faculty members are more likely to publish in open access journals (Norwick, 2008; Park, 2009). Untenured faculty, on the other hand, may not believe they are able to take the risk of publishing with a journal that has not been around long enough to have established prestige (Norwick, 2008; Suber, 2008). Using a web-based questionnaire, Park (2009) found the following when looking at the responses of tenured and untenured faculty (pre- and nontenure line):

The *tenured* group accorded more importance to career benefit than did the untenured and not applicable groups. It is perhaps appropriate to say that while tenured respondents continue to pursue research and reputation, they likely are less concerned about where and what to publish to gain career benefit; in other words, career benefit may not be as high a priority for them as it is for non-tenured respondents. (p. 363)

Norwick (2008) found that 61% of the faculty members surveyed feared open access publications would negatively impact their tenure and promotion reviews. To further complicate this matter, much attention has been given to articles that have been published in journals that appear to have very little or no peer review (Bohanon, 2013; Beall, 2013). “Fear of losing the peer-review aspect of publishing is often cited by faculty authors as a reason they are opposed to the open-access model” (Corbett, 2009, p. 129). Coonin and Younce (2010) also observed that peer review is the most important factor when determining where to publish. While publishing in a predatory journal is a valid concern, faculty members, departments and universities can take steps to ensure that professors are not in danger of throwing away perfectly good manuscripts, which is an unfortunate occurrence for some who have published in a journal that has no valid peer-review process. While academic disciplines as well as the “research and publishing culture within the disciplines” have bearing on whether or not faculty select open access journals for their manuscripts (Coonin & Younce, 2010, p. 121), could the documents that communicate promotion and tenure policies and guidelines also communicate biases regarding open access journals?

The University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire (UWEC) serves as the focus for inquiry because a previous study

explored the attitudes and awareness of UWEC faculty toward open access publishing. That study revealed that nearly 30% of the faculty did not understand open access publishing, a significantly higher number than that reported in the literature (Kocken & Wical, 2013; Xia, 2010). This current study expands on this earlier work, seeking to determine if department and program evaluation plans could account for some of the reluctance of UWEC faculty to publish in open access journals.

Depending on an academic institution's priorities, reexamining or updating the promotion and tenure process may be in order if the institution has made a commitment to support open access by adopting an open access mandate or other measure. "Although it may not be possible to work directly with university administrators, it is important to take into account what their priorities are" (Corbett, 2009, p. 131). Since policy documents, such as those regarding promotion and tenure, have to be signed by high-level administrators before they can be applied, reviewing these documents is a good approach to determining if any biases or potential biases for or against open access exist. There is a lack of analysis of promotion and tenure documents in how they address or do not address emerging models of scholarly communication, including open access journals and open access publishing (Anderson & Trinkle, 2004). In this current study, the investigators hypothesized that the documents guiding the tenure and promotion process at UWEC do not formally support open access publishing or distribution.

In 1995, a time when major publishers were beginning to offer the first bundles that later came to be called "big deal" packages, "Cronin and Overfelt found that any formal analysis of promotion and tenure policies with regard to electronic publication was noticeably absent from the literature" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 36). While the tenure and promotion process varies from institution to institution, there are many aspects of the process that are similar at almost all institutions. Frequently, tenured faculty members review untenured faculty members. Those reviewers often look at a wide variety of criteria, which often include scholarship, service, teaching, and advising. Nevertheless, Cronin and Overfelt's study "suggested, unsurprisingly, that there may very well be inconsistencies in interpretation and practice in the academic reward system" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 36). Their conclusions have not been overturned in 22 years since their research. "The Florida State University system investigated the perceptions toward electronic publishing held by their university administrators and faculty. It concluded that there is a need to develop formal policies regarding the acknowledgement of electronic scholarly

publishing in promotion and tenure decisions for faculty" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004 p. 37).

