

# Report on the SFU Open Access Policy

## Prepared by

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## Background

In late 2015, an Open Access Advisory Committee was struck as a sub-committee of Senate Library Committee and charged with drafting a university-wide Open Access (OA) Policy. The OA Policy's goal was to "provide consistency with the [Tri-Agency Open Access Policy](#), to maximize the exposure of the outputs of SFU scholarship, and to work toward a sustainable alternative to current challenges in the scholarly publishing market" (Bird, 2016, para.1). After extensive consultations and meetings with various campus groups and departments, Senate endorsed the SFU OA Policy in January 2017.

The [SFU Open Access Policy](#) acknowledges the commitment of faculty, students, and postdoctoral fellows to share the products of their research with the broadest possible audience, including other scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and the public at large. The OA Policy commits SFU researchers to deposit their authored and co-authored scholarly articles in Summit, SFU's institutional research repository, granting SFU permission to archive, preserve, reproduce, and openly disseminate such work. This permission is a non-exclusive license: researchers retain the rights to their work.

## Context

Through the OA Policy, the [Central Open Access Fund](#), and related initiatives, SFU is actively engaging with the current international open access landscape. In 2018, the [cOAlition S](#) initiative of European national research funding organizations released Plan S, a plan whose [key principle](#) is that all scholarly publications from research funded by national, regional, or international funding bodies must be published open access, without embargo. The International Alliance of Research Library Associations, of which the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (and by extension, SFU) is a member, recently [expressed support](#) for Plan S and provided concrete suggestions for members to support open access. In February 2020, the Office of the Chief Science Advisor of Canada released the [Roadmap for Open Science](#), a plan that explores how federal (and federally funded) science can be made more open and accessible.

In March 2019, the [University of California system terminated subscriptions to journals from the publisher Elsevier](#) with the support of their faculty and senate after being unable to reach a transformative agreement (a deal aiming to offset subscription costs against open access publishing costs in order to shift towards open access). In the intervening months, several national consortia successfully negotiated transformative agreements with large publishers, such as Sweden with Elsevier, Germany with Springer/Nature, and Hungary with Wiley.

## Open Communities of Practice

The OA Policy demonstrates SFU's endorsement of and engagement with the open movement more generally, and signals our active interest in supporting the wide dissemination and use of research taking place at SFU. SFU is one of 4 Canadian universities (along with Concordia, OCAD, and Laval) to be a full member of the [Coalition of Open Access Policy Institutions](#) (COAPI). In addition, York University recently adopted an institutional OA Policy.

## Outreach Activities

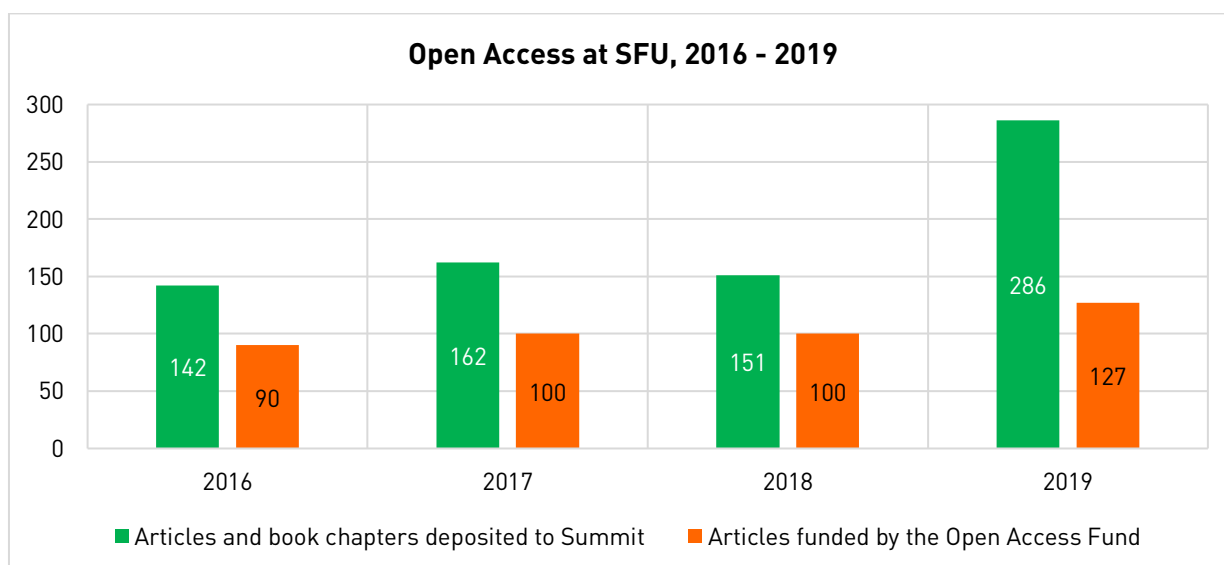
Over the last three years, SFU Library has supported and promoted awareness of the OA Policy and the benefits of open access scholarly publishing, such as:

