

The Open Access Movement in Latin America. A continuation of the historic clashes between the capitalistic-driven forces against the socializing forces of information and knowledge sharing. A personal opinion

*By: Zapopan Martín Muela Meza
Mexican PhD student
University of Sheffield
Dpt. of Information Studies*

*First Workshop on E-LIS (E-prints in Library and Information Science)
Geneva, Switzerland, 22 October 2005 (at CERN)*

Abstract

~This presentation intends to give a Latin America-wide account of the development of the Web-based Open Access movement. It provides a historical account of the class struggles between the capitalistic-driven appropriators of information-knowledge and the socializing and commonalizing forces, and it employs that as a framework to analyse the overall OA movement. It argues the capitalistic-driven pay-per-access publishing system is an irrational framework which should be put aside. It calls for all the OA advocates to build OA archiving and publication systems, by putting aside in the process the monopolistic systems of ISI and OCLC. It also proposes a model for both OA and E-LIS advocates in order to challenge the capitalist-driven appropriators of info-knowledge and implement, instead, a socializing-communalizing OA info-knowledge sharing strategies: **POLITICS** (democracy) + **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY** (for the human and species survival and ecology) + **COMMUNICATION** (to reach out all the levels of the public). It argues the capitalistic-driven pay-per-access publishing system is an irrational framework which should be put aside.

~

~Keywords: Socialization and commonalization of information & knowledge. Open Access. E-LIS. Latin America.

Acknowledgements

~The author thanks Imma Subirats (Government of Catalonia, Spain & E-LIS Archives Administrator) for inviting him to this workshop. He also thanks her and Antonella De Robbio (University of Padua, Italy & E-LIS Archives Administrator), for inviting him to give this lecture. Finally he also thanks the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain for funding his transport and lodging expenses.

Socializing forces of information and knowledge -pre-Hispanic conquest times (before 1492)

- ≈ Communal sharing of the land and living resources (though far from idyllic; class struggles were waged too; Kings & nobles had all the best)*
- ≈ Money unknown as currency of exchange of goods. 'Trueque' (aboriginal 'coin' for exchange of goods by goods, not money)*
- ≈ Pre-Hispanic sharing of knowledge for the commons (procomún); welfare of all (however there were also class struggles, and all but Aztecs were oral cultures without alphabets)*
- ≈ Impressive public works services in some major cities: canals, sewer, irrigation, etc.*

Capitalistic early beginnings of private expropriation of information and knowledge -post-Hispanic conquest & Colony, between 1492 - 1800s

- ≈ Introduction of capitalistic privatization of the land, goods and resources*
- ≈ Complete eradication of communal property rights & advent of enclosures of the land and resources*
- ≈ Advent of monastic libraries & advent of enclosure of knowledge*
- ≈ Instauration of the State torture Ministry (the Holy Inquisition) & chasing of non-divine-driven (& scientists) thinkers*

*Independence wars vs Spain & Portugal –
full development of Capitalistic private
expropriation of information and knowledge*

–from early 1800s up to date

*≈Introduction of free of charge public
education for all, but illiteracy remains large
& elitism*

*≈Introduction of public libraries, but remain
in very bad conditions compared to private*

*≈Silent re-colonization by US-British
powers through oppressing “information-
knowledge transfer” agreements (copyrights,
patents, etc.)*

Socializing forces of information and knowledge -1900s bourgeois revolutions up to 1960s

- ≈Public funded universities begin leading the way returning free of charge and free for all info-knowledge to the “commons”*
- ≈Radical & left-wing Scholars and politicians begin breaking public government info-knowledge free access for citizens*
- ≈Region-wide public libraries, archives and other repositories of public knowledge begin blooming; specially in major cities*

Capitalistic private appropriation forces of information and knowledge

-1900s bourgeois revolutions up to 1960s

- ≈ Large private universities begin to compete with public ones*
- ≈ Bourgeois-led government became so corrupted, totalitarian, repressive, oppressive*
- ≈ Information – knowledge from anti-government began “witch-hunted”*
- ≈ Advent of major repressive regimes in the region; re-enclosure of info-knowledge; a cuasi-Dark Ages for the region*

Capitalistic private appropriation forces of information and knowledge -1960s-1980s – the right-wing totalitarian regimes

- ≈ Advent of aggressive book and information industries (owned by or linked with corrupted governments)*
- ≈ Flourishing international agreements for standardization of information-knowledge; capitalistic-led*
- ≈ Introduction of ISI as de-facto standard for publication in universities*
- ≈ Advent of ICT cuasi-monopolistic vendors (owned by or linked with corrupted governments)*

Socializing forces of information and knowledge -The Socialist Revolutionary times 1960s - 1980s

- ≈ Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions; socialist insurgencies all across the region*
- ≈ Brutal military and oppressive clashes of capitalistic-in-power forces against socialist insurgents*
- ≈ Cuba leads the way of full socialization and commonality of information and knowledge: free of charge and open to all; literacy for all, etc. (and until today is the leading force; even in E-LIS is the country with larger e-prints in the region)*

The 1990s, the Internet galaxy and the advent of Open Access

- ≈ Giving full and free of charge Open Access to info-knowledge to the world's humans is an ancient human quest, not from the 1990s*
- ≈ 1974 & UNESCO's Universal Availability of Publications and the 1970-1980s New World Information Order (See Herbert I. Schiller) might have been OA precursors*
- ≈ ICTs empowered professional to counter-attack the monopolistic ISI & OCLC effects*
- ≈ First came e-mail, then the WWW was returned to the world-wide commons of info-knowledge*
- ≈ Ancient quest to make human's legacy available and break ISI-OCLC claws was fostered by the Web*

Is the ICTs-led Open Access a reality in Latin America?

