

**'Challenging the Current Business Models in Academic Publishing',  
Antwerp, April 26,27 – Workshop organized by SE, EUA, LIBER.**

It is my pleasure to conclude this meeting with a few closing remarks. I will not attempt to summarize the presentations and discussions we had yesterday afternoon and this morning, but I do want to emphasize that the collective knowledge of Open Access scientific publishing that is represented by this audience, by the participants in this workshop is vast, even impressive and more than sufficient to support a transition from 'traditional' publishing to OA publishing.

My involvement in OA dates back to 2004 when, during my tenure as scientific director of CERN, I made my first acquaintance with ideas on the subject. This led, with my support but thanks to the effort of others (Salvatore Mele et al) to SCOAP3 (Scientific Consortium for OA Publishing in Particle Physics). Under SCOAP3 an agreement was reached for 'lumpsum' payment to the publishers involved, who in return made the publications available through OA. This is only one of several viable models for OA publishing.

Several viable models were indeed presented at this meeting, including 'from scratch' initiatives (like SciPost) and 'flipping' existing journals (like LingOA). In fact the 'offsetting' Big Deals (of the universities) with the established publishers may be interpreted as a first step towards 'flipping' or in any case 'converting' existing journals.

Before continuing let me briefly tell you a recent anecdote. A few weeks ago I was preparing my 'farewell lecture' (not my last lecture, I hope!) at the University of Amsterdam. Naturally, I needed to look up some older publications. I tried to get access through 'Science Direct' to discover that my institute (NIKHEF) had discontinued its subscription. Too expensive! The institute had done so only after consulting the scientific staff. The staff agreed: most of them had access to Science Direct anyway, through their university affiliations, and the others had (legal!) ways, e.g. through CERN, to access the information they needed. So the NIKHEF subscription involved 'double counting': for the university staff the subscription was paid twice!

Another observation I made whilst preparing my lecture: there is a huge backlog in the transition to OA!

End of anecdote.

Also at the occasion of this workshop I have asked myself: why is the transition to OA scientific publishing so slow? Because slow it is, as we have barely reached 20% today. By the way, let us be clear about this: if we refer to OA we mean 'gold OA', no half-baked hybrid solutions.

The main reason the transition is so slow is, in my opinion, the entanglement of the traditional scholarly publishing system and the scientific (publicly funded) research system. As long as our research assessment procedures lean on 'reputations' of journals and on 'impact factors' we will never succeed in imposing our will (and that of our governments) in achieving a speedy transition to OA publishing.

The 'Big Deals' referred to above confirm and consolidate this entanglement and are therefore, in my opinion, not a promising road to gold OA. This is not to say that I don't have great appreciation for the efforts of our colleagues who try to conclude these deals!

We, research funders and universities, supported by the researchers, should more actively help the transition to OA.

- Stop unproductive (public) discussions about 'research budget' versus 'library budget' to pay for OA; put everything in one 'scholarly communication budget'
- Get rid of the Big Deals. Make à la carte deals. Don't allow the publishers to make the waters muddy; don't mix OA into the big deals.
- Help new OA initiatives and support those that are promising; cf cooperative models, Open Library of the Humanities, LingOA, SciPost, Copernicus, etc. etc.
- Try to make a coalition with very influential organizations like Wellcome. Don't re-invent the wheel (and don't let them re-invent the wheel).
- Work on the implementation of new credit methodologies.

My most important observation is that the OA community should learn to make one front and speak with one voice. Accept that several gold OA models can coexist! Don't wait for a perfect solution and start by implementing perfectly adequate ones.

Organizations like Science Europe, European University Association should convince their members, or, rather, the members should convince each other, to make gold OA mandatory. Get going for real now, remaining issues (metrics...) will be solved on the way!

Jos Engelen, May 2, 2017