

Oxford Journals experience of open access publishing

As one of the first publishers to experiment with Open Access, Oxford University Press has been contributing to this controversial debate. Using Nucleic Acid Research (NAR), the largest journal owned and published by OUP as a test model, OUP has been exploring this new publishing model that might further the dissemination of research. In the presentation, a few years' result of OUP's attempt in finding out demand from researchers for open access, exploring how open access models might co-exist alongside subscription-based models, and understanding differences between disciplines on its viability will be explored.



Martin Richardson
(Managing Director, Academic Books and Journals, Oxford University Press)

Martin Richardson has held a variety of positions at Oxford University Press over the past 20 years. He is currently Managing Director of the Academic Books and Journals Divisions, where he is responsible for over 3,000 print and online publications across a broad range of subjects.

As a department of the University of Oxford, OUP is keen to experiment with new ways of increasing dissemination of research and educational material by employing new technologies and business models. Under Martin's leadership OUP began online journal publishing in the early 1990's and in 2000 launched the first of many online reference publications - the Oxford English Dictionary. In 2004 Oxford Scholarship Online was launched, providing a platform for the publication of OUP's extensive monograph programme.

Martin has represented OUP on a number of publishing industry organizations, including ALPSP, PLS and CrossRef. He is a regular speaker at conferences and has also published papers on various aspects of online publishing.

INTRODUCING OPEN ACCESS

Open access is a controversial issue in the world of scholarly publishing. Opinions are polarized and often spark debate. As one of the first publishers to experiment with open access, Oxford University Press (OUP) has contributed to this debate by sharing the results of their experiments in open access with the academic community. We hope that our research will contribute to an evidence-based approach for open access.

The University of Oxford's OUP has a strong imperative to explore any publishing model that might further the dissemination of research. In 2004, we embarked on a series of open access publishing experiments with a view to testing researchers' demand for open access and gradually developing an open access model that could co-exist alongside subscription models.

Most importantly, it is important that all stakeholders

understand that the costs involved in validating and disseminating research for publishing have to be borne by someone. Without the possibility of charging fees for subscriptions, for example, a common approach under an open access model is to cover publishing costs through author-side charges. The journal business model therefore shifts from reader-side to author-side payments.

Such a model may only be viable in certain disciplines depending on whether researchers have access to funding for publication costs. Therefore, understanding the differences between disciplines is another aim of our research. Our experiments with open access are grouped under the Oxford Open brand and can be broadly divided into two types.

The first is a full open access model where the entire journal is open access immediately upon publication.

The second is an optional open access model where

authors can decide whether or not to pay for immediate open access publication of their articles. An optional open access model is a hybrid between full open access and subscription-based access.

In a full open access model, we need to obtain the revenue that the journal requires for open access publishing through author charges. Nucleic Acids Research (NAR) is the largest journal published by the OUP. It serves as one of the few examples of a traditional subscription-based journal that has undergone a transition to full open access. A significant portion of the funds needed to cover publication costs now come from author charges.

Since 2005, all new NAR articles have been freely available online immediately upon publication.

Since we have already shared NAR's experience with the community, I will not discuss this further in this presentation.

In July 2005, we launched an optional open access model for approximately 20 OUP-owned journals across a wide range of disciplines. Since then, we have expanded the programme to include many journals published on behalf of societies, and today, approximately one-third of our journals participate in the Oxford open access initiative.

We decided to offer authors significant discounts on optional open access charges if they were affiliated to institutions that already had an online subscription to the journal. Further discounts were made available for authors from developing countries. At present, optional open access charges are the same for most journals participating in the Oxford open access initiative. However, this could change in the future; we may need to introduce different rates after taking into account each journal's cost structure and the level of open access uptake by authors.

UPTAKE OF OPTIONAL OPEN ACCESS

Across the 65 Oxford journals offering the Oxford Open option in 2007, the overall uptake was approximately 7%, which is very similar to the level of uptake in 2006 (Figure 1). The average uptake in the life sciences was, predictably, higher than in other subject areas given that the open access movement has a higher profile here, and funding is usually greater in the life sciences than in other areas of research. In 2007, the uptake for medical and mathematics journals was 5% and that for participating social science and humanities journals was just 2%. Access to funding to cover open access

Uptake of the Oxford Open option by subject Area in 2007				
Subject area	No. of journals	Articles published	Open access articles	Open access uptake (%)
Medicine	30	5799	289	5
Life Sciences	19	3609	388	11
Social Sciences and Humanities	13	598	14	2
Mathematics	3	614	29	5
Total	65	10620	720	7

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(Figure 1)

charges is likely to be limited in the latter subject areas. In the first half of 2008, we did not observe any material increase in the average uptake despite seeing an increase in the number of funding agencies that implemented open access policies (Figure 2). The uptake is higher than average for some journals in molecular and computational biology. In contrast, many journals are experiencing low than average uptake.

