



## Talking Points for ARL Directors: The University's Role in the Dissemination of Research and Scholarship – A Call to Action

### Background

*On August 4, 2008, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Association of American Universities (AAU), the Coalition for Networked Information (CNI), and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC), convened a roundtable discussion engaging provosts, chief research officers, chief information officers, senior faculty, and library and university press directors to identify actions that should be taken to expand the dissemination of the products of the university community's research and scholarship. Informed by that discussion, a new statement, "The University's Role in the Dissemination of Research and Scholarship" provides guidance to each organization and its members. Many campus leaders should receive copies of the statement through their affiliations with AAU, NASULGC, CNI, or EDUCAUSE (or see [http://www.arl.org/disseminating\\_research\\_2009.pdf](http://www.arl.org/disseminating_research_2009.pdf)) giving library directors an opportunity to promote it as a consensus document and reinforce its messages.*

### Who needs to know

The statement is written for campus leaders, including presidents, provosts, chief information officers, heads of faculty governance bodies, deans, and other stakeholders. Research library leaders are generally well informed on the issues the call to action addresses, perhaps more so than others at their institution. ARL Directors are positioned to educate colleagues, communicate a sense of urgency, and seek opportunities to position the library to support needed change.

### Points for discussion

There is a pressing need for research institutions to disseminate, manage, reuse, and preserve the products of their research enterprise. Today, these research products take a wide range of digital forms. Traditional high value content, like journal article manuscripts, is complemented by a host of new digital content types incorporating images, multimedia works, simulations, and diverse forms of preliminary reports.

The statement's primary recommendation is that, "*Campuses should initiate discussions involving administration and faculty about modifying current practices and/or its intellectual property policies such that the university retains a set of rights sufficient to ensure that broad dissemination of the research and scholarly work produced by its faculty occurs.*" This is followed in the statement by a substantive set of strategies for institutions, consortia and other peer groups, and national associations. Two important themes thread through the various recommendations.

1. **Copyright assignment practices:** For institutions to take action to collect, disseminate, preserve, and enable reuse of content, it is essential that they establish mechanisms for obtaining limited copyright assignments. Institutions need to review existing or develop new policies regarding distributions of copyrights between research institutions and the scholars and

researchers in their employ. Institutional policies requiring authors to assign a limited license to exercise key rights to the institution are likely to be the most effective and efficient means for ensuring that research and knowledge can be shared.

2. **Academic rewards:** Institutions should ensure that their reward systems encourage the broadest possible dissemination and use of new knowledge. Tying rewards too closely to traditional monograph and journal formats can penalize any scholars who, for a variety of entirely appropriate reasons, could benefit from newer forms of dissemination. Therefore, research institutions need to rearticulate promotion and tenure criteria in ways that promote positive change and the advancement of the research enterprise. Institutions need to adopt for their faculty, “criteria that are appropriate for judging the quality of contributions to their discipline, criteria that embrace emerging forms of scholarly work, where those possess the same attributes of quality and contribution to new knowledge, and do not rely solely on traditional publications and historic practices.”

### **How libraries can contribute**

Research libraries have important roles to play in achieving broad dissemination and reuse of the products of research and scholarship.

- Emphasize the library’s role in developing and managing key infrastructure that enables dissemination and promote its ongoing development and adoption. Digital repositories of various kinds are common on campuses, and libraries typically act as leaders and partners in their development.
- Highlight the library’s key services that support researchers in placing content into forms appropriate for dissemination and reuse. These range from educating faculty about new models and supporting appropriate rights management practices to providing digital data management and archiving capabilities and often formal publishing services.
- Showcase partnerships with academic units, campus information technology units, university presses, and others involved with disseminating locally produced content.

A statement coming jointly from an influential group of higher education associations should draw new attention to topics that have already been engaging the concern of the library community. To take advantage of this opportunity, initiate conversations, organize campus events, and sponsor meetings among key stakeholders to promote the statement and its recommendations.

*For more information, contact:*

Karla Hahn  
Director, Office of Scholarly Communication  
Association of Research Libraries