- ≈ The answer depends whether the countries' classes in power, governments & institutions are capitalistic (or privateering) or socialist led (or pro-socialising and pro-commons)*
- ≈ Cuba since 1959 with its revolution leads the way; everything is OA (ICT-based or not)*
- ≈ Current initiatives are Scielo in Brazil (after a left gov in power) and other alike governments*
- ≈ Several major universities such as UNAM do their own OA versions*
- ≈ But the reality is rather gloomy and challenging...*
- ≈ It is quite from likely OA is a reality in LA*

Latin American signers of the Budapest Open Access Initiative

≈ As of 22 October 2005 these are the individual scholars who have signed the BOAI:

≈ Brazilians, 1 and Cubans, 15 (although they both lead the Scielo's way; may be due to the Soro's-capitalistic-led effect)

≈ Mexicans, 64 and Venezuelans, 15

≈ Argentines, 59, Uruguayans, 5, Colombians 15, Chileans, 19,

≈ Costa Ricans, 1, Nicaraguan 0, and the rest of the countries fairly do not count.

Is E-LIS a reality in Latin America?

- ≈ As of 22.10.2005 these are the documents deposited in E-LIS by major self-archiving countries:*
- ≈ Cuba at the top with more than 350 documents deposited*
- ≈ Followed by Mexico with more than 100, Brazil 81, and the rest with no more than 50.*
- ≈ If something is better than nothing, it is a reality, but it's better to sense the real challenge that compared against the ISI-rule, it's a nano-microscopic one*

What's then the road ahead for the Open Access Movement in Latin America?

- ≈ Not an easy one: both major world-wide political classes will remain in conflict.*
- ≈ The socializers and communers (where OA fits) will keep on fighting against the privateering of info-knowledge*
- ≈ But the privateering capitalistic forces of information and knowledge are in power in all fronts of life*

What's then the road ahead for the Open Access Movement in Latin America? cont...

- ≈ Open Access fits into a rational-scientific model for the whole betterment of humans, species, and the environment; the opposite antediluvian forces simply fall (philosophically) into an irrational model against the whole betterment of humans, species and the environment.*
- ≈ Only the rational-scientific models have proven to guarantee us all humans the best (or least worst) ways for our survival, the species and ecology.*

What's then the road ahead for the Open Access Movement in Latin America? cont...

- ≈ Ergo (therefore)...All the OA advocates should leave the pragmatistic-technological drive behind and theoretise deeply beyond... to explore all the diverse factors of the phenomenon, such as: sociological, political, economical, scientific, etc.*
- ≈ They also need to play a more political role both in the practmatistic and theorethical issues of the OA phenomenon.*

What's then the road ahead for the Open Access Movement in Latin America? cont...

≈Furthermore... OA advocates may link their practicing and theoricing with a sort of model like this: **POLITICS** (democracy) + **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY** (survival of humankind)+ **COMMUNICATION** (to engage and reach out all the public down to the deepest strata).

≈Perhaps so far the OA advocates might be quite strong in their Sci-Tech stuff, but so are the adversaries of OA, life, humans, species, and environment, but besides that, they are extremely **POLITICAL** and **COMMUNICATIVE**!

What's then the road ahead for the Open Access Movement in Latin America? cont...

~At the end... only when the public is convinced of the Sci-Tech greatest benefits of OA (and the socialization-commonalization of info-knowledge) is when they'll jump up on the wagon. But a Political-Communicative commitment is the key for victory in the OA battles. The broadest flag-waving picture is simple and straightforward: for rationality-survival of all, humans & species, and the ecology. Surely we don't have the financing-political power, but neither did all the Social Transformers of history and eventually they transformed the world; for the better...that may be a humble but burning light for the road ahead for OA in Latin America and the world over...

Finally... a quote from a Philippinean ICT expert and political activist synthetising this presentation:

~“The socializing tendency emanates from the nature of information itself, and can therefore never be suppressed. The monopolizing tendency emanates from the potential high profit margins in selling information and the economic and political power concentrated in information monopolies. The conflicts arising from these two opposing tendencies will drive the historical development of the third wave of globalization. [...] Historically, these information economies are basically the same colonial powers that have exploited developing countries over the centuries.” -- Roberto Verzola

~Verzola, R. (2004). Towards a Political Economy of Information: Studies on the Information Economy. Quenzon City, Philippines: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, p. 134

*Thank you for attending this
presentation, for your attention and
comments!*

Author's contact information:

*Zapopan Martín Muela-Meza
zapopanmuela@yahoo.com*