Peer-review Discussion Group Summary

- Participants - E. Hilf, E. Muller, R. Brandsma, H. Bosc, T. Velden, I. Bohlin, S. Harnad, J. Vigen, P. Dall’Aglio, B. Arms (scribe), A. Wray, K. Konings, S. Buckingham Shum, D. Dallman, M. Bosc, J. Palmer, M. Doyle (moderator)

CERN, March 22, 2001
Scope of Discussion

• Traditional peer-review
  – Reasons for peer-review
  – The true cost of peer-review (added responsibilities?)
  – Serials crisis
• Open Archiving
  – Variations across disciplines
  – Prejudices and encouraging expansion
  – Relation to OAI
• Non-traditional possibilities
  – Referees as scarce resource and multiple reviews
  – New schemes
  – New ways to fund it
Reasons for Peer-review

- Quality control and certification
- Author recognition
- Guideposts for outsiders and insiders
- Editorial suggestions
- Constructive criticism
Costs

• Access problem -- closed access to journals -- journals not accessible to all researchers.

• Can lower cost of peer review, but not eliminate it. Relationship between costs of peer review and costs of serials spiral. Can it be broken?

• Publisher's cost of editorial and processing each article could be as low as €500. This is 100 x greater than the cost of arXiv distribution.

• Shortage of peer reviewers. In NL plans to have cost of reviewers reimbursed (“referee tax”)

• Conclusion: There is an irreducible cost to peer-review that must be funded somehow
Some options for covering cost

• Charge for rejection

• Submission side payment
  – by author
  – by author’s institution
  – by government funding agencies
  – additional payments for advanced services
  – from self-archiving windfall savings (savings from reduced serials expenditures re-allocated to institutional payments)

• Conclusion: We don’t believe any of them (last may happen if time scales are commensurate), but at least one is surely necessary
Discipline and Organizational Factors in Open Archiving

- Long-term trend towards primary information being open accessible.
- Discipline have different approaches, e.g., central archives v. distributed web sites.
- OAI can be used to provide services across distributed systems.
- Requires push-button easy to submit.
- Institutional support to break through real and perceived barriers can be from research center, university, professional society, funding agency. Embolden individuals to act.
- Conclusion: No real difference between goals of different disciplines, but paths may be very different.
OAI issues

• What is the role of the OAI in harvesting full text? Minimalist protocol for metadata harvesting including URLs to full document. Ethical to link back.

• Is the name "Open Archives Initiatives" confusing?

• Is the name "preprint" confusing? Really should be focused on postprint literature being available in archives.

• Fields in which patents, commercialization, etc., are unlikely to use preprints but authors still want their postprints to be read.
Scarce Resources

- Different kinds of multiple reviews
  - Good when non-overlapping resources used; e.g., CERN - collaboration => institution => journal
  - Bad if submitted to successive journals. Is it possible to forward a rejected paper to another journal with its reviews?

- Finding and managing reviewers is a major challenge in running publishing services. Web can help be better and more equitable. Peer-review can be improved by e-print commentary.
New Schemes

• Open reviews (JIME example)
  – May be constrained by willingness of participants to work for “egoboo” (cf. eopinions, Usenet)

• Additional cycles of vetting (social sciences and humanities)

• Internal review (CERN model, PhysNet model)

• Editorial Board (volume => referees)

• Conclusions: To maintain benefits of current system, any new replacement will be at least as expensive in terms of money or referee resources.
Conclusions

• Either eliminate peer-review or find a new way to fund it. Latter preferred.
• New schemes unlikely to preserve benefits while being cheaper.
• Beneficent publisher can’t act unilaterally.
• Institutional support needed for archives, author encouragement, new funding models.
• Money may have to come from government funding agencies unless institutions can really manage to redirect library savings.