Are You Giving Me Attitude? – The Attitudes of Three Researchers in Sweden Concerning the Open-Access Initiative

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Abstract

Our goal with this study is to gauge the attitudes towards Open-Access publication amongst researchers in Sweden. Open-Access is a relatively new concept, which emerged in formalised form for the first time in the 2001 Budapest summit. The initiative was spearheaded by OSI (Open Society Institute) that felt that researchers were being exploited by publishers that not only published their work without monetary compensation, but then charged their institutions for the right to access the material once printed. Open-Access is aiming to make academic information and research freely accessible to all users in electronic form. OSI/JISC has conducted a large study concerning this matter, and the subject is widely discussed in today's research communities. We have focused on gaining a deeper understanding through a qualitative study of the motivation behind the researcher's publication process. Our informants show a positive attitude towards Open-Access but various requirements imposed on them by the nature of academics and the criteria for advancement forces them to publish in established commercial journals. The importance of the study lies in the researchers spreading of information, and the Open-Access initiative being able to reach everyone, especially researchers free of cost. The initiative builds on the researchers willingness to publish themselves in an Open-Access setting, and therefore their attitudes and concerns are vital to the Open-Access initiative.

Introduction

Open-Access is a relatively new concept, which emerged in formalised form for the first time in the 2001 Budapest summit. The initiative was spearheaded by OSI (Open Society Institute) that felt that researchers were being exploited by publishers that not only published their work without monetary compensation, but then charged their institutions for the right to access the material once printed (Budapest Open Access Initiative). The aim of our study is to see the researchers' attitudes towards Open-Access publishing, now that they have had a few years to experience the effects of the initiative. Researchers are important information providers and the information pool they contribute to is of great significance to other researchers as references in their work. But the importance lies in that information publication is executed so that the work can be located, thus the question where you should submit your work comes to surface. And since the finding of pertinent Information is a great part of Library studies it would be of great interest to monitor the process and study the Open-Access initiative.

Purpose

Our goal with this study is to gauge the attitudes towards Open-Access publication amongst researchers in Sweden.

- How familiar are researchers with the Open-Access publication as a concept?

- Are there any factors that researchers perceive as being significant in their decision on whether or not to publish their work in open access journals? If so, in what ways do they perceive that these factors impact their decision?

Theory and definitions
Here we will try to define the concepts we will use in our study, foremost the concept of Open Access (O-A). O-A is a concept that can be applied in many fields not only in the matter of publishing research but also in areas of for example software distribution. Our paper will only discuss O-A in the relation to scholarly publishing. According to Ji-hong Park & Jian Qin, 2007 (p.57) the term O-A is the name given to Stevan Harnad's free access model that aims to make academic information and research freely accessible to all users, in electronic form. The cornerstone in this is the fact that O-A should be free of charge to the "reader". This has been made increasingly possible with the rise of the internet.This has drastically reduced the cost of publishing by eliminating printing and distribution costs almost altogether. This is in theory the ideal way to distribute articles and other materials since science often is funded by the state, through the universities although there are also researchers that are either privately funded or backed by corporations. The researchers have traditionally given their materials and the copyright to publishers of journals without monetary compensation. The publishers have then sold them back to the universities, in the form of a journal making them basically pay for the same materials twice (Sherrie S. Bergman, 2006, p.112).

The fact that some O-A journals charge a fee for publication to cover the small overhead they generate as an alternate way of founding for the O-A journals. The journal remains free to all who wish to access it, a core tenet of O-A publishing. The publication fee is often covered by the institution in some way or by research grant money, but in some cases the researchers have covered the fee themselves (Swan, Alma & Brown, Sheridan, 2004, p.32).

Method
Here we will explain what methods we have employed and the reason as to why we chose these particular methods in our study. We will also explain how we decided which informants to approach and literature to use.

