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Open Access, IRs and other players

The goal of the Open Access (OA) movement is to expand the capabilities for immediate and broad distribution of research publications. Institutional repositories (IR) play a fundamental role in collecting, preserving and making widely available faculty scholarly and research work. Thus, with the use of latest technology, they offer a prospect of expanding the current scholarly communication system by increasing authors' impact and institutions' prestige, and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration.

Understanding and addressing the issues faced by IRs requires a multidimensional approach that involves all stakeholders including: individual scholars and researchers, academic institutions and librarians, scholarly and scientific society publishers, commercial publishers, and government institutions. However, most researchers (Kim, 2010), agree that the main players are faculty members that can "make-or-break" an IR.

Literature review

Scholars have been slow to act in ways that will bring OA closer to meeting its goals. Surveys conducted by Primary Research Group (2009) show that 57.2 % of faculty in the sample said that they are aware of the digital repository for faculty publication maintained by their library/institution. However, only 9.7 % have ever contributed a publication to their libraries' digital repository. The study reveals that 59% of faculty understand the term institutional digital repository and 74.6% understand the meaning of open access. Figure-2 provides the summarized data on faculty attitudes towards the OA movement.

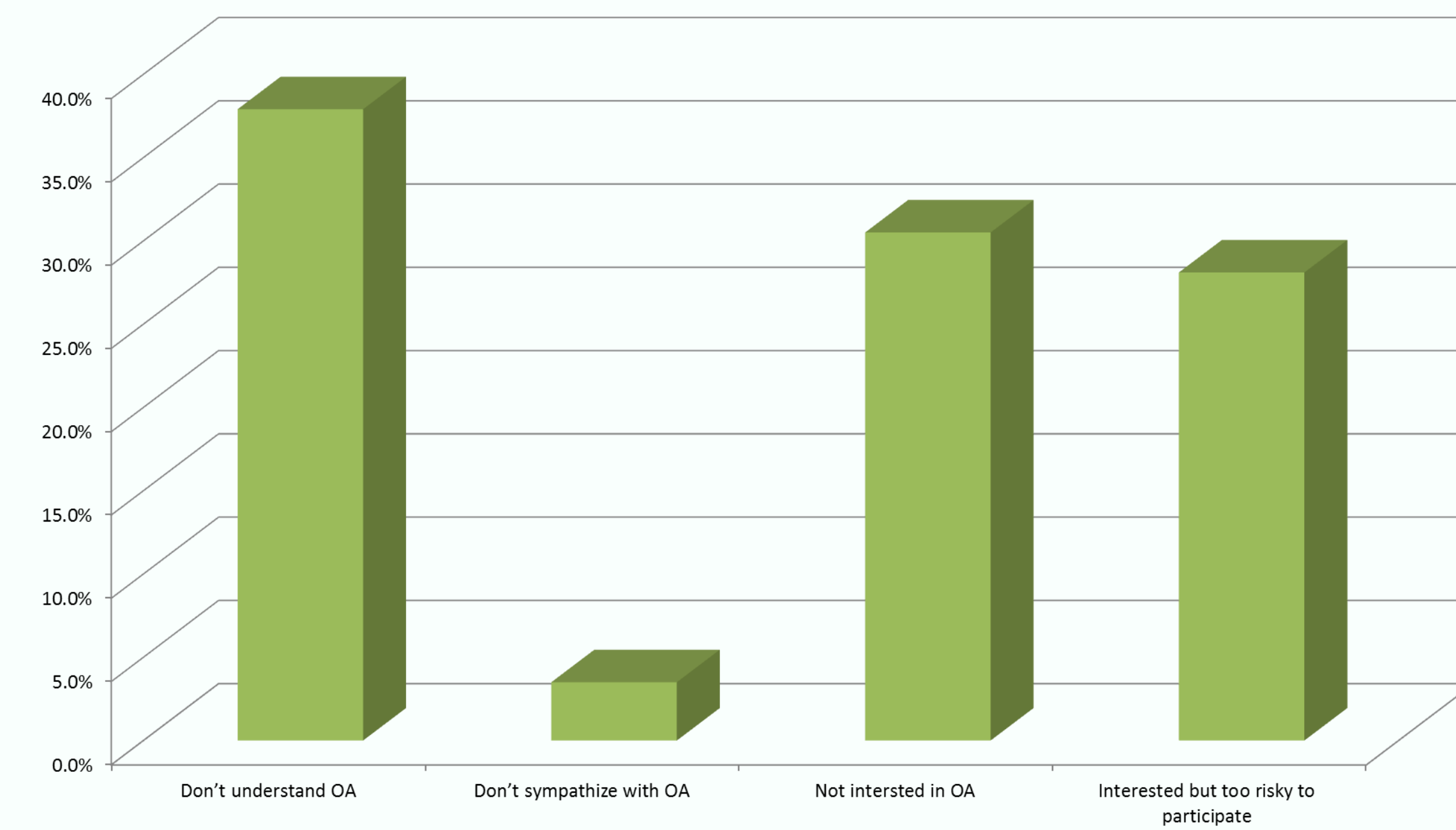


Figure-2 Faculty awareness of Open Access (Source: Primary Research Group (2009))

Current IR situation

The current situation of IRs is rather bleak and calls to question the effectiveness of the current ways of recruiting content, including institutional mandates. According to Primary Research Group (2014), only 5% of journal articles published by the faculty members have been archived in the IR.

