

The development and implementation of a university-wide self-archiving policy at Queensland University of Technology (QUT): Insights from the frontline.

Paula Callan
Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

Institutional Repositories: The Next Stage. Workshop presented by SPARC & SPARC EUROPE
November 18–19, 2004, Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Australia's contribution to scientific publishing is quite small (approx 2%). Within the Australian university sector, there is a trend towards; competition, priority setting and performance-based funding for research.

Queensland University of Technology (QUT) is one of the newest group of universities; created in the late 1980's from the amalgamation of the colleges of advanced education and technical colleges. QUT is one of the most successful universities in Australia in terms of research growth. It is currently ranked 9/38 in terms of research output. At QUT, there are approximately 40,000 students, 3,000 staff. QUT research output in 2003 included 900 "weighted" research publications. The annual budget is approximately A\$416m.

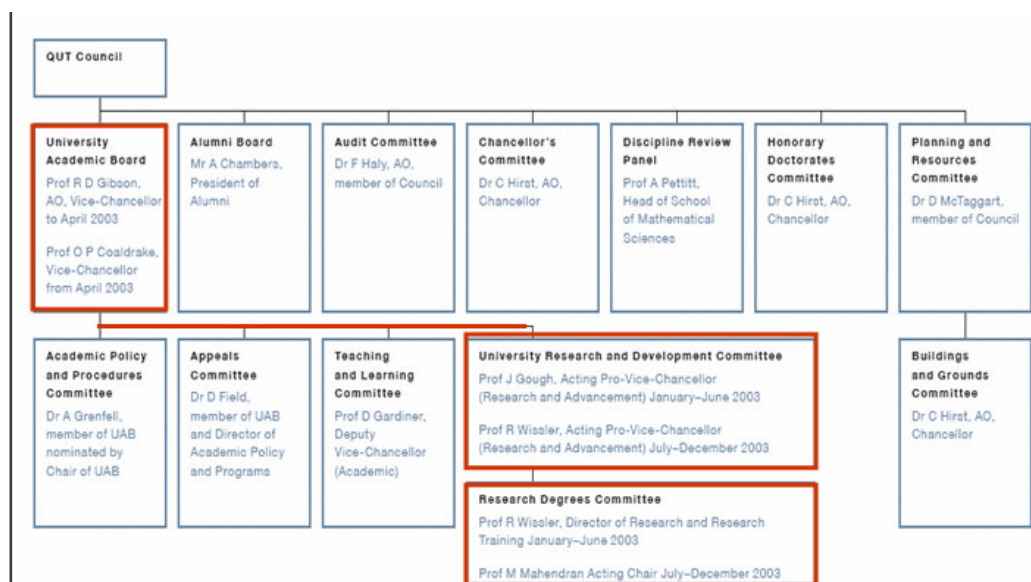
At QUT, we have been very fortunate insofar as the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Technology Information and Learning Support), Tom Cochrane, has been a vocal advocate for open access for many years. This is hardly surprising given that his CV includes, amongst other things, Director of the Australian Digital Alliance; Chair of the Australian Libraries Copyright Committee; Member of the Attorney General's Copyright Law Review Committee AND he has a librarianship background. Tom has a longstanding interest in the impact of the internet on scholarly communication, was influenced by Stevan Harnad and all the discussions taking place on the American Scientist Open-Access Forum, the SPARC Open Access Newsletter and the literature on OA and scholarly communication. Persuaded by the arguments for mandating self-archiving, Tom decided that he would attempt to implement a self-archiving policy at QUT.

The first step was to discuss the issue, at length, with a number of influential stakeholders. This included QUT's new Vice Chancellor, the Dean of Science, who is also the editor of a prestigious international science journal, the Director of Research and Research Training, the Chairs of the Faculty Research Committees and the Library Director. He knew that these people were intimately acquainted with the "serials crisis" issue. All had been involved with painful serial cancellation rounds so they could fully appreciate how this state of affairs was constraining access and, consequently, research impact.

A draft eprint repository policy was then tabled, by the DVC(TILS) at meeting of the University Research and Development Committee in May 2003. Importantly, the Chair of this committee at the time was the Director of Research and Research Training (Rod Wissler) who was now the Acting Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research & Advancement). Rod Wissler was one of the "previously-converted". During this meeting, the DVC(TILS), Tom Cochrane talked to the policy at great length as not all members of this committee had heard about the "Open Access" movement or self-archiving before. According to the DVC(TILS), there was some restlessness but this was due to an assumption that it was "self-publishing" or that it would threaten a

researcher's ability to exploit their own IP. The compulsion aspect of the policy was purposely downplayed at this stage.

Committee Structure at QUT



Having been approved by the University Research and Development Committee, the policy moved up to University Academic Board for final endorsement. University Academic Board (UAB) included a number of individuals who also sit on the University Research and Development Committee. Board members also include, the DVC(TILS), the Library Directory and the Deans. Consequently, a significant number of Board members were already very familiar with the concepts of open access and self-archiving and were aware of the arguments in favour of mandating the practice.

The policy went to the University Academic Board with the support of: the Library Director, the Director of Research and Research Training, the Dean of Science and, of course, the DVC(TILS). The policy was passed, unanimously and became effective in January 2004.

See: http://www.qut.edu.au/admin/mopp/F/F_01_03.html

What happened next?

The sky didn't fall in and, so far, there has been no revolution in the QUT academic ranks.

Insights from the frontline:

At QUT, we have been very careful about how we represent the policy. For example, we purposely downplay the compulsion aspect. When addressing the researchers directly, first we "sell" the concept of "open access" and the benefits, *to the author*, of self-archiving. Then we explain how the QUT eprint repository helps to promote the University (indirect self interest?). Next, we discuss the copyright and publisher permission issue. Finally, we introduce the eprint repository policy and explain how it is there to "*encourage and assist*".

