

***SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING AS SEEN BY THE
ACADEMIC COMMUNITY: THE FUNDERS WILL
DECIDE***

Anthony Watkinson

Principal Consultant CIBER Research

anthony.watkinson@btinternet.com

anthony.watkinson@ciber-research.eu

THE FUNDERS WILL DECIDE

Plan

This revised presentation falls into two parts:

- **THE FUNDERS WILL DECIDE**
- **WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY**

The second will relate the first but it is by no means an exact fit. The views expressed about funders are my own and not the result of research by CIBER.

THE FUNDERS WILL DECIDE

Why the title?

- This comment below to Bas is what led him to give me this title.
- ***“Publishers have always argued that in the end the researchers who publish in their journals will decide whether or not the journal continues. They can always stop submitting. We now know that there is a higher power - the funders.”***_
- When I wrote this I was thinking of my own belief expressed in Watkinson, Anthony. "Open Access: A Publisher's View." *LOGOS: The Journal of the World Book Community* 17 (2006): 12-21 and why I can no longer embrace it.

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Sources (1)

This is a list of sources which indicate what Funders (government mainly) have announced or have implemented already within the EU and excluding the UK

- http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/GRC/2013/2013_1030_GRC_European_OA_JC%20Kita_REVISED.pdf
recent European survey showing that most EU countries favour gold and green
- <https://www.societyofbiology.org/about-us/committees/research-dissemination-committee/rdc-activities>
Lots of important presentations especially one by Barbara Kalumenos
- <http://www.government.nl/documents-and-publications/parliamentary-documents/2014/01/21/open-access-to-publications.html>
Dutch government favour OA and visualise ten year

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Sources (2)

- **These are the sources for the special and very visible case presented by the UK**
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/public-access-to-publicly-funded-research>
Speech by David Willetts to UK parliament sets out policies
- <http://www.researchinfonet.org/finch/> All the Finch documents showing how the pro Gold policies have worked out so far
- <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Open-access/Policy/index.htm>
Wellcome is the biggest individual funder in the UK and are now enforcing their mandate. It extends to books
- <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/library/open-access/rcuk-imp-guide.shtml#guiding>
A major UK university follows government policy but does not commit all staff to enforced OA publishing. The word is “educational”

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Sources (3)

Here is the thinking in the EU: this is just one example and some other examples give much more emphasis on the open agenda as an end in itself

- <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>
- EU emphasis is not dissimilar: here is the Horizon 2020 introductory blurb:
- Seen as a means to drive economic growth and create jobs, Horizon 2020 has the political backing of Europe's leaders and the Members of the European Parliament. They agreed that research is an investment in our future and so put it at the heart of the EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.
- By coupling research and innovation, Horizon 2020 is helping to achieve this with its emphasis on excellent science, industrial leadership and tackling societal challenges. The goal is to ensure Europe produces world-class science, removes barriers to innovation and makes it easier for the public and private sectors to work together in delivering innovation

There is also an emphasis on informing the people in general and working with them

THE FUNDERS WILL DECIDE

some general thoughts

Here are some generalisations which relate particularly to the UK and within the UK particularly to the funding councils

1. The emphasis is on research to create national revenue not to increase knowledge as such and after all this knowledge is being paid for by the taxpayer
2. Contact with actual researchers has been minimal in creating policy. This is more true of the UK than it is (say) in Germany. For an expansion of this assertion see the last slide
3. The civil servants responsible are supremely confident that they are right in all they are planning and of course they could be right.
4. They aim for an integrated system – a totally OA system and transition to this system should be as quickly as possible.
5. They are very cautious about explaining the mechanics of the new system and what publishing will look like

THE FUNDERS WILL DECIDE

Response from the UK Academy?

