

IS OPEN ACCESS THE SOLUTION?

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DRIVERS

- Academics and librarians complaining about the current toll-access system
- Governments around the world - publicly funded research should lead to free of charge access
- Wellcome Foundation's initiative
- UK House of Commons Select Committee looking at it.

SO WHAT IS OPEN ACCESS?

- Electronic copies available free of charge to anyone who can read them
- Two routes – open access journal (toll-free, i.e., without subscription charge) and electronic repository (subject-based, or institutional)
- In both cases, they are searchable from remote locations

ADVANTAGES OF OPEN ACCESS

- Return to core value of scholarship – free exchange
- Number of accesses for OA e journals higher than for toll-access e journals
- Some evidence that OA articles get more citations than those in toll access journals
- Moral/ethical argument – everyone around the world can get access
- Impact argument – more eyeballs means greater spread of ideas
- Cuts down costs for libraries

DISADVANTAGES OF OPEN ACCESS

- Scholars as authors have concerns – peer review; cost; prestige; archiving; information overload
- Copyright issues
- Not everyone has access to the Web – especially in developing countries
- It merely shifts the costs from libraries to the funding agencies or employers

COPYRIGHT ISSUES

- Refuse to sign copyright assignment
- Avoid publishers who require assignment – www.sherpa.ac.uk has list of publishers who offer OA-friendly licences
- Use an OA journal instead
- Use the Oppenheim-Harnad solution – see www.cogsci.soton.ac.uk/~harnad/Tp/resolution.htm#Harnad/Oppenheim

HOWEVER....

- These all require some degree of self-confidence
- No problem if academic has high reputation
- Problem if the academic is just starting out

NOT EVERYONE HAS ACCESS TO THE WEB

- The idea of increasing number of eyeballs falls down when so many of the world's population has no access to telephones, networks, PCs, reliable power supplies
- Even where there is access, the costs of the hardware and software may be considered too high
- Is there any evidence of considerable un-met demand for electronic access to research output?

SHIFTING THE COSTS

- It is a zero sum game – someone has to pay for the system one way or another
- So how does it get charged for, and who has to pay?

AUTHOR PAYS MODEL FOR OA JOURNALS

- Costs per article to break even range from \$500 to \$2000; to make a profit, need even more – maybe \$5000 (there is no reason why OA cannot be profit-making)
- Submission fees versus publication fees
- Submission fee – if it gets rejected, author has wasted his/her money
- Publication fees – only if article is accepted, but then successful authors are subsidising poor authors
- No easy answer, but most journals go for publication (acceptance) fee; a few go for a mixture of the two

WHO PAYS FOR OA JOURNALS?

- Funding agency – incorporated into bid – but then fewer funding awards overall
- Employer, e.g., University – but what gets cut to pay for it?
- Library – in which case it is no better off than before
- Authors pays him/herself (rare)
- Fees often waived if author pleads poverty – but then richer authors subsidising them
- Some subject areas, such as humanities, are not funded much by funding agencies – may not get OA journals, though no reason why IRs should not happen

WHO PAYS FOR INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES?

- Library?
- Computer Services?
- Central admin?
- Individual departments?
- Costs are uncertain at the moment – but are certainly not zero!
- What gets cut to pay for this?

CONCLUSIONS

- I am in favour of OA, but the ethical and commercial issues are still unclear
- I believe it has been over-sold as a panacea to the serials crisis