

OPEN ACCESS: IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY.

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Abstract

This paper describes Open Access (OA). It discusses two main forms of open access publishing such as open access archives and open access journals. It highlights open access as an initiative to facilitate North- South as well as South-North information flow. It presents benefits of Open access in library and information service delivery such as access enhancement, digital publishing, easier preservation, subsidization of author fees and well -resourced information delivery.

Keywords: Open access, Information, Archives, Journals, Publishing.

Introduction

Open access (OA) simply means making materials accessible to users at no cost (Giarlo, 2006). According to Global Network on Global Public Goods, GPGNet (2005) open access is “free availability on the internet, permitting users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself”

Berlin Declaration (2003) gives a more precise and legal definition that an Open Access Publication is one that meets the following two conditions:

- The author(s) and copyright holder(s) grant(s) to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, perpetual right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship, as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use.
- A complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in a suitable standard electronic format is deposited immediately upon initial publication in at least one online repository that is supported by an academic institution, scholarly

society, government agency, or other well-established organization that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, interoperability, and long-term archiving.

The salient points common to these definitions are that open access concerns scholarly literature (peer-reviewed or not) that is subject to copyright (not in the public domain) and is made available free of charge by depositing it in a long-term reliable, standards-compliant online repository with a license permitting unrestricted access and utilization subject only to proper attribution of authorship and ethical norms.

There is some disagreement on the taxonomy and naming of open access mechanisms (Bethesda 2003; Carl 2005; Doaj 2007). This paper identifies two main forms of open access publishing

Open access archives: These are repositories in which copies of already published articles are deposited for free access by all. This is also referred to as self-archiving. However, the scope of open access archives is not restricted to already-published articles, but may also encompass pre-prints, theses, dissertations, manuals, teaching materials and other grey literature. Open access archives that are maintained by universities and research institutions for works contributed by their staff and students are called institutional repositories. This is a rapidly growing group. In order for their contents to be accessible worldwide, open access archives have to be OAI-compatible; they comply with the Open Archive Initiatives Metadata Harvesting Protocol, which ensures that they are interoperable and searchable by any search engine (Carl 2005).

Open access journals: These are published online and are accessible free of charge. The Directory of open access journals which currently covers over 2,500 journals and gives access to over 125,000 articles, defines open access journals as “journals that use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access” (Dewatripont, 2006). They therefore do not derive their income from subscriptions but rely on alternative business models. Suber (2007) claims that both the spread of open access archiving policies by funding agencies and universities and the spread of institutional repositories are “unstoppable” trends. Although the adoption of open access policies is not immediately accompanied by an equal rush of academics wishing to deposit their work there is no doubt that the open access movement is a significant trend that cannot be lightly dismissed. Open access has been hailed as a solution for developing countries (Arunachalan, 2003; Carl 2005), as it has the potential to facilitate not only North-South information flow but also

South-North flow, by enhancing the visibility of work published by scholars from developing countries.

Open Access and Library and Information Service Delivery:

Librarians generally have responded with a mixture of enthusiasm and caution.

Many librarians are vocal advocates for open access. Potentially, open access would simplify the librarian's role in the under listed ways:

- Libraries would own, not merely license, but copies of electronic journals.
- They would have the right to archive them forever without special permission or periodic payments. Long-term preservation and access would not be limited to the actions taken by publishers, with future market potential in mind, but could be supplemented by independent library actions.
- If publishers did not migrate older content, such as the back runs of journals, to new media and formats to keep them readable as technology changed, then libraries would have the right to do it on their own.
- Access and usage would not be limited by password, IP address, usage hours, institutional affiliation, physical location, a cap on simultaneous users, or ability to pay. One would not have to authenticate users or administer proxy servers.
- Libraries would have the right to lend and copy digital articles on any terms and to any users. They could offer the same services to users affiliated with their institution, walk-in patrons, users at home, visiting faculty, and ILL users.
- Faculty and others could donate digital literature and software without violating their licenses, and without limiting their usability.
- All use would be non-infringing use, and all use allowed by law would also be allowed by technology. There would be no need for fair-use and their accompanying risk of liability. There would be no need to err on the side of non-use. Faculty could reproduce full-text for students without the delays, costs, or uncertainties of seeking permission.
- Libraries would not have to negotiate, either as individual institutions or consortia, for prices or licensing terms. And librarians would not have to remember, consult, or even retain, complex licensing agreements that differ from publisher to publisher and year to year.
- Users who object to cookies or registration would have the same access privileges as other users. Anonymous inquiry would be possible again for every user.

- Libraries would never have to cancel a subscription due to a tight budget or unacceptable licensing terms. Researchers would not encounter gaps in the collection corresponding to journals with unacceptable prices or licensing terms (SPARC, 2007).

