

Research Communications Strategy

2nd Report to JISC - July 2010

**Current Issues in Research Communications:
Open Access and Institutional Benefit**

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Evidence that widening access to research results is “on the radar” can be found in a number of recent publications. In an article called ‘Open to debate’¹ in *Research Information*, Rebecca Pool examines the reasons for the relatively low take-up of open access publishing opportunities in the humanities and social sciences disciplines. Taking the concept of open access to its farthest conclusion, Michael Wood, in *Times Higher Education*, has called for a repository run by ‘an organisation with global ambitions, such as Google’ that would contain every academic paper in all disciplines.² This idea is, of course, merely a (fanciful?) extension of current practice through institutional, national and subject-based repositories, and may be misinformed as to the existing infrastructure. These two articles, however, indicate that open access is a currently relevant topic within the academy.

Also relevant is the continued development of shared services such as Mendeley³, as previously reported. Mendeley is still growing and appears to be focussing on the provision of research tools instead of (as the common initial impression suggested) creating an alternate repository system. This seems to be very popular with academics, with a claimed 472,462 researchers using the system, referencing 34,428,653 documents⁴ (over double that reported in the RCS report in March 2010). The detail of these figures is unclear, with duplication, test registrations, dummy entries, errors and inappropriate registrations almost certain and most articles metadata only.⁵

However, the scale of the figures does show this to be a significant current player in academics’ use of Web 2.0 services and the provision of on-line access to research papers. At present it is impossible to tell if this is a long-lasting service (such as Facebook appears to be) or whether like other web 2.0 services such as MySpace it will pass through a surge of popularity and decline to an uncertain future. None of the three Research Managers consulted for this report was aware of Mendeley or saw it as having anything significant to offer. However if usage is sustained at the high levels implied by registrations, Mendeley is on track to be a significant future factor in online provision of research materials and tools.

It could be argued that this service offers a route to open access, consistent with institutional repositories and apparently congruent with academic wishes, that JISC should support. There is currently a JISC funded project, DURA, involving

¹ Pool, Rebecca, 2010. Open to debate. *Research Information*, 47, pp.12-14.

² Wood, Michael, 2010. The journal of everything. *Times Higher Education*, 22 April, p.25.

³ <http://www.mendeley.com>

⁴ figures taken from the site on 20/08/10

⁵ as, it has to be said, is the case in repositories also

the University of Cambridge, Symplectic, CARET and Mendeley.⁶ One risk for JISC in associating with Mendeley is that it might be seen to be validating a service that gives potentially misleading copyright advice⁷, as discussed in the March RCS report. Given the numbers involved, it might be that academic usage and pressure forestall any reaction to possible copyright infringement. It is likely that the responsibility for the advice (if under question) would be clearly seen to belong to Mendeley with little risk to JISC. However, we consider that the robust attitude to copyright has played no small part in the growth of Mendeley and this attitude from Mendeley has been reported to RCS as a concern from a number of publishers.⁸ We recommend that caution continue to be exercised with regard to this issue in any JISC promotion or seeming endorsement of Mendeley.

1 Financial costs and benefits

With an economic climate continuing to cause concern and in an age of new austerity, the issue of the cost of scholarly communication remains paramount. Both the articles referred to above pay attention to costs and benefits – either (as in Pool’s discussion) the cost to the researcher of open access publishing or (as in Woods’ analysis) the cost to institutions of *not* opting for open access methods.

A JISC-UUK event in June for senior managers looked at this issue and the economic model derived from the Houghton report.⁹ JISC, through RCS, also funded a series of workshops around the country, aimed at research support staff, to look at individual institutional effects from the model.

1.1 Costs to institutions

The RCS workshops on the Houghton/Swan modelling of the costs and benefits of open access have shown that the Gold model of open access (as an entire sector model) would end up costing research-led institutions¹⁰ more. However the model does not take into direct account the current willingness of funding councils to pay OA costs: such costs are treated as an institutional cost within the model.

⁶ <http://jisc-dura.blogspot.com>

⁷ <http://www.mendeley.com/faq>

⁸ OUP; Society for Endocrinology & BioScientifica Ltd; The Company of Biologists Ltd; The British Institute of Radiology; Society for General Microbiology

⁹ Houghton, John *et al*, 2009. *Economic implications of alternative scholarly publishing models: exploring the costs and benefits*.