Questions about the value of open access publishing have persisted among scholars. A 2000 survey conducted by the American Association for History and Computing revealed that, "Chairpersons questioned whether a peer-reviewed electronic journal article was 'as good as' a peer-reviewed print article." In discussing this survey, the 2004 book *Digital Scholarship in the Tenure, Promotion, and Review Process*, suggests that at that point 13 years ago, "traditional modes of scholarship continue to remain the primary mechanisms by which all faculty in all disciplines are evaluated" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 34). "Electronic journals, even when they have a strictly defined peer-review process, continue to be less widely perceived by scholars as being of the same scholarly caliber as are traditional paper publications" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 35). Although now over a decade old, this concept of traditional modes of scholarship remains an issue that persists in the tenure and promotion review process, and there is nothing in the way of scholarship that explores promotion and tenure documents as they relate to open access publishing.

Tenure and promotion committees were slow to address the issue of e-scholarship. In the early days of electronic journals, faculty and administrators were not sure what to do about electronic journals when it came to evaluating research output as it related to promotion and tenure (Sweeney, 2000; Hurrell & Meijer-Kline, 2011). More recent discussion of this topic explores whether the tenure and promotion process even needs to change to support open access publishing/distribution. David Lewis (2012) argues the inevitability of open access. "As open access comes to dominate the scholarly communication system, the current concerns about publishing in this venue, often related to promotion and tenure decisions, will diminish" (Lewis, 2012, p. 501). If this proves to be true, then specific changes to the guidelines that direct tenure and promotion decisions would be unnecessary. However, just like early electronic journals were viewed with suspicion, open access journals (which are online only) suffer from their older relative's reputation. "If tenure and promotion committees do not recognize newer forms of scholarly outputs, including OA materials, as legitimate, then authors may be reluctant to explore these options" (Hurrell & Meijer-Kline, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, in describing the results of a 2006 survey of University of California, Corbett (2009) noted that "A traditional system of tenure and promotion was seen as hindering changes in faculty behavior regarding scholarly communication, i.e., deciding to publish in open-access journals or posting their publications in institutional repositories" (p. 126).

While publication quality is the most important factor for faculty when choosing where to publish (Warlick & Vaughan, 2007), faculty authors often have to rely on other factors as a shorthand for quality in making their decisions (Suber, 2008). “Universities tend to use journal prestige and impact as surrogates for quality” (Suber, 2008, p. 119). Therefore, journal reputation (Antelman, 2006; Suber, 2008) is what faculty authors make their decisions on. Because of this, faculty authors are more likely to publish in older, more established journals rather than risk publishing in a new high-quality open access journal (Suber, 2008). Hattendorf Westney (2004) observed that “the creation of formal criteria and guidelines for the assessment and evaluation of digital scholarship and teaching with technology for purposes of tenure, promotion and review remains largely in the discussion state” (p. 31). This statement could also be made about open access scholarship. Chairpersons questioned the equivalency of electronic journals to print journals when electronic journals first started to appear (Hattendorf Westney, 2004; Anderson & Trinkle, 2001). Similarly, technology-based projects, such as “computer software, articles in e-journals, Internet based materials, videotapes, and audiotapes” were not valued by the institutions even though faculty and administrators valued them (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 34.). Today promotion and tenure committees may still favor older more established peer-reviewed journals that are not open access to those that are open access, just as promotion and tenure committees had been leery of electronic journals in their early days. As Hattendorf Westney (2004) observed over 10 years ago, “While electronic journals offer many advantages to multiple constituencies, their acceptance by university promotion and tenure committees remains unclear” (p. 36). These shortcuts of relying on prestige and impact to indicate quality could potentially be problematic because of two observations noted by Suber (2008):

Prestige can't keep pace with quality, at least when there are many high-quality journals. If prestige is our measure of valuation, then it will inevitably undervalue some high-quality journals. (p. 119)

If you've ever had to consider a candidate for hiring, promotion, or tenure, you know that it's much easier to tell whether she has published in high-impact or high-prestige journals than to tell whether her articles are actually good. (p. 119)

Suber (2008) observes that people who do not know that open access is compatible with publishing in a prestigious subscription journal assume that publishing in a prestigious subscription journal is incompatible with open access.

