

Benefits of Open Access Publishing for students in higher education

Peter Becker & Jos van Helvoort

Most students in higher education have some experience with Open Access when doing their deskresearch. They appreciate the free access of scholar publications on the World Wide Web, mostly found by them by using a popular search engine like Google. But students in higher education also develop their competences as junior researchers and publishers. In our contribution to this conference on Open Access Publishing we pay attention to the motivators of students to publish their papers, essays or (chapters of) their theses in Open Access resources (repositories or journals).

Students' attitudes

A 2006 study on Loughborough University (UK) on research students' attitudes towards delivering their work on the Institutional Repository made clear that *Dissemination* was an important reason, both for academic researchers as for student researchers. However, these two groups differ in the reason why they want their work to be disseminated. For academics the most important goal seems to be a high readership to increase the chance to be cited, for research students the possibility to get feedback or comments is highly valued. Other reasons for students to post their work in a repository are (according to the Loughborough investigation) students' agreement with the Open Access principle of freely availability of information and the possibility to exchange the outcomes of their research with colleagues and the possibility to collaborate.

Of course, delivering research results to an institutional repository is not the only way for students to publish. Discussing our question by e-mail with Peter Suber (an eminent supporter of the Open Access movement) we concluded that students prefer to publish in scholar journals (whether they are Open Access or Toll Access) but that posting on an institutional repository is for most of them the easy way to disseminate their work. However, in the case of putting their work as a preprint on a repository, students sometimes concern about the possibility to publish it later in a more prestigious journal. It seems that there is a lack of communication about the authors' right to publish preprints before transferring the copyright. As a result of the open access movement, even commercial publishers are becoming more open to let authors retain copyright (Baily Jr., 2006).

Barriers

The so called 'Born Open Acces Publishers' use Creative Commons licenses to let the authors retain their copyright. But some of these publishers maintain a financial barrier: they use an author charged business model which means that the author pays a fee for publishing his work. Institutions can pay these fees for their students, in order to remove that barrier.

It is obvious that academic institutions could motivate students to publish their work in a repository by informing them about copyright issues and reducing financial barriers. Happily some commercial publishers nowadays show a responsible behaviour by minimizing the author fees for research institutes in developing countries.

Net generation

Today's student population of universities and colleges is often characterised as the 'Net Generation' or 'Millennials'. A lot of those young people that are grown up in an environment where the use of computers and new media was quite evident, live with the opinion that "anything accessible online should be free" (Oblinger & Oblinger 2005, 6.4). Their behaviour in sharing music, movies and software that they have not purchased, might be to blame in the eyes of our own generation, it demonstrates that they are supposed to be supporters of the Open Access concept. As mentioned before, they prefer easy access to web content with simple search tools

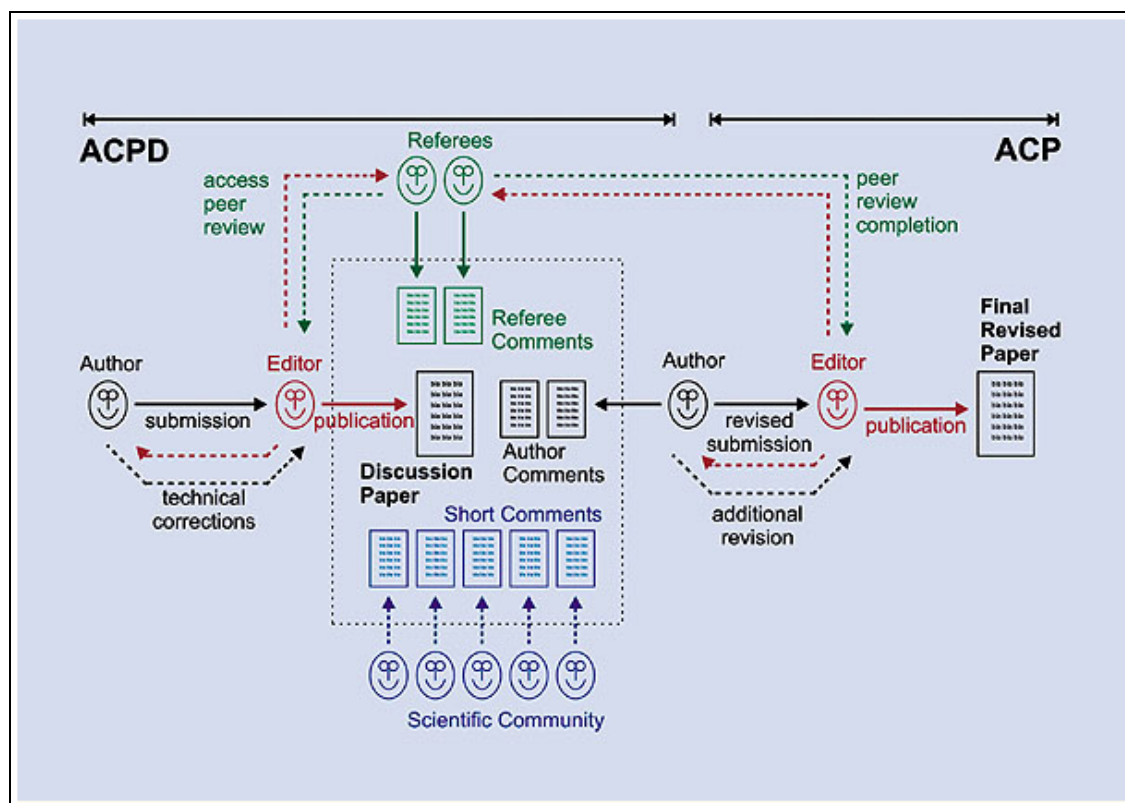
like Google. In our opinion, for research students this means that publishing their work on an institutional repository or in an Open Access journal is particularly attractive if the documents they published are well retrieved by the popular search engines like Google (at a top position in the hit list). Unfortunately there are still institutional repositories that are obviously not well indexed by the big search engines not even by Google Scholar. The repository maintained by the library of our own university is, unfortunately again, an example.