<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/rpteconomicoapublishing.pdf>

¹⁰ i.e. mainly the Russell Group and some 1994 Group members. However the results depend on the figures put into the model by each institution, to the detail of which we were not privy. The institutions that attended the workshops included representatives from Russell Group, 1994 Group and other universities: University of the Arts London, Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, City, Durham, Edinburgh, Essex, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Salford, UCL, Warwick and West of England.

If such costs end up at the door of universities, then the model makes clear the significant additional cost to research-led universities, being net contributors rather than saving. Workshop delegates from the Russell Group have already expressed the view that OA publishing as an additional expense will be sufficient to reject support for Gold OA completely.

One decision for JISC, therefore, is whether it wishes to support OA publishing through work (lobbying or process development) to ensure that OA publishing is seen by UK funders as a research cost in perpetuity and that structures and processes are put in place to support the transfer of appropriate funding with all the issues this implies.¹¹ JISC should ensure that funding councils understand that it will cost them significant amounts of money to fund OA publication. There needs to be promotion and probably JISC projects to help put in place workflows connecting research funders and institutional finance systems to encourage the unimpeded flow of funds.

JISC so far has supported institutional repositories and we are fortunate in the UK, compared with other countries in Europe¹², to have a network of repositories that already provides the infrastructure for an OA Green model. Repositories have been established for some years within the Russell and 1994 Groups, which addresses over 80% of research funding.¹³ This is becoming a mature structure but repositories are not yet fully integrated into university systems. The RSP is hoping to contribute to developments in this area.

We recommend, then, that the repository model is the easiest and most cost-effective sectoral model to follow because it can be put in place now.

One consequence of a thoroughgoing move to Green OA would be that copyright practice would remain an unresolved issue. While Gold OA effectively pays to answer the copyright questions, a sector-wide Green model would leave copyright in the air, with the effective control of copyright still dependant on publisher practice. To answer this, we recommend that JISC encourage funders through any possible avenues to take a robust attitude to copyright and reserve copyright for OA archiving prior to any downstream agreement with publishers.

This may sound extreme but is only a mirror of US Federal policy which has been in existence alongside traditional subscription publishing for many years. Funders may need to be reassured of the desirability of their making use of their powers to dictate terms "upstream" in research production to take effect "downstream" at the point of publication.

¹¹ Funder identification with particular eprints; metadata models and processes to support this; financial structures; workflows in funding, reporting and compliance; identification of areas of responsibility between funders, libraries, research support offices etc

¹² notwithstanding Germany, Netherlands and Scandinavian countries

¹³ HESA stats, various measures, <http://www.hesa.ac.uk>

The hope is that the results of the Houghton/Swan RCS workshops will inform policy-making within institutions at a strategic level. The CRC intends to keep in touch with delegates to try to ascertain outcomes from the modelling exercise. Conversations with PVCs for research and senior research managers suggest that so far, only those who attended one of the workshops are aware of potential savings through sector-wide adoption of open access. However it may still be early days for knowledge of the implications of the Houghton/Swan model to have filtered through within institutions. While many of the respondents to our questions were in favour of Green open access in a general way, they were largely unconvinced that it would save money, at least in the short term.¹⁴ If future advocacy is to concentrate on financial benefits, senior managers need to be presented with robust costings and plausible scenarios for change.

1.2 Costs to libraries

Librarians are among the significant stakeholders in this area. The Research Information Network has produced a timely guide¹⁵ for senior institutional managers and policy makers that focuses on the response of academic libraries to the current financial situation. Assuming that the next three to five years will be a period of sustained cuts, it asks whether libraries will be able to maintain existing levels of service. The RIN guide questions whether financial support for initiatives such as open access will remain adequate in the long run.

To gauge how far this was evidenced within the community, we approached a number of senior figures within the community (Appendix1). All the librarians to whom we talked expressed the view that there would be changes in library services during the next five years, though not all were prepared to say that these changes would adversely affect the level of service – just the way in which it is delivered. In this context, the rising costs of electronic journal subscriptions are very much in their minds. Reports¹⁶ from the UKSG conference in Edinburgh indicate that libraries are expecting serious financial constraints over the next few years radically to affect the continuation of journal subscriptions – especially the “big-deal” packages. For an international context we may look to the stand being taken by the University of California against an increase in subscription costs demanded by the Nature Publishing Group. The most recent public statement from the university¹⁷ invites the NPD to justify a price increase of 400% in the site licence fee. It concludes with expressing a doubt as to whether the university’s faculty should be paying exorbitant fees to access their own

¹⁴ Please see appendix.