The most recent survey by Nicholas et al (2014) suggested that while the size and use of repositories has been relatively modest, almost half of all institutions either have, or are planning, a repository mandate requiring deposit. Nicholas et al argue that mandates vary based on the research community and/or institution.

The effect of mandates on deposit

A survey conducted by Swan (2005) shows that academics favor open access, but will not self-archive unless it is mandated by their institutions and/or their funders.

National institute of Health (NIH) merely reached 4% of deposits with encouragements alone, but with mandated deposit in place the deposit rates rose to over 60%. (Harnad, 2009).

Nicholas et al conclude that 22% of researchers were directly influenced by mandate to deposit their work, and this varied based on age. The younger researchers were more likely to comply with the mandate.

Other studies (Sale 2007) compared the rates of three universities in Australia, one with only an IR, another with an IR and assistance in deposition; and one with an IR, assistance and mandate. The results from this study showed that deposition rates were significantly higher (close to 100%) for the last one within two years of adoption of the mandate.

The Impact of mandate at the UNT

The University of North Texas (UNT), was the first public institution in the state of Texas to implement a policy in support of Open Access (Approved on February 1, 2012). The UNT Scholarly Works repository was launched in September 2010 and the collection includes Articles, books, book chapters, Presentations, Posters, Artworks, videos, and datasets dating from 1932 to the present. Out of 50+ Colleges and departments that contributed items to the UNT Scholarly Works, the top two contributors are: UNT College of Arts and Sciences (930 items) and UNT Honors College (580 items).

The graph below (Figure-3) shows the total number of items uploaded to UNT Scholarly Works per year. It is interesting to note that the highest rate of deposits was in 2012, the same year UNT adopted an open access mandate.