- During the last few years the OA agenda seems to me to have moved from access to knowledge by disadvantaged members of the research community worldwide (OA gratis) to a policy of benefit to the local EU or national economy (OA libre). Re-use is now central and embodied in the CC BY licence. There is no dichotomy necessary here but it is a change in rhetoric.
- Are researchers worried and should they be worried? On the whole researchers aim to expand knowledge by solving research questions.
- As yet few concerns have emerged except in the humanities... it would seem <http://www.britac.ac.uk/openaccess/debatingopenaccess.cfm>.
- In the sciences there have been some muted concerns about losing control of data but on the whole OA libre in research publications has been tacitly accepted. BMC for example have used CC BY for years and no-one has complained or refused

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY

Rationale

- The second part of this presentation relates to the Trust project: http://www.ciber-research.eu/download/20140115-Trust_Final_Report.pdf
TRUST FINAL REPORT TO THE FUNDER DECEMBER 2013. We think of this as Phase One.
- I shall pick out aspects of the research which I think are relevant to the theme of this section: primarily attitudes to publishers, librarians and funders. Publishers and librarians see themselves as facilitating scholarly communication. Government and funders see themselves as paying for the whole show as indeed they do.

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY

The project

- Funded by Sloan foundation
- Principal investigators Professor David Nicholas CIBER and Professor Carol Tenopir UTK
- Three stages: focus groups (15), interviews (87), and survey (3650 responses)
- This focus groups and the interviews were with US and UK researchers but other researchers covered in the survey
- Most academic contacts came through major publishers including open access publishers and their comparative skills at finding interviewees determined samples. We had more social scientists than scientists but did not want applied scientists including clinicians or humanities scholars
- The publishers involved were Sage, Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Wiley, PLOS One, Biomed Central and (in the US) Thomson. They had no influence on the questions or the interpretations
- Ten papers in the process of being submitted for publication

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY

The purpose of the project

The title was **Trust and Authority in Scholarly Communications in the Light of the Digital Transition**

- The assumption was change was likely to have happened and be happening and there was a lot of interest in social media
- The report talks of “largely user led”, of “treading very carefully” and “shifting sands” and the purpose of the focus groups and then the interviews was to establish nuanced questions
- The interviews included critical incident analysis of citation practice which was seen as central to research practice and communication

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY

Key conclusions of the project

This is a simplified background

- Researchers continue to prefer traditional information evaluation practices dictated by their discipline specific research work conventions – peer reviewed journals
- There is a continued distinction between formal and informal scholarly communication. Social media has not taken over though used more for ideas among social scientists
- There was an increased confidence among researchers in personally judging information using experience and this was greater in the USA and Europe than in emerging countries.
- There was great importance in one's own circle of trust and information overload was avoided because information about what is worth reading etc came from people one knew

Actually the remaining slides do not represent central themes for the project

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT PUBLISHERS

Perhaps surprisingly publishers were generally accepted as part of the ongoing picture. The deconstruction agenda was hardly mentioned (but see below – the section on transformation). A few serious scholars preferred to support learned society publishers but Elsevier mentioned by name was seen as professional and publishing top journals and even editors of OA journals published in them - in spite of the regular perception of a company with too high profits. Publishers were needed to run peer review in an independent way but they should not only be quicker in their processes but improve standards. There was little knowledge or discussion of the mechanics of publishing except when journal editors were present at focus groups

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT OPEN ACCESS

There was a lot of discussion about open access. Some researchers were hostile and imputed poor peer review but most were happy certainly to read, usually to cite and sometimes to publish in the OA journals. Experience sometimes overcame opposition. Interestingly if a well known publisher had an OA journal it was regarded more positively. Quite strong opposition was partly age related but more frequently because of the impact of predatory OA journals which muddied the waters. This was often mentioned – getting several invites a week. A few felt it was wrong to have to pay (vanity publishing) and more were upset by the prices charged - <http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uczciro/ciber-pa-report.pdf> showed that very few would pay more than \$500 but though that was 2004 it still came up in the 2013 questionnaire. Almost everyone felt that OA was good in principle and good for increasing knowledge and reaching more people (particularly in developing world). PLOS One was overwhelmingly approved of and no-one mentioned negatively its peer review policy.

