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Review: "The State of Open Access," Interviews by Richard Poynder

Chris Diaz

University of Iowa

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**REVIEW: "The State of Open Access," Interviews by Richard Poynder (Independent journalist, UK), July 1, 2013 through September 18, 2013,
Available: <http://richardpoynder.co.uk/the-state-of-open-access.html>**

Richard Poynder reports on the current state of open access (OA) through a series of interviews spanning the perspectives of scientists, open access advocates, librarians, and publishers. Poynder has been writing about open access for over a decade and has become the *de facto* chronicler of the movement. As of this writing, he has published thirteen interviews and more are expected to be released. While all are useful in gauging the open access movement from its most vocal positions, the perspective of publishers is most revealing for what lies ahead for collections managers. This perspective is represented by Joseph Esposito, a publishing consultant and contributor to the blog, *The Scholarly Kitchen*, Anthony Durniak, an executive at the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Alexander Grossmann, professor of publishing management and former academic publishing executive, Cameron Neylon, Advocacy Director of the Public Library of Science (PLOS), and Sven Fund, Chief Executive Officer of De Gruyter.

The market economics of open access will determine how publishers will accommodate this growing demand for openness. Esposito states that open access is "a useful, marginal activity that opens up a new class of customers through the author-pays model and that it would be subject to the laws of market economics." While advocates may argue the merits of serving the interests of scholarly inquiry, these arguments have little bearing on how publishers have been approaching this demand. This can be seen in the commercialization of open access through the hybrid model and the emergence of the mega journal.

The hybrid open access model maintains traditional pay walls for academic journals while providing the option for certain articles within those journals to be made available through author-side fees. These fees, oftentimes in the thousands of dollars per article, cover the revenue stream for publishers while addressing the access concern of readers. Some have estimated that, in the sciences, these fees are at a lower rate than the subscription cost per article for most big deals. Fund rightly points out the attractiveness of this model because of the desire for researchers to publish in prestigious, high impact journals. However, hybrid open access is almost universally derided by advocates because its lack of transparency fuels concerns of “double dipping,” where publishers generate revenue from both the author and the reader side of the transaction. It is predicted that perpetuating this model would likely result in library collections budgets diverted from acquisitions to paying the author side fees for underfunded faculty, as Grossmann and Fund suggest. Durniak foresees the possibility of a “Crisis in Article Processing Charges” similar to the “Serials Budget Crisis” libraries have been dealing with for over a decade.

The success of open access mega journals has convinced traditional publishers to invest in their own versions. Poynder’s interview with Neylon addresses the success of PLOS’s mega journal, *PLOS ONE*. Poynder credits the revenue generated from *PLOS ONE*’s article processing fees as the primary factor that has made PLOS a sustainable operation. This has influenced the creation of IEEE’s open access mega journal, *IEEE Access*, *Nature’s Scientific Reports*, and others, thus leaving advocates skeptical of the extent to which these venues are actually “open.” While competition in the author side fees market may naturally bring costs down, the

notion of returning control of the scholarly communication system to the research community may be further complicated.

In his introduction to Neylon's interview, Poynder points out, "The more one examines the state of Open Access, it seems the more confused the picture becomes." This is evident in how much of this series is devoted to understanding the distinctions between gold, green, and hybrid open access. Perhaps most central to understanding open access is the "open" part of the definition, which requires the use of open licenses. "I'm disappointed that the majority of OA journals still use all-rights-reserved copyrights rather than open licenses," says Peter Suber, the most prominent voice in the open access movement today. It is important to remember that open access journals represent only a portion of the open access options available. Green open access, such as institutional and disciplinary repositories, is compliant with most traditional publishing agreements. The majority of advocates interviewed see this method as the most effective and efficient path toward openness. Still, advocates will continue to be wary of the commercial adoption of open access journals and collections librarians will need to understand the nuances of these developments.

Author:

Chris Diaz is the Residency Librarian for Scholarly Communications and Collections at the University of Iowa. He can be reached at christopher-diaz@uiowa.edu or [@chrisdaaz](https://twitter.com/chrisdaaz).