

Friday, April 22, 2005

The role of digital rights management in Open Access

Growing conviction that scientific progress will significantly benefit if scholarly articles and research papers are made freely available on the Web has given rise to the Open Access (OA) movement. While there is some awareness that OA articles may require digital rights management (DRM), there is currently only low-level interest in the topic, with many OA advocates maintaining that it has no relevance to OA.

The issue is complicated by the fact that there are currently two ways in which research papers are made OA, each of which has different implications from a rights point of view.

Richard Poynder

OA has gained a lot of traction over the last year, but it has also attracted considerable resistance from commercial and society publishers. Since they currently generate substantial incomes from selling subscriptions to their journals scholarly publishers fear that if research is made freely available on the Internet these revenues will be significantly threatened.

Given the consequent struggle simply to make Open Access happen many OA advocates argue that worrying about DRM today could prove a distraction from the more important task of "freeing the refereed literature."

Since many also view DRM as synonymous with the use of "technical measures" designed to restrict access, rather than as a broad set of tools for managing rights in a digital environment, there is a tendency to see DRM as an issue for proprietary interests alone.

The danger is, however, that if the OA movement fails to engage with the topic those proprietary interests may set the DRM agenda, to the possible detriment of OA.

Nevertheless, some preliminary work on DRM is being done by the OA movement, and the growing success of the [Creative Commons](#) may encourage OA advocates to take a greater interest in the topic.

What is DRM?

Any discussion of DRM in the context of OA has first to seek to define the term. The continuing controversy surrounding P2P and illegal file swapping, for instance, has led many to conclude that DRM amounts to little more than "locking up" content with electronic padlocks. Indeed, since this perceived emphasis on restricting access is viewed as the very antithesis of OA, DRM has become the bête noir of many OA advocates.

What this overly narrow view of DRM overlooks, however, is that digital rights management implies something broader than access control alone. It can also be used, for instance, to ensure correct author attribution, to certify document integrity and provenance, to prevent plagiarism, and indeed to enable

creators assert their rights in ways that encourage — rather than restrict — access.

It may be helpful in this regard to view DRM as a two-layered cake. In this model the first layer consists of metadata that define the usage rules (rights) associated with the content. Then on top of this can be placed an (optional) second layer of software-imposed limitations on copying, printing, viewing etc. (i.e. technical measures) in order to enforce the usage rules.

Some OA advocates argue that neither layer is relevant in an OA environment. After all, they say, the aim of OA is to make research papers available to everyone, without restriction.

It may be that the use of technical measures — even for apparently harmless purposes such as ensuring document integrity — will prove "politically" unpalatable for the OA movement (although Frederick Friend's INDICARE [article](#) appears to demur on this). There are, however, strong reasons for arguing that the use of rights metadata does have an important role to play, and will for this reason be the main focus of this article.

What authors require

It is clear, for instance, that in making their research freely available on the Web researchers have no intention of giving away their IPR. Their only aim is to allow others to read and build on their work without facing the obstacle of the toll-barriers represented by increasingly expensive journal subscriptions.

In fact we know researchers want to maintain control over their work on the Web because they have told us so. In 2002, for instance, when the [JISC](#)-funded Rights METadata for Open archiving ([RoMEO](#)) Project asked researchers for their views 55 percent of those surveyed (both OA and non-OA authors) said they wanted to limit usage of their works to certain purposes — e.g. educational or non-commercial.

And while over 60% were happy for third parties to display, print, save, excerpt from and give away their papers, they wanted this to be on condition that they were attributed as the authors and that all copies distributed were done so verbatim.

What RoMEO made clear, says Steve Proberts, a lecturer in information science at UK-based [Loughborough University](#) who was involved in the RoMEO Project, is that "authors are interested in maintaining some form of control over who can do what with their articles."

As Brian Simboli, a science librarian at [Lehigh University](#) in Bethlehem, PA puts it: "The shift from toll-access to open access may (illogically) encourage people to assume that the whole concept 'intellectual property' has or should undergo some sort of sea change. Intellectual property is still intellectual property, regardless of how it is accessed."

