Purpose:

- To promote robust, persistent, public access to the whole of U of L research published as scholarly articles
- To advance the public good of free intellectual conversation, information sharing and knowledge creation among scholars and interested individuals around the globe

Scope:

- Scholarly articles authored or co-authored by U of L researchers that are published after the adoption of the proposed policy

Context:

- Without expectation of payment, for more than 350 years researchers have published their work in scholarly journals in the pursuit of knowledge and to explore solutions to the world’s many puzzles and problems. Today scholarly articles remain a common mode of disseminating the fruits of scholarship, but the ability to read them is most often paywalled. Academic libraries struggle to provide access to the scholarly literature needed by their research communities in the face of perennial substantial subscription price hikes and a sustained system-wide economic climate of stagnant or shrinking funding levels for university libraries.
- At the same time, government and other funding agencies are increasingly concerned about ensuring broad public enjoyment of research outputs that are developed with the aid of research grants. Following the lead of the U.S. National Institutes of Health and Research Councils U.K., Canada introduced an Open Access Policy in 2015 requiring all Tri-Agency grant recipients to make their research published in scholarly journals accessible by the public no later than 12 months after publication. Researchers can do so in two ways: by publishing in an open access journal, and by making the accepted manuscript publicly available in a disciplinary or institutional research repository such as OPUS.
- The article is but one form of scholarly communication. It is dominant within many science and professional fields, whereas different forms of intellectual expression prevail in other fields, such as monographs and other creative or artistic works. The proposed OA policy pertains only to scholarly articles because unlike other forms of peer-reviewed scholarship, they never involve royalties paid to authors. The proposed policy nonetheless recognizes the desirability of making all scholarly works by U of L authors available in OPUS. All forms of scholarship by U of L authors are thus welcomed for deposit in OPUS.

Rationale:

- As a matter of principle, the public should have unimpeded access to publications arising from research conducted at publicly funded institutions like the U of L, especially research that is supported by publicly funded granting agencies.
- Subscription-based academic journal publishers have a legitimate interest in controlling uses of the published version of record (VOR) of scholarly articles. The public interest, however, is unlikely to be served when the content of authors’ freely contributed journal articles is (lawfully) accessible only from behind publishers’ exorbitantly priced paywalls.
• Most academic publishers (e.g., Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley, Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Academy of Management, Royal Society of Chemistry, American Psychological Association) allow archiving of authors’ accepted manuscripts (AAM) in research repositories like OPUS, although public access is often subject to an embargo period.

• Rampant unlawful access to the scholarly corpus poses another threat to the sustainability of the current scholarly communication system.

• Adoption of the policy advances the public interest in taxpayer access to publicly funded scholarship while protecting university authors’ academic freedom to choose appropriate venues for their scholarly publications and to exercise control over their intellectual property.

Researcher benefits:

• Compliance with Tri-Agency Open Access Policy requirements, for Tri-Agency grant holders
• Greater visibility and impact
• Greater article usage, citation and social media attention
• Lawful public access to researchers’ scholarly articles (many publishers disallow posting AAMs and VORs on commercial academic networking sites like Academia.edu and ResearchGate)
• Retention of authors’ copyrights in scholarly articles that are otherwise usually transferred or exclusively licensed in their entirety to commercial publishers via standard publishing agreements
• Convenience of public access to all or a good proportion of researchers’ published articles in one place via OPUS.

Selected FAQs:

• How can the policy apply to me if I don’t know any reputable OA publishers or journals in my field? The policy recognizes that for many researchers, the preferred venue for their scholarly articles remains traditional subscription-based journals. That is why the policy focuses specifically on authors’ accepted manuscripts (AAMs) since most commercial academic and scholarly society publishers already permit archiving of AAMs in research repositories like OPUS.

• If most publishers already permit local archiving of AAMs, why do we need an OA policy? At most institutions, ours included, very few researchers on their own initiative have taken the necessary steps to add their AAMs to the institution’s repository. The process of establishing a policy will help raise awareness of the policy’s aims, benefits, and supports.

• What happens if a journal I publish in does not allow local archiving of manuscripts of any sort? That’s ok. In such cases you would apply for a waiver for each accepted manuscript. The waiver will always be granted, no questions asked.

• Will I have to spend a lot of extra time reading my author publishing agreements carefully to ensure they don’t conflict with the policy? No, the aim is to keep the time and effort required for policy compliance to a minimum. If adopted, the policy will be widely publicized to publishers by the responsible U of L office. If your publisher is not among those directly notified, you will be able to provide a link to the policy. Upon receiving your AAM, Library staff will determine the permissibility of making it publicly available in OPUS and whether an embargo is applicable. The University Copyright Advisor will be available to help you interpret your publisher agreement if so desired. Should you encounter conflicts that cannot be overcome, you will have the option to seek a waiver for the article in question, which will always be granted.