Open Access: In Support of Research

Research Communications Strategy Project

Paul Ayris
Director of UCL Library Services
(University College London) and UCL Copyright Officer
p.ayris@ucl.ac.uk

Open Access (OA) is part of a global discussion about Open Scholarship and Open Knowledge.[1] As public funding for Higher Education is reduced, university budgets are under enormous pressure and libraries are even more challenged in supporting their researchers. OA, however, is a new way in which research can be supported and research outputs made more generally available.[2] If research outputs are disseminated in OA, they are immediately available, subject to any publisher embargoes, and free to the user, although their production does need to be balanced by a sustainable business model.

Benefits

There is a growing body of literature which shows that dissemination in OA leads to greater visibility for a researcher's work, not least because Google and other Internet search engines index these items.

A university's mission is to create and disseminate knowledge. OA allows universities to deliver on this mission, creating a higher profile on a global stage. The free diffusion of knowledge into society in general from Europe's universities also aids the building of a knowledge economy.

Professor John Houghton has demonstrated the economic benefits, showing that OA is the most cost-effective option for disseminating research. Houghton and his team have estimated that savings would be many times the costs in every case modelled, amounting to substantial sums, e.g. the Netherlands could enjoy economic benefits to the value of €133 million a year.[3]

"Green" Route

The Green route has been defined as one in which copies of peer-reviewed outputs are made freely available on the web, using an OA institutional repository (IR) alongside any formal published versions. An institution that has established such a repository has the technical tools that enable it to manage and share its research outputs on the web. Such repositories should use standard protocols, in this case OAI-PMH.[4]

In parallel with the establishment of an IR, universities should consider the creation of a communications and advocacy strategy, which informs the academy of both the drivers for a repository system and also how university researchers can submit their outputs to the new dissemination service. Regular monitoring and evaluation will identify what proportion of the university's research output is available via the IR. At an early stage, the institution can embed their OA efforts into pan-university strategies, which can help work on OA to be fully aligned with an institution's mission.

In many ways, a real sign of success at an institutional level is agreement on an institutional mandate where, copyright permissions allowing, all research outputs from the institution are deposited in the IR and made OA. Such a step is a bold one and will need explicit support from the academy. Universities are able to take a proactive stance on copyright issues, safe in the knowledge that most commercial journals allow some form of archiving of an author's own research outputs.[5]

It is also important that universities actively continue investigations into the feasibility of storing primary data in repositories, and linking the open data to secondary research publications. This is potentially a new area for repositories and will bring to light different issues and concerns.

"Gold" Route

The "Gold" route has been defined as journal publishing operating with a business model not based on subscription, but rather on publication charges (where the author or an organization on behalf of the author funds the publishing costs) or on subsidy. "Gold" OA journals do not charge readers and generally grant extensive usage rights in accordance with the authoritative definition of OA provided by the Budapest OA Initiative.[6] Universities should consider allocating funds to pay for OA publication charges when funding is not provided by the research funder. As with the "Green" route, universities should embed their approach to OA publishing in pan-university strategies.

The research community may also lobby to convince funders and other stakeholders that meaningful changes to the existing scholarly publishing system will require investments (transition costs). Universities could also connect to the activities of the OAPEN network[7] in order to promote OA publishing of scholarly monographs.

Best Practice

Adopting an Institutional Mandate

At UCL, the move to adopt an institutional mandate was achieved in two phases. In May 2009 UCL´s Academic Board agreed on two principles to underpin UCL's publication activity and to support its scholarly mission:

- That, copyright permissions allowing, a copy of all research outputs should be deposited in the UCL repository in OA

- That individual UCL academic researchers should be directly responsible for providing and maintaining details of their publications [...]

The second phase was accomplished in Autumn 2010 when UCL's Academic Board ratified a formal Publications Policy which expands on these principles. Collaboration within the University's Academic Board and liaison with academic colleagues has been important in taking forward the policy.

Copyright and IPR[8]

UCL has appointed the Director of Library Services as Copyright Officer, and the Library is actively clarifying and informing guidance in UCL's copyright framework for research and education. The Library also teaches graduate students the basics of copyright and IPR management, both in terms of students respecting third party copyright and in protecting and exploiting their own rights. The basic position taken by UCL is that academic staff and students own the copyright in their intellectual outputs, not the university.

Establishing an OA Publishing Fund

An institutional OA Publishing Fund was established at the University of Nottingham in 2006. The idea for the Fund came from work carried out by Information Services,[9] and it is now administered by Research Innovation Services as part of the university's research support. This Fund is available for use by any member of staff who wishes to make their research output freely and openly accessible, regardless of their source of funding or research area.

Collaborations

Collaborations with others, such as the Wellcome Trust,[10] SPARC Europe,[11] and Enabling Open Scholarship (EOS)[12] can help universities acquire support for their work and contributions to OA. The Wellcome Trust provides grant holders with additional funding to support OA publishing, while SPARC Europe provides a voice for universities and academic libraries and EOS provides guidance, information, and support.

References

[1] Open Knowledge Foundation. **http://okfn.org/**

[2] This paper is built on work undertaken by the Chief Information Officers of LERU **http://www.leru.org.**

[3] Houghton Reports. **http://www.knowledge-exchange.info/Default.aspx?ID=316**

[4] OAI Protocol for Metadata Harvesting. **http://www.openarchives.org/pmh/**

[5] The authoritative tool is the SHERPA RoMEO listing at **http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/**

[6] Budapest Open Access Initiative. **http://www.soros.org/openaccess**

[7] Open Access Publishing in European Networks. **http://www.oapen.org/**

[8] **http://www.ucl.ac.uk/Library/copyright.shtml**

[9] Pinfield, S. (2010). Paying for Open Access? Institutional funding streams and OA publications charges. *Learned Publishing,* 23(1), 39-52. **http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/20100108**

[10] Wellcome Trust. **http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Open-access/**

[11] SPARC Europe. **http://www.sparceurope.org**

[12] Enabling Open Scholarship. **http://www.openscholarship.org**

Centre for
Research
Communications
crc.nottingham.ac.uk

JISC

March 2011