We are well aware of the pros and cons that are present in qualitative studies, we understand that our interviews will not have any generalization value and to get this generalisation value the preferred way is to do a quantitative study, (Case, Donald O, 2002, p.182) thus we will partake of a larger study conducted in Swan, Alma & Brown, Sheridan, 2004 that gives us a look from a broader perspective. Our informants are not necessarily representative of the opinions or attitudes of all researchers in their respective fields. But we still think that it gives us a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind the researchers publishing decisions.

Working method and selection
We used a qualitative approach to our study and conducted three interviews. The researchers were interviewed in regard to their views and perception of O-A publication. Researchers from different institutions participated, a conscious move on our part to gauge any variations in attitudes that could be linked to the field they worked. We took notes during the sessions and later typed up an account of the interviews that we submitted to the interviewee for fact checking and a final approval. We thought that in doing a qualitative study we would get to see the publication process from the researchers' eyes, which might explain why some publish in O-A and why some will not. This is also the reason we interviewed researchers from different fields and of different dispositions. The researchers time were also a factor, as busy

as they are with research and teaching we had to scrounge whatever time we could get. The duration of the interviews varied from 15 minutes to one hour depending on how familiar the interviewees was with O-A.

We gave the interviewees our contact information so that they would have ways of contacting us to provide additional input if they deemed in relevant and to withdraw from the study whenever they pleased. Our informants' identity will be held confidential in order to protect their interests thus they will be given the following aliases Alex, Jack and Nina. Alex comes from the field of computer and engineering science, Jack from Molecular biochemistry and Nina from Library and Information science. The literature selection was done in order to cover our needs in establishing a background and an overview of the discourse in the O-A initiative. We also limited ourselves to three articles in order to be able to apply them in this restricted format. One of them (Swan, Alma & Brown, Sheridan, 2004) is fairly large and encompassing, the other two selected for their pertinence to specific questions posed in our purpose.

Literature and earlier research
In this part of the paper we will review some of the literature we have used in constructing our paper. And we will also try to give a picture of how the discussion is flowing, thus creating a context for our study.

Concerns
Many researchers are favourably disposed towards O-A publishing, but since they are authors, publishing and access to information is an important factor in their work they tend to have concerns or objections about. The main concern often comes down to the perceived lack of peer reviewing as in lowered quality, that it will cost money to publish in O-A, and that the preservation wont be sufficient and their articles might be lost in time. There are some issues concerning copyright when it comes to making your article available trough institutional repositories or placing it in other freely accessible public domains. Some publishers still have contracts which enable them to retain copyright on an author's work and thus putting a stranglehold on the information routes (Swan, Alma & Brown, Sheridan, 2004, p.11). Another concern is the worry that articles published electronically may not be permanently available, a concern that is especially valid in the O-A field it would seem since a printed copy not always exist. This was a minor theme in our interviews so we will not digress, but there are many different approaches and initiatives that address this issue, some of them in Hans Jansen's article Permanent access to electronic journals (2007).

Advantages of Open-Access and publishers response
As mentioned in New master, new rules by Rene Oliveri (2006) "any denied access must by definition be a hindrance to productivity" With this the author is trying to capture the main argument for O-A. O-A is a way to come down to the core values of academics, and creates a way to contribute to the spreading of advancements preventing work from being done twice and lifts the foundation on which others can build. It's also a way to reach out trough the boundaries set by the subscription costs, which may hinder the information being spread. Regarding O-A publication benefits, there is some circumstantial evidence suggesting that the number of O-A journal downloads is high and growing in comparison with restricted electronic journals were the readership is decreasing. The downloading figures might be misguiding though, since the download statistics can not say how the downloader is going to use the article. Citation would be a more meaningful measure, and according to (Swan, Alma

& Brown, Sheridan, 2004, p.10) Lawrence states that an article published in O-A is cited 4.5 times more then those that are not.