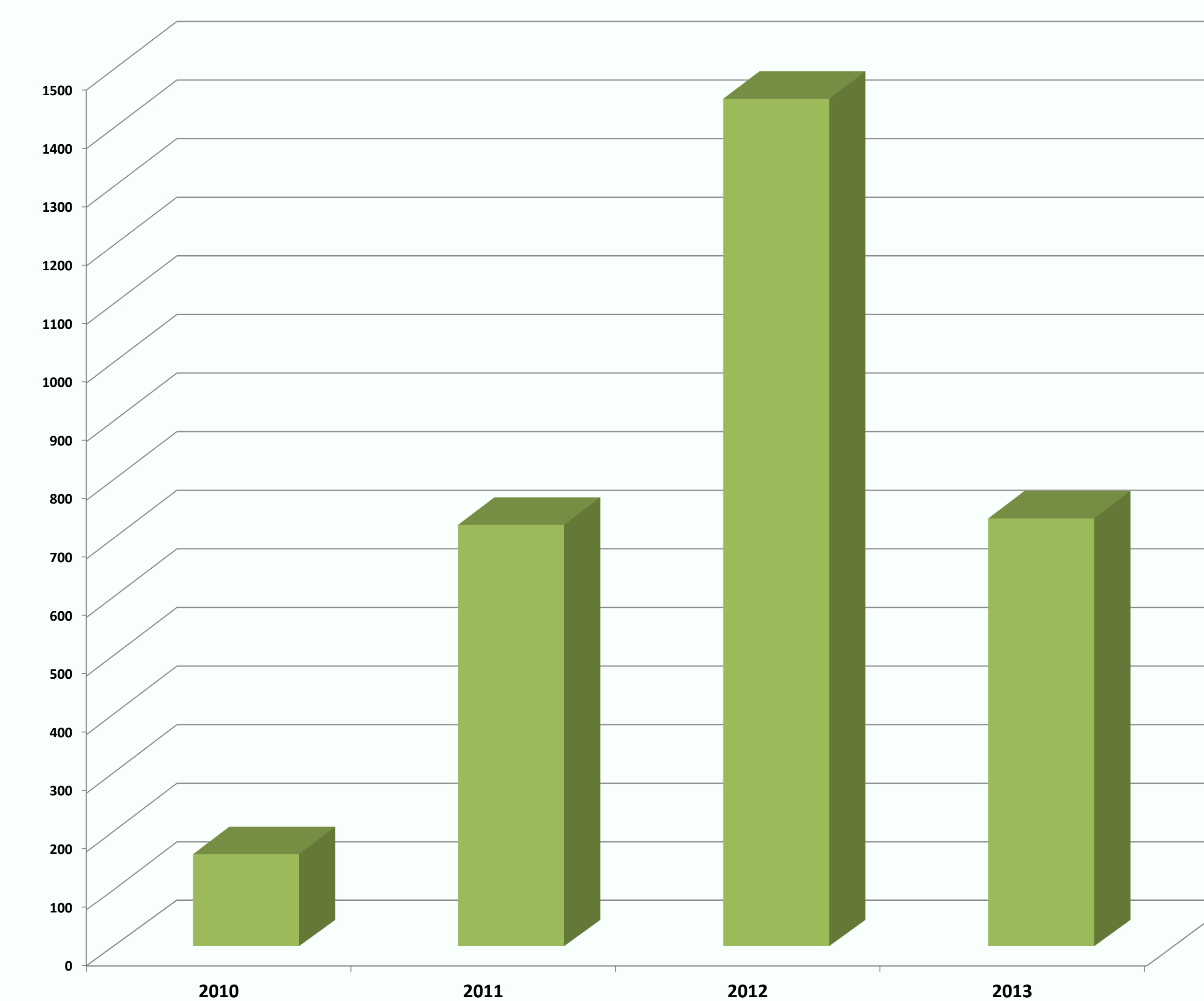


Figure-3 UNT Scholarly Works deposited by year, as of April 5, 2014

Access rate for the Scholarly Works

The UNT Libraries compile usage statistics for digital resources they manage, which can be viewed by any user at any time. The UNT Scholarly Works collection were already heavily used (more than 250,000 times) by scholars and researchers around the world. As can be seen from Figure-4, the greatest usage of items in UNT Scholarly Works occurred in year 2013 - right after the implementation of the open access mandate.

