

THE PATCHWORK MANDATE

Working Paper

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Policies for Repository Managers

This document is written mainly for repository managers who are at a loss as to what policies they (or their universities or research institutions) ought to deploy. In essence, there are really only two pure policies:

- requiring (mandating) researchers to deposit, and
- voluntary (spontaneous) participation.

The institutional mandate

The obvious and no-risk solution is for the institution to require researchers to deposit their publications in the institutional repository. There is ample evidence — both in pre-implementation surveys and in post-implementation outcomes — that this is acceptable to over 95% of researchers. See for example chapters by Swan <http://eprints.ecs.soton.ac.uk/12428/> and Sale <http://eprints.utas.edu.au/257/> in Jacobs, N (Ed), *Open Access: Key Strategic, Technical and Economic Aspects*, Chandos Publishing: Oxford, 17 July 2006.

One Australian university is leading the world in collecting 70% of its annual research output and the fraction is rising. This is not surprising, since the researcher's world is hemmed in with the requirements to teach, to ask for student evaluations, to write and mark examinations, to supervise PhD students, to publish research, to report to granting bodies, etc. However it may be difficult to convince some senior executives (Rectors, Vice-Chancellors, Presidents or the Research Vice-Presidents, Pro Vice-Chancellors, etc) that they have been carried into a new era of scholarly dissemination while they weren't looking, and that their attitudes are obsolescent.

An institution-wide requirement to deposit in the IR is the logical and inevitable endpoint. In fact it is exactly what is needed. Once such a policy is in place the IR manager's approaches to researchers and heads of centers and all the plethora of feel-good activities actually work. People who are required to deposit their publications are grateful for advice. The occasional chase-up call is not resented. Just about everything that the university can put in place (for example publicity for deposits, awards for the best author or paper, assistance with self-archiving, download statistics, etc) will begin to work as it resonates with every academic in fulfilling their duty.

A mandatory policy will approach a capture rate of 100% of current research publications, but over a couple of years. Figures of 60-90% can be expected in a short time. See http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_10/sale/index.html for some data on how mandates actually work.

Voluntary participation

The 'everything else' policies are not worth talking about for long. In the absence of mandates, every encouragement policy known to Man fails to convince more than 15% to 20% of researchers to invest the 5 minutes of time needed to deposit their publications. The percentage does not grow with time. When you look at this closely, all these encouragement policies (awards to top authors, regular articles in the house magazine, great feedback, personal approaches, download statistics, seminars, explanation of the OA advantages, etc) fail. This is a global experience, but I have plenty of Australian examples. The reason is easy to grasp: these activities appeal to the converted and the practicing self-archivers, not the skeptics or the lazy. In other words they simply pass over the heads of over 80% of the potential contributors without engagement with the little grey cells.

I must emphasize that such policies are known to achieve no greater deposit rate of current research than 30% and more usually around 15%. The evidence can be produced and is absolutely clear. At such deposit rates, one wonders why it is worth bothering having a repository or undertaking the proselytizing activities, except simply to have a repository in place (a yes/no tick).

It is also useless to look at growth rates of documents in the repository without taking their publication and deposit dates into account. The evidence shows that many 'converted' depositors busy themselves with mounting all their old papers. This is not to be discouraged and makes repository managers think they are achieving something, but it is *not* a significant performance indicator. The only important performance indicator is 'How much of your institution's annual research output appears in your repository by (say) 6 months after year end?'

The Patchwork Mandate

So, many repository managers find themselves between a rock and a hard place. They can't convince the senior executives to bring in a mandate, and they know that voluntary deposition does not work. Fortunately there may be a middle way or even a transitional way ahead. I call it the *patchwork mandate* for reasons that will become obvious. Unfortunately we don't have any evidence yet that this policy works on an institutional scale, though there are significant pointers to indicate that it will.

So what is the patchwork mandate? Simply this:

- 1 Knowing that you have been unable to convince the senior executives, you nevertheless personally commit to having a mandate across your institution.
- 2 You aim to pursue a strategy that will achieve an institutional mandate in the long term. It is highly recommended that you register your intention to do this in ROARMAP <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/> so as to encourage other repository managers caught in the same dilemma.
- 3 Since you can't get an institutional mandate, you work towards getting departmental (school/faculty) mandates one by one. Each departmental mandate will rapidly trend towards 100% and needs little activism to maintain this level.

Let's look at this a bit more closely. We have solid evidence that departmental mandates work, and much faster than university-wide mandates. A year or so suffices to achieve a substantial acquisition rate of current research. This is because there are fewer people involved, and the researchers tend to trust their leaders more. It is also easier to achieve conversion at the departmental level. Two documented examples are ECS at Southampton University and the School of Computing at the University of Tasmania (mine). Again see http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_10/sale/index.html.

What is a departmental mandate? A decision by the Head of Department (or a Research Director or a democratic staff meeting) that all peer-reviewed articles in the department must be deposited in the IR as a postprint, at the time of acceptance. See <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/sign.php> for a draft policy you can adapt. Its effect is immediate, and most members of the department comply quite easily. The 'enforcement' of the policy (if any is needed) is in the hands of the responsible person of the department, and all it needs is to watch what people claim they have published and ask "have you archived that yet?" That is enough – no punitive action is required.

How do you achieve this? Well what you don't do is try a scatter-gun approach across the institution. Not only does it waste effort, but it puts people's back up. You analyze all your departments and research centers. You decide which senior people in them might be amenable to persuasion. A high research profile is a good indicator, as is a discipline where online access is already widespread. Another pointer is an area where a funding body mandate is going to affect many people. You know your institution better than I do, so choose your own criteria.

Then you concentrate on the leader of a department and possibly people around him or her to firstly deposit their own current research, show them what they can get out of it (for example download statistics), and then persuade them that their whole department should deposit. Give them the words to use. Suggest implementation. Provide support. Run seminars. Provide monthly deposit data summaries. But all of this strictly targeted at the selected department. Once you have a mandate from that department, keep up your support, publicize successes across the institution, and move on to the next target. Of course you might tackle a few targets at the same time, but not too many. Successful departmental mandates are what you are after.

You will end up with an odd collection of mandated departments, and the rest being voluntary. Hence the term *patchwork mandate*, like a calico or tortoiseshell cat. You won't achieve 100% deposit rates yet, but you may begin to escape from the 20% ceiling of voluntary deposit.

Two of the key features of the patchwork mandate is that you are (a) convincing the very people you need to support you in instituting a university-wide mandate, and (b) you are demonstrating that mandates work without difficulty.

When you as repository manager have (say) 40–50% of the departments (or the same proportion of research output, which ever occurs first) with departmental mandates, go back and argue with your senior executives. Take some of your converted heads of departments with you. If they still don't agree to bring in an institutional mandate, tell

them that you now have to tackle the remaining more difficult departments, and that they (the executives) are now looking like very silly neo-Luddites. Carry out your promise if you do say that.

Conclusion

I think that the patchwork mandate strategy will probably work. We are trialing it in Australia. It won't achieve 100% content instantly, but it is a clear way to work towards that. You can even explain it to your senior executives and they probably won't stop you. They may even encourage you to try it.

Just remember that voluntary persuasion of individuals is known not to work beyond a pitiful participation level. Self-archiving needs to be made part of the routine academic duty, and this requires a policy endorsement by someone.