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Enabling Open Access

Why and How the Research Community Can Seize the Initiative

Bernard Schutz
Max Planck Institute for Gravitational Physics
(Albert Einstein Institute)
Potsdam

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 and 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.
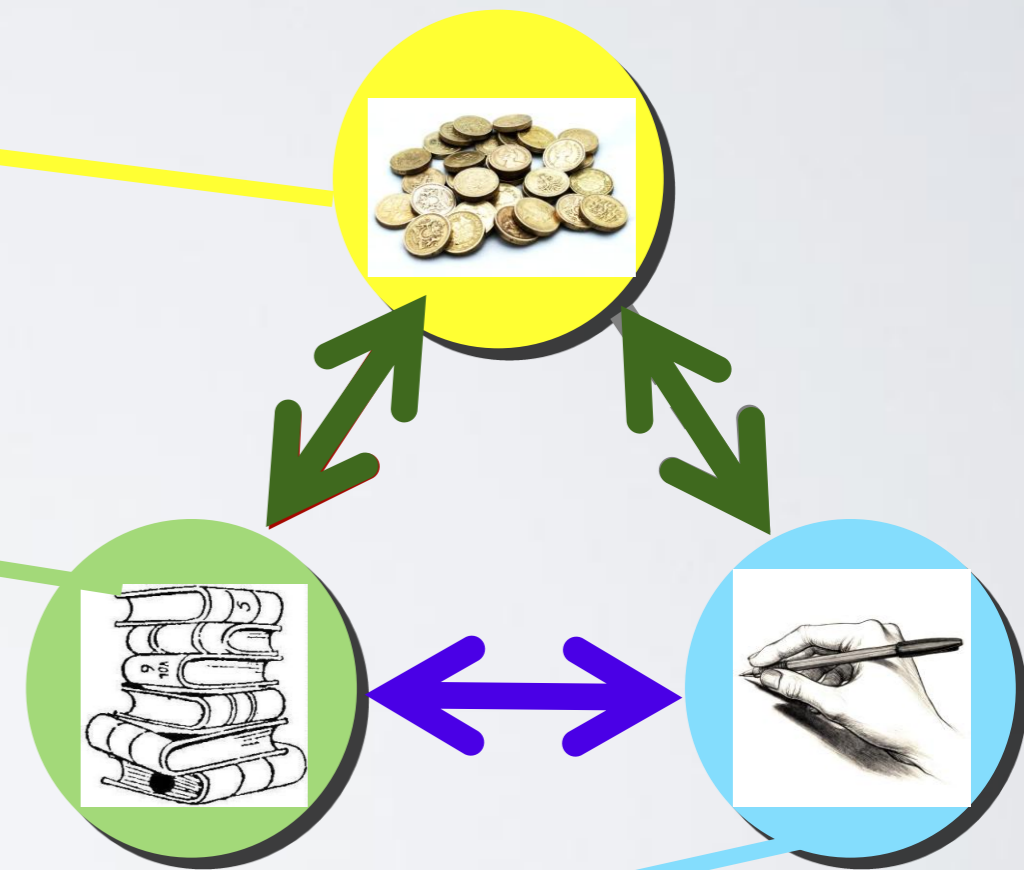
Need for an OA environment

- 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.

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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.