Methodology

The University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire (UWEC) has 34 departments or programs with 31 evaluation plans that govern the tenure and promotion review process for faculty members. (Accounting and Finance, Business and Communication, Information Systems and Marketing and Management all share the same College of Business evaluation plan). See Table 1. The investigators were able to obtain all of the evaluation plans and review them.

This study focused on how these guiding documents could potentially influence faculty attitudes and decisions regarding open access publishing/distribution. The investigators contacted the chairperson of each of these departments and programs and requested access to the departmental evaluation plans or program evaluation plans (DEPs/ PEPs) while also explaining the nature of

Table 1. Departments and programs with evaluation plans at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire.

<i>Department/unit/program name</i>	<i>Date of review document approval</i>
Academic Affairs	
McIntyre Library	September 7, 2012
College of Arts & Sciences	
American Indian Studies	June 2012
Art and Design	February 14, 2014
Biology	February 15, 2013
Chemistry	May 7, 2012
Communication and Journalism	Not available in reviewed document
Computer Science	May 14, 2009
Economics	April 2010
English	May 23, 2013
Foreign Languages	October 31, 2008
Geography and Anthropology	September 26, 2009
Geology	September 29, 2009
History	July 29, 2013
Latin American Studies	May 16, 2012
Materials Science	September 24, 2012
Mathematics	Not available in reviewed document
Music and Theatre Arts	August 15, 2013
Philosophy and Religious Studies	Not available in reviewed document
Physics and Astronomy	Not available in reviewed document
Political Science	September 18, 2013
Psychology	May 10, 2013
Sociology	October 8, 2009
Watershed Institute	November 12, 2014
Women's Studies	Not available in reviewed document
College of Business	
Accounting and Finance*	Not available in reviewed document
Business Communication*	Not available in reviewed document
Information Systems*	Not available in reviewed document
Management and Marketing*	Not available in reviewed document
College of Education and Human Sciences	
Communication Sciences and Disorders	2013
Education Studies	December 8, 2011
Kinesiology	May 24, 2013
Social Work	September 12, 2008
Special Education	August 28, 2012
College of Nursing and Health Sciences	
Nursing	July 2013

*All of the departments in the College of Business use a combined evaluation plan for reviews.

the research. While each plan is individually approved by campus administration, evaluation plans for many of these departmental plans are reinforced by a university-wide document that provides guidance for the tenure and review process. Each plan was carefully analyzed for specific language regarding open access publishing. The keywords “open access,” “Internet,” “online,” “traditional,” and “repository” were carefully noted and analyzed in their contexts. In addition to the identification of specific words, a qualitative analysis of the language regarding scholarship requirements was conducted. This analysis explored an aspect of the context of how “open access” is supported or discouraged through an evaluation of the scholarship requirements in these documents. The research presented in this article is limited in its scope to UWEC. Every institution conducts tenure and promotion reviews in a different manner. UWEC places a much greater emphasis on teaching than other institutions, and this emphasis influences the tenure and promotion review process as described in the official university documents. The focus of this study was to look only at these documents without any potential bias in interpretation contributed by interviews with department chairpersons or department evaluation committee members.

Results

In general, department and program evaluation plans at UWEC present a variety of accepted publication types and give some sense of the relative importance of the types of publications that tenure-line faculty are expected to produce in order to achieve promotion and tenure. While most departments and programs do not explicitly state the number of publications required for promotion and tenure, the expectations of departments in the College of Business are more explicit: Four peer-reviewed publications are expected to achieve promotion and tenure.

Of the 31 evaluation plans examined, five distinct issues were identified that relate to open access scholarship in the review process: first, plans that directly address “open access” and provide context that supports open access scholarship; second, the degree of flexibility given to candidates under review to support the evaluation of their scholarship; third, dissemination of scholarship; fourth, the issue of equality of scholarship; and finally, the use of contradictory language that potentially diminishes support for open access scholarship. Rather than attempt to address each evaluation plan separately, unique occurrences of these five distinct issues are addressed in this section.

