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## I Hear the Train A Comin' -- From the Paris of the Plains

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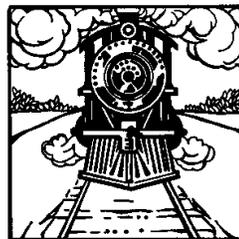
## I Hear the Train A Comin' — From the Paris of the Plains

Column Editor: **Greg Tananbaum** (ScholarNext Consulting) <greg@scholarnext.com> [www.scholarnext.com](http://www.scholarnext.com)

In March, I was pleased to attend **SPARC's** first North American meeting devoted to all matters open access. While the organization has hosted a series of conferences on digital repositories since 2004, this event expanded upon its predecessors to encompass the many threads of the open access movement. Three hundred librarians from around the world convened in Kansas City to hear from some of the leading voices in scholarly communication, including **Heather Joseph**, **John Wilbanks**, **Michael Carroll**, and **Caroline Sutton**. I will leave it to others to provide a detailed summary of the various talks and sessions. Instead, I am using this issue's column to present the three big picture conclusions I took away from the Paris of the Plains (that's a real nickname — look it up!):

1. The aborted **Research Works Act** has lit a fire under the open access movement. As I detailed on these pages last issue, the ill-fated **Research Works Act** stirred deep antipathies within academia. The notion that a certain segment of the publishing industry would seek to roll back postprint accessibility truly angered a large number of professors, researchers, and librarians.

Shortly before the **SPARC 2012** Open Access Meeting, **Elsevier** withdrew its support of the **Research Works Act**. Nevertheless, a theme both on the dais and in the hallways was the need for practical action to capitalize on this emotion. One popular subject was the “Cost of Knowledge” **Elsevier** boycott, which has accumulated nearly 9,000 signatories as of this writing. A decade ago, the **Michael Eisen/Pat Brown** petition against subscription control helped kick-start the open access movement. It eventually led to the establishment of the Public Library of Science. It remains to be seen whether the **Research Works Act** kerfuffle will have similar consequences. Judging by the clear-eyed determination of the **SPARC 2012** Open Access Meeting participants, there is intense interest in moving from the “talking” to the “doing” stage. This could certainly include a new wave of campus-based publishing initiatives, a hot topic at the meeting. It might



also mean a redoubling of efforts to pass the **Federal Research Public Access Act** (HR 5037), a bill that would ensure free,

timely, online access to the published results of research funded by eleven U.S. federal agencies. The bill, known as FRPAA, would require those agencies with annual extramural research budgets of \$100 million or more to provide the public with online access to research manuscripts stemming from such funding no

later than six months after publication in a peer-reviewed journal. The bill gives individual agencies flexibility in choosing the location of the digital repository to house this content, as long as the repositories meet conditions for interoperability and public accessibility, and have provisions for long-term archiving. It may well be, of course, that this anger fades into complacency; however, judging by the intensity of feeling in the City of Fountains (more than 200, according to the hotel magazine),

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# Something to Think About — What Are We About?



Column Editor: **Mary E. (Tinker) Massey** (Retired Librarian) <eileen4tinker@yahoo.com>

Each New Year, I like to reassess who I am, where I am now, and where I am going in life. We can usually embellish who we are, although I fight the urge to do so. The *where* question, involves more of an evaluation of what personal expectations I have met in my life rather than a GPS locator test. I usually find that I have met some of my expectations, but there are many more to complete. This is the point at which I re-evaluate my real needs and goals, whether those goals are obtainable in my present circumstances, and whether I need to make adjustments to attain reasonable and positive goals. Expectations are like sorting your incoming tasks. You need to make a pile of immediate doable tasks and complete them readily. More difficult tasks form a second pile, and the third pile becomes the ever-growing stack of intricate “hair-pulling” knee-knockers that continue to plague our existence. Thought you hid those tasks in smaller piles last year? Did you try to disguise them and ignore them? They’re back! One of the ever-present problems that keep reappearing is our relationships with other staff members. What can we do to find

solutions to those awkward situations where disagreements occur or our expectations for their behavior are damaged?