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT LIBRARIANS

Librarians were rarely mentioned. There was some nostalgia over past visits. There was no overt recognition that they paid for the journals. There investment in discovery tools was not mentioned as people went in to publisher sites via Google Scholar (particularly). Investment in alternative publishing and data curation not visible at all. A few knew about repositories and the green model but it was few. Subject repositories (invariably PMC) much more mentioned.

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT FUNDERS

Successful researchers complained about any outside organisation that prevented them from publishing where they wanted and this complaint included funders – but they were not mentioned as representing barriers to productivity unlike http://www.publishingresearch.org.uk/documents/overcoming_barriers_report.pdf

where the question was raised directly.. Funders and their policies were in fact rarely mentioned. As far as mandates were concerned the insistence on publishing in high impact journals not ones directed at the most appropriate audience was much more disliked than demands to publish OA.

Pressure to publish was seen as increasing all the time and there were frequent complaints about the REF (UK) and the tenure system (US). REF is still seen as judging by impact factor in spite of all protestations to the contrary

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT TRANSFORMATION (1)

The transformation of the current (broken) system of scholarly communication is central to future aims of many outside the research community but it was rarely mentioned (not all in the interviews but in a few of the focus groups) by researchers. Here however are two free comments from the questionnaire:

"Academia of today is a pyramid scam where a few big older names feed upon a much larger mass of doctoral students, post docs and junior faculty"

"If a young independent author tries to publish something controversial and challenging, he is mercilessly shot down by the referees, regardless of how clueless they are how inane and ignorant their comments"

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT TRANSFORMATION (2)

It was very difficult to find any sort of proposals to mend the system but here is one:

There was suggestion for a clearinghouse of learned people to expedite the process and give greater continuity of comments. "An international clearing house should be started that test publishers and journals before they enter the market with new products that no -one really needs"

There are echoes here of the deconstruction theories of the early Raym Crow (2002) -

<http://digitalcommons.bepress.com/repository-research/27/>

But no mention at all of the open agenda as a whole (not just scholarly outputs in the form of journal articles but data, lab notebooks and books).

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA (1)

It was built in to our research proposal that it would be likely that social media as part of digital transition would be part of changing scholarly communication – based on previous research e.g. Rowlands I, Nicholas D, Russell B, Canty N, and Watkinson A. Social media use in the research workflow. *Learned Publishing*, 24(3), July 2011, pp.183-195. The reality surprised us and because the reality is important I have included the following slide

WHAT RESEARCHERS SAY ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA (2)

- As already mentioned social media remained part of informal communication. In science we do not see this as changing soon
- Moreover among many researchers and not only scientists social media was not used at all in informal communication though they might talk about future use. Our conclusion was that change was expected but not yet
- Reasons given centred on the concept of “noise”
- Social media was not part of the way that top scholars worked and was not worth bothering about.
- Some social scientists did not work like this but not all and some younger researchers but not all
- It was also clear in research groups there was usually someone out there blogging and tweeting
- Only in outreach was its use recognised by all especially influence with the UK REF demands for “impact”

CONCLUSION

My picture is that funders including particularly government may be producing policies which are at variance with the way researchers are doing research. They do research to increase the store of knowledge and they communicate primarily to their peers. One can argue that ego/funding etc is actually the real reason but my view is that the denial of actual interest in the subject can be done overdone

During APE 2014 David Sweeney admitted that when he referred to concerns of the research community over double dipping it was not reflecting interaction with learned societies but with university hierarchies. How much does university administrations reflect the researchers they employ?

Researchers are very resilient and may well adjust: will new policies help them or hinder them? What will be the shape of the future and how will publishing look? Publishing is valued and embodies values.

Will the money be available in the transition to an open access future? If a green solution re-invents publishing how will that be financed?

Researchers like society as a whole expect their modes of communication to take advantage of the functionality of the web and the availability of that functionality is always increasing and costs.