

Open Access

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Scholarly skywriting calls to mind a scholar communication model without time and space barriers. However, according to Harnard's 1991 formulation, it refers even more to a continuum that is a *live* recording of the evolution of scientific research, which is made up of various kinds of contributions, not necessarily complete and/or published. Therefore, it is both a constantly evolving, participated form of science and a model that merges formal and informal communication. According to Harnard, who considered the Internet to be its ideal channel, it is a «subversive proposal», since it radically changes the way in which scientific communication is carried out (going from paper-based to digital communication), but especially because it drastically transforms the ways knowledge is produced and diffused.

We cannot say that Harnard's dream has come true. However, surprisingly, the open communication models tested in those years within specific scientific communities (e-print archives) were widely accepted by international organisations and prestigious scientific institutions, but also by individual researchers and libraries. This consensus is expressed by the Open Access (OA) movement which encourages and supports free access to scientific information via the Internet, removing all kinds of barriers: economic ones, those that generated the 'serial crisis', legal ones linked to copyright and user licences and technological ones connected to proprietary hardware and software systems. The OA movement thus reaffirms an ideal of universal science and common good for society as a whole, as supported by Merton and De Solla Price in the 1950s and 60s.

The originality of this movement lies, in particular, in the fact that, besides issuing statements of principle, it identified development and success strategies for the creation of examples of

the free circulation of scientific knowledge. Such strategies, from developing open Archives to implementing institutional Repositories and increasing open access electronic newspapers, suggest communication models tailored to specific disciplinary contexts and respond to the needs dictated by specific research practices. Open disciplinary Archives are one of the most efficient channels for scholars to rapidly and freely communicate the results of their research to their entire scientific community of reference. Institutional Repositories enable Academies and research institutions to document their activities in ways that are visible even to a wider public while also highlighting the work of their scientific community, thus earning visibility and prestige in a civil society that demands an ever more active role in the choices and values of science. Open access electronic newspapers, produced by scientific communities and research institutions but also by small publishers, make available peer-reviewed articles, thus going against the oligarchy of the big publishing groups. Following the example set by the OA movement, the latter have been forced to offer hybrid models of publication and access to scientific publications (*pay per view*, *author pays*, *institution pays*, articles made available at a set time after their date of publication in commercial magazines, or time-limited access), which, in any case, are concessions towards the elimination of certain types of access barriers. In turn, by supporting OA examples, libraries recover their role as disseminators of research results and, among other things, support researchers in self-storing their works in open archives and repositories. Moreover, they support the spread of open access journals, thus trying to contain the increases in subscription prices (*serial crisis*), which are not justified by the increase in the production and distribution costs of scientific journals. In other words, these experiences are redesigning the roles and functions of the actors who are part of the chain of production, diffusion and assessment of scientific knowledge, and, in particular, point to the fact that the producers of scientific knowledge, be they authors and/or institutions, are regaining possession of the activities connected to the communication and diffusion of knowledge, which in the past had been delegated almost completely to commercial publishing.

The affirmation of the principles of the free circulation of knowledge, supported by the Open Access movement and contained in the BBB definition (Budapest, Bethesda, Berlin Declaration), beyond the different interpretations, are currently a strong example of the change and democratisation of the system of scientific communication, which it will be difficult not to take into account in the near future.