

November 2006

Open Access: Walking the Talk

Richard Gedye

Oxford University Press, richard.gedye@oxfordjournals.org

Follow this and additional works at: <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/atg>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gedye, Richard (2006) "Open Access: Walking the Talk," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 5, Article 14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.5014>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

Open Access: Walking The Talk

by **Richard Gedye** (Sales Director, Journals Division, Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK; Phone: +44-(0)1865-353785) <richard.gedye@oxfordjournals.org>
www.oxfordjournals.org



From all sides of the academic spectrum, a debate of vastly varying opinions continues over the future of scholarly publishing under an open access model. As more journals begin to experiment with open access, I've compiled here some views on the viability of open access as a long-term business model in the future.

Oxford Journals On Open Access — Some Hard Evidence

We've very recently published findings into the effects of open access on our journals. **Claire Saxby**, Senior Editor, **Oxford Journals**, carried out a large scale survey into the views of authors and readers on *Nucleic Acids Research (NAR)* under a full open access model. **CIBER (University College, London)**, and **LISU (Loughborough University)** have also conducted research using our open access content to evaluate effects on user behaviour, usage and citations. All three reports are available to download from the **Oxford Journals Website**: http://www.oxfordjournals.org/news/oa_report.pdf.

I'll return to **Oxford Journals'** views on the future for open access shortly, but first of all I wanted to consider the other key parties who are affected by the open access model, and what their thoughts on the future of the model might be.

The Readers' Perspective: It's Free, and It's Getting Used

As a publisher it's not always easy to hear directly from our readers and gauge their opinions. But it's pretty clear from the experiments we have conducted that readers are using open access content, and journals moving to an open access publishing model do see noticeable changes in user behaviour. Open access articles show higher access and usage compared to subscription articles in the same journal volume.

The model also seems to affect the type of content downloaded, with PDF versions of open access articles being downloaded more than abstracts, and users suggesting preference for PDF over full text HTML.

From these findings, readers seem to be benefiting from having open access content available, and it's likely that they would be the group most in favour of an open access model continuing in the future. There certainly don't seem to be any obvious downsides to the model from the readers' perspective. Interestingly though, some of the findings above also show that there can be benefits to authors, librarians, and publishers from changing reader behaviour, as usage is driven up — surely the one thing we all want to achieve, regardless of our role in the scholarly communication chain.

The Author's Perspective — Some Gains But Some Questions Too

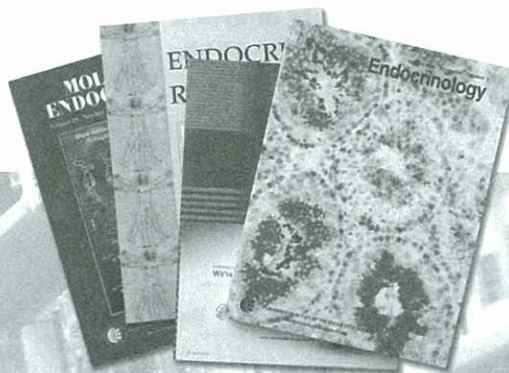
Authors want to achieve faster, wider dissemination of their research, and also increased citations through open access, and the findings above show that more papers are being read more quickly under this model. The results of the *NAR* author survey suggest that the majority strongly support an open access model.

Interestingly, from the results of the **LISU** experiment, there are also knock-on benefits to other subscription content by open access publishing: the experiment revealed that there was also an increase in downloads of subscription articles published in the same journal issue as open access content. So even authors not publishing open access can apparently gain from the model.

It's not a simple "all in favour" for this group however. Firstly, from the results of the **LISU** study, there was, as yet, no conclusive evidence to show that authors receive a higher level of citations through open access publication, so this particular wish has so far not been conclusively achieved.

continued on page 80

Four ways TO ENHANCE your collection.