Scholar publications about the net generation (most of them from the discipline of e-learning) stress that the information use of today's young people is characterized by interaction. They participate in digital social networks, prefer chatting above e-mail and contribute to weblogs and wiki's. Not by accident these are examples of what we call web 2.0 applications. This preference for interaction corresponds with one of the outcomes of the Loughborough investigation, students' appreciation of comment and feedback on the research that they have published.

Our suggestion is that most Open Access resources use a rather traditional model for scholar publication (one way!). We believe that there are challenges in providing more Web 2.0 functions for readers (like forums, ratings and comments) that make Open Access resources more attractive for the new generation of researchers. An example is the journal *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* that uses interactive peer review and public discussion to reach

- rapid publication and
- quality assurance of the publications.

The figure below shows the organization of the two stage publication process in ACP (copied from Pöschl 2007).



Two stage publication with interactive peer review and public discussion is practised in the interactive scientific journal Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics (ACP) and its discussion forum ACPD (bold arrows = basic processes; dashed arrows = optional processes).

The way in which ACP uses interactive tools is well designed and organised. For most institutional or discipline oriented repositories more simple applications (like a simple comment function as they are used in weblogs) can be applied to satisfy the needs for more interactive communication.

Conclusion

Open Access publishing is supported by students and young researchers. For them the most important motivator is feedback. Financial barriers should be reduced by government, institutions and/or publishers and students should be well informed about 'rights' and journal policies in pre-publishing. Last but not least we believe that Open Access resources would be more attractive if more interaction is added to repositories and journals, for instance for peer review or for public discussion.

Cited literature:

Bailey Jr., C. (2006). *Open access and libraries*. Retrieved 2007-09-14 at <http://www.digital-scholarship.com/cwb/OALibraries2.pdf>

Oblinger, D. & Oblinger, J. (Eds.) (2005), *Educating the net generation*. [S.L.]: Educause. Retrieved 2007-09-14 at www.educause.edu/educatingthenetgen

Pickton, M. & McKnight, C. (2006). Research students and the Loughborough institutional repository. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 38 (4). Preprint is available at: <https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace/>

Pöschl, U. (2007). Open Access: interactive peer review enhances journal quality. *Research Information*. Retrieved 2007-09-06 at <http://www.researchinformation.info/risepoc04openaccess.html>

Hyperlinks:

Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics: <http://www.copernicus.org/EGU/acp/acp.html>

About the authors:

Peter Becker was educated as music librarian, and worked 10 years at the information service of a university of professional arts education. The last seven years he developed training programs for information workers in academic and public libraries. Since 2007 Peter works as a lecturer at the department of Library & Information Studies of The Hague University.

Jos van Helvoort (1957) graduated in 1981 in Dutch Language & Literature. He worked as a teacher in secondary education and as course developer in the disciplines of Library Science and Record Management. Since 2001 he is a senior lecturer at the department of Library & Information Studies of The Hague University. His interests include Information Research, Information Management and Information Literacy. As the chairman of the Board of Examiners of the faculty of ICT & Media he is strongly involved with assessment issues in Dutch higher education.