The publishers are reacting both defensively and offensively, the offensive approach is to make a strong case as to why they are important, and push for their marketing expertise that ensures the journals wide circulation. Knowing what the readers are after and want from the scholarly communication process and their smooth facilitation of the peer-reviewing process and administration in general are other arguments they often voice (Swan, Alma & Brown, Sheridan, 2004, p.11). Journal quality and publication speed are two important aspects as to where researchers publishes and in the publication process there are some stages of delay that might differ depending on where you publish. These delays are such as editorial work, acceptance in to the journal and final publication. Most periodicals track publication speed, when it was received, revised, accepted and published online or in print (Peng Dong & Marie Loh & Adrian Mondry, 2006, p.272).

Another argument that is raised by publishers is the fact that some O-A journals charge a fee from the author in connection to publishing. This is true, author fees are the primary source of funding for open-access publishing, the only other one being print copy fees. (William H. Walters, 2007) This they state should bring the O-A journals objectivity into question since they might be tempted to accept papers for publishing that are not up to standards just to get the publication fee. (Open-Access myths, p.6)

This is a very curious argument since the justification that is often given for increasing subscription fees are that the publishers publish more articles each year. This would put them in a similar bind that they accuse O-A journals of being in. No such conflict really exists for any form publishing for since authors choose to submit their work, and they choose journals with a reputation for good science since this is important for their academic track record. The system polices itself; journals that get a reputation for poor science would get no submissions. (Open-Access myths, p.6) Some commercial and non profit journals already have page charges on the author, so it is not unprecedented even in traditional commercial publishing (Peng Dong & Marie Loh & Adrian Mondry, 2006, p.273).

Archiving in Open-Access
There are two main ways to make your work available in O-A form, one is publishing directly in a journal, and the other way that is far more common is to self-archive your work in an institutional repository or make a copy available somewhere on the net. The article that is self-archived is often already published commercially when a copy is deposited somewhere by the author, the copy that is deposited is seldom identical to the one that was printed, usually it is the draft sent in for the final peer-reviewing that is made available through self-archiving. Many institutions demands that their faculty make their work accessible through O-A for teaching purposes and in the spirit of making public funded research freely available. The non centralised nature of self-publication can pose problems in retrieving tough, despite efforts at developing search engines in the field like the Open Archives Initiative-Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH). This attempt to impose rigor and order to facilitate the retrieval process in institutional repositories is praised by Anita Coleman (2007).

The process of setting up an O-A archive has been made relatively easy by the development of software and manuals and the adoption of shared technical standards dictated by the O-A initiative. O-A also makes it possible to implement more objective ways to measure impact, since the articles that can be cited is accessible to all, and not passed up or missed by

researchers because of lack of access (Chan, Leslie et al, 2005). There is another area that developed countries can profit from access to and that is for example all the primary data that is accumulated in some areas in developing countries, India's 100 years worth of epidemical studies for instance. (Chan, Leslie et al, 2005, p.5)

O-A also makes peer reviewing[1] more possible since the wealth of articles that may be needed for peer-reviewing is made freely accessible. The number of articles that needs to be read before peer-reviewing becomes possible is not always available to scholars in developing countries (Chan, Leslie et al, 2005, p.6)

One of the main concerns with O-A according to the publishers is the fact that it would undermine older commercial journals, and it was therefore met with resistance. There is little to validate this claim though, and most publishers today are favourably disposed to self-archiving, with somewhere in the area of 90% allowing it, explicitly in their publishing agreements or through a policy akin to "'don't ask don't tell"[2] (Anita Coleman, 2007, p.287).

This is an important find in the context of O-A self archiving since one of the biggest barriers that among others Anita Coleman (2007) have found is that researchers once published feels that the publishing agreement where they relinquished copyright does not give them the right to self-archive. But if the publishers are more or less benevolent towards self-archiving, the issue seems to be poor awareness on the part of the researchers as to what goes.