¹⁵ Research Information Network, 2010. *Challenges for academic libraries in difficult economic times*. www.rin.ac.uk/challenges-for-libraries

¹⁶ <http://www.uksg.org/event/conference10> [accessed 6/7/10]. Pool, Rebecca, 2010. Big-deal packages squeeze recession-hit libraries. *Research Information*, 48, pp. 9-10. Hyams, Elspeth, 2010. Where next for the serials crisis? *CILIP Gazette*, 3 June-16 June, p.4.

¹⁷ *Response from the University of California to the Public statement from Nature Publishing Group regarding subscription renewals at the California Digital Library*. June 10, 2010. http://osc.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/UC_Response_to_Nature_Publishing_Group.pdf

work. The resolution of this stand-off may have implications for the open access agenda in the USA, which may have knock-on effects elsewhere. The recent Houghton Report for the USA, finding savings and benefits from the adoption of OA in line with reports for other countries, may bolster these moves. However, although there are university groups capable of joint action – i.e. the Russell and 1994 Groups – they do not have any tradition of negotiatory/political activism.

Consultations for this report confirm a general disquiet among librarians about the increasing costs of the “big deals”, though several of those consulted did also make the point that these deals have been cost-effective (in relation to costs per download) and have increased access significantly. Some respondents were concerned about the difficulties of cancellation when titles are “bundled” together; though it was suggested that it was unrealistic to expect publishers not to include less-used titles in bundles alongside the more popular publications and that this did not constitute a significant problem. The point is also made that ‘the value of bundled deals is not the issue, rather it is their sustainability. We are reaching a point where those deals are unaffordable to individual HE institutions.’¹⁸

Opinions also varied as to the probable efficacy of taking a stand against the publishers in emulation of the University of California – not least because no UK university carries that kind of clout. RLUK appears to be taking a particularly forceful attitude to publishers’ demands and is hoping for change.¹⁹ Some senior librarians would also like to see developments in this area but our contributors emphasised that no action could succeed without the backing of a consortium. The value of the national deal, brokered by SHEDL, for the provision of digital content to Scottish academic libraries was stressed by one of our Scottish contributors. Almost all of the respondents to our questions saw JISC Collections’ role as very important in any future negotiation.²⁰

In a more positive move, the Royal Society has announced a change to its pricing model. From 2012, the price of each of its journals will be tied to the number of non-open access articles in each journal – with the relevant figures published annually.²¹ The Royal Society has also changed its publication policies to “green” allowing archiving of the author’s final version. Wiley-Blackwell is reported to be reviewing its open access payment models; additionally, RCS staff (AH) have held confidential discussions with Wiley-Blackwell over issues relating to the development of new OA journals. This suggests that Wiley-Blackwell is still seeing OA as a growth area. Given their restrictive policies for OA archiving, this may be an indication as to the preferred OA route for Wiley-Blackwell – i.e. to charge for OA rather than to allow it for free.

¹⁸ Lewis, Nicholas, 2010. Time to strengthen the consortium. *UKSG Serials-eNews*, May 14.

¹⁹ Information from a conversation with a senior manager within RLUK.

²⁰ One respondent said they were unsure of JISC’s potential role in this area.

²¹ <http://royalsocietypublishing.org/site/authors/EXiS.xhtml> [accessed 7/7/10]

1.3 Open access publication costs

Linked to the concern with the financial implications of open access publishing is the issue of centralised institutional funding. Stephen Pinfield, long a champion of open access, has returned to this topic in a recent article²² describing the setting up of a fund at the University of Nottingham. He concludes that:

It is essential that institutions and others monitor activity in this area and share their experiences with other key players in the scholarly communication community in order to ensure good practice norms emerge and achieve widespread acceptance. (p. 48)

The University of Birmingham is trialling a publication fund to help with Gold OA, but reports rather slow (but increasing) uptake from academics. At Nottingham, the Information Services division is undertaking work to clarify researchers' publication habits, which may cast light on their apparent reluctance to seize the opportunity for subsidised OA publication. This work will involve detailed analysis of research costs and publication practices in the University, carried out in collaboration with staff from the CRC to facilitate an exchange of information. To address these issues, the RCS is intending to hold an event to explore the extent to which these concerns are general within the sector and is developing a series of briefing papers to share best practice in this area.