- Hosting a yearly celebration of [International Open Access Week](#), which includes events featuring invited speakers, poster displays in Convocation Mall, and table displays at each campus Library.
- Participating in University events and activities related to open access and the Policy, including the [President's Dream Colloquium on Making Knowledge Public](#).
- Conducting a number of communications campaigns, like "[Open in order to...](#)" in which scholars were asked to discuss why they publish openly, "[What does open knowledge mean to you?](#)" in which students were asked to respond to this prompt, and "Keep your research open" which featured knowledge users explaining how research informs their practice.
- Contributing blog posts on topical scholarly communications issues for [Radical Access: The SFU Scholarly Publishing Blog](#).
- Facilitating discussions with researchers, including librarians speaking at department and faculty association meetings.
- Presenting to graduate classes, and teaching scholarly publishing workshops through the Research Commons.
- Offering Summit deposit clinics and other one-on-one consultations to support researchers making their work open

## Policy Outcomes

Deposits to Summit have increased steadily since the OA Policy was implemented in 2017; in 2019 there were nearly twice as many deposits of articles and book chapters as there were in 2016. Further, many of these deposits were from "first time submitters, so the OA policy appears to have worked to publicize Summit to these authors" (De Forest, Dowson, & Power, 2019).

In addition, there has been an increased interest in the OA Fund: since the OA Policy was implemented, uptake of the Fund by SFU researchers has increased by approximately 40%. While the OA Fund only supports publication in fully "gold" open access journals, and the OA Policy focuses on disseminating articles from closed publications via "green" open access or self-archiving options, we anticipate that awareness of the policy has likely led to greater understanding and uptake for all forms of open access (Moore & Zerkee, 2020).



Despite the fact that adherence to the OA Policy is not universal, we are optimistic that as demonstrated, the policy is having an impact on SFU researcher behaviour. Internationally, no institution has complete OA Policy compliance, though we continue to work towards this goal.

### **Faculty perspectives on SFU's Open Access Policy**

Many SFU researchers have value-driven reasons for choosing to make their work openly available. For example, Dr. Angela Kaida, Associate Professor in SFU's Faculty of Health Sciences is encouraged by what having an OA Policy means for knowledge users. She comments that she is "grateful for SFU's leadership in adopting an institution-wide Open Access Policy. As a health sciences researcher focused on HIV and sexual and reproductive health, I want our research findings to inform practice and policy to improve equity in health outcomes. To do so, our research needs to be widely available and accessible to all who need it, including community organizations, government representatives, researchers in LMICs, clinicians, patients and their families, students, and many other health stakeholders outside of the formal academic system. Open access policies are an important step in this right direction."

The Publishing Program at SFU has incorporated the values in the OA Policy into the department's tenure and promotion criteria (McGregor, 2019, para. 3). Dr. Hannah McGregor, Assistant Professor in Publishing, describes the benefits to her as a researcher: "In the context of an institutional setting where OA is treated as a shared value, I have had the space to experiment with open, accessible, and publicly-engaged scholarship" such as her peer-reviewed scholarly podcast, *Secret Feminist Agenda* (McGregor, 2019, para. 3).

### **Conclusion**

We are sharing these reflections on three years of SFU's OA Policy in order to recognize and celebrate SFU's and SFU Library's achievements in this area, and also to develop goals for open at SFU, and to consider opportunities for development and growth. We are confident that there is value in having an institutional open access policy, and it's clear from SFU researchers' endorsement and increasing repository deposit rates that the resources invested into supporting open access initiatives have been worth it.

### **References**

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