Interview findings
All of our informants are positive towards the O-A initiative, and thinks that it is good that the dependence on high cost subscriptions are reduced. Nina puts forward the ideal that O-A should always be free of charge, both to authors and readers instead of just readers. Nina and Alex thinks the fact that publishers continue to make massive profits from something that they put no real effort into or have any real overhead in is ludicrous. Researchers submit their work for publication without receiving any pay from the publishing houses and the review process and the editorial staff of commercial publications are made up of unpaid academics. Jack thinks that O-A will help to reduce the subscription fees or at least curtail their successive increase.

Of the three informants only Nina has published her work in an O-A journal. The reason Alex gives for his poor track record in O-A publishing is that there simply does not exist a O-A journal that is suitable in his field. Jack states that he is simply driven by habit in his publishing process and likes to use the same journals to publish in. While they all express a will to publish in an O-A journal, Nina, the only one to actually do so can not be limited to publishing only in an O-A journals.

The criteria for academic advancement, which in turn builds on the criteria for securing funding for different departments often demands that researchers publish their work in high profile, high ranking journals, that are almost exclusively commercial.

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[1] Peer-reviewing in the sense that the article is question is submitted to peer-reviewing before being accepted for publishing.
[2] Policy in the United States armed forces, gay personnel in the army is not officially allowed, but the policy in effect is that they do not ask about your sexual orientation and you do not volunteer any information about it.

Nina is critical of the system that is in place today to measure 'ranking' in the ISI citation database. The current system is based on the number of citations a journal gets in the ISI system, but there are some drawbacks to this system. One is the warped ranking journals in relatively small fields receives due to the fact that there are a small number of journals to choose from when selecting articles to cite. Journals in the big fields, like economics gets comparatively lower status ranking with the same quality material due to the sheer number of journals to choose from when citing.

Alex does not use conventional journals in his work, but gets information about articles, that he then reads, sometimes even before publication and feels that publishing in a journal has more to do with a show of academic prowess than real scientific goals.

Nina takes up another problem concerning commercial journals, and that is the fact that they are bound by a publishing cycle. They must put out an issue, usually on a quarterly schedule, and if they do not have the sufficient number of high quality articles to print a number, they lower their criteria for acceptance. Another drawback that worries both Nina and Alex is the fact that even after an article is written and peer-reviewed and has been accepted for publication, an entry in a high ranking journal that is bound by the publication cycle can take years to see print. A problem rising from this is that the contents of articles can be dated by the time they are published. O-A journals are not bound by the cycle, but publish as soon as they have the sufficient amount of articles, or vary the number of articles in an issue.

The informants had diverse requirements from their departments when it came to publishing their articles. Nina that is from another European country thinks that Sweden is very relaxed when it comes to publication. She had no real pressure to publish in high ranking journals or to publish that frequently to get tenure, something that both were issues when it came to her position at her 'home' university. The library at Nina's workplace had recently begun an initiative to archive articles published by staff, the only restriction being license agreements with publishers. Alex had no restrictions or responsibilities placed on him to publish in particular journals but had heard about the harsher conditions in other countries. Alex was concerned about the lack of directives regarding self-archiving from his department. Most of his colleagues self-archived, but not all, and he felt that some were reluctant on account of the fact that they had signed over their copy-rights to the publishers upon publication. Jack on the other hand had clear directives to archive his articles both somewhere online and in a printed copy in the university library after publication.

A question that Nina raises was whether or not we are too Eurocentric and overestimate the leading role of our own scientific community. She brought up the example of Chinas citation database, the only one except ISI that keeps citation records of their own scientific journals. We have no clear idea of the impact of articles in Chinese journals on their scientific community, important work can be published in China and be cited extensively and we would never know since the article would not leave the Chinese boarders. Lastly, Nina thinks that O-A is a great instrument to counterbalance the concept of "Power Law"[3], that is already in effect in economics. To prevent the same unbalance to enter the academic field she feels that O-A and distribution through the internet can play the role of the great leveller bringing equality of access to information.

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[3] Power law is originally a concept in economics that describes the inequality of the distribution of economic resources when compared to population size. It states that 20% of the earth's population controls 80% of all economic resources.