Some rights reserved

What the RoMEO survey also revealed, however, is that the "all rights reserved" model of classical copyright is more than most researchers want. "[T]he protection offered [to] research papers by copyright law," the report concluded "is way in excess of that required by most academics."

In other words, when releasing their work on to the open seas of the Web OA authors are interested in

asserting only some of the rights of traditional copyright (e.g. the right to be named as author), while waiving other rights (e.g. the right to copy or make derivative works). That is, their wish is to make their papers available on a "some rights reserved" basis.

But if researchers don't make clear to their readers on what basis a paper has been released, how will their readers know? They may mistakenly assume, for instance, that a paper has been made available without any restriction on its use and reuse, as if it had simply been placed in the public domain. Alternatively, they may feel constrained about using a paper in the more liberal way the author intends, for fear of legal reprisal

Consequently, if they dismiss DRM out of hand OA authors risk depriving themselves of a useful mechanism for specifying on what basis they are making their work "freely" available.

Expression of rights

For this reason, in 2002 Project RoMEO began developing an XML-based system designed to express rights and permissions in an OA environment. These issues are not unique to OA authors however. Motivated by the same desire to provide greater licensing flexibility for web-based content, for instance, in 2002 a number of intellectual property lawyers, including [Lawrence Lessig](#) and [James Boyle](#), founded Creative Commons (CC).

By separating out the basket of rights provided by classical copyright Creative Commons aims to give creators greater flexibility to mix and match those rights they wish to assert, and those they want to waive.

Selecting from eleven different CC licences creators can, for instance, stipulate that anyone can make whatever use they want of a work, so long as the author is credited; that they can make whatever use they want, provided it is not done for commercial purposes; that they can use it, but not create any derivative works, or verbatim copies; or the work can be offered on a "share-alike" basis — thereby allowing others to make derivative works, but only on condition that the resulting work is then distributed under the same share-alike terms.

Once they have chosen a licence that meets their needs, creators can cut and paste the appropriate HTML code from the CC site and place it on their web page. This puts a visible CC logo on the page, as well as inserting machine-readable metadata into the page's HTML describing the usage conditions associated with the licence. Both passing surfers and search engines can therefore quickly establish what permissions apply to the content attached to the page without needing to contact the creator.

The applicability of Creative Commons to OA was immediately apparent to the Project RoMEO team, who incorporated CC licences into the work they were doing. Explains Proberts: "[T]he feelings of the Romeo Project were that the Creative Commons licences would be sufficient to specify the majority of restrictions/conditions required by authors (e.g. that authors are attributed, or that derivative works or commercial uses are allowed)."

Proberts, however, questions whether inserting rights metadata into OA papers can be classified as DRM. "I'm not sure that I would regard these licences as a DRM solution", he says. "[They] indicate the ways the work can be used; they do not technically enforce that these conditions/restrictions are applied."

This, however, is surely too narrow a view of DRM. How better to describe the process of inserting machine-readable rights information into digital content in order to control how it is used than "digital rights management"?

Others argue that utilising rights metadata without any means of enforcing their prohibitions is pointless. By the same reasoning, however, we might conclude that it is a waste of time creating any rule, or law, unless it can be physically enforced at the point of potential infringement. We also know that anyone happy to infringe copyright law can circumvent most if not all the electronic padlocks devised to date.

Two roads to OA

For researchers wanting to better manage the rights in their papers, however, there is a more immediate problem than enforcement — namely how they establish and define their rights in the first place. And since there are two ways in which researchers can make their papers OA a one-size-fits-all approach is not currently possible.

For researchers using the "Gold Road" to OA matters are relatively straightforward: they can simply publish in one of the new-style scholarly journals produced by OA publishers like [BioMed Central](#) (BMC) and the [Public Library of Science](#) (PLoS). By reversing the traditional subscription model and charging authors (or more likely their funders) a fee to publish, rather than charging readers to read, golden publishers are able to make research papers freely available on the Web without any access costs.

More importantly, by treating publishing as a service provided to the author, rather than as a property transaction in which the publisher acquires copyright in return for publishing a paper, both BMC and the PLoS are happy to use the [Creative Commons Attribution Licence](#) as a default option. The terms of this licence are printed as a copyright notice on all their articles, as well as being inserted into them as machine-readable metadata.