None of the evaluation plans examined specifically mentioned “open access” anywhere within the department evaluation plan or program evaluation plan documents. This does not come as a surprise, but these

plans did provide fascinating insight into how open access scholarship could be evaluated through the guidelines in these plans. The plans of three departments, Communication Sciences and Disorders, English, and Education Studies provided the strongest context toward addressing open access scholarship. The Communications Sciences and Disorders Department’s plan identified, “articles in refereed journals, in print or on-line” as recognized scholarly activity (Communication Sciences and Disorders Department, 2013, p. 7). It is possible that the department attempted to stress format neutrality rather than support open access, but the step of identifying “on-line” is certainly uncommon among the plans evaluated. Similar to Communication Sciences and Disorders, the English Department also made reference to “electronic or online scholarship.” The English Department’s plan goes on to state, in parentheses, that this scholarship is “subject to the same standards as non-internet scholarship/creative activity” (English Department, 2013, p. 10). Again, this is an effort to be format neutral, but it does recognize that scholarship can be published electronically. Education Studies identified “electronically published documents,” but this was identified in a nonessential category of scholarship termed “enhancing criteria” (Education Studies Department, 2011, p. 11). Although an analysis of the document does not provide any additional context, the placement of “electronically published documents” within the “enhancing criteria” section could be construed as suggesting electronic publishing is of lesser value to this department.

An overwhelming characteristic of the plans evaluated is the degree of flexibility present in these documents. From the perspective of supporting open access, plans with a great deal of flexibility in the types of scholarship accepted and the means of evaluating that scholarship offer the greatest potential support for open access. Generally, most evaluation plans offered flexibility to reviewers and candidates regarding qualified works of scholarship. For example, the Art and Design Department’s evaluation plan states, “the Department encourages and recognizes a wide variety of scholarly activities and productions” (Art and Design Department, 2014, p. 4). Many of the plans evaluated cited a university-wide structural document that guided the formation of departmental evaluation plans. That document, the Faculty and Academic Staff Handbook, sets a tone of flexibility for the specific plans.

Two of the evaluation plan documents examined highlighted the value of dissemination of scholarly contributions. Open access platforms allow for some of the broadest dissemination options available to scholars. The Mathematics Department states within their plan the department values “dissemination to an appropriate audience, and submission of the product to

the examination and critique of professional peers, either before or after dissemination, or both” (Mathematics Department, n.d., p. 5). The Chemistry Department’s evaluation plan also echoed the sentiments of Mathematics placing an emphasis on dissemination (Chemistry Department, 2012, pp. 5–6). Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields are earlier adopters of open access dissemination, and it is not too surprising to see an emphasis on dissemination within the plans of these departments.

Another recurring issue, which again appeared in some of the documents examined, focuses on the issue of equality of scholarship. The Psychology Department’s plan “acknowledges that some review processes are much more rigorous than others in accepting materials for publication and presentation” (Psychology Department, 2013, p. 7). Likewise, the Political Science Department’s plan mirrored this statement, almost word for word (Political Science Department, 2013, p. 3). The issue of equality of scholarship is something that scholars have often debated in regards to open access. The department’s perception of open access publication becomes more important within the context of these documents. The Political Science Department’s plan further states, “It falls to the Department Personnel Committee, or an appropriate subcommittee thereof, to make judgments on the quality and importance of these activities” (Political Science Department, 2013, p. 3). The candidate under review is, in this instance, unable to defend open access publication and is left to the judgments of their senior colleagues on the Department Personnel Committee. A few departments offer avenues through which candidates can defend the quality of their scholarly products. The Latin American Studies Department’s plan, for example, “encourages faculty members to make a case in review materials should they wish to recommend a different ranking for their own work. Scholarly activity may be demonstrated in various ways, depending on the strengths, interests, and professional training of the individual” (Latin American Studies Department, 2012, p. 6).

