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Charleston Conference Call for Papers

Editor

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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**¹ 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**.² **Suber** accurately breaks down this rather verbose document as follows:³

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.⁴ **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.⁵ **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**.⁶ 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.⁷ **Stevan Harnad** is tirelessly seeking out the first trickles that will lead to the flood. He hopes much from Norway:⁸

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:⁹

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:¹⁰

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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