1.4 Open access cost benefits

To look at an overall view of open access costs after Houghton, the Houghton/Swan RCS workshops and several years of running institutional repositories, we asked librarians the question 'do you think that open access could save money for your institution?'. We received the following comments:

'Open access has not yet reached critical mass. As yet, open access is not delivering any significant savings in terms of subscription costs.'
(*Librarian, 1994 Group*)

'Yes. Immediate savings are highly unlikely, however.'
(*Librarian, 1994 Group*)

'On the Gold model [we] would be a net contributor. Green is cheaper, but will it happen?'
(*Librarian, Russell Group*)

'Not sure that it would. Would have thought the savings would be fairly modest, though OA is likely to grow.'
(*Librarian, 1994 Group*)

'Repositories are very cost effective. But not *saving* money.'
(*Librarian, Russell Group*)

'OA potentially could save money but while repositories were once seen as the "great white hope" they don't seem so any more.'
(*Librarian, Russell Group*)

No research manager felt able to express a view.

²² Pinfield, Stephen, 2010. Paying for open access?: institutional funding streams and OA publication charges. *Learned Publishing*, 23, pp.39–52. doi:10.1087/20100108

This does show that the issue of costs is seen as, at best, a neutral factor for open access for these librarians. It also shows that the institutional savings from open access identified by Swan's use of Houghton's data are still not being taken as an accurate forecast in spite of a range of publicity about this.

2 Impact and the REF

Despite ongoing uncertainty about the format and timing of the REF, it continues to exercise a defining influence on institutional activities. There are associated anxieties about the definition and scope of "impact", both in the context of the REF and in relation to RCUK's Research Outcomes Project.

2.1 Research managers' concerns

At a recent Research Outcomes workshop²³ it was evident that research managers, especially, have serious concerns about the nature and extent of the data that will be required by the RCUK project.

In this context it seems clear that open access has a part to play as a potentially effective method of disseminating research outcomes to a wide audience. Research managers, however, are likely to be moved, not so much by the theoretical or philosophical case for open access, as by demonstration of its practical value. For instance, they are inclined to question the idea that institutional repositories should be dedicated to full-text items – for managing research, they may believe that it is more convenient for the repository to act as a publications database (i.e. largely populated by metadata-only items). At the Research Outcomes workshop, of around 12 institutions represented, only two (Nottingham and Surrey) had dedicated full-text repositories: the rest had significant percentages of metadata-only content.

Where full-text is not seen as fundamental, this affects OA searches since it makes them more likely to return metadata than actual research output. This undercuts front-line advocacy of the utility of OA with academics. We recommend that JISC encourages full-text collection if OA is to succeed. There might need to be technical work, possibly funded as project work by JISC, to allow the clear harvesting separation of full-text and metadata-only content in repositories.

Linked with this issue is the need to develop workflows that facilitate and maximise the embedding of open access dissemination of results as part of the research lifecycle. One of the key points coming out of discussions with research managers and other university support staff is the need for co-operation between different university departments (the library, the repository, the research support unit) to facilitate the development and implementation of open

²³ Research Outcomes workshop, organised by the University of Glasgow, London, June 29, 2010.

access processes within the institution. This was mentioned at all of the recent workshops on the financial model for open access.²⁴ Glasgow, Newcastle and Birmingham are all working on this but our discussions indicate that this is untypical. We recommend that JISC supports projects in the area both to create exemplars of best practice (as it has done at Glasgow) and also to put effort into the promotion of such exemplars and assistance in the customisation of such experience for individual institutions, as the individual examples (i.e. work at Glasgow) have not yet been widely adopted. From general discussions there can be a reaction to exemplars of 'nice for them: be nice to do it here, if we had time/money/expertise available'. It can be argued that institutions should have strategic reserves to adopt such best practice, but it seems that there might be a missing step.²⁵ There is a need for central promotion of best practice that has already been developed. The RCS briefing papers are intended to address this to some degree, directed towards senior managers and other institutional stakeholders, alongside the ongoing activities of the RSP in training and supporting repository staff.

2.2 Academic concerns

Within the scholarly community strenuous efforts are being made to identify and promote examples of impact. The recent ESRC Research Methods Festival²⁶ included a strand on Research Impact containing sessions entitled 'Getting your message across' and 'Maximising the impact of social science research'. The ESRC also plans to commission an evaluation study on the impact of social science postgraduates and academics outside academia. The AHRC has run an event on 'Public Engagement in the Arts and Humanities'.²⁷ The EPSRC has developed a delightful website showcasing the effect of scientific research on the wider world.²⁸ With initiatives like these becoming the norm rather than the exception, it should surely be possible for advocates of open access and other forms of innovative research publication methods to get a hearing in the academic community. RCS is working with academic communities to build on this background of change and to try to establish baseline behaviours with respect to open access and identify the incentives for change that have so far largely eluded advocates.

