

SPARC®, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition

North American Campus-Based Open Access Funds: *A Five-Year Progress Report*

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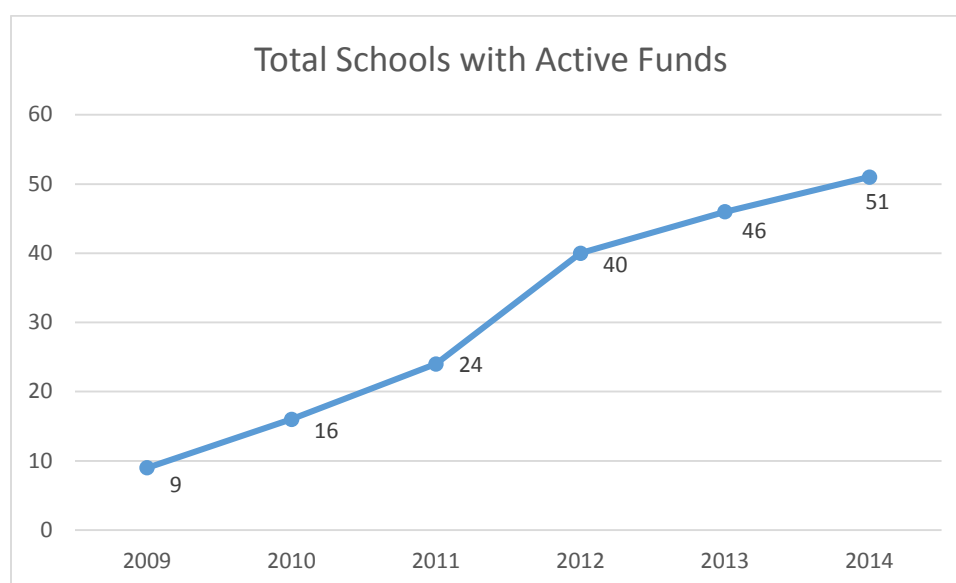
Introduction

In 2009, SPARC unveiled its “[Campus-Based Open Access Funds](#)” resource. It was intended to provide actionable information to institutions contemplating the creation of an Open Access (OA) Fund, institutions that were already operating such a Fund, authors seeking to learn more about the opportunities these Funds could provide, and anyone else in the scholarly communication community wanting to keep abreast of important developments in this area. The resource has, since its inception, provided a wealth of background information, practical resources, policy guidelines, and hard data documenting OA Fund developments.

As we approach the five year anniversary of this resource’s launch, SPARC is providing this progress report to apprise the community on the quantitative and anecdotal successes of campus-based OA Funds across North America, as well as those areas in which these Funds have not fully realized their potential. Consider this an interim update on a mechanism that remains very much a work in progress. SPARC looks forward to continuing to monitor OA Fund developments and to report this information to the community.

By the Numbers

When the “[Campus-Based Open Access Funds](#)” resource launched in 2009, it included the first iteration of the “[Open Access Funds in Action](#)” worksheet. This tracked the policies and activities of institutions that had launched OA Funds. In its inaugural incarnation, the worksheet documented the nine North American schools that had active OA Funds at that time. The progress of these schools’ Funds were tracked regularly in the intervening period, and the policies and outputs of other institutions were added as new Funds were established. The growth in the number of active Funds has been both steady and impressive:



The growth associated with OA Funds is not limited to the number of schools that are running these types of programs. The amount of money institutions have committed, as well as the number of papers and authors supported, have all evolved significantly since 2009:

	2009	2014	Growth
<i>Cumulative \$\$ Committed</i>	\$412,500	\$2,205,068	435%
<i>Cumulative Papers Funded</i>	207	3863	1766%
<i>Cumulative Unique Authors Supported</i>	187	3121	1569%

In real terms, these results are significant. Nearly 4,000 research articles have been published in Open Access journals with the support of these Funds. This has benefitted more than 3,000 unique authors, as well as the myriad readers and researchers who have gained unfettered access to this content as a result.

In 2009, SPARC articulated why an institution might launch a campus-based OA Fund:

The fundamental goal of any open-access fund is to support publication models that enable free, immediate, online distribution of, and access to, scholarly research. By setting aside resources for the express purpose of encouraging authors to publish in open-access journals, open-access funds demonstrate an institution’s concrete support for reshaping the economics of scholarly communication.

From this perspective, campus-based OA Funds have been impactful. They have tangibly underscored schools’ commitments to Open Access while simultaneously encouraging authors to experiment with this emerging model. With that stated, the Funds remain a work in progress. Most significantly among the cumulative data tallies, 30% of the Funds that are more than a year old have served 20 or fewer authors. This highlights the extent to which sustained and painstaking outreach to eligible authors is a critical factor in a Fund’s ongoing success.

