

## Transparency Roundtable - Key Points

- The Coalition has a commitment to Open Access (taken here to mean increased transparency to facilitate improved access to research publications and data).
- The Roundtable appeared to recognise that OA has the potential to bring significant benefits to the academic community and through its effective translation, the wider economy and society. What is also clear is that whilst a trend towards OA is developing, how we move from “here to there” remains a major challenge. The transition needs to be achieved without losing the advantages of the current arrangements (such as academic Peer Review in co-operation with publishers).
- New funding models are emerging but they also present the challenge of determining which is preferable. ‘Green’ and ‘gold’ are clearly different and whilst ‘gold’<sup>i</sup> may be more appealing, it is not clear, from an OA perspective, that it provides the best solution or is sustainable. We need to consider where costs should fall.
- More policy development work will be needed (including some cost benefit analysis of the possible options). The Royal Society/Learned Societies/RCUK/HEFCE/publishers may all have something to contribute towards arriving at a sustainable solution. Learned Societies can act as a ‘bridge’ between academia and the publishing sector.
- We will want to consider how we can best use the means to bring about change (including the REF, negotiations on improving the relevant EU directive and policy developments and proposals for the forthcoming White Paper on Higher Education) to push the issue forward in a collaborative way.

### Detail

- Access to the results of research should be a core principle. In this and other important respects (including the drive towards increased transparency and the greater use of repositories) approaches being adopted by Harvard and the UK Research Councils are similar.
- Experience at Harvard (and MIT) indicates that when given the opportunity to adopt an Open Access (OA) approach increasing numbers of academics would prefer to do so.
- There are possible savings to education (although total public sector cost is likely to be a ‘zero-sum’ game) and recognised benefits to SMEs experiencing difficulties in accessing data from universities (the opportunity cost due to lost innovation by SMEs has been estimated in one study to be £4m/firm). In the US the Committee for Economic Development has endorsed OA
- UK Research Councils (RCs) have policies on OA and have adopted the same approach to ‘green’ OA<sup>ii</sup>, with embargo periods in the range of six to twelve months. Examples of good practice include the Economic and Social Research Councils (ESRC’s) ‘Research catalogue’ repository and BBSRC/MRC/ Wellcome Trust’s UKPubMed in the life sciences.
- Future development in the UK (and elsewhere) will include the use of appropriate search engines to help users to ‘mine’ the required information from repositories and other OA sources to help users to cope with the growing volume of publications at their disposal.<sup>iii</sup> This will also help in monitoring compliance – a key issue.

- The Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE) will be determining how increased transparency and 'green' OA should feature for evaluation within the Research Excellence Framework (REF). It is recognised that criteria should be sensitive to the nature of the research, since 'one size may not fit all', such as the length of embargo periods in different disciplines before material is required to be published through repositories, and different publishing traditions such as primary use of monographs rather than journal.
- It was acknowledged that the RCs are important as funders but that the greatest impact on promoting OA might be derived from Universities requiring OA. The REF may be the right mechanism for encouraging universities towards this approach. In addition in the arts and humanities sector the Arts and Humanities Research Council is a minority funder, others such as HEFCE have more influence.
- The UK is already experiencing some success with OA as evidenced by the Wellcome Trust's 50 per cent compliance rate for its PubMed Central site and its requirement for research outputs to be published within six months. If all papers went to OA, the cost to WT would be an estimated £10 million or 1.25 per cent of its research budget.
- Although there has been commitment to the 'green' model there was some doubt as to how well this is being maintained in practice and concern about continuing difficulties for smaller universities and colleges being able to afford access. There was also some question as to how effectively the 'green' model adequately compensated the publisher compared to 'gold'.
- Need to work with the publishing industry so that the value added service it provides (which includes administration of peer review, quality control of presentation and an assurance of credibility and due recognition) continues to form part of a scaleable and sustainable business model without placing an unacceptable OA cost burden on the author/funder.
- The prime benefit of OA should not be seen to be the reduction of publishing costs (which may be possible through more efficient processes) but instead, the wider benefit to the UK (and global) economy resulting from increased communication and translation of knowledge.
- For research undertaken in the public interest it would be reasonable to assume that an element of the research funding should be for OA publication. The cost to researchers /funding agencies could, under some approaches, be prohibitive. It is not clear that, in the taxpayers' interests, there has been sufficient negotiation between parties to their mutual advantage. The UK Research Council funding mechanisms through Full Economic Costing does provide the means to fund OA.
- We face a period of transition in which it will be necessary to avoid cannibalising or de-stabilising the current system (including Peer Review) during which the greatest rate of progress is likely to be achieved through collaboration.
- Need to consider the global picture. In the US research from publicly employed researchers is published and the Federal Government is understood to be broadly supportive. China has experienced significant growth in publications; chemistry alone has increased five fold since 1996. China now produces 50 per cent of the world's papers in chemistry, but Chinese authors may not be able/or prepared to pay for 'gold' access, although it was pointed out that Hong Kong has an OA policy. In Australia a university with an OA mandate had noticed that its funding from industry was increasing at twice the national rate, which it had concluded was largely attributable to 60-70 per cent of its research output being OA and therefore more accessible.

- Data is an important and potentially an even more challenging area for OA than publications. The Royal Society is about to establish a group to look at openness and data sharing with regard to the Freedom of Information Act (which requires disclosure). Consideration is also being given, by the Ministry of Justice, to the Data Protection Directive which relates to personal data. ONS stated that under the Statistics and Regulation of Services Act that there is a presumption of release for data. RCUK has recently adopted principles for access to research data.
- The issue of OA becomes one of how best to manage the transition from where we are now to an OA world in a sustainable way, but, even the present arrangements are not sustainable. It is not clear which model to adopt. The reader pays model is a problem in terms of not having free access, but the author pays ('gold') approach may be more expensive overall for the UK and not pursued internationally.

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<sup>i</sup> The gold route is a business model whereby the author or her funder pays the publisher to make the article freely available through their journal on open access immediately on publication. Many publishers now operate this business model for new journals, which is of course dependent on research authors being adequately funded by their research grants to cover this up-front cost. This is more problematical on the humanities side than on the science and medical side, as a smaller proportion of such research is Research Council funded, where such costs can be claimed. Many more publishers operate what has become known as a 'hybrid model' whereby some articles are available immediately on open access if the author is able to fund the publication fee. If not, the article is published alongside the rest of the journal that is made available on subscription. The subscription price of the journal is adjusted in proportion to the number of open access articles in the mix. This model is likely to gain ground rapidly as funding agencies require that researchers funded by their grants should publish on open access.

<sup>ii</sup> The green route involves posting a version of the article in a repository, managed on a subject basis by such as the Wellcome Trust or on an institutional basis by such as the University of Southampton. Many publishers permit through their contract for publication research authors to post a version of the peer-reviewed manuscript in a repository, usually with a time delay (a so-called 'embargo') so as not to undermine the 'time' value of the subscription journal. This model is being further discussed within the publisher community and may be applied more systematically in the future, based around embargos applied by subject or even by journal in line with the half life of access to the subscription journal. In other words, the access cost will be discounted over time, but on a variable basis. The PEER project, now in its third year and funded by the European Commission, is an observatory designed to test the dynamics of access via repositories, and the impact on the existing system.

<sup>iii</sup> The annual growth rate is about five per cent, on a baseline of over one million publications per year, meaning that some assisted searching for publications is necessary. Fortunately, the cost of storage is falling.