



** Oxford University Press's Open Access programme is a model of pragmatic experimentation, and repositions the publisher as the intermediary of choice who picks the publishing and revenue models most appreciated by the widely differentiated sub-sector markets of STM – and social sciences and humanities.*

by David Worlock, Chairman

There is a real difference between Oxford's molecular biology titles and its titles on bioinformatics. The difference is rooted in the function of the journals themselves: the former are primary research, the latter are about technique and practice, and may represent working improvements in techniques that are recorded by researchers whose primary concern is that primary work, but who publish in the latter area in the course of other activities. And how do Oxford perceive the difference? Mostly as a researcher group committed to author-paid OA in the first instance, but not nearly so committed in the second. The difference between fundamental research and work on research technique can be demonstrated by a willingness in the former to pay the access bill, and in the latter to go for conventional publishing.

These are the type of symptomatic lessons that Oxford are learning through a steady process of experimentation since 2003. With few exceptions, Oxford has always been committed to a hybrid model, offering authors the potential for author-pays access as well as traditional submission. In some areas of molecular biology some 30-40% of submissions in some journals are author-paid, and Oxford has accepted around 1,000 articles on these terms. It is probable that only BioMed Central have accepted more. Oxford's tariff is a moderate one: £800 (\$150) for authors based in a subscribing institution, £1,500 (\$2,800) where the author is based in a non-subscribing institution. As 'free' articles mount in the journal's portfolio, so subscription levels fall. OUP have successful journals where OA author-paid articles are 30% of content, and subscription pricing has declined pro rata.

OUP track this progress carefully, through projects with LISU and CIBER, which will produce vital input when they mature. It seems likely that the first result will be a demonstration of the complexity of the market – some OUP journals will be 100% OA one day – others will never get underway. Oxford Open will prove the poverty of generalisation. And the same lesson will prove true for institutional repository publishing. OUP have experimented with giving the author a clickable URL to enable him to connect his web site to his article – and have found that it solves most problems of visibility combined with version control. Oxford authors are entitled both to deposit a pre-print on their site or institutional repository, and, more importantly, a post-print (defined as the final draft, as accepted for publication, including peer review suggested modifications but prior to copyediting and proof-reading). There is also a provision asking for a link to the published version: the URL works OK, since visibility is the ambition of authors,

not local storage. And copyright is retained by authors, who license these activities to their publisher.

OUP will be a vital case study in the next five years. More so than BioMed Central, its wide range of 42 journals open for OA services will show where the model works, where it is an acceptable, hybrid, and where it is irrelevant. Without hysterical affliction to any sectarian beliefs, Oxford are slowly demonstrating that pragmatic research and patience in the product development cycle will be needed to give good indicative results. When they have finished, we will be much closer to knowing where OA works – and where it is irrelevant.

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