Qualitative Insights

In conjunction with the development of this progress report, OA Fund managers were asked to provide feedback on the successes and challenges associated with their activities. Twenty percent of schools with active Funds elected to participate. The results are detailed below, along with a summary analysis of the input.

Fund Successes

The achievement most frequently trumpeted by Fund managers was the use of these financial resources to support authors who otherwise might not have been willing or able to publish in OA journals. More than half of respondents indicated that their Funds have been successful in introducing scholars to Open Access, with a number also emphasizing the exposure across a wide range of disciplines. While these are practical successes, the Funds were also singled out by a majority of respondents for an intangible benefit they have generated. Campus-based OA Funds underscore an institutions’ commitment to the principles behind Open Access – notably free and immediate access and reuse. Putting real dollars into

the Funds is seen as a way to underscore the value a school places on openness, and to convey this value to the campus community.

Fund Challenges

The two primary challenges Fund managers articulated were author engagement and coping with the success of their Funds. With respect to the former, this encompasses building a baseline level of faculty awareness about the Fund, its aims, eligibility requirements, and logistics; the special effort required to engage faculty outside of the STEM disciplines who may have less prior exposure to OA journals; and addressing author misconceptions about the Open Access model. Regarding the latter, more than half of the respondents indicated that the popularity of their Funds has created operational and financial challenges. Handling a large volume of applications requires time to train staff. As new journals and publishers emerge, they must be vetted against eligibility requirements. Crucially, as more authors become aware of the OA Funds, there is a greater interest in leveraging this resource. This places a financial strain on the Fund and managers must either secure additional funding or turn eligible authors away until the Fund is replenished.

Level of Satisfaction

Fund managers uniformly rated their library's level of satisfaction as a four on a five point scale. While the concerns cited in the *Challenges* section immediately prior were articulated as the reason why top marks were not warranted at this point, there was a consensus that the Funds have provided a useful service to campus authors. Additionally, the Funds have helped create a dialog between faculty and the library regarding publishing decisions. This has opened the door to larger conversations about institutional repositories, funder mandates, rights retention, and other scholarly communication issues.

Communicating with Faculty

When asked how the Fund has changed the nature of conversations with faculty about Open Access, two primary strands emerged. A majority of respondents indicated, as per the section immediately above, that the Fund has provided an entrée for into a deeper discussion about scholarly communication issues. The library has a wealth of expertise on these matters, and the availability of OA funding support provides an organic intersection with authors that can lead to a deeper, ongoing discourse. Equally cited by Fund managers was the benefit of taking a theoretical discussion about OA into the practical realm. It is easier to discuss the benefits of Open Access within the context of a specific author's specific publication decision. The library, in this scenario, becomes the provider of practical assistance that is of real and direct value to the author.

Communicating with Administration

Fund managers were also asked how the Fund has changed the nature of conversations with campus administration about Open Access. The consensus response was that the Fund has had only a minimal impact in this regard. While some schools have used the success of their Funds to leverage greater financial commitment among the administration, in general, most managers already feel well-supported in this regard. (It is worth noting that of the 51 institutions with OA Funds, at least one-third receive substantial funding from their administration.) In general, OA Fund managers feel their administration is supportive of these efforts, and the success of their Funds has validated and perpetuated this support.

Summary

Five years into SPARC's involvement with campus-based Open Access Funds, it is clear that these programs have generated positive momentum. Thousands of authors have published thousands of OA articles. Each of these individual cases has provided an opportunity for the library, often with the active support of campus administration, to engage with authors on OA's benefits – for themselves, for their research peers, for students and teachers, and for society-at-large. These conversations are valuable seeds that are blossoming into a growing comfort with, and support for, Open Access within the authoring community.

The steady rise in the number of campus-based OA Funds is a material indicator that institutions place real value on the free and immediate access and reuse of scholarly articles. This visible support validates not only the individual Funds, but also Open Access as a whole.

The next step in the successful evolution of campus-based Open Access Funds will be extending both the depth and the breadth of their adoption. The number of schools with Funds has grown from 9 to 51 in the past five years. The launching of Funds at additional institutions will serve as an important indicator of the ultimate impact this mechanism will have within scholarly communication. So, too, will the growth of usage within campuses that have mature Funds. Attracting additional authors to use the Fund, and working with the university administration to secure sustainable funding, will be key challenges going forward.

SPARC anticipates an ongoing involvement in campus-based Open Access Funds. This commitment includes monitoring the progress of existing Funds, tracking the launch of new Funds, and engaging librarians, campus administration, authors, and readers in an open dialog concerning the benefits and challenges associated with campus-based Open Access.