Enabling Open Access

Why and How the Research Community Can Seize the Initiative

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Leave ideology behind

- The Berlin Declaration in 2003 was a step toward converting principles of OA into actions.
- Much progress since then on repositories, policies, new OA journals.
- Little progress changing the business model of established publishers.
- Many discussions of OA turn publishers into “enemies”.
- But publishers have to address practical issues. To enable progress, the research community must address these issues too.
OA serves scholarship: goals and payoffs

- OA defined: full text machine-readable access to published articles; reasonable re-use permitted even for commercial purposes.
- In an OA world, publishers continue to do peer review, compete on quality, provide website access, innovate.
- Development of community tools for intelligent full-text search and retrieval. This can go far beyond current tools. Think Google.
- Fostering interdisciplinary research by broadening access.
- Providing access to non-research interests: SMEs, community professionals, education.
- Matters of principle (e.g. why do scholars give away copyright to their work?) provide less motivation: why worry just now?
Actors with different interests

- There are three actors:
  - Research organizations want the benefits of OA just described.
  - Publishers want to protect their businesses and competitiveness (not their business models).
  - Scholars want maximum visibility, a reputable journal, good peer review, no disruptions.
Need for an OA environment

- OA has not happened, despite demands, admonishments, mandates, reasoned arguments, … .
- Publishing costs money: managing peer review, editorial work. If not from subscriptions, money needs to come from authors.
- Web publishing has made current publishing business model unstable: income (subscriptions) not coupled to costs (article processing activity). Print costs (tied to subscriptions) minor now.
- Many publishers regard OA as inevitable, but it is not safe yet.
- We need to ask how we can create an environment in which publishers will voluntarily adopt an OA business model.
Who should take the initiative?

- Research organizations (including government ministries) have the most to gain from OA.
- The research/university community currently strongly biases publishing economics against OA.
- Authors won’t sacrifice grant money to pay author charges.
- Research organizations can change the balance here by pro-actively supporting author charges.
What should an OA environment look like?

• Free society: we must expect a mixed publishing system for many years. Rise of OA gives universities more leverage on subscription fees.

• Publishers will seriously examine author-pays business models if they can be confident that author fees will be paid.

• An OA environment should be a market:
  • all three players -- research organizations, publishers, and scholars -- follow their own interests;
  • research organizations provide funding but scholars make choices;
  • market rewards quality and innovation in publishing.
An OA environment

- The Max Planck Society has created a Working Group to develop a policy and work with publishers and research organizations to implement it at least in a pilot subject, like physics.
- Here is what we think an OA-enabling environment should look like:
  - Research organizations guarantee support for author charges (up to €2000?).
  - Authors pay a small part from own grant/budget: sliding scale to encourage them to choose low charges.
  - Journals compete: authors will pay more only for quality and innovation.
- Requires research organizations around the world to cooperate and introduce similar policies. Requires attention to impact on poor countries.
How to get there

- Journals cannot switch to OA unless a large majority of authors are supported by their research organizations.
  - Research organizations worldwide must coordinate policies.
- There will be costs: transfers from subscriptions to author charges relieve universities and burden on grant-givers.
  - Libraries and grant-givers must negotiate equalization.
- Publishers must be partners, at least in the pilot experiment.
  - Market model must be flexible and respond to experience.
- Some services and journals may be unsuited to OA: print copies, review journals, news magazines (*Nature, Science*):
  - Research organizations should find other ways to support key review journals (subsidies, subscriptions).
An OA world

• I believe that, once an author-pays funding policy is in place worldwide, the change to OA will be quick.
  • Publishers will be able to scale income with costs.
  • As OA gains ground, scholars will begin to see its advantages (e.g. full text searches) and avoid closed journals.
• Some benefits predictable, but maybe the most important are ones we have not thought about.
  • When Berners-Lee introduced the WWW as a tool for physics, no-one could have foreseen its current impact.
  • Information is valuable, and locking it away inhibits realization of its value. Services built on open information may be the biggest payoff of OA.