Why that particular licence? Because, explains PLoS' Andy Gass, the CC Attribution Licence best meets the OA criteria outlined in the [Bethesda](#) and [Berlin](#) OA declarations. These, he says, specify that in making their papers OA authors grant "to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly, and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship ... [as well as] ... the right to make small numbers of printed copies for their personal use."

But while the Gold Road is the most logical route for researchers wanting to make their papers OA there are today only 1,600 (out of a total of 24,000) golden scholarly journals in which to publish.

For this reason many researchers opt instead for the "Green Road". Rather than publishing with an OA publisher, they continue to publish in traditional subscription-based scholarly journals, but then "self-archive" an electronic copy of their papers, either on their home pages, or in an e-print archive such as their institutional repository or a centrally-based archive like [PubMed Central](#) or [arXiv](#).

However, the rights situation on the green road is complex, since traditional subscription-based journals generally insist that authors assign copyright as a condition of publication. As a consequence, researchers relinquish all control in how their IPR is managed. The RoMEO study, for instance, found that in 90 % of cases authors are asked to transfer the copyright in their papers.

Moreover, while 92% of scholarly journals now allow their authors to self-archive it is a far from ideal solution. As authors are not permitted to use the publisher's PDF, for instance, the self-archived version may be somewhat different from the publisher's version.

More problematically, the rights status of self-archived papers is vague and frequently misunderstood. Indeed, there are reasons to believe that general confusion and uncertainty over copyright represents one of the greatest obstacles to self-archiving today, and perhaps explains why still only 15% of authors self-archive. "The fact is that copyright raises its head all the time when authors are asked about OA, and it is acting as a deterrent to self-archiving," says [Alma Swan](#), co-founder and director of UK-based scholarly publishing consultancy Key Perspectives (KPL). "So it can't be ignored".

The solution, suggests John Ober, director of the policy, planning and outreach office of scholarly communication at the [California Digital Library](#), is for publishers to "turn their publication copyright policies into the appropriate 'set' of Creative Commons elements"

This would clarify the situation over self-archiving, confirm its legitimacy, and so give self-archiving authors the same transparency over rights as is currently available to those publishing in golden journals. As a consequence OA would receive a significant boost.

Reducing the value of self-archiving

Far from helping to facilitate self-archiving, however, most subscription-based publishers today appear more intent on emasculating it. The fact is that as research funders like the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) and [Wellcome Trust](#) increasingly encourage researchers they fund to self-archive their papers, publishers are becoming more and more concerned that their revenues are under serious threat. In response, they are actively seeking ways in which they can hobble self-archiving.

Having succeeded in persuading the NIH to water down its policy on public access to research, for instance, more and more publishers are insisting that papers are only self-archived on an embargoed basis, demanding delays of between 6 and twelve months between publication and self-archiving. This, say critics, significantly reduces the value of self-archiving, particularly in areas like biomedicine.

Publishers are also insisting that authors provide a link from the archived version to the official version of the article on the publisher's web site, and that they include the article's unique [Digital Object Identifier](#) (DOI). The aim is to drive users away from the free version of the article that has been self-archived, to the for-fee version on the publisher's web site.

The next stage in this strategy may be for publishers to change direction and, instead of prohibiting authors to self-archive the publisher's PDF, to actively encourage it. This would give publishers an opportunity to reassert their ownership of the article, to reinforce their brand, and to charge authors in the process. But the real attraction is that the PDF file format is ideally suited to the use of second-layer DRM (technical measures) enabling publisher-determined usage rights to be incorporated into the articles.

The logic here is compelling. After all, as Chris Barlas, a senior consultant at [Rightscom](#) points out, to date scholarly publishers have seen little need for DRM. As he puts it: "[M]ost of the STM publishers currently use some kind of subscription system with password protected access to sites as their form of protection." As scholarly papers increasingly leak out of these proprietary databases, however,

publishers will surely want to exploit new ways to protect their proprietary interests.

Certainly [Springer Science+Business Media](#), the second largest STM publisher, has begun to go down this road. While it permits authors to self-archive their own versions of papers, Springer now also invites them to self-archive the final published PDF. To do this, explains Springer's executive vice president corporate communications Sabine Schaub, authors can purchase Springer's PDF file from DRM vendor [Aries Systems Corporation](#), to whom Springer has outsourced the function. Aries will then "download the article from Springer Link [Springer's online database], wrap it with a DRM system called DocuRights, and send it to the author for posting or distribution".