Get your free sample copies of these four highly-regarded journals: *Endocrine Reviews*, *Endocrinology*, *Molecular Endocrinology* and *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. The Institute for Scientific Information rates these four journals among the most important in the field of endocrinology. And they are ranked in the top 5% of 5,968 journals in citations. These journals are more relevant than ever:

- Featuring improved readability
- Access to manuscripts online within days of acceptance
- Free online journal archives

Take this opportunity to review the four most prestigious, peer-reviewed journals for endocrinologists in the world. For free!

Order your sample copies today. Email your request to: societyservices@endo-society.org or call 888.363.6762.



Email your request to: societyservices@endo-society.org to order your sample copies.

More data needs to be collected over a longer period of time to see what effect open access might have on citations.

In addition, the same authors in the *NAR* survey who were mainly in support of an open access model also answered that they would publish in the journal even if it were not open access; in other words they value the quality of the journal more highly than publishing in an open access journal.

There were other more surprising results from the *LISU* and *CIBER* experiments that may cause reflection from authors: firstly the increase in usage of open access journals is not as high as may have been expected, in fact there is strong evidence to suggest there are several factors driving up online usage, including search engines, and that open access is just a small factor.

Google began indexing the full text of all our journals in June 2003. *NAR* became fully open access in 2005. The rise in downloads of full text articles from *Nucleic Acids Research* after Google began indexing it was much greater than the rise in downloads once it became open access in 2005 (see "Assessing the Impact of Open Access" Report at http://www.oxfordjournals.org/news/oa_report.pdf).

The Journal Editor's Perspective — A Worthwhile Move for the Promotion of Science

Mary Traynor is Managing Editor of one of our partial open access journals, the *Journal of Experimental Botany (JXB)*. *JXB* first moved to optional open access for primary research papers in July 2004. It was a decision not easily made, and there was some resistance, but it was felt that open access was a worthwhile move (for the promotion of science) and something that the journal wanted to support. Even before the move to open access, there were concerns over the sustainability of business models in the future, so trying out open access was seen to be a good move. The journal also hoped that open access might encourage citations, and make *JXB* even more of a "must have" journal.

I spoke to Mary about the effects open access had had in practice, and whether she had seen any noticeable changes in attitudes towards the journal from within the editorial board, and also from readers and authors.

So far, Mary felt that the experiment had progressed almost as they had expected and hoped it would do. Around 30% of *JXB*'s primary research papers are open access, and there has been no significant difference in subscription uptake so far.

The lack of evidence to date that open access increases citations is, from Mary's perspective,

JXB, at least for the time being, will remain under this optional author-pays model: there are no plans to move to full open access. The main reason for this is that *JXB* is charging very low open access rates (£300 standard, and £250 discounted for members with institutional access), and income from this alone would not be enough to support the journal. It's hoped that if open access grows, the journal will be able to reflect this change in revenue by having a more realistic open access charge while lowering subscription prices — something that will also be reflected in the subscription costs for all our open access journals. This has already been implemented for 2007; the subscription prices of three journals in the **Oxford Open Initiative** (*Bioinformatics*, *Carcinogenesis*, and *Human Molecular Genetics*) have been adjusted to reflect how much original research material was made freely available in the first phase of the initiative.

So back to the big question: what will we be making freely available to all library collections in the future and what will continue to be sold only to those paying a subscription fee?

The results above seem to suggest that making a journal freely available does impact on its usage. So in turn, what does this mean for librarians and the journal collections of the future?

There are two things to consider: firstly, will there be enough take up of open access in **Oxford Journals** in the future to significantly affect how we sell our content to you, and secondly, will libraries continue to subscribe to journals even if much of the content in them is free?

Clearly, it is difficult at this stage to draw any firm conclusions from our own open access results: it's still too early in the experiment to see the long term effects of open access on usage, and much more data needs to be collected.

