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## International Dateline

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# International Dateline

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Many readers of the journal can with reason feel a growing boredom about the exponentially increasing literature on **Open Access**. Such a response is rational because, in practice, **OA** impinges very little if at all on the working life of not only the scholars participating at the beginning and end of scholarly communication but also we intermediaries. However, in January, the articulate and courteous **Professor Peter Suber** comes to the conclusion, writing in his **SPARC Open Access Newsletter**<sup>1</sup> of the developing stories mostly from the last quarter, that not only has **OA** momentum become unstoppable but that “the United States is conspicuously late for this party.” With this in mind this column this issue describes the main recent European initiatives and interactions and one initiative from the Antipodes.

Perhaps the biggest event of all was the long-awaited **Berlin Declaration**.<sup>2</sup> **Suber** accurately breaks down this rather verbose document as follows:<sup>3</sup>

Signatories pledge (1) to encourage those they employ and those they fund to publish their work in some open-access form, (2) to encourage cultural

heritage institutions to provide open access to their contents, (3) to develop ways to evaluate and assure the quality of open-access journals, (4) to advocate that promotion and tenure committees recognize the value of open-access publications, and (5) to support an open access infrastructure through software development, metadata creation, and content dissemination.

The list of signatories is impressive.<sup>4</sup> **Suber's** assertion at the time was that they “include all the major scientific and scholarly societies in France and Germany, and other important research institutions in Norway, Italy, and Hungary” but by January he has recognised that they are the main public funders — rather different animals. This distinction is rather important, as we shall suggest later.

The other major **OA** document from Europe, which actually appeared three weeks earlier, represents an implementation by the **Wellcome Trust**, said to be the largest funder of biomedical research in the U.K. It is succinct.<sup>5</sup> **Wellcome** pledges to meet the “cost of publication charges for online-only journals” (oddly not

just **OA** journals) but more important, the **Trust** “will encourage and support the formation of (free-access, high-quality scientific journals available via the Internet) and /or free access repositories for research papers.”

What does encouragement mean in these contexts? We have some evidence from **David Prosser (SPARC Europe)** who posted a very interesting account of what happened in Berlin in the **SPARC Open Access Forum**.<sup>6</sup> He wrote:

There was some discussion as to whether it was a right of the funding body to insist that authors archive their papers, in the same way that many insist that authors make data available.

Leading **OA** proponents see “mandating” as the way forward.<sup>7</sup> **Stevan Harnad** is tirelessly seeking out the first trickles that will lead to the flood. He hopes much from Norway:<sup>8</sup>

It is small, but representative, and, most important, it is autonomous and in a position to take action in a way that will serve as an example to other nations. IF it should actually become the first nation to \*implement\* the **Berlin Declaration** (rather than merely endorse it, as other nations have so far done), mandating open-access provision for all Norwegian research output, Norway could trigger at last the long-awaited cascade of the open-access dominoes.

Another small research community gets a medal also. This time it is the State of Queensland. Under the heading of University policy mandating self-archiving of research output, the Liaison Librarian writes:<sup>9</sup>

We now have a clear institutional mandate for self-archiving which will be backed up with plenty of promotion, training and support.

The site is explicit:<sup>10</sup>

From 2004, it is QUT policy that publicly available research and scholarly output of the University should be deposited in this ePrints repository.

What a wonderful language we have! Does “should” in this context mean “ought to” or “must” and what sanctions will be used against academics who refuse?

But the Big Fish is the U.K. The higher education system in the United Kingdom is unusually centralised by international standards. North American readers will be surprised to learn that all the universities, bar a very small singleton, are nationally owned and dependent on national funding. The work of **JISC** as a promoter of electronic communication and a broker of deals for content is well known. **JISC** is funded by the U.K. further and higher education funding councils to give guidance and to

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provide strategy.<sup>11</sup> JISC does not appear to have an official OA policy: a leading staff member told me last year:

JISC actively supports a variety of models for improving scholarly communication, and open access is one of these. The open access model is an interesting model which (as you say) has a lot going for it and which needs support, but which offers an approach that is not yet proven. Serious investigation is required of issues surrounding the open access model, e.g., its long-term sustainability.

In practice JISC is a little warmer towards OA. There are, of course, the well-known evangelists for OA on JISC committees such as **Fred Friend**, one of the signatories of the **Budapest Open Access Initiative**.<sup>12</sup> For them OA is a moral duty. There are those for whom public access follows from the fact that the public pays. Perhaps more important but rarely expressed in public is the belief that there is no chance of funding increasing so there must be savings and OA will enable cheaper scholarly communication in the future. At an important meeting in November,<sup>13</sup> in theory designed to convince scholars but not handicapped by the attendance of more than a handful plus a sprinkling of other outsiders (publishers), the theme was stated as follows:

The barriers of price and licensing restrictions are hindering access to the results of academic research world-wide, and the seminar will place UK initiatives in the context of international moves to create open access to published research.