Has the policy helped to populate the repository?

Yes, in many ways it has been very helpful to have a policy. As it is a policy that has been endorsed at the highest level, it can be inferred that self-archiving is valued by the University hierarchy. The policy definitely makes it easier to get invitations to address School staff meetings and Research Committees. I email the Head of School or Chair of the Faculty Research Committee and request a spot on the next agenda to explain the “implications of the new QUT eprint repository policy”. This strategy has proved far more effective than offering to come and talk about the new QUT Eprint Archive.

The policy also facilitates permission negotiations. Our authors can refer to the policy when requesting permission to self-archive one of their papers. I suggest that they add the phrase “*because it is a policy of my employer*” to their email request. When I request permission on behalf of one of our authors, as well as referring to the policy, I add that, in future, QUT authors may need to retain certain rights if a publisher does not support self-archiving. When I contact a QUT author to solicit a paper for the archive I mention that it is now QUT policy that they should deposit a copy in the eprint archive, where it is legally permissible to do so.

In Australia, each year, universities must submit details of their scholarly publications to the Department of Education, Science and Training. This is known locally as the DEST Collection. The practice is similar to the RAE in the United Kingdom. As the Collection is about to commence, for 2004, I will be sending an email to the Heads of School, gently reminding them about the University Eprint Repository Policy and suggesting that they may wish to consider combining the data collection for DEST with the depositing of the actual papers into the QUT eprint archive (QUT ePrints), on behalf of their academic staff. Some Heads of School have already indicated that this is the path down which they plan to proceed. Consequently, we are hopeful that a significant number of publications from 2003/2004 will be deposited by School administrative staff and research assistants over the coming summer.

While having a policy is extremely helpful, it cannot change a culture overnight. For a while to come, uptake will be patchy. Publishing is compulsory for academics (publish or perish), but is also rewarded, directly, by the University (with tenure and promotion). For self-archiving to become similarly embedded in the research culture, it also needs to be acknowledged by the institutional reward systems. This is unlikely to happen overnight – even with a policy in place.

Unfortunately, the QUT Eprint Repository Policy does not apply to the publishers. Even with the assistance of the policy; many researchers are still reluctant to challenge the transfer of all their rights. Many researchers want assistance with requesting permissions. Institutionally-mandated self-archiving will be more effective when most publishers openly support self-archiving and permission checking and/or permission requesting becomes unnecessary.

Results so far

In the first three months following endorsement of the policy, discouragingly few papers were deposited in the archive (fewer than 50). In spite of a formal launch, the distribution of a glossy brochure and numerous other promotion activities, very few academics at QUT appeared to know that the archive existed. Even fewer were aware of their responsibility to deposit future papers. Advertised “Eprint depositing workshops” were very poorly attended. It became obvious that promotion efforts needed to be targeted more precisely.

The amended promotion plan included the emails addressed to Heads of School and Directors of Research Centres. When addressing a group of researchers from a specific discipline, the

message, and examples used could be tailored to suit. A few days after each School meeting I now run a hands-on workshop for that group. I also suggest that it is a good idea for School administrative staff to attend the workshop so that they can be a local source of expertise. The relevant Faculty Liaison Librarian helps to organise the session and sends email reminders encouraging the academics to attend. This strategy has been much more effective.

We have also used the 2003 DEST Collection data to identify conference papers and articles published in eprint-friendly journals. We are now contacting the authors of these papers and suggesting that they deposit a copy of the conference paper or journal article in QUT ePrints (with help if necessary). The email quotes evidence that providing an open access copy could increase the likelihood that the paper will be cited.

Now, nine months since the launch of QUT ePrints (<http://eprints.qut.edu.au>), over 400 papers have been deposited and the deposit rate is steadily increasing. Currently, 72% of our eprints are published, peer reviewed papers. Some disciplines have shown more enthusiasm than others. Education, Nursing, Creative Industries and Humanities were all early adopters. By contrast, Law has shown very little interest. After a slow start, Engineering and IT are picking up pace. Some Schools/Faculties are planning to have administrative staff deposit papers on behalf of the authors. Others, are leaving it up to the authors to self-deposit. If a trend appears, I work with it and tailor support mechanisms to suit.

We recently installed a “Download Statistics” feature, courtesy of the eprint team from a neighbouring institution (University of Queensland). This feature allows authors to monitor how many times each of their deposited papers is either viewed or downloaded. It also lists the “Top 50 authors” and “Top 50 papers”. This feature is proving to be very useful. The information it provides can be used to promote the archive. The information can also be very valuable to the authors themselves. One of our researchers, from the humanities, was delighted to see that his papers had been downloaded over 1000 times in the past nine months. He noticed that a couple of his papers were attracting significantly more interest than his other papers. Citation rates in the humanities are generally much lower than in the sciences so, previously, he had no way of knowing this was the case. He informed us that he is planning to focus his research efforts on this particular topic from now on.

Conclusions

Our experience is that having a university-wide policy on self-archiving assists us in many ways. To ensure smooth passage for the policy, it is necessary to lobby support for the policy well before the draft is tabled. Develop support mechanisms in advance of implementation. Avoid resistance by focusing on the supportive intentions of the policy rather than the compulsion aspect when talking to researchers. However, to garner compliance, focus on the requirement and implications of the policy when talking with Departmental Heads. Even with a policy in place, it is necessary to PROMOTE, PROD, and PROVIDE PLENTY OF SUPPORT.