

# Against the Grain

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## IRs: Publication Method of Last Resort

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# IRs: Publication Method of Last Resort

by **Anton Angelo** (Research Data Coordinator, University of Canterbury) <Anton.angelo@canterbury.ac.nz>

Just when I thought it was all over for Institutional Repositories, they have shown me a new face that just might provide the stuff to move us to a truly open publishing landscape.

It feels as if there is a resurgence in interest in Open Access (OA). Plan S, the research funder's attempt to disrupt the traditional subscription based business model, has raised the possibility that a more complete transition to a largely OA publishing landscape is one step closer to being achievable.

The coalition of research funders who have come up with Plan S includes some very heavy hitters — amongst them national bodies throughout Europe and Scandinavia, the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, and the European Research Council. We're talking billions and billions of euros of funding. The principles behind Plan S, the manifesto, so to speak, are influencing the minds of many research funders around the world, and the pace of subscribers abandoning their big deals with publishers is increasing as well.

So, it would seem OA is sexy again.

What I'd like to suggest is that Institutional Repositories (IRs) have a fundamental role to play in the medium term of satisfying and increasing the pace of OA transition, as well as a permanent role within research institutions as a "publisher of last resort." I didn't used to think that. I was very much of the mind that IRs were only a tool for the former, a way to put a wedge into big deal subscription packages offered by Big Publishing (as no one is calling it) and would wither away once the glorious revolution was complete. IRs were a transitional tactic designed to attack the profits of the profiteers, opening up research and letting libraries abandon subscriptions. I've changed my mind.

Firstly though, a digression about the concept of free. Free is a fundamental part of OA, and it comes in many guises. Free-to-read. Free-to-reuse. Free-to-redistribute. Free-to-remix. Free-to-retain. At its heart is the implicit notion that academic discourse is an important thread of freedom of speech. I won't dwell too long there — there be dragons. The other "frees" however, are worth spending some time thinking about.

Open Source has long thought about the notion of free resources. The original Jargon definition of Free Software<sup>1</sup> encapsulates the theory and expresses the two main implications. Free as in Beer — no cost. Free as in Speech — a far more nuanced concept, sometimes emphasised as "libre," implying liberty.<sup>2</sup> There's a third definition of free as well — Free as in Kittens. Although sappy perhaps, this free has a serious implication. You know, you go get



a kitten from someone desperate to find homes for an unexpected litter, but you know there is a cat-lifetime of care involved.

So, what does that mean to us? Publishing isn't free, as publishers like to remind us. It's so not free, one publisher was able to make 2,000,000,000 Euros in profit from it in 2018. However, the demands of OA are that the results of research are at no cost to the end user, and that they are reusable and redistributable (sort of like the Open Source idea of "libre"), plus the added implication that researchers are open to study and analyse results in the way they think is best, without interference from funders, their institutions and other potential oppressors.<sup>3</sup>



I'd like to consider another model of folk wisdom. The Quality/Speed/Cost triangle. This was introduced to you by a builder, or a mechanic, or an embittered cousin, grandparent or sibling. Pick two, they say — you can have any two of a good job, a cheap job, or a fast job, but never all three. The idea is that you will always have to compromise something, and it's your choice on how you'd like to do it. Let's apply this to our Open Access dilemma.

	Cheap	Fast	Quality
Big Publishing	No	Yes	Yes
Scholarly Societies	Yes	No	Yes
Predatory Publishing	Yes	Yes	No

**Table One. The way we'd like to think about cost/speed/quality**

Table One shows a view of the cost/speed/quality triangle, and demonstrates a rather simplistic view of the world. Let's take a few examples. Is Big Publishing fast? A lot would say no — article turnaround can take years — and an argument for why that is could be about refereeing and editing, which is done for free — invoking

the triangle all over again but this time requiring a cheap and high quality solution. This point is raised again when looking at small scholarly societies that are the bulk of so-called "diamond" OA — free to read and free to publish. Because it is done on the cheap, it's slow. Certainly the journal I edit is guilty of that, but many are not.

Predatory publishing, that takes a small (compared to Big Publishing) fee for sticking your article online with no quality assurance, is fast. Anecdotally I'm aware of researchers who exploit this to get their work up fast. They realise its problematic, but speed is essential for their specific needs, and it serves a purpose.

A row could be included for pre-print services like ArXiv, and IRs — and it would look a lot like the one for predatory publishing. The costs for these are met by patrons — mostly libraries — to have somewhere to get an idea into the knowledge-sphere easily and reliably. Speed is important here to keep the momentum of discussion going outside the conference room.

My point here is that looking at the speed/cost/quality triangle, though tempting as it is, is too weak a metaphor on which to base our arguments about OA. Free is complex, and to say that we pay for free by a reliable relationship in low quality or slow speed of delivery isn't held up in practice — many other things are in play. This contradicts the arguments of Big Publishing

So now we return to the role of the IR.

I've mentioned the power of patronage — that IRs are paid for through the goodness of libraries' hearts. In fact, IRs are a "core business," something that libraries must do if they hold by their value of equitable information dissemination.<sup>4</sup> Libraries, as I explain to enraptured people at parties, are moving from collections of books spread geographically — piles of Marx and Shakespeare — to collec-

tions of on-line, unique material being shared digitally. So are libraries becoming publishers? That's a bit like asking are Doctoral

Theses published once you put them online, the real answer to which is, "...kind of?"