Once it is encased in DocuRights, explains Aries' Lyndon Holmes, the article becomes a "pay-per-view object" with usage rules determined by the publisher. "The publisher can, for instance, specify the number of computers a particular PDF can be opened on". Amongst other things, DocuRights also allows publishers to restrict the number of times a paper is printed and/or viewed.

The attraction to researchers is that using the publisher's PDF allows them to offer the final, definitive version of their article, in a clean professional format. Moreover, since today 78 % of authors who have never self-archived are unaware of how to go about it publishers are clearly in a powerful position to persuade them that archiving a PDF reprint is a better way of providing OA.

However, while authors will still be able to provide Open Access (by themselves prepaying for usage) it is not the kind of solution envisaged by OA advocates.

Take the initiative

Confronted by continuous publisher foot dragging over OA some have concluded that, rather than accepting whatever terms publishers impose, it is time for authors to take the initiative over rights. To this end the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition ([SPARC](#)) has produced a downloadable [Author's Addendum](#) that researchers can print and attach to the publication agreement publishers ask them to sign on the acceptance of their articles.

The aim of the Addendum is to modify the publisher's agreement to make explicit the fact that the author is retaining sufficient rights to self-archive, and to also require that the publisher provide a free PDF version of the article — one, moreover, with no DRM functionality incorporated into it.

More specifically, explains Michael Carroll a law professor at Villanova University who authored the Addendum, it ensures "that the author retains all rights necessary to grant a Creative Commons Non-Commercial-Attribution License". A second version of the Addendum that will allow the author to simultaneously reserve these rights and then grant the Creative Commons license is now in draft, explained Carroll in a [recent post](#) to the liblicence mailing list.

Will this prove acceptable to publishers? While agreeing that "the intent of the Addendum is entirely reasonable," Peter Banks, a publisher at the American Diabetes Association (ADA) [responded](#) to Carroll's post by cautioning that several clauses in the Addendum were unacceptable. "Were we presented with this Addendum, we would decline to publish the paper. I am quite sure a majority of publishers would do the same".

In reality it is highly unlikely that subscription-based scholarly publishers will allow authors to manage their own rights. Indeed, many have come to see copyright ownership as key to their survival. While

they could adapt by converting to an OA publishing model, most publishers view this as far too risky financially, and certainly less profitable.

Publishers' efforts, therefore, appear to be focused on reducing the impact of self-archiving. Embargoes are one way to do that. A more powerful long-term strategy would be to encourage authors to self-archive the publishers' version and arm it with second-layer DRM. As such, the self-archived article would potentially become a Trojan horse capable of transforming OA articles into "pay-per-view objects".

Such doomsday scenarios are no doubt overblown. But they serve to remind us that ignoring rights issues could prove a risky strategy for the OA movement.

For the moment, however, most OA advocates appear happy to sit on their hands. It is, for instance, nearly two years since the funding for Project RoMEO ended. While its work was inherited by the Open Archives Initiative (OAI) [rights group](#), to date most of that group's efforts have been devoted to developing rights expressions for OA records, not for the underling resources!

This means that even where OA publishers and self-archiving authors include rights metadata in their papers there is currently no OA infrastructure able to exploit those metadata to good effect.

Given the continuing scepticism over rights this is perhaps unsurprising. "It is harmless to make rights explicit in metadata, but that's not the priority", says leading OA activist [Stevan Harnad](#). "The priority is the content (for which these metadata would be part of the decoration)".

In other words, until the number of self-archived papers increases there is no point in fussing over rights. But as Swan points out, uncertainties over rights are a major deterrent to self-archiving today — suggesting the movement may face a chicken and egg stalemate.

Moreover, since the 1,600 gold journals can at most make just 5 % of scholarly research OA such a stalemate would represent a significant obstacle to the wider movement. Harnad insists, however, that all that is necessary today is for governments and other research funders to mandate self-archiving. After that, he says, all the other dominoes will "fall naturally (and anarchically) of their own accord".

