

*Statement to the Library Faculty Association, Virginia Tech*

The purpose of open access policy A is to increase the number of publicly available research articles generated by library faculty. This policy is consistent with the values of our profession, the mission of the library, and of a public, land-grant university. When research is openly available, we benefit as authors from increased views, downloads, and citations for our articles, and significant segments of the public benefit, including colleagues here and at other universities, independent scholars, taxpayers, alumni, and librarians in the developing world.

Most of the peer-reviewed journals in which we publish use a business model that blocks access to our articles from those without a subscription. But a majority of these journals allow authors to archive their final version, the postprint, which includes changes made from the peer review process. This policy takes advantage of the permission given to us by a journal in its publishing contract.

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While much is made of the word “mandatory”, it is simply a response to human nature. When an action is labeled voluntary, it is not accomplished. Yet more than any group on campus, we know how important access to information is. A voluntary policy does not make semantic or practical sense. We should learn from the experience of universities and funders, where voluntary policies have always failed to increase the amount of openly available research. We should make policy decisions based on evidence, and the evidence shows that the adoption of a mandatory policy triples the number of openly available research articles.

While the proposed policy A requires article deposit, it’s important to remember three points. First, the author controls access to the article. Authors may delay or restrict access to their work and no justifications are needed. Therefore, the policy does not affect where an author publishes. This model was the consensus of LFA members during discussion. Second, the policy has no enforcement mechanism. This policy is a collective agreement that our daily work providing access to information should be extended to our own research whenever possible. Finally, this is not a top-down mandate. We decide as a group, today, democratically, the merits of this policy.

Adoption of this policy will establish the Library Faculty Association as leaders in access to information, both on campus and within our profession. For all of the reasons just stated, I hope you will support Policy A on the ballot. Thanks.

Philip Young