



■ The 2nd SPARC Japan Seminar 2013

Latest Developments in Open Access in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Friday, August 23, 2013: National Institute of Informatics,
12th floor conference room (Attendees: 95)

The second SPARC Japan Seminar of 2013 was the first seminar to focus on open access in the humanities and social sciences. After presenters gave reports from their respective standpoints, on open access as seen by researchers and on trends in and outside Japan, they all joined in a panel discussion on the future of open access in the humanities and social sciences. This being the first time to venture into the topic area, the discussions touched on a wide variety of matters and continued to pick up momentum as they proceeded. It is hoped that this seminar will be the impetus for further attempts to delve into the issues of open access in the humanities. The seminar was attended by 95 persons in all, including university librarians, publishers, and researchers. See the SPARC Japan website (<http://www.nii.ac.jp/sparc/event/2013/20130823.html>) for the handouts and other details. A summary of the seminar is given below.

Open Access for Economics and Economists

Reiko Aoki (Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University)

In the specific field of economics, even before the appearance of open access journals, academic information was exchanged by means of working papers. As a means of open access, providing academic information free of charge is efficient since the information is not exclusive and does not get used up. From the viewpoint of economics, then, open access journals can be seen as a logical approach. Moreover, this model matches the interests of both the seller and buyer with their different standpoints in what economists call a “two-sided market,” and so the model works regardless of which side covers the costs. When the academic journal is seen as a two-sided market, it does not matter whether the cost burden falls on the issuer of the information or the recipient or both.

Research Method and Environment in History, and Open Access: A Study from the Perspective of a Researcher in Japanese History of Modern

Hitonari Ishii (Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University)

Traditionally historical research has tended to favor primary records such as original texts and handwritten manuscripts. Historical researchers, moreover, by their nature have an attachment to tangible historical records, which helps to explain their affinity for publishing culture. A preference for accuracy over speed of reporting is another feature of historical studies. For reasons like these, the needs for open access in historical studies cannot be regarded as high in general; but there are

signs of change. In the latter 1990s, for example, a shift could be seen from empirical toward interpretive studies. Since the latter put greater weight on guarantee of verifiability, interest began to turn toward access to authoritative information sources. Meanwhile, the technology was also changing, as primary sources became available on the web and the inclination grew to publish research outlines as working papers at an earlier stage than before.

Overseas Stream: Front Lines of OA in Humanities and Social Sciences

Martin Paul Eve (Open Library of Humanities: OLH)



1. Open access background and issues

During the same time that consumer prices in the UK were rising 80 percent overall, between 1986 and today, journal subscription prices increased 380 percent, to the point where journal subscription is no longer sustainable. While major publishers reaped huge profits, some researchers were no longer able to access academic journals. In addition there is the problem of journals becoming expensive due to their high reputation.

2. Issues for society

The process of papers being submitted, undergoing peer review, and gaining in reputation does not change even with the shift to open access journals. At the OLH, in keeping with our traditional approach, internationally renowned researchers and specialists are asked to serve as Academic Steering & Advocacy Committee members. While preserving quality through a conservative, traditional approach, our desire is to gradually bring about innovations at the point when their benefits become clearly visible.

Even as we continue to focus on publication of papers in the humanities and social sciences, we cannot ignore monographs, and therefore are planning to realize open access publication, in cooperation with four publishers, as a time-limited project of five years.

3. Technical issues

We are thinking about making it an “overlay journal,” picking outstanding papers from highly reputed journals, centering on specialists in certain fields, and overlaying these on a megajournal. Also, since there is a tendency among humanities researchers to worry about the permanency of digital preservation, we are thinking of using technologies like LOCKSS or CLOCKSS with their stability and permanency.

4. Financial issues

We estimate the cost of this project to be around US\$2.6 million over the five-year term, including the monograph publishing costs. Initially we plan to ask for contributions, and then will aim for self-sustaining operation.

Scholarly Information and /or Comprehensive Knowledge—UP's relevant Mission to Explore New Methodology

Tetsuya Suzuki (Kyoto University Press)

Kyoto University Press began an experimental project five years ago of offering published works for free on the Kyoto University Research Information Repository (KURENAI). When it comes to Green or Gold open access as a whole, the humanities are not necessarily lagging behind the natural sciences. There is a problem, however, in that despite the importance of scholarly works in the form of paper books for obtaining systematic and comprehensive knowledge, conventional academic publication did not meet that need. In deciding what to put in book form and what not to, the respective roles of books, journals, and open access need to be defined. Also remaining is the difficult task of establishing a business model for open access.

Panel Discussion

The Future of Open Access in the Humanities and Social Sciences

Moderator: Kuniyoshi Ebina (Graduate School of Human Development and Environment, Kobe University)

Panel members: Reiko Aoki (Institute of Economic Research, Hitotsubashi University), Hitonari Ishii (Graduate School of Social Sciences, Hitotsubashi University), Martin Paul Eve (Open Library of Humanities), Tetsuya Suzuki (Kyoto University Press), Kazuko Matsumoto (Information and Media Center for Science and Technology, Keio University)



Ms. Matsumoto began by presenting a diverse range of topics from the viewpoint of university libraries, including the status of humanities libraries, the approach of humanities scholars to resources, the current state of digitalization in these fields, and government efforts to promote open access to the results of research funding.