While use of language that specifically identifies open access scholarship remained absent, the evaluation of these plans did reveal vague and occasionally contradictory language that could create confusion regarding the status of open access scholarship in the review process. Notably, use of terms such as “traditional,” “in-print,” or “papers” leads the reader, and reviewers, to make assumptions about the definition of these terms. The English Department identified “traditional forms of peer-reviewed, discipline-centered scholarship” in their review document but failed to clearly define what this scholarship entails (English Department, 2013, p. 9). “Traditional”

could potentially lead a reader to regard print publication as more important than online publication of scholarship. Additionally, the Geography and Anthropology Department uses the term “papers” but does not elaborate if these could be either in print or online (Geography and Anthropology Department, 2000, p. 7). That was the only reference to the term “papers” among the evaluation plans examined. Some departments, such as the Department of Foreign Languages, address this issue by using the broader term “publications” (Foreign Languages Department, 2008, pp. 5–6). Other departments took more concrete steps by identifying specific journals or defining terminology used in their review plans. The Department of Music and Theatre Arts, for example, identified very specific journals for publication within their plan (Music and Theatre Arts Department, 2013, p. 7). The Mathematics Department, when identifying the significance of quality scholarship, provided a set of characteristics that define “quality” for the department (Mathematics Department, n.d., p. 5).

Discussion

Of all the departmental evaluation plans analyzed during this research project, only those of English and of Communication Sciences and Disorders specifically identified Internet publishing within the scholarship guidelines for review. The overwhelming majority of evaluation plans are generally silent on this issue of electronic publishing. On the surface, this might suggest that open access publishing is not readily adopted by faculty tenure and promotion review committees. Most of these documents, however, provide reviewers with a tremendous degree of flexibility to evaluate the scholarly achievements of faculty peers. This is a strength and not a weakness of these review documents. Given this, open access publishing is given equal weight alongside traditional publishing models. However, the promotion and review process is complex. The review document is ultimately interpreted by the reviewers. In the standard tenure and promotion review model, senior, tenured faculty members frequently review junior, untenured faculty members. The burden of determining a work’s value lies not with the individual under review but by the team conducting the review. The biases of the review members and perceptions of those biases by untenured faculty members become important factors in the process.

From reviewing the evaluation plans for departments and programs from UWEC, there is no specific prohibition against publishing in open access journals despite anxiety faculty members may have about the quality of open access publications. The recent proliferation of scam journals that have taken advantage of opportunities

created by the gold open access model could have caught the attention of faculty who do not wish to publish in or be associated with anything other than reputable journals. Jeffrey Beall raised issues that are valuable to anyone on the tenure track. In his role as a scholarly communications librarian, Beall cautioned scholars about the perils of not carefully vetting their choice of publications and editorship venues. Additionally, he suggested that untenured faculty become familiar with their departments' evaluation plans (Beall, 2013). This is an area in which scholarly communications librarians can assist all tenured and tenure-track faculty members who may need advice about suitable journals to disseminate their scholarship as well as advice on how to evaluate journals in which their junior colleagues publish.

One would hope that faculty members could identify the subscription journals in their fields, but junior faculty are often encouraged to consult more senior faculty for a list of publications. If departments and programs want faculty to choose to publish in a limited number of journals, evaluation plans should explicitly say so. Since open access journals are a recent development, more senior faculty members may not be as aware of reputable open access journals. Also, newer open access publications may not have been around long enough to establish prestige (Suber, 2008).

Until recently, the availability of a blacklist of open access publishers and journals (scholarlyoa.com) provided a quick way for scholars to see if an open access journal or publisher was not worth their time or energy. Scholarlyoa.com, also known as "Beall's List," went dark in mid-January of 2017. Cabell's International anticipates launching its own list of predatory journals and hired Beall as a consultant (Silver, 2017). Many of Beall's critics have suggested referring to a whitelist of reputable open access publishers as a better approach. The Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA) membership list could serve as such a list and OASPA has a mission of setting and maintaining standards:

Our Mission is to represent the interests of Open Access (OA) journal and book publishers globally in all scientific, technical and scholarly disciplines. This mission will be carried out through exchanging information, setting standards, advancing models, advocacy, education, and the promotion of innovation. (OASPA, 2014)

What is noteworthy is that this association is for open access publishers and not for the consumers of open access publications. Scholarly Open Access listed journals and publishers that Beall considered predatory because they exploited the Gold Open Access model and engaged in deceptive practices, like saying they performed peer review when they really published everything they

received. While compliance with the ethical standards of OASPA was something that Beall looked at when reviewing a journal or publisher for inclusion or exclusion from Beall's list, it was not the only factor taken into consideration (Beall, 2012). Moreover, members of OASPA have found themselves on Beall's list, even though OASPA also places its members under review for falling short of OASPA's ethical standards. The Directory of Open Access Journals has recently purged itself of journals that are not providing peer review and could also be used as a white list.

