

STEPPING INTO THE OPEN: THE INTERMEDIARY PERSPECTIVE ON OPEN ACCESS SERVICES

The past couple of years have been rather fast-paced in the open access (OA) world. The failure and fallout of the Research Works Act in the US in 2012, the Finch Report in the UK and its new gold OA mandate, and more recently the announcement from the University of California that all funded research will be made open access for all to read: these events all show that the scholarly landscape and publishing models associated with it are changing faster than ever before.

For many this is great news. Increasing free access to more research must surely be a good thing. For students and researchers it means a broadening of material that is available for use in study or research work. It

also expands the possibilities for deep data mining across increasing amounts of content to discover hidden meaning in the research record. For publishers, the paid side of OA (Gold) opens up a new stream of revenue that they can develop as subscriptions lie flat or are in decline. But what about libraries, whose central role is managing content and information for their patrons?

Inevitably, new publishing models have meant the need to develop and maintain new workflows, and with OA much of this has fallen at the feet of the library. At a time when library resources and budgets are as stretched as ever, there seem to be clear roles for intermediaries to take away much of the burden associated with OA.

There are three broad areas which see an intermediary working alongside the library to deliver common benefits and increase the value of service they provide within the scope of OA.

Firstly, library professionals seek to ensure that their patrons can access OA content as easily as standard subscribed content. Content acquisition, curation and preparation for use by patrons are primary functions of the library and OA content should be no exception to this. A current initiative from the National Information Standards Organisation

(NISO) looking at standardisation of OA metadata promises to make OA content more easily identifiable, allowing it to be more easily integrated into A-Z lists, and therefore more useful and accessible to end users through their library.

Intermediaries are well known for their extensive catalogues and databases, and as vendors of aggregated content, they provide a

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natural place to harvest and collate OA metadata.

Secondly, we see many libraries adopting a teaching or coaching function to help researchers and authors in their institutions find the best way to approach open access publishing, advise which journals to publish in, and help them with licensing issues. The 'library as educator' is a lively topic right now across the blogosphere.

Intermediaries are well-connected to publishers, and therefore gathering licensing and copyright information might be another natural way in which they could provide up-to-date information back to libraries and authors.

Finally, there is the administrative function the library and its staff play in managing content.

Library professionals are responsible for selecting, acquiring and then distributing the materials for their library, which usually means managing budgets, payments and other administrative tasks. One of the overarching benefits of working with an intermediary is that they can take a lot of that admin away.

For OA, the industry is now faced with article processing charges (APCs). We estimate that 180 000 articles were published via paid ('Gold') OA in 2012. The administrative time to process that

many individual invoices is vast. Industry figures state that a normal invoice takes around an hour to administer from receipt to payment. That's nearly 700 full-time people, and paid OA is still in its early days.

If we look at the average cost of processing an invoice (industry standards suggest \$50USD), then supporting researchers to publish gold OA is already costing an extra \$9M. This number will only go up as OA expands, and will place more pressure on library and other institutional resources.

Just as intermediaries manage vast numbers of subscriptions for libraries, so they are able to use their many relationships with publishers to quickly and cost-effectively manage large numbers of APC payments. After looking carefully at the market, this is where Swets has developed its first open access related service, in APC management; launched initially in the UK with a view to expanding the service to other regions shortly.

In time, there are many other functions that an intermediary may play around OA, including offering similar services to publishers and funding bodies. Swets is looking carefully at a number of these opportunities.

It's an exciting time as open access publishing grows and an ecosystem of ancillary services starts growing around it. Intermediaries will develop to add value where possible as the research and publishing environment changes, using capabilities in-house that can cover gaps libraries don't need to fill.

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