Library Open Access Funds in Canada: review and recommendations

A report of the CARL Open Access Working Group
Library Open Access Funds sub-committee:

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Executive Summary

This report was prepared by a sub-committee of the CARL Open Access Working Group struck to examine library open access funds in Canada and develop guidelines for successful management of these funds. The sub-committee surveyed 14 CARL institutions in Canada with OA funds in March and April 2015, asking for information about histories of each fund, criteria used to award OA grants, how workflows are managed and how funds are assessed. All institutions responded to the survey and their responses were compiled into this report.

Overall, the report reveals that diversity is the most uniform characteristic of OA funds in Canada and that most libraries are still experimenting with these ventures. While institutions demonstrate consistency in some areas, particularly eligibility criteria, a wide variety of approaches are exhibited in many other aspects, including funding amounts, workflows, and assessment measures. The survey data also highlight that individual institutional characteristics

make a "one size fits all" approach to fund management inappropriate. Accordingly, the sub-committee did not develop a set of guidelines; instead, the report offers some recommendations and suggestions for further exploration and research.

Major findings and recommendations

Part 1: Fund history
OA funds vary greatly in size across the 14 institutions, ranging from $10,000 at Brock University to $350,000 at the University of Calgary, with a mode of $50,000. Generally, larger, more research-intensive universities have larger OA funds. Most funds draw on library collections' budgets, while some include monies from research offices or other units.

Part 2: Criteria for the fund
Most OA funds are open to all faculty and staff at an institution on a first-come, first-serve basis. Funds usually cover journal articles as well as other forms of scholarship including books and creative works. Journal eligibility criteria focuses on fully open access publications, but varying definitions of "open" are used.

Part 3: Workflow
Funds are most often managed by librarians in scholarly communication or public services role. There is no common approach to paying APCs, with some institutions paying publishers, others reimbursing authors and some doing both. While authors may be required to submit funded works to their institutional repository, in most cases libraries assume that duty for them.

Part 4: Fund assessment and changes
Most institutions do not practice systematic assessment. Quantitative measures, such as budget expenditures, numbers of applications and articles funded, etc., are commonly used. Seven institutions (Brock, Memorial, Calgary, Manitoba, Regina, Ottawa and Toronto) made major changes to their funds while this report was underway due to financial pressures; some suspended their funds outright, while others reinvested monies into supporting strategic OA initiatives such as publisher memberships and institutional repository development.

Recommendations
As noted, this project did not generate any universal guidelines for OA author funds. However, data from the survey provides the basis for several practical recommendations:

- Adopt a more evidence-based approach to fund amounts: Data on past fund usage and current information on number of eligible applicants would help institutions determine whether the amounts considered are adequate, as well as to help predict how far a fund can "stretch".
- Monitor time spent on managing OA funds: tracking the time spent on this work will allow libraries to more clearly evaluate the staffing costs involved.

- Provide clear, openly accessible fund documentation: supporting documentation will make it easier for authors to successfully navigate the application process and reduce time spent by library staff adjudicating applications.
- Ensure eligibility criteria for applicants are transparent and objective, and can be adjusted as needed
- Develop eligibility criteria that encourage authors to consider best practices in OA publishing: Libraries could increase clarity and accountability by adopting uniform criteria for assessing the openness of journals – and of their business practices.
- Clarify the rights of authors and users: Libraries can more fully support open scholarship and authors' rights by recommending that funded authors retain full rights to their work, as well as by specifying that funded materials be freely and immediately available to all users.
- Facilitate automatic deposit of funded articles in a repository: Requiring grant recipients to archive their funded work in the institutional repository - if available - further enhances dissemination of their research, in addition to strengthening the researcher's ties to the library
- Develop systematic assessment measures to allow comparative analysis within and between institutions: CARL could adopt the foundational measures of fund activity used by SPARC, for example, to create its own set of benchmarking tools to facilitate aggregate data collection and analysis.