But is that enough? After all, the NIH's decision not to mandate (but merely encourage) its researchers to self-archive appears to have been partly influenced by uncertainties over copyright. This suggests that until the copyright situation is clarified uncertainty over rights — and how they are managed — will remain a serious obstacle to OA. What better reason for OA advocates to seize the DRM nettle?

Alternative view

As we've seen, one can view DRM in two ways: as a proprietary and totalising means of locking up content and forcing restrictive usage rules on users in order to maximise revenues; or as a set of tools to help creators maximise usage of their work (without ceding ownership) by specifying what rights they wish to retain and what rights they are happy to waive.

While some question whether the use of Creative Commons licences can be classified as "digital rights management" their heavy reliance on machine-readable metadata to control usage suggests it is entirely reasonable to use the term DRM. After all, why should proprietary interests bent only on locking down content have a monopoly on the term? Why should not this overly proprietary definition be challenged?

More importantly, perhaps, the OA movement faces the clear danger that if it does not more actively promote an alternative view of DRM, then proprietary interests may succeed in foisting a more restrictive model on scholarly publishing, with the risk that some of the OA movement's recent gains could be lost.

With luck, the growing success of the Creative Commons — and the recent founding of the [Science Commons](#) — may help OA advocates see the relevance of DRM, and encourage them to promote a broader definition of rights management.

At the very least, by assisting researchers to utilise more liberal Creative Commons licences when publishing in traditional journals, OA advocates could introduce greater certainty about the legitimacy of self-archiving. Not only would this provide a boost to the movement, but it would help to demonstrate that digital rights management is not just about "monetising" content, but is part of a larger initiative focused on creating a rights management regime more suited to a networked environment.

"Personally, I think DRM is really important in the context of OA", says Herbert [Van de Sompel](#), a member of the OAI rights group. "It can, indeed, be about protecting authenticity of works, and avoiding plagiarism ... [and] ... and even CC licences would cover this. But there is another increasingly important aspect. Readers of the future will more and more be robots that will try and make sense of what they 'read' (by mining content), and present their analysis to humans. It is important that such use be explicitly allowed; in the current environment, one really doesn't know whether it is OK to mine content from OA repositories".

Until there is much greater clarity over rights, and how they are managed, the OA movement may struggle to make significant progress. Increasingly it appears that only by grappling with these complex issues can the movement hope to achieve its objectives.

If you would like to comment on this interview please e-mail your views to me at richard.poynder@journalist.co.uk, or to comment publicly hit the comment button below.

This article was commissioned by INDICARE, and is also [available](#) on their web site.

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Sunday, April 10, 2005

Roller Coaster Ride

In [Part One](#) of this two-part interview Dr. Alma Swan, co-founder and director of UK-based scholarly publishing consultancy Key Perspectives (KPL), discussed the findings of two recent KPL surveys on Open Access (OA). In this second part she explains why self-archiving should not be viewed as a threat to subscription-based journals, and discusses how scholarly publishing is likely to evolve in the future. Publishers, she concludes, should prepare themselves for a roller coaster ride.



Dr. Alma Swan

RP: *You've researched OA; you've thought a lot about it; and you've concluded that OA is optimal and inevitable [See [Part One](#) of the interview]. Does this mean that you expect to see all research made freely available on the Web?*

AS: I do. At least, whatever research its creators wish to give away.

RP: *As you explained, there are two ways in which researchers can embrace OA: they can use the so-called Gold Road, where they publish their papers in new-style OA journals, or the Green Road, where they continue publishing in traditional subscription-based journals, but then self-archive their papers. Which, in your view, is the optimal way of providing OA: green or gold?*

AS: You ask this as though it's an either/or situation, yet both methods co-exist at the moment, both are growing, and both have their place. For instance, some journals have already converted to gold, some are in transition, and there are now plenty of born-gold journals. But it will not be possible to successfully convert all existing journals to a gold model, at least not without major disruptions to the businesses of some publishers, and not in a hurry. For this reason alone the Green Road is also important.

RP: *Going gold is a choice that publishers can make. Self-archiving, by contrast, is a choice researchers make. While 92% of publishers have given permission to self-archive, many seem to be