This reads to me like how not why or whether and certainly all the speakers toed the same line, with differences of emphasis. The **Harnad** group in particular pressed academic bureaucrats present to mandate archiving in institutional repositories. The Director of the

**Wellcome Trust** made clear that for him mandating only awaited education of those he funded. No timescale was, however, provided.

The trouble, however, in Europe as elsewhere is that, while the OA gains momentum, there is a growing undertow of concern over practicalities among all those concerned with scholarly communication including librarians. **David Brown** of the **British Library** recently published in his capacity as editor of *Scholarly Communications Report*<sup>14</sup> thirty two arguments against **Open Access** many of which will strike a chord outside the ranks of "traditional" publishers.

In an excellent article in the British magazine *New Scientist*<sup>15</sup> a **Public Library of Science** protagonist writes:

"Our real target is the society journals. Those are the journals we think should move in the direction of open access... If we, **BioMedCentral** and other open access journals attract the best articles and most of the articles, the other journals will have to come round because they won't get submissions any more."

But this is not how the officers and publishing staff of European learned societies see it. Few go into print but some, for example **Dr. Peter Gregory** of the **Royal Society of Chemistry**, put forward reasoned objections.<sup>16</sup> It is not only staff like **Gregory** (clearly suspect to some as concerned with money!), but in practice academics in general do not rush to publish in OA journals. **Harnad** frequently points out with only about five per cent of peer-reviewed journals now OA, that route to OA is a no-brainer. It will take too long. Therefore he urges the wholesale and compulsory creation of institutional repositories. Alas there is no greater enthusiasm among the academic community about filling these repositories – at least with peer reviewed papers. It is interesting that the excellent **Dspace** (the bell weather of the repository movement) opens its doors to MIT

faculty but it is not articles in journals that the press forward to archive.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the rights and wrongs of OA, the advantages and the disadvantages, the costs and the savings, attempts at compulsion by those funding academic research will lead to some rather unpleasant situations (if mandating is to work) and will certainly leave many librarians in a situation where alliances will shift. The fight for the hearts and minds is only just beginning and it will be the scholars themselves who will decide.



### Endnotes

1. <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/01-02-04.htm>.
2. <http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>.
3. <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/11-02-03.htm#berlin>.
4. <http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/signatories.html>.
5. <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/1/awtvispolpub.html>.
6. <https://mx2.arl.org/Lists/SPARC-OAForum/Message/221.html>.
7. Personal communication from Professor Peter Suber.
8. <https://mx2.arl.org/Lists/SPARC-OAForum/Message/288.html>.
9. <https://mx2.arl.org/Lists/SPARC-OAForum/Message/450.html>.
10. <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/>.
11. <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=about#what>.
12. <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml>.
13. [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=event\\_research\\_1103](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=event_research_1103).
14. [http://www.scrpublishing.com/si\\_pd.cfm](http://www.scrpublishing.com/si_pd.cfm).
15. <http://archive.newscientist.com/>.
16. [http://www.chemsoc.org/chembytes/ezone/2003/gregory\\_dec03.htm](http://www.chemsoc.org/chembytes/ezone/2003/gregory_dec03.htm).
17. <https://dspace.mit.edu/community-list>.

## Dana Alessi Tribute

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*Column Editor's Note: In the December 2003/January 2004 issue of ATG, you might have seen the sad notice of Dana Alessi's untimely death and, on page 8 of the same issue, her obituary and a letter from her cousin, Lois McNicol.*

*As requested by Dana, the obituary contains a poem that ends with this line: "Miss me, but let me go." We will miss her, but we will not let her go, either; but in a sense other than what the poem implies. We will each, those who knew her, keep her in our memories in a special way. Those who didn't have the pleasure of her acquaintance can read the following testimonials and perhaps get some sense of why she is missed.*

*If you did not contribute to this memorial, it is not too late for another issue of ATG. Please send your remembrance to Tom Leonhardt <[thomasl@admin.stedwards.edu](mailto:thomasl@admin.stedwards.edu)>. Thank you.*



I was saddened to learn of Dana's most untimely death.

Years ago, when I was a young pup repping for Baker & Taylor in the Midwest, I remember hearing stories about Dana from my customers. Even then, she was beloved for her energy, integrity, and friendliness. When we finally met at a conference, I was flattered to learn she knew who I was and we spent quite a while swapping tales of the road and sharing our love of the Classics.

Over the years, our paths crossed often. Dana's unflinching good humor was a bright spot at countless exhibit halls and her insightful contributions to meetings we attended enriched all involved. I came to look forward to seeing her, grateful that our profession was blessed

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