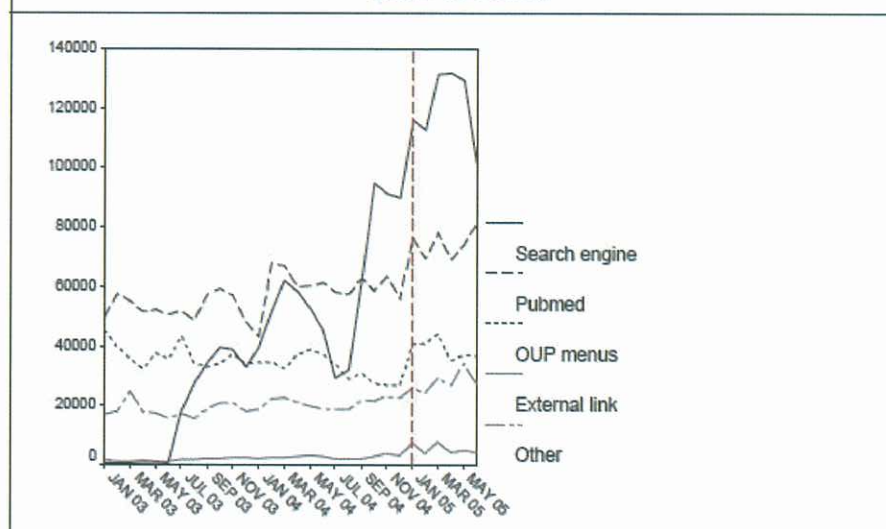
As far as **Oxford Journals** is concerned, our approach to open access has been one of responsible experimentation: as part of **Oxford University Press**, one of our core remits is to make the highest quality research available to the widest possible audience, and a route that seemingly offers that, like open access, is compelling. At the same time we're not in a position to put our business at risk — any new business models that we move into must be financially viable. The flip side of this is that we're in a much better position to experiment with new models than smaller independent publishers, and it's for this reason that we've been more than happy to share the results of our experiments with the community, to increase knowledge and understanding of open access, and to provide hard evidence into the effects it has on our journals and their consumers.

We will use this evidence to help direct us, and other publishers, towards a viable business model for the future. Part of this may indeed include open access, but if the current trends continue this will not be for all journals within our collection. In a perceptive address at last year's **Charleston Conference**, Rick Anderson referred to Open Access as a "boutique phenomenon." Our experience so far seems to confirm this. The take up of open access in our journals is mixed, and very much split by disciplines: there has been a much greater interest in open access from the biomedical sciences than in any other subject area, and even within disciplines the take up seems to vary widely from journal to journal. **Oxford Journals** will be publishing the first full year of data from its optional open access model, **Oxford Open**, over the summer, so that will again

continued on page 81

Nucleic Acids Research Full Text Downloads Jan 2003-May 2005

Figure 30 Monthly movements of article use by referrer groups - 2003 to 2005.



The dotted red line marks the point at which *NAR* became fully open access.

Also, there seemed to be significant variation in the position taken by institutions (for *NAR* authors at least) as to whether funds are made available for publication charges, and whether open access publishing is encouraged. There are obvious implications here for the long-term viability of this model. While there are positive benefits for authors, there are numerous questions that need to be answered to decide how successful and beneficial an open access model is for this group.

a little disappointing. But with *JXB* Mary notes that the majority of authors currently choosing to publish open access are mainly authors at the start of their career, rather than the well-established, more prestigious authors who would be more likely to gain high citations. Mary thinks that a change in the type of authors submitting open access that may come with higher awareness of the model in the future will change this. More data across a longer period of time will show whether this is the case.

Introducing Springer eBooks

Spend less time searching and more time researching.

- ▶ More than 3,000 New eBooks and eReference Works Every Year
- ▶ Ownership Business Model
- ▶ Unlimited Simultaneous Use
- ▶ Grouped in 12 subject specific Online Libraries
- ▶ Collection comprises Textbooks, Monographs, Handbooks, Major Reference Works, and more

**VISIT
NOW!**

012383x

Open Access: Walking The Talk from page 80

help to show what is happening with uptake across all disciplines.


Availability of funding will be another key factor in the uptake of open access in the future. Who is to say whether the attitudes of institutions and funding bodies to open access will stay the same, or whether there will be an increased impetus towards providing money to pay for open access, in turn pushing up the number of open access papers published, and the usage of these papers. I think it's very likely that we will see some change in this area, particularly as more evidence into the effects of open access for authors and research itself becomes more widely available, but nothing is certain, and again I think we can expect wide variation between subject areas.