What scholars want to avoid is submitting an article to or reviewing an article for a publication that could be considered predatory because it engages in practices that are considered unethical by the scholarly community. Ultimately, all reviews for promotion and tenure should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. While some policies will explicitly state the number of and specific quality of publications required to achieve promotion and tenure, nearly all policies at UWEC leave a lot of flexibility for promotion and tenure committees. However, determining the quality of a publication may take much more work than most faculty members are willing or able to do with their current workloads. If, as Suber (2008) states, "the key variables in journal quality are excellent authors, editors, and referees," (p. 117), then perhaps faculty time is better spent analyzing the credentials of authors, editors, and referees rather than something like an impact factor, which is one of "the key variables in journal prestige" (p. 117). The key variables that Suber (2008) identifies are "quality, age, impact, circulation, and recognition by promotion and tenure committees" (p. 117). In any case, committees are not looking at an article for its actual merit, but are making educated guesses based on what they believe to be true about journals.

The way that open access journals are often perceived compared to society and commercial journals that charge a subscription price in many ways resembles the ways that electronic journals were perceived in the early days of electronic journals. "Scholars who had published electronically believed that there is a widespread perception that electronic publication is less significant than print publication. Their beliefs continue to be reflected in the current practices of promotion and tenure" (Hattendorf Westney, 2004, p. 36) It is very likely that a bias against open access exists in the minds of faculty even if the policy documents that guide promotion and tenure decisions fall silent on the issue. How this will likely translate in the tenure, promotion, and review process is that "established methods of publishing and teaching will continue to be rewarded more often and consistently" (Fountain, 2004, p. 53). There is a lack of recent scholarship in this area,

and it deserves further exploration, as scholarly communication has changed dramatically in the last 15 years.

After reviewing numerous evaluation documents, it is apparent that universities can take steps to support open access publishing without needing to directly support open access in the guidelines that govern the evaluative process. The following are some suggestions of ways that scholarly communications librarians can help support open access within the academic landscape:

- Encourage all faculty members to submit eligible scholarly works to an institutional or discipline specific open access repository.

This is simple, but can have far reaching effects. Submitting scholarly works to an open repository can build awareness simply by being part of the tenure and review process. In turn, faculty and other academic staff learn more about repositories and copyright. Additionally, this activity could be viewed as service to the college or university (more on that in the following). Self-archiving of publications remains a valid option for tenure track professors, even though Kim (2010) found that faculty members surveyed believed “there would be little positive effect of self-archiving on tenure and promotion, especially when posting non-peer-reviewed materials” (p. 1918). Kim (2010) indicated that two interviewees relayed that self-archiving their publications had helped enhance their reputations, and they believed that this helped them secure favorable recommendation letters. In the fall of 2011, library faculty at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire signed a declaration to put our own research in Minds@UW, the University of Wisconsin system’s institutional repository, whenever possible (Free, 2011). How could we expect teaching faculty to submit their work to an institutional repository if we were not leading by example?

- Scholarly communications librarians and open access advocates should review their institutions’ criteria for promotion and tenure.
- Avoid using contradictory language within guidelines.

Our words are often subject to interpretation. Use of the term “traditional,” for example, is ambiguous and misleading. Documents should be specific when identifying “traditional publications” or any time subjective language is used.

- Provide a mechanism for faculty members undergoing a review to defend their publications and the journals they choose for publication.

Allowing faculty members to address a review committee can often provide clarity for both parties during a review process. If given the opportunity, faculty members

can provide alternate measures of scholarly impact, such as altmetrics.

- Build partnerships to support change.