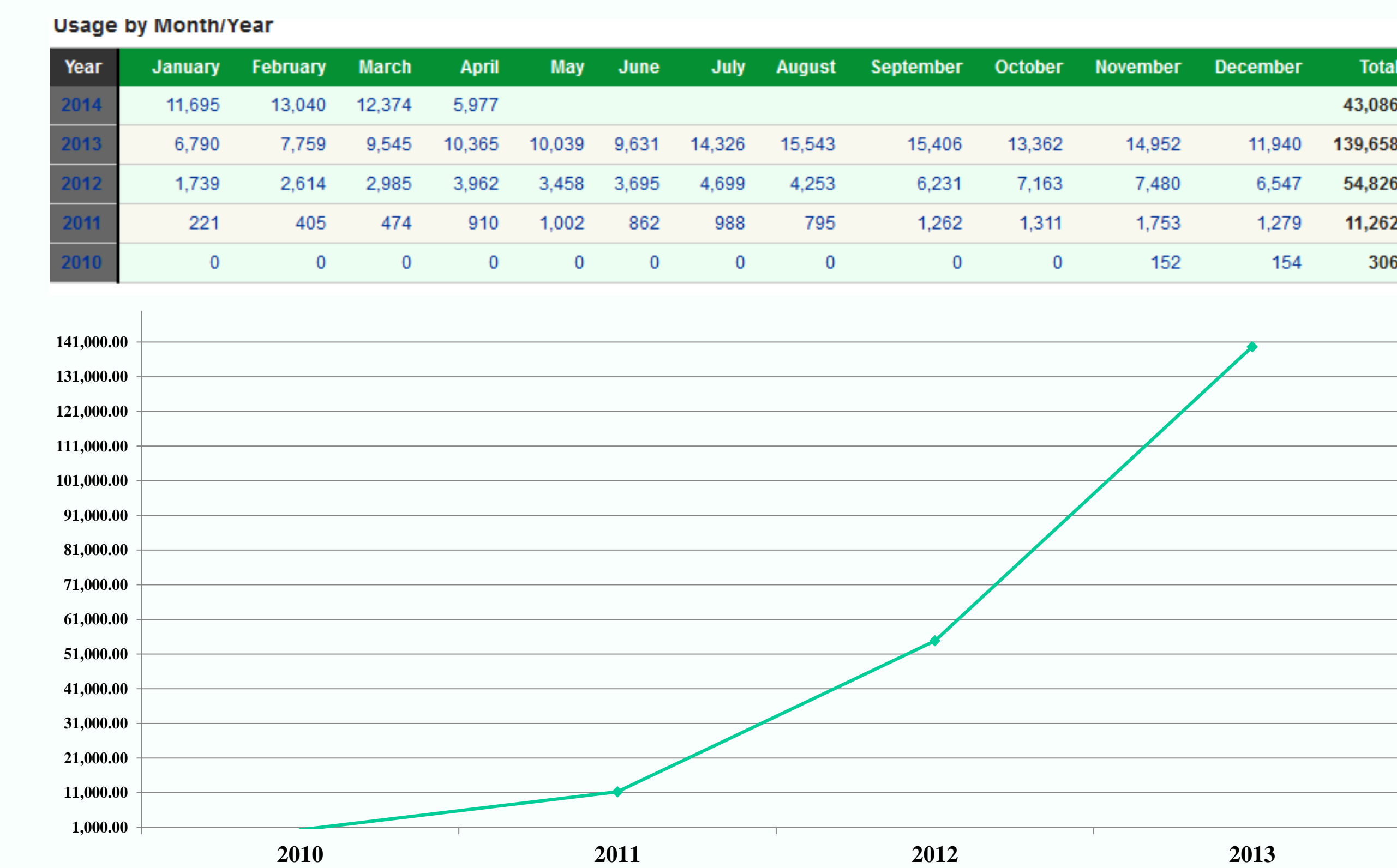


Figure-4 UNT Scholarly Works access by year, as of April 5, 2014

Conclusion

Studies by Nicholas et al (2013); Primary Research Group (2013); and Sale, A.H.J. (2007) that surveyed researchers from an array of disciplines have shown a significant increase of scholarly work deposits in web based scholarly work repositories after their institutions have adopted an OA self-archiving mandate. UNT is not any different.

It should be noted that mandates alone may not be the determining factor in the success of IR, but they are an enabling tool to change the mindset and culture of faculty members, and increase deposits in IR. Making scholarly works available to the wider academic community (via open access repository harvestable using the OAI-PMH protocol) indeed, requires a well-developed infrastructure and dedicated support from all stakeholders.

References

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Figure-1 Conceptualizing the development of IRs