The SOAP project has announced²⁹ an online survey aimed at active researchers to assess their experiences of open access publishing. While the SOAP

²⁴ Institutions represented were University of the Arts London, Birmingham, Cambridge, Cardiff, City, Durham, Edinburgh, Essex, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Salford, UCL, Warwick and West of England.

²⁵ Would an approach of both building exemplars at institutions and accompanying such grant-activity with later, large-scale "adoption projects" be one solution?

²⁶ <http://www.ncrm.ac.uk/TandE/other/RMF2010/>

²⁷ <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News/Events/Pages/PEArtsandHumanities.aspx>

²⁸ <http://www.impactworld.org.uk/>

²⁹ <http://project-soap.eu/soap-survey-released-your-views-on-open-access-publishing-are-needed>
[accessed 7/7/10]

consortium cannot be said to be an independent body (it includes representatives from major academic publishers SAGE and Springer), the survey is indicative of a wish further to understand the attitudes of scholarly researchers to Gold open access in some disciplines and to examine the basis for their reservations about its value.

These reservations remain significant, though (as is indicated by work currently being carried by the CRC on the publication habits of Nottingham economists and chemists) they are more significant in some disciplines than in others. The CRC is undertaking related research to find out if these attitudes are replicated in other institutions.

Some researchers do advocate greater openness. Philip Ashton, in a blog on the RIN site, calls for a more relaxed attitude to citations from web sources in the name of a 'full and frank communication of ideas and results'.³⁰ In general, however, advocacy of open access still comes up against what Elspeth Hyams (2010, p.4) has defined as 'the real elephant in the room: the current reward system for academics' pay and promotion.' Unless and until fears about the academic validity and impact of citations from open access sources are dispelled, progress with academics seems likely to be slow. This view was endorsed by several of the library managers and research managers consulted for this report. One senior librarian suggested that the main block to the development of (Green) open access was the academics' reward systems and what she described as a 'schizophrenia' within the academic community: wanting everyone else's research for free while themselves publishing in *Nature*. This attitude was described by a research manager as 'academic pride'. A similar view was taken by another librarian who suggested that academics would be happy to endorse open access if it became the generally accepted method of publication but were worried about what would happen during the period of transition.

While no one adduces hard evidence to back this up, it seems from our discussions that university support staff (and, by implication, academic staff) share a general opinion that citations from open access publications or repository deposits carry less academic weight and provide less kudos than those from traditional publishing outlets. JISC's work on citations should, therefore, be valuable – but it should address the question of the 'quality' of the citations as well as their sheer numbers. This of course begs the question of the potential contradictions in any argument that invited publication in open access outlets in order to increase citations in traditional high-impact journals.

Forthcoming work by the CRC will attempt to address the question of why the potential for the dissemination of research in both a repository *and* a traditional

³⁰ <http://www.rin.ac.uk/blogs/guest/ashton-phil/building-strong-citations>, 28/6/10.

journal has so far apparently filtered so slightly into the consciousness of academics (and perhaps of librarians).

3 Open access monograph publishing

The third report from OAPEN on open access publishing of monographs in the humanities and social science disciplines is now available.³¹ It offers recommendations concerning strategic issues in open access book publishing. The report usefully addresses many of the concerns that have also been central to the debate about open access publication of journal articles (eg cost, quality control, the perceived effect on academics' reward-systems). However its recommendation on copyright (it advocates licenses that remove all restrictions, including on commercial use) may be difficult to promote to authors.

For researchers in the Arts and Humanities, of course, published books are often more significant than journal articles. Manchester University Press, one of the partners in the OAPEN project, is 'currently in negotiation with a number of partners over the digitisation of not only all in-print books, but also their archive'.³² The Press represents this as an initiative specifically directed at the need of Arts and Social Science researchers for some kind of open-access outlet appropriate for their disciplines.

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³¹ Kempf, Jean *et al*, [2010]. *Report on Best Practices and Recommendations*. Open Access Publishing in European Networks.

http://www.oapen.org/images/D316_OAPEN_Best_practice_public_report.pdf

³² http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/about/open_access.asp [accessed 27/7/10]

Appendix

The comments in this paper come from a group of 13 senior librarians, research managers and PVCs for research with whom we had conversations or email correspondence in August 2010. We also had conversations with representatives from SCONUL and RLUK. The interviews were carried out by telephone by Dr Amanda Hodgson.

Institutions represented were:

University of Bath

University of Bristol

Durham University

University of East Anglia

University of Glasgow

University of Liverpool

University of Nottingham

University of Sheffield

University of Surrey

University of Warwick