More fundamentally, open access resonates with the professional ethos of librarians. At the same time IFLA(2004) recognizes the roles of many stakeholders, including publishers, to all of whom it addresses seven open access principles. These deal with:

- Protection of the moral rights of authors
- Effective peer review
- Opposition to all forms of censorship
- Succession of scholarly works to the public domain
- Measures to combat information inequality
- Support for development of sustainable open access publishing models
- Measures to ensure long-term preservation and availability of scholarly literature and documentation.

Bailey (2006) identifies the following roles for libraries in respect of open access:

Libraries can provide enhanced access to OA works: This presupposes that librarians will not simply leave it to information users to find these materials themselves, but will actively promote access to them, for example by including selected materials in catalogues or other finding tools. This implies selecting appropriate materials from the large and growing pool, creating metadata, keeping track of their status and availability, developing skills in using search engines and specialized finding tools, and transmitting these skills to library users as part of information literacy education

Libraries can be digital publisher of OA works: librarians generally have better content expertise and people skills than IT specialists, and are better equipped for interacting with authors, dealing with metadata and intellectual property questions, promotion and training, which are bread and butter issues for reference librarians. This could especially be the case in developing countries. Anbu (2006) recommends that institutional repositories in African universities should be run by the university libraries.

Libraries can build specialized OA systems: Early library automation systems were developed in and by libraries. More recently some open-source institutional repository software, including DSpace, Fedora and OAster (Bailey 2006) has been

developed in collaboration with libraries. However, such efforts are likely to be limited to a small number of well-resourced libraries in major universities.

Libraries can digitize OA versions of out-of-copyright works: Digitization of rare and specialized materials that are in the public domain is a widespread library activity. To the extent that digitized materials remain in the public domain or are put under a Creative Commons license, this activity adds to the pool of open access materials available.

Libraries can preserve OA materials: Libraries traditionally play a role in respect of preservation and have moved into the preservation of traditionally published digital resources such as electronic journals. Much attention is currently being paid to options for the long-term preservation of digital scholarly content, e.g. legal deposit “trusted digital repositories” (OpenDOAR 2006) and the LOCKSS (lots of copies keep stuff safe) concept (Lessig 2002). The long-term preservation of open access resources, which are arguably at greater risk, needs urgent attention, and libraries are the obvious institutions to shoulder this task.

Libraries can subsidize author fees: This role arises in the case of open access journals using a business model in which the costs of publication are wholly or partly borne by authors or their institutions. In the latter case author fees may be waived or reduced if the institution (usually through its library) takes out an institutional membership. The extent to which this will happen is still uncertain. Bailey suggests that by supporting open access journals libraries contribute to the common good. This is in line with the Bethesda Statement, which proposes that libraries should “develop and support mechanisms to make the transition to open access publishing and to provide examples of these mechanisms to the community” (Berlin Declaration 2003)

However many librarians, mindful of their long-term responsibilities, are cautious and are adopting a wait-and-see attitude. An empirical study by Beckett and Inger (2007) on how open access archiving affects journal subscriptions indicates that, while librarians show a strong preference for content that is freely available, quality and access factors also weigh heavily. Hence preference is given to content that has undergone peer review, and the length of an embargo placed on open access to electronic journal content is a significant consideration. There are also some who fear that some existing library funding for publication subscriptions may be transferred to fund the running of the institutional repository. Changes in the economics of scholarly publishing cannot fail to affect the economics of libraries. Much depends on how one sees the library of the future. If it is seen as a collection of resources, diverting funding away from collection appears to be a problem. If it

is seen as the knowledge management centre of the university or institution, that would be entirely appropriate.

Conclusion

Librarians are concerned with facilitating access to information for all. This is well encapsulated in IFLA(2006) *core values*:

- The belief that people, communities and organizations need universal and equitable access to information, ideas and works of imagination for their social, educational, cultural, democratic and economic well-being;
- The conviction that delivery of high quality library and information services helps guarantee that access.

Facilitating access to information for all implies cooperation and sharing. These are central to our ethos. This accounts for our interest in, and in many cases enthusiasm for, open access. But it does not mean that librarians are against publishers. They have no wish for the demise of publishers and we do not begrudge publishers a fair return on their investment, provided that the prices that they charge are fairly related to the value they add, which we acknowledge, for example in entrepreneur initiative, mobilizing capital, project management, editorial expertise. Quality control and promotion.

Publishers also need librarians to grow their market by promoting literacy, reading and information use and exposing users to their products. Librarians provide publishers with reliable sales for certain categories of publications. A mechanism for the distribution of works no individual scholar could afford, and a single point of contact for their sales team, and also sustain the users who are authors, reviewers, editors and readers. Librarians and publishers have a common belief that information makes a difference and has to be disseminated. How dissemination will evolve over the coming decades is not clear. It is expected that open access will be an important factor in the evolution of scholarly publishing, and that both publishers and librarians will have a major role in it.

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