Survey of University of Toronto Faculty Awareness, Attitudes and Practices Regarding Scholarly Communication, 2010

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Scholarly communication covers a range of activities including the dissemination of the results of scholarly research. These activities are fundamental to the development of scholarly careers, and to the production of metrics that establish university rankings in international league tables.

While scholars are central, they are only one part of a scholarly communication ecosystem that includes publishers, librarians, university administrators, as well as scholarly societies and associations, funding agencies and others. Scholarly communication as a set of activities and practices is constantly changing – in some periods more rapidly than others and in some fields or disciplines more quickly than in others.

Today, the economic, social and cultural landscape is being transformed by the turn to the digital that is evident in phrases such as the networked information society or the digital economy. How does this turn affect scholars and other members of the scholarly communication ecosystem on which so much depends? How aware are scholars of the opportunities and challenges posed by the networked environment in which they are situated, and the implications for their activities and those of others in the system? Are they aware of how the activities of others in the ecosystem affect them?

A survey of University of Toronto faculty was conducted in 2010 to enquire into these issues.¹

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The research had three main objectives:

- to collect evidence regarding the current practices of University of Toronto faculty with regard to scholarly communication – primarily scholarly publishing and dissemination.
- to obtain evidence of the awareness of the faculty, and their attitudes toward the changes in practices and forms that are occurring with the turn to the digital
- to stimulate conversation on these topics among faculty within departments, faculties and academic units across the university, as well as with other members of the scholarly communication ecosystem.

The survey had five sections that asked about: i) current practices ii) scholarly publishing, including copyright and peer review iii) newer practices relating to open access, subject or institutional repositories, policies and mandates iv) costs associated with scholarly communication and iv) local services.

Detailed findings, including faculty comments, and a summary of findings organized by the broad themes identified below are included in the report. The summary also includes comparisons with the results from a 2006 survey of faculty at the University of California.

- UofT faculty characterization of the general state of the scholarly communication system varies by discipline and rank (See Figs. 1&2)
- Conventional practices with regard to scholarly publishing and dissemination are confirmed and continue to dominate, while alternate practices are also in evidence
- Reputational factors – including readership/audience, peer review, and reputation of the venue – rank highest in deciding where faculty submit work for publication
- UofT faculty are committed to peer review and are active contributors
- Current tenure, merit and promotion processes re-enforce traditional practices, with some evidence that digital forms of scholarship are emerging
- Publisher’s contracts and copyright are a ‘black box’ for the majority of faculty
- Awareness of Open Access is very high and the principle is strongly supported. Understanding of the different open access options is more limited and practice is shaped by disciplinary norms
- There is little awareness or use of digital publishing, dissemination or curatorial services offered by the University
- UofT faculty across the disciplines are experiencing charges and fees associated with publication
- Faculty are interested in issues related to scholarly communication; many are unaware of recent developments, but a core of faculty are actively engaged

The report is at: https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/26446