Next Mr. Ebina, the moderator, summarized each of the talks and issues raised, guiding the discussions while engaging the audience as well. Among the issues he noted were (1) The current state of open access: Do the humanities really lag behind natural sciences, and is it an issue of differences in research methods in different fields? (2) Purpose of open access: How should academic research be carried out and how should the results be returned to society? (3) Developing researchers, and (4) Scholarly communication: How should the differences between researchers and ordinary citizens as recipients of information be addressed?

Ms. Aoki suggested first of all that much of the discussion hinged on the kinds of expectations people had of open access, for example, whether the emphasis was on distribution of academic information, or on assessment of academic results, so that a more rational form of publication was called for.

Then Mr. Ishii noted that while history is a discipline that values accuracy over speed of reporting, there is also a need, as with grants-in-aid for scientific research, to make results public in stages, so that some see a high affinity between funded research results and open access.

Mr. Eve stated that despite the need for research results to be returned widely to society, the market in which academic information is traded is

monopolized by publishers.

Mr. Suzuki offered the view that the superiority of paper books is in the area of making discoveries; that is, while digital media are good for pinpoint searches, paper is better at leading to accidental discoveries. He suggested one solution would be to add navigation functions to open access.

Ms. Matsumoto pointed to the major problem of human resource development in library science as there are fewer such specialists today, noting that the training of not only researchers but also librarians is an issue.

The audience was actively engaged in the discussions, offering opinions and asking questions from the floor. To give just one example, someone asked from the floor whether there was not some method by which documents used as paper media could be reused cheaply either as open access or in digital form. In response, it was noted that digital and paper media are complementary, each having their own functions, and that the existence of a PDF actually raises the value of a paper book.

The latter half of the panel discussion took up the issue of literacy of the academic community and the general populace. This issue can be seen also as one of how to approach the recipients of open access.

Mr. Suzuki offered the view that literacy is necessary when clarifying what a book is for, and stressed the need for publishers to make concepts clear.

Mr. Eve pointed out that literacy will not improve without provision of information.

Mr. Ishii talked about the relationship of writers to information recipients. He noted that the recipients of information will be different depending on whether or not open access is assumed, and that authors would write differently with this in mind. He said that the consent of people involved is necessary in either case, whether a paper is to be limited to the academic community or is to be made widely open.

The panel discussion was a most fervent conversation, starting out with the fundamental topic of the purpose of open access and going so far as to discuss the issue of literacy while also highlighting various issues in open access in the humanities and social sciences.



-----Comment by one of the attendees-----

Impressions of the seminar

(person affiliated with university library and involved in academic journal editing)

- It was a good learning experience to hear about open access from multiple standpoints.

(person affiliated with a university library)

- The key points for library involvement in open access were presented clearly.
- Prof. Aoki's remarks about the two-sided market were of special interest. As she pointed out, we cannot decide who should bear the cost burden without clarifying our expectations for open access and its objectives. What also left an impression were the talk about the significance of books, the preference of the humanities for paper, and the point that authors would write differently depending on whether or not open access is assumed.

(university educator)

- I enjoyed participating in the discussions focused on the humanities and social sciences.
- I learned a lot from hearing talks by various people responsible for dissemination of academic information in the humanities and social sciences.
- I was able to get a clearer picture of the status of open access in these fields including overseas trends.

(university researcher)

- This was a valuable chance to hear such discussions from various aspects. I feel it might have been necessary also to present a comprehensive description of the situation. I get the impression that talk about digitalization and open access tend to get mixed together, and in that regard I found the presentation by Mr. Eve to be highly interesting.

(person in a corporation, involved in academic journal editing)

- I was expecting the talk about costs of open access to be from an economics standpoint, but it turned out to be different.

(person affiliated with a non-university library)

- Because the presenters each talked about different objects of open access, the focus was lost.

Other views and impressions of the seminar program

(person affiliated with a university library)

- I wish the topics had been more centered on the humanities and social sciences.
- The cost burden and business model for open access in the humanities is a concern.
- This is a valuable program in that it devotes the entire year to learning about open access.



-----Afterword-----

☺ The way discussions about open access keep growing and diversifying, I have to admit to being unable to get a good grasp of the situation. In this seminar, probably the first in Japan to focus on open access in the humanities and social sciences, perhaps more time should have been devoted to sorting out the themes. It was nonetheless a thrilling experience to listen to the frank views of people involved on the front lines of research, publishing, libraries, and open access publishing, and to be presented with a number of viewpoints that will lead us on to the next program.

(Natsuko Fukuda, Hitotsubashi University Library)

☺ Along with the planning for the seminar, what I enjoyed this time was preparing the fliers for it. We chose green as the basic hue representing the way open access in the humanities and social sciences will continue to

sprout. The cover design may look like leaf veins, but in fact it is not. The motif for the back cover is a certain summer vegetable.

(Akikazu Imamura, Waseda University Library)

☺ I agreed to this seminar without really knowing what open access is all about and, to be honest, I regretted it immediately. As I suspected, I ended up depending on Dr. Fukuda and Mr. Imamura for everything from the seminar preparations to the compilation of this newsletter.

What sticks with me is the approach to carrying forward a project. I have to say honestly that I never did get quite used to the idea of conducting a project by email contact only, without ever meeting face to face.

(Takashi Shimada, Head Office, Information and Media Center for Science & Technology, Keio University)