AF CHRISTIAN LAUERSEN (RED.), CULA@KB.DK

PRESS THE BUTTON IN FAVOR OF OPEN RESEARCH

In November 2013 the World got a button to press when denied access to scholarly research – a button in favor of open access and open research. REVY had a talk with The Open Access Button Communications Lead, Chealsye Bowley, about the Button, libraries role and the importance of open access to research.

What is The Open Access Button?

The Open Access Button is a student and early career professional run project that works to connect people to open research. The project has two apps: the Open Access Button and the Open Data Button. The apps allow users to find, request, and share both research papers and research data.

The primary purpose of the Open Access Button is to get people legal access to the research they need, and to support advocacy efforts for open research. We know there are so many people that get denied access to research through paywalls, but at the time that the Open Access Button was conceived there was nothing to track paywalls. The Open Access Button was originally developed to track the impact of paywalls and collect user stories that could be used to advocate for Open Access, but since then the Button has grown. Now we have in place an "email the author" request system that allows a user to request an author's paper or data. We contact the corresponding author and publicly track requests and authors can either send us a link to their research in any Open Access repository, or deposit their paper or data through Dissem.in, Zenodo, or the Open Science Framework. Of course an individual can directly contact an author and the author may send them a copy of the paper, but this only benefits the one requester. The Open Access Button provides a solution to encourage archiving and connect any future requests instantly with the openly archived version after a successful request.

Why is Open Access Button important?

I think any initiative that advocates for open research is important, but the Open Access Button is particularly important, because it's a grassroots initiative run by an international team of students and early career professionals from various disciplines. Joe McArthur and David Carroll who founded the Open Access Button had an incredible idea and had the guts to make it possible. I'm still in awe of that! I joined the team six months after the idea was originally conceived and there was a beta version of the Open Access Button developed by volunteer developers - The Open Access Button is a fantastic example of student contributions to the open movement.

Additionally, I think it's important that we are working on providing a legal option to get access to research, that we promote historical archiving, and now an option for users to request data through the Open Data Button.

Why is Open Access important?

Open Access is important because not everyone who needs access to research has it. People have the misconception, particularly in wealthy countries, that everyone who needs access has it and this simply isn't true. This includes researchers around the world that contribute to scholarly knowledge but don't belong to wealthy institutions that can afford publications, patients and doctors who need to learn about conditions, and even just those are simply curious. Knowledge should be accessible to all.

How can The Open Access Button use libraries / librarians?

This is a great question, Christian! We're thinking hard on this. Both as a librarian myself and an Open Access Button team member, I think libraries and librarians can be fantastic partners for the project.

One initiative that I'm thinking about is having librarian partners who we contact when we get a paper or data

REVY

03 2016

request for an author at their institution. This would allow us to have a partner in speaking with the author about sharing their research openly, and further support library efforts and institutional repositories.

We're currently working on a library outreach project and would love to partner with libraries, but we're still in the development stages for this project.

Could libraries promote The Open Access Button more and how / where should they do it?
Absolutely! There are librarians that promote the Open Access Button in their library guides, include it within presentations, or even advertise it on the library or university Open Access website. This promotion is a great first step. An additional step is to actively promote the use of the Open Access Button and Open Data Button by installing the plug-ins on library computers. This option is simple to implement on computers, but requires a commitment to educate and outreach to the university community in order to make them know the tool is there in the browser. We're going to be working on a library that will be useful for libraries that want to promote the Open Access Button.

How can libraries use The Open Access Button?
Two of the greatest benefits of the Open Access Button to libraries is the promotion of institutional repositories through our request feature, and potential interlibrary loan (ILL) cost savings when used by university researchers and students.

When the Open Access Button beta launched I remember a negative comment from an ILL Librarian in the United States commenting people could just use ILL. This may be the case for many students at institutions in the United States, but ILL does not exist in all universities or in the same way. For example, when I studied in the United Kingdom my ILL request would require a portion of the fee being paid by me. Then in other countries ILL simply isn't an available option. The Open Access Button has the potential to help lower ILL costs for a library if students and researcher uses the Open Access Button to find or request an openly archived version.

When does the Open Access Button become needless? (because that's the purpose in the end I guess?)
The Open Access Button would become needless when all research is Open Access, when academic culture changes to researchers by default sharing their papers and data openly. As much as I love working on the Open Access Button, we'd love for us not to have to exist! I think it's doubtful that that *all* research will become Open Access, as that would take a huge amount of historical archiving, but I do believe there will be a future where the majority of scholarly research is being published openly.

What's in the future of the Open Access Button?
We recently entered a new partnership with Jisc, the United Kingdom's higher, further education and skills sectors' not-for-profit organisation for digital services and solutions. This partnership will support further development on the Open Access Button and Open Data Button through July 2017. This partnership has enabled us to update the plug-ins, build new features, and we'll be expanding our advocacy work. Additionally, we'll be putting a heavy focus on partnering with libraries in the upcoming years. I think the future of the Open Access Button project will be rooted in collaborating with libraries and librarians.

What do you think is in the future for open access?
Oh, big question! I think the future of Open Access is rooted in collaboration, more shared repositories at regional and national levels, and innovative funding models for Open Access publishing.

So many of us, particularly in libraries, are doing our own thing, building programs, and having so-so repositories. Collaboration between libraries and also within the whole Open movement can provide more beneficial solutions. I would love to see more paper and data repositories at the regional, state, national levels. I'm a huge fan of the Open Library of the Humanities and I think the future of Open Access lies in an innovative funding model like this, allowing everyone (and every library! affordably) to participate in Open Access, and importantly flipping existing journals from a subscription model to Open Access.

About Chealsye Bowley
Besides her involvement in the Open Access Button, Chealsye works as a Scholarly Communication Librarian at Texas Woman's University. She holds a Master in Library and Information Studies + an MSc Science, Technology, and Society. She's a big fan of the Danish specialty "flødeboller".