

Open Access: Key Strategic Technical and Economic Aspects

Edited by Neil Jacobs

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This is a very topical book, covering a subject, Open Access that is increasing in importance on almost a daily basis.

The book opens with a Foreword by Ian Gibson, MP, who chaired the 2004 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry 'Scientific Publications: free for all?' Gibson says that:

The commercial publishing world has an increasingly harmful monopoly on a number of prestige journals which are essential to disseminating new ideas and research. This monopoly over knowledge has been one factor underlying an increase in the price of subscriptions, leaving some academic libraries with no choice but to cancel subscriptions as they can no longer afford to pay for a full range of journals (p.xi).

It is this type of situation that has led to the rapid development of open access.

The book includes contributions from a wide range of different people writing on a variety of aspects on open access. In the opening chapter, Alma Swan, for example, refers to the 'Serials Crisis'. Swan emphasises how in recent times, it has not been possible for a university or research institute library to purchase subscriptions to every journal and book that would form an ideal collection for the users of that organisation. Therefore, the benefit of the open access movement is that it is:

... dedicated to freeing up research output from the constraints imposed on its dissemination by publisher restrictions and the non-affordability of journals (p.11).

Meanwhile, **Charles Bailey** considers the definition of open access. He looks, for example, at the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) which emphasises that literature should be freely accessible online. The BOAI recommends 2 complementary strategies for achieving open access to scholarly journal literature. These are self-

archiving and the ability to launch a new generation of journals committed to open access. Bailey notes a number of factors when examining the definition of open access, including the fact that open access works are freely available; secondly, that they are online which means they are digital documents available on the Internet; thirdly that they are scholarly works; fourthly, that authors of these works are not paid for their efforts and fifthly that there are a lot of permitted uses for open access material. Stevan Harnad also examines the definition of open access saying that:

... open access means free Webwide access, immediately and permanently, to the full texts of all 2.5 million articles published annually in the planet's 24,000 peer-reviewed research journals across all scholarly and scientific disciplines (p.73).

Whilst Alma Swan is of the opinion that:

... the term open access is a misnomer – though one we are stuck with – for the issue is about enhancing research dissemination and not, primarily, access (p.67).

In regard to self-archiving, specifically, Bailey points out that self-archiving can be achieved in a number of different ways, including the author's personal website, disciplinary archives, institutional-unit archives and institutional repositories. Approximately, a quarter of all researchers have inserted copies of their articles on their own websites. Arthur Sale says that it is difficult to persuade authors to self-archive, but once they do they find it very beneficial and they do not look back.

The growth in open access is also considered. Andrew Odlyzko points out the fact that it is estimated that the peer-reviewed literature grows by about 2.5 million papers a year, and is published in approximately 25,000 serials. Of these 2.5 million papers, approximately 15% are open access. Also, as Chris Awre says:

...technical advances and the underpinning network have opened up the development of new techniques to support scholarly communication. It is likely that such advances will continue and support future scholarly communication and research through open access and collaboration (p.62).

Meanwhile, Frederick Friend argues that progress towards open access to UK research reports is slow but steady and that:

The story of open access in the UK is one of initiatives by organisations and individuals to develop the opportunities provided by new technologies, while the benefits from those initiatives have not been realised by a hesitant government influenced by lobbying from vested interests (p.161).

Whilst Alma Swan emphasises that:

The last couple of years have seen the acceptance of open access as a desirable goal by institutions, research funders, libraries and some publishers, to the point that these parties have taken action towards achieving it (p.65).

Robert Terry and Robert Kiley consider the Wellcome Trust, which first looked at issues of access to the research literature following concerns raised by the Wellcome Library Advisory Committee in 2001. The Wellcome Trust was the first major UK funding agency to commit to open access. Its reasons are made clear in a 'position statement' on its website, where it says that: "The Wellcome Trust has a fundamental interest in ensuring that the availability and accessibility of this material [i.e. journal articles resulting from Trust-funded research] is not adversely affected by the copyright, marketing and distribution strategies used by publishers."

Colin Steele argues that scholarly publishing is likely to evolve along 2 distinct paths in the future. Firstly, that large multinational commercial publishers will increase their dominance of global science, technology and medicine market, and secondly that a variety of open access initiatives will emerge and become a part of everyday life.

Citations for open access articles are examined in the book. Interestingly, open access articles receive more citations than non-open access articles. As Colin Steele says:

Open access, apart from the major considerations of increased access and impact, also allows for the provision of enhanced methods of citation analysis, which can also link into performance indicators, both of researchers and institutions (p.137).

Meanwhile, Leo Waaijers looks at the Digital Academic Repositories (DARE) Programme in the Netherlands, which is working towards a programme whereby institutions control their own intellectual products whilst also having better access to them. Waaijers says that once the DARE programme is completed, "...The Netherlands will have a robust but elementary infrastructure of institutional repositories." (p.147) Thus, there will no longer be organisational obstacles; instead, the material will be able to be made available far and wide.

Other areas covered in the book include open access and scientific communication (Jean-Claude Guedon), the sustainability of open access (Matthew Cockerill), Internet archiving, creative commons and discussion forums (Peter Suber).

In conclusion, this is a very useful and informative book, covering many different aspects of open access.

There is a detailed bibliography and an index.

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