Libraries can play a fundamental role in supporting truly free Open Access to research by paying for platforms that do so. IRs are an obvious start, and they can be put to all sorts of use. Let's look at Dspace, a major open source IR platform — like many platforms in use, it can integrate with all the major harvesting and indexing services (Google Scholar, OCLC ...)

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to make work stored there eminently findable. It's understood by archiving systems committed to permanent retention. And, its relatively straightforward to maintain (at least as much as healthy kittens are). They can also hold all sorts of work that had previously withered away on desktop hard drives or forgotten file folders — conference contributions, posters, research datasets (especially those related to electronic theses).

Plan S appears to hold the power for a real tectonic shift. Its demands could shift the thinking of those who hold the power in this relationship — the content creators (and them that pay their bills). Speaking frankly, researchers are more interested in their research than



the neo-liberal economic models that have hijacked their work, and libraries have done a great job in hiding the messy details of the economic transactions behind the hijack. When I tell a researcher that 11/12ths of our collections budget goes towards subscriptions for journals that will just disappear the instant we stop paying for them, their eyes widen. (The other 1/12th, that goes towards the things they think we spend all our time dusting).

By putting the focus back on IRs, Plan S revitalises the repository projects we were all hoping were worth the time and investment. By underscoring the role IRs and related services can and (quietly) do play, we have an opportunity here to show our relevance to the research process, and embed our expertise in supporting publishing. Given active and positive management, IRs could even become a spearhead for library

led publishing in general and, for those of us not already doing it, a mechanism to support our obvious and preferred end goal — free to read, free to publish platforms paid for by the academy itself with the money it used to put into publishers' pockets. 🍷

#### Endnotes

1. <http://catb.org/jargon/html/F/free-software.html>
2. Ever wondered why Open Office forked when it was picked up by Oracle, and the "free" version was called Libre Office?
3. This has led to a kickback from some saying that mandating OA publishing is actually a limitation on free speech. Those "some" are normally publishers or publishing consultants.
4. I'd argue if libraries are not about equitable information dissemination, then they are essentially just franchises for publishers, online bookshops.

## Putting the IR in RIMS: Towards an Automated Integration Between Institutional Repositories and Research Intelligence Systems

by **Jamie Wittenberg** (Indiana University, Bloomington) <jvwitten@indiana.edu>

### Introduction

Institutional repositories are at a turning point. There have been several public and contentious assertions that the institutional repository (IR) is dead,<sup>1</sup> but it is more accurate to say that the IR may not continue to exist in the way that we currently conceive of it. In 2017, **Ellen Catz Ramsey**, Director of Scholarly Services, wrote a blog post addressing why **UVA** launched a new repository at a time when the value of institutional repositories was being questioned, even by those who initially supported them. She wrote, "As an option for authors whose disciplines are not congregating around an international discipline-based archive, or whose work doesn't (yet) fit existing scholarly archives, every good research institution will always need the safe haven of a local repository ... Put it in the IR, poof, it's in the library's catalog, Google Scholar, and has a persistent link you can cite." However, Ramsey also writes that IRs have not served their function as clearinghouses for research at an institution. In contrast, **Novak and Day** at the **University of Nevada, Las Vegas** assert that "After reading the literature and a self-examination of our repository situation, we believe a new role exists for the IR, a research administrative one" (2018). This contentious, contested new role is inexorably tied to the rise of research information management products in the higher education sector. Libraries have historically collected and analyzed publication

data in order to improve services and collections. This data has taken on new significance in the age of data-driven university administration. Publication quantity, venue, and citation counts are often used as a proxy for measuring the impact of research. Thus, publication data enables universities to assess research impact, productivity, co-authorship with other institutions, etc. Furthermore, it allows systems that integrate publication data with funding data to mine publications for keywords that can be matched to grants and, ideally, assist research administration offices in suggesting appropriate funding opportunities to faculty authors. Commercial entities have developed sophisticated software that links faculty biographical data with data on past grant and award activity, publications, co-authorship, and more. The collection and monetization of this data on research activity makes up a lucrative research intelligence market.

It is no secret that academic publishers are making headway into the research intelligence market, and it is a logical progression to then develop or acquire faculty activity reporting systems. These systems, often referred to as

research profiling systems, research information management systems (RIMS), or current research information systems (CRIS), are systems that collect and manage data about research activity.<sup>2</sup> **Elsevier**, for example, announced in 2016 that they were rolling out Faculty and Academic Activity Reporting functionality in Pure, their RIMS which enables administrators to track faculty research activity by integrating faculty profile, funding, and publication data ("Pure Faculty Activity

Reporting: Making data-based strategic decisions," 2016). Shortly following **Elsevier's** reporting tool, **Bryant et al.** noted that "RIM adoption [is] growing in countries without strong national reporting mandates, driven by reasons other than compliance, such as improved decision support and improved

researcher services" (2017). Commercial ownership of preprint servers and institutional repositories (SSRN, Bepress, Esploro) coupled with the rise of RIMS and their consolidation with faculty profile, reporting, and funding operations systems strategically targets research administration and compliance offices as new

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