Colleges and universities, especially publically funded institutions, are frequently under scrutiny to prove their value. Partnerships with an office of research or similar department that is receptive to supporting open access and institutional repositories provide colleges and universities with opportunities to demonstrate their value.

- Provide a mechanism for untenured faculty members to initiate a revision of an evaluation plan.

The time when David Lewis’s (2012) conclusion that open access will come to dominate the publishing landscape is not yet upon us. While this may someday be true, the opportunities presented here can help make the tenure and review process more amenable to open access without forcing the issue through institutional requirements or an unnecessary reward structure. As Mercer (2011) observes, librarians can effect change by “enhancing the value of open access with administrators and promotion/tenure committees” (Mercer, 2011, pp. 450–451).

Scholars who are on the tenure track are encouraged to become familiar with their department or program evaluation plans and to begin conversations with librarians. If a plan has outdated language that does not reflect the current realities of scholarly communication, untenured faculty members are encouraged to initiate a dialog with tenured faculty members in order to make much needed changes where appropriate. Untenured faculty members can ask each of the members of their promotion and tenure committee and librarians which journals they believe are appropriate publication venues and to bring high-quality open access publications to the attention of committee members. One way might be for untenured faculty (and their librarian allies) to send their senior colleagues great articles from open access journals that are relevant to their senior colleagues’ research interests. If a senior colleague has never heard of the open access journal from which the article came and they find it highly useful, they may be more accepting of other open access journals that publish in areas outside of their research. Another possibility is to seek out the mentorship of more senior colleagues by discussing possible journals where junior faculty may wish to publish their research. Inviting librarians to departmental meetings to discuss scholarly communications issues is another way to effect positive change to update evaluation plans. In any case, the burden of pushing for updating department and program evaluation plans may fall on junior faculty, as senior faculty will have little incentive to change them unless they are charged with that responsibility on a formal committee.

Our findings are limited in scope in that they focus on UWEC, but it is our hope that this study could lead to important conversations about real and perceived values of open access publications to tenure and promotion committees. With the abundance of open access journals and the appearance of predatory publishers, it is crucial that tenure and promotion evaluation plans explicitly address what is considered legitimate scholarship.



Conclusion

UWEC program and department evaluation plans fall silent on the issue of open access publishing as a viable option for tenure line faculty. Promotion and tenure guiding documents at larger research universities could produce different results, and campus climates could be very different, so more research in this area is needed. An additional area of inquiry is described by Hurrell and Meijer-Kline (2011): “No study has specifically investigated the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs around OA publishing among academic faculty and administrators who sit on tenure and promotion committees, and the effect that those attitudes might have on their judgments” (p. 18). This would be a logical next step to the study presented here, especially since the documents as a whole leave much room for interpretation. Corbett (2009) also recommends that librarians consider the priorities of administration. Sweeney (2000) had surveyed administrators about their attitudes about electronic journals, and a similar study looking at administrator attitudes and beliefs about open access journals and predatory publishers would be an excellent area of future research. Before open access gains wide acceptance, the way promotion and tenure committees evaluate scholarship needs to be examined. More research is also needed to better understand how open access journals are accepted by specific disciplines based upon the prevalence of open access journals in those disciplines.

While the program and department evaluation plan documents at UWEC do not explicitly address the issue of open access, they do explicitly address peer-review as an indication of quality scholarship. The implications of this for tenure line faculty, departments, and programs as well as for colleges and universities are addressed. Our findings regarding the promotion and tenure documents are not surprising considering the prior survey findings of Coonin and Younce (2010) that “peer review and peer acceptance is at the heart of scholarly research endeavors” (p. 121). Because of the importance of peer review to scholarly communication, we may wish to turn our attention to ensuring that scholars are not lured into publishing in journals that have little or no peer review. Not all

peer review processes are equal, so helping scholars determine when to “walk away” from a questionable publisher is something that librarians are well positioned to do. In any case, scholarly communications librarians and open access supporters should familiarize themselves with their institution’s criteria for promotion and tenure to determine not only how they can better help tenure-track faculty but also how they can help policy evolve so that it corresponds well with the current landscape of scholarly communication.

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