I have tried from the instant of hiring to instill in my workers a feeling of confidence in their attempts to complete work. I ask for their eyes and ears to find situations that are not working and offer some choices for change. I give them a chance to buy into the team effort to make things better and to search for new ways to make each person’s needs met more efficiently and quickly. I give positive meaning to finding answers for everyone. Our student workers assist us when they return from shelving to tell us about struggles others have faced in the stacks with finding material. They offer some suggestions, and in this process, we find some resolutions that enhance the search for needed resources.

The new ideas are created in actuality, and everyone profits in the improvement. This has happened more than once from all levels of our staff, and we get excited about the results. I have come to realize that the enhanced results come



from the respect we each show for our co-workers’ varying abilities in the workplace. As a supervisor, I can hardly be expected to come up with all the answers, so I empower my co-workers to help the whole team effort with their many talents. I do not have the artistic ability to create eye-pleasing displays, but I have staff who can and willingly produce those creative arts, which enhance understanding in the library’s efforts to teach others. Sometimes a narrow focus is needed to solve a problem, but other times we need more general perspectives. While I can vocalize a “big picture” understanding, my co-workers may be able to offer me various ways to achieve that goal. Why not utilize everyone’s talents? Have a meeting of the minds. Ask for help on a one-to-one basis. Be able to hear and absorb and discuss all of those views and ideas to find lasting resolutions so that the patrons are helped by your efforts. Remember, consistent respect for your staff can bring a much-needed trust and loyalty, which can be utilized in producing better relationships and effectual workflow for the public we serve. I think this is always something to think about. 🐾

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I would bet that this is the start of a new push within the open access movement.

2. The commercial services supporting open access have proliferated in recent years. A vendor showcase was held in conjunction with the **SPARC 2012** Open Access Meeting. It was truly impressive to see the number and range of organizations that have a business interest in open access. This extends beyond obvious publishing candidates such as **BioMed Central**, **Springer Open**, **Copernicus**, and **Wiley Open Access**. The burgeoning industry also includes hosted institutional repositories (Digit Commons), repository support services (@Mire, DiscoveryGarden, Longsight), and publication management systems (Symplectic, Public Knowledge Project). Some might object to the commercial exploitation of open access, believing that it somehow cheapens or co-opts the movement. I take a different view. The entry of these organizations — big and small, privately-backed and university-

incubated — demonstrates the maturity of open access. There is enough heterogeneity within the open access space that a variety of approaches are needed to support it.

3. Open access publishing might benefit from more business model experimentation. In my discussions with librarians at the **SPARC** meeting, I got the sense that their patrons still retained some reservations about the article processing charge (APC) system. Some scholars feel that it is akin to vanity publishing. Others believe it disrupts editorial integrity by coupling acceptance with payment. Others fret that neither their grants nor their institutions provide the financial latitude required to pay these fees. There is some concern within the library community that the “author pays” model simply transfers the burden wholly from the consumer to the producer. The content pool for open access journals may very well be constrained as a result. It was interesting to hear this opinion expressed in informal conversations, but to hear little from presenters or vendors about business model alternatives. With limited exceptions (**BioMed Central’s**

Membership scheme, for example) we have seen little experimentation on this front. My observation from the **SPARC** meeting is that there is a disconnect between service providers and the market as to how settled this issue in fact is. The former sees a model that is basically set, with the major variable being the cost of the APC. The latter has yet to embrace this view wholeheartedly.

The conclusion I took away from the Cyclone City (ok, I made that one up) is that the open access movement, like many aspects of life, contains multitudes. It is not just a political cause, although its legislative acumen has made mainstream media headlines in recent days. It is not just an industry sector, although an increasing number of businesses are finding profit in the services that support open access. It is not just a business model, although those who believe that open access has hit upon the one true formula for funding publications risk an increasing disconnect with a more cautious authoring community. Open access is none of these things, and yet it is all of these things. A decade after the Budapest Open Access Initiative, the **SPARC 2012** Meeting demonstrates the energies and complexities that will propel the movement forward. 🐾