Open Access Uptake and the effect on 2008 online-only price			
OA Uptake 2006 (% pages)	No. of Journals	Actual online price change 2008 cf. 2007 (%)	Effective online price reduction due to open access (%)*
0	26	+8%	0%
1-5	20	+3%	-2%
6-10	6	0%	-8%
11-12	2	-3%	-18%**

* Compared with our normal pricing model
 ** these two journals had a -9% online price adjustment in 2007 due to open access uptake in 2005

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(Figure 2)

When we launched the Oxford open model we promised our customers that the online subscription charges for all participating journals would be adjusted after taking into account the proportion of content being published under the open access model. Our standard policy is to price the online and print subscriptions to our journals at 95% of the combined online and print price. In the case of journals with an open access uptake, we offer further discounts on the online-only price based on the amount of open access content published over the previous year.

In 2008, the average online-only price increase for 28 journals with open access uptake was just 1.7%, which is much lower than the average increase of 6.9% across

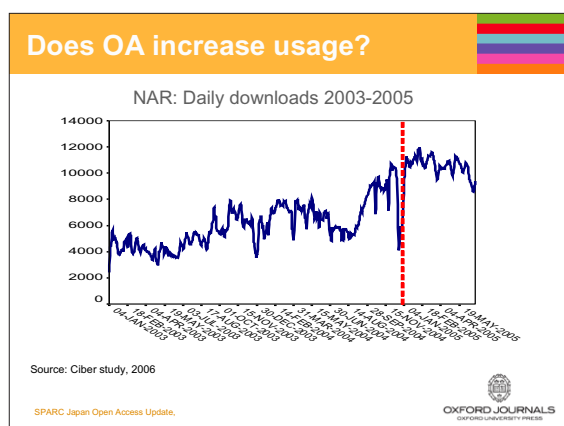
all titles.

This subscription pricing also depends on many other factors including variations in page extent, exchange rate adjustments, and open access uptake in previous years. The adjustments do not always result in an actual decrease in price from one year to the next. They may simply reduce the necessary price increase due to other factors.

However, taking all factors into account, Oxford Open titles have seen an absolute price reduction from 2007 to 2008. Five journals will see a reduction in subscription price in 2009. As yet, we have not analyzed what impact these price reductions will have on the number of subscriptions or whether there might be an open access uptake beyond which subscription attrition might accelerate; however, we are, of course, watching this very closely.

IMPACT OF OPEN ACCESS ON ONLINE USAGE AND CITATIONS

In order to check whether open access impacts online usage, we have been working with CIBER (University College of London, publishing group), looking at the usage trends of NAR and optional Oxford Open journals (Figure 3).



(Figure 3)

The red dotted line in this slide represents the time at which NAR became a full open access journal. CIBER concluded that by and large, online usage growth in recent years can largely be attributed to search engines. However, the move to full open access is estimated to have generated a further increase in online usage by approximately 7% or 8%. The CIBER group is currently analysing usage data for open access and non-open access articles in Oxford open journals.

There is much controversy over whether open access publication leads to an increase in citations. The results

of the 2006 analysis by LISU, based at Loughborough University in the UK, were inconclusive with respect to citations in three of our journals publishing open access articles. A recent report by Phil Davis, who looks at open access articles published in 11 journals from the American Physiological Society, concluded that there was no evidence of citation advantage for open access articles in the first year of publication. However, this is in contrast to the reports of increased citation impact due to open access, by Harnad, for example.

The hybrid subscription- optional open access model that I have described here has worked well for us over the past three years. Authors can decide whether to pay for their articles to be made available for open access and subscribers can choose to pay only for non-open access material.

So far, our experience suggests that no single models is likely to work across all the disciplines in which we publish. We therefore, foresee a future of a diverse range of models depending upon the community requirements of each journal.

FURTHER READING

I have only been able to give you a summary of the work that I have spoken about in this short presentation. I would request you to read the publications of our work for further information (Figure 4).

Further Reading

1. Oxford Journals' adventures in open access: from reader-side payment to author-side payment by Claire Bird *Learned Publishing*, Vol 21 Issue 2 (April 08)
2. Experimenting with Open Access publishing, Martin Richardson & Claire Saxby, *Nature* 2004
<http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/12.html#b1>
3. Assessing the Impact of Open Access – Preliminary Findings from Oxford Journals, June 2006
(http://www.oxfordjournals.org/news/oa_report.pdf)

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(Figure 4)