RATIONALE FOR UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON SELF-ARCHIVING POLICY

1. Research Accessibility

1.1 There exist 24,000 peer-reviewed journals (and conference proceedings) publishing 2.5 million articles per year, across all disciplines, languages and nations.

1.2 No university anywhere, not even the richest, can afford to subscribe to all or most of the journals that its researchers may need to use.

1.3 Hence no article is accessible to all of its potential users, and hence all articles are losing some of their research impact (usage and citations).

2. Research Impact: Usage and Citations

2.1 This is confirmed by recent findings, independently replicated by many investigators, showing that articles for which their authors have supplemented subscription-based access to the publisher’s version by self-archiving their own final drafts free for all on the web are downloaded and cited twice as much across all 12 scientific, biological, social science and humanities disciplines analysed so far. (Note: there are no discipline differences in benefits of self-archiving, only in awareness.)

2.2 The total citation counts for articles submitted to RAE are also very closely correlated with departmental RAE rankings (despite the fact that citations are not directly counted by RAE). More citations mean higher RAE ranking.

2.3 Hence citation counts are (i) robust indicator sof research performance, (ii) they are not currently maximised for those articles that are not self-archived and (iii) those articles that are being self-archived have a substantial competitive advantage over those that are not.

3. Institutional Self-Archiving Mandates Maximise Research Impact

3.1 Only 15% of the 2.5 million articles published annually are being spontaneously self-archived worldwide today.

3.2 Creating an an Institutional Repository (IR) and encouraging staff to self-archive their articles therein is a good first step, but it is not sufficient to raise the self-archiving rate appreciably above the 15% baseline for spontaneous self-archiving.

3.3 Adding library help to encourage and assist staff to self-archive raises the self-archiving rate somewhat, but insufficiently.
3.4 The correct measure of institutional success in self-archiving is the ratio of annual self-archived articles in an institution’s IR relative to that institution’s total annual article output.

3.5 The only institutions that are reliably approaching a 100% annual self-archiving rate today are those that not only create an IR (3.2) and provide library help (3.3) for depositing, but also adopt a self-archiving policy requirement or mandate.

3.6 A self-archiving mandate is a simple and natural extension of institutions’ already existing mandate to publish research findings (“publish or perish”); it is already linked to incentives by the fact that staff are promoted and funded on the basis of research performance indicators, of which citation impact is a prominent correlate, as in the RAE (2.2).

3.7 Two international, cross-disciplinary JISC surveys have found that 95% of authors will comply with a self-archiving mandate (81% willingly, 14% reluctantly).

3.8 The four institutions worldwide that have adopted a self-archiving mandate to date (CERN in Switzerland, Queensland University of Technology in Australia, Minho University in Portugal, and the ECS Department at University of Southampton) have each confirmed the outcome of the JISC author surveys (3.7), with their institutional self-archiving rates reliably climbing toward 100%, whereas institutions without mandates remain at the 15% spontaneous self-archiving baseline rate.

4. Southampton’s Longstanding Leadership in Open Access Worldwide

4.1 U. Southampton ECS department was the first department and institution in the world to adopt a self-archiving mandate (2001).


4.3 ECS designed the first and most widely used software for creating institutional archives (Eprints, 2000), now already used by about 200 institutions worldwide; ECS also created Citebase (2002), the citation-based OA search engine (well before Google Scholar).

4.4 ECS conducted many of the seminal studies empirically demonstrating the citation impact advantage of self-archiving across all disciplines; ECS also maintains the growing and widely used bibliography of the accumulating findings on the OA Impact Advantage.

4.5 ECS/Eprints maintains ROAR, the Registry of Open Access Repositories, tracking the number, size and growth of IRs and their contents worldwide.
4.6 ECS/Eprints maintains ROARMAP, the Registry of Open Access Repository Material Archiving Policies, tracking the institutions worldwide that have adopted self-archiving policies, from recommendations to full mandates.

4.7 ECS/Eprints maintains the ROMEO Directory of Journal Policies on Author Self-Archiving: 93% of the nearly 9000 journals registered to date (including all the principal publishers and the core ISI journals) have already formally endorsed author self-archiving; only 7% of journals have not.

4.8 ECS/Southampton successfully lobbied the UK Parliamentary Select Committee in 2004 to mandate self-archiving; this led directly to the RCUK self-archiving mandate proposal, the Berlin 3 Policy Recommendation (formulated at Southampton) and the development of RAE submission mechanisms for the world’s two principal IR softwares (Eprints, and MIT’s Dspace, both written by Southampton’s Rob Tansley).

5. Action: Southampton should now mandate self-archiving university-wide

5.1 University of Southampton should now maximise its own RAE ranking and set an example to the rest of the world by extending its own successful ECS self-archiving mandate university-wide.

5.2 As indicated by the JISC survey and the empirical experience of the other 3 mandating institutions (3.8): there is no need for any penalties for non-compliance with the mandate; the mandate (and its own rewards: enhanced research access and impact) will take care of itself.

5.31 What needs to be mandated:
- immediately upon acceptance for publication
- deposit in the Southampton Institutional Repository
- the author’s final accepted draft (not the publisher’s proprietary PDF)
- both its full-text and its bibliographic metadata (author, date, title, journal, etc.)

(Note that only the depositing itself needs to be mandated. Setting the access privileges to the full-text can be left up to the author, with Open Access strongly encouraged, but not mandated. This makes the Southampton self-archiving mandate completely independent of publishers’ self-archiving policies.)

5.32 The Eprints software allows authors to choose to set access as Open Access (OA) or Restricted Access (RA):
- OA: both metadata and full-text are made visible and accessible to all would-be users web-wide
- RA: metadata are visible and accessible web-wide but full-text is not

5.4 The decision as to whether to set full-text access as OA or RA can be left up to the author: 93% of authors will set full-text access as OA (4.2); for the remaining 7%, the
Eprints software still makes it possible for any would-be user web-wide to request an eprint of the full-text automatically by email -- by just cut-pasting their own email address into a box and clicking; the author immediately receives the request and can instantly email the eprint with one click. The result will be 100% access to all Southampton research output, 93% immediately and directly, with one keystroke, 7% indirectly after a short delay, with a few extra keystrokes by user and author.

6. The Importance of Prompt Action

6.1 Self-archiving is effortless, taking only a few minutes and a few keystrokes; library help is available too (but hardly necessary).

6.2 Southampton should not delay in adopting a self-archiving mandate: 100% OA is both optimal and inevitable -- for research, researchers, their universities, their funders, and the tax-paying public that supports both the research and the universities. It will also put Southampton in the best position for RAE 2008, relative to all the other UK universities.

6.3 Southampton is already the world leader in OA self-archiving; it should now provide a model for the world with its university-wide self-archiving policy, while by the same stroke maximizing its own research impact and RAE ranking

6.4 RCUK is contemplating adopting a UK-wide self-archiving mandate along the same lines (but Southampton, itself the source of much of the momentum and direction in the RCUK policy proposal, should, for both practical and historical reasons, not wait for RCUK before adopting its own mandate).

6.5 ECS is building an archive for Bournemouth University and their VC plans to adopt a mandate as soon as it is ready for use. Southampton should be the first UK university, historically, to have a mandated self-archiving policy, but it will lose that race if it does not adopt a policy within a few weeks.

6.6 The mandate need have no penalties or sanctions in order to be successful; it need only be formally adopted, with the support of Heads of Schools, the library, and computing services. The rest will take care of itself naturally of its own accord, as the experience of Southampton ECS, Minho, QUT and CERN has already demonstrated.