Open By Default? Concept-Mapping Our Way to Open Access Consensus

Emily Carlisle
Western University, ecarlis2@uwo.ca

Lillian S. Rigling
Western University, lrigling@uwo.ca

Joanne Paterson
Western University, jpater22@uwo.ca

Courtney L. Waugh
Western University, cwaugh5@uwo.ca

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Ten years ago Western Libraries acquired an instance of bepress’ Digital Commons to power its institutional repository and support the open access dissemination of research and scholarship. The face of scholarly publishing has evolved since then, and with Western Libraries pursuing a reorganization that promises to emphasize research and scholarly communication, we saw an opportunity to turn the lens on ourselves and redefine what “open access” means to Western Libraries.

Engaging the principles of design thinking, we invited participants from across Western Libraries and our affiliates to explore how we define open access, and why and how our libraries support it. Using a collaborative concept-mapping approach, all attendees individually answered each question and collaboratively mapped the answers. The concept maps have informed Western Libraries’ new statement on open access—one that reflects understandings of open access at all levels of our library system.

Folks in non-administrative librarian roles, library staff roles, and student roles do not often get to have input in the early stages of policy development, and instead work within the boundaries set by administration—even if the policy doesn’t reflect their values or understandings. Including a variety of voices from across the library creates a sense of ownership over policy for staff at all levels of the organization.

Likewise, including staff from different levels, roles, and departments ensured that understandings of open access shaped by varying job experiences and user interactions were represented. Doing so has allowed for development of a policy that is relevant to Western Libraries and its external community.

**ATTENDEES**

18

**OUR APPROACH**

We employed concept-mapping—a design thinking tool—to expose individual understandings of open access, generate consensus around such understandings across Western Libraries, and work through disagreements.

**WHY OUR APPROACH?**

“Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to imagine and resolve the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success” (Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO).

**WHAT is Open Access?**

Open Access is the barrier-free, immediate availability of research outputs coupled with the rights to fully use and build upon these outputs. Open Access works are both free and libre: free of cost with additional liberties or rights to retain and reuse.

**WHY do we support it?**

Our support for Open Access is rooted in the following:

- Increase the visibility and impact of Western University research on a national and global scale.
- Enable equitable access to scholarly materials for the betterment of society, regardless of location, affiliation, or status.
- Enable interdisciplinary research collaboration.
- Create opportunities for innovative scholarship through sharing and reuse of research outputs.
- Make publicly funded research available to communities beyond the Academy.

**NEW OA STATEMENT**

Our event, at the start of Open Access Week

Data interpreted and new Open Access statement written by three members of the Scholarly Communications Subcommitee, who also planned and led event!

Order of creating and receiving approval for Western Libraries’ new Open Access statement:

1. Statement approved by Western Libraries' Senior Leadership Team
2. Statement approved by Western Libraries Research Support Standing Committee
3. Statement approved by all members of Western Libraries’ Scholarly Communications Subcommitee
4. Statement approved by the individuals across Western Libraries who brought energy and critical feedback to this initiative.
5. Statement posted on Western Libraries’ website.

**RESULTS**

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