Analysis and Discussion
In this section we will analyse and discuss our findings, concerning O-A. We will mainly use our interviews as foundation for the analysis and discussion. We have structured the part around our three main questions as posed in the purpose and will analyse and discuss the questions successively.

Open-Access familiarity
Our informants were all familiar with the concept of O-A, but not necessarily the term itself. They where also all favourably disposed towards the O-A initiative, but they had varying levels of knowledge of what constitute the initiative. Publishing in O-A was something that they all could see themselves doing, but it was not always possible, due to different circumstances. A lack of knowledge of O-A journals in their particular fields, demands from faculty about publishing in high ranking journals, and various other concerns made publishing in O-A not always a viable choice.

What our informants needs are help in orienting themselves in the O-A environment, locating appropriate journals and maybe even help in starting journals up. Alex felt that the task of running O-A journals was something that took too much time from researchers other pursuits and suggested that this was tasks suited for the university libraries or other external parties. The researchers still need to perform the same tasks that they do under the commercial system, peer-reviewing, book reviews and so on.

Important factors in publishing decisions
When it came to the question of what would be required of O-A journals to facilitate publishing in them, the main concern our informants voiced was the same that they had when publishing in commercial journals. They were concerned about the status of the journal in question, not wishing to squander their work by publishing in an unknown journal that may lack the status to make their work noticeable and recognized. Nina had requirements imposed on her as previously mentioned to publish in journals of high rank and gather as much citations as possible to get continued tenure at one of her posts. So status was their main concern, and the lack of, or lack of knowledge of O-A journals that could provide them with this vital resource. The main ingredient in gathering the credibility and status that the researchers needs has been found to be time in the study conducted by Ji-hong Park & Jian Qin, (2007). So we can hope that with time the status and credibility of O-A journals will rise, sadly this is something that may not happen under the current system since it requires a leap of faith from researchers, something that untenured researchers are reluctant to do since they strive for tenure. Tenured researchers may be too fixed in their ways to change their publishing habits and seek out new journals and so the circle continues. The ways of measuring impact could be questioned since a measure of citation also could have flaws. As mentioned in the literature the citation count is a better measure than downloading count, but is it a good way of measuring? One problem could be, as Nina mentions huge differences in field size and that in small fields even mediocre articles could get a high number of citations. O-A could prove useful in the effort to remedy this.

Conclusions
In our paper we can see that researchers have a positive attitude towards O-A and that our informants are most interested in the concept even if they have not published in O-A yet.
The familiarity with the O-A concept varies a bit, something that showed in the length of our interviews, so further education might be needed, and the question is who should provide it remains unanswered. When it comes to publishing we think O-A journals needs time more

than anything to be able to provide the much coveted status that researchers need. Researchers fear the uncertain status of O-A journals or lament the non-existence of O-A journals in their fields. A way around this problem is built into the O-A initiative in the form of self-archiving, something that is practiced in most higher education institutions today. This is a way for researchers both to publish their findings in the trustworthy setting of old commercial journals that can provide them with the status they need and at the same time self-archive their article and get the greater reach and impact that comes with O-A's increased accessibility. We think that it is no coincidence that most publishers looks the other way or even have explicit policies that allows self-archiving, preventing O-A journals to gather the quality of articles they need to gather status and credibility. In countries were publishing in high ranking journals is not a requirement for continued tenure such as Sweden publishing exclusively in O-A journals seems more possible than abroad, because of our less competitive demands on the scholarly publishing of our researchers. O-A would also promote cooperation and help the international research community to grow, potentially advancing the rate of progress over the board. Instead of having a large portion of the scientific community doing ineffectual research, reinventing the wheel, we feel that real progress could be made with research being shared freely in the O-A model. This all builds on researchers' willingness to publish in O-A, journals with an O-A policy can not grow as long as researchers save their best work for the commercial journals and rely on self archiving. The system is built around the researchers efforts so only they can effect change, so the ball is effectively in their court.

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