My only real prediction for the future is that libraries will need to continue paying, at least in part, for journal content, to ensure that users can continue to get access to content where open access is not taken up, and where extra content and functionality beyond primary research (as is the case for *JXB*) is on offer: the likelihood, in the short term at least, is that a subscription model will continue to operate for a large part of our journal content, and it's my tentative prediction therefore that the collection we provide to you in the future will still be subscription-driven.

Even if open access does start to have a higher take up, libraries can, and no doubt will, continue to play a significant role in subscribing to journal content to benefit their research-

ers financially. We charge two rates for publishing open access papers: a standard charge and a reduced charge for authors from subscribing institutions (see <http://www.oxfordjournals.org/oxfordopen/> Librarians questions and answers for further details on this). Librarians can support their authors in publishing open access by continuing to take out subscriptions, thereby opening up the lower rate to them. If the uptake of open access rises, librarians will notice a decrease in subscription costs to jour-

nals, but I suspect that, in the short term, this is not likely to be significant.

I'm sure I'm not alone in my belief that a future model of scholarly journals publishing is far from fixed. In fact what seems to be emerging is that there will be a number of business models all operating simultaneously, to try to benefit all of those people we work with as best we can. Open access is just one of many possibilities on offer. 

United States Periodicals Service		Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation	
1. Publication Title AGAINST THE GRAIN		2. Issue Frequency Quarterly	3. Filing Date 10-1-06
4. Issue Number for this Issue 4		5. Number of Issues Published Annually 4	6. Annual Subscription Price \$10/ISS/870
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4) PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408		8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer) PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408	
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Not printer) Publisher: Dr. Bruce Strunk, PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408 Editor: Dr. Bruce Strunk, PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408 Managing Editor: Dr. Bruce Strunk, PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408		10. Owner (Do not leave blank. If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a sole proprietor, give the name and address of the proprietor.) Owner: Dr. Bruce Strunk, PO Box 1000, Charleston, SC 29408	
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owring or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none, check box <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None		12. Tax Status (For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at nonprofit rates) (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: <input type="checkbox"/> Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months <input type="checkbox"/> Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (Publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)	
13. Publication Title AGAINST THE GRAIN		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below 10-1-06	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run) 2,350		b. Extent and Nature of Circulation 1. Paid and/or Requested Circulation 2,350	
2. Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b1 and 15b2)		3. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b1 and 15b2)	
4. Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)		5. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15c1 and 15c2)	
6. Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15c1 and 15c2)		7. Total Distribution (Sum of 15b3 and 15c3)	
8. Copies not Distributed		9. Total (Sum of 15b3 and 15c3)	
10. Payment of Postage and Fees (Carriers or other means)		11. Publication of Statement of Ownership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Publication not required	
12. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Dr. Bruce Strunk, Publisher		13. Date of Signature 9-20-06	
I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).			

Instructions to Publishers

- Complete and file one copy of this form with your postmaster annually on or before October 1. Keep a copy of the completed form for your records.
- In cases where the publisher or printer is a foreign entity, include in item 10 and 11 the name of the person or corporation for whom the form is being filed. Also include the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock, mortgages, or other securities of the publishing corporation. In item 11, if none, check the box. Use item 11b if more space is required.
- Be sure to furnish all circulation information called for in item 15. Free circulation must be shown in item 15c, 1, and 2.
- Item 15b. Copies not Distributed: must indicate (1) investment copies originally mailed on Form 3841, and returned to the publisher; (2) estimated returns from news agents, and (3) copies for office use, libraries, special, and all other copies not distributed.
- If the publication had previously been authorized as a general or requester circulation, this Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation must be published. It must be printed in any issue in October or, if the publication is not published during October, in the first issue printed thereafter.
- In item 10, indicate the date of the issue in which this Statement of Ownership will be published.
- Item 17 must be signed.
- Failure to file or publish a statement of ownership may lead to suspension of Periodicals postage authorization.

PS Form 3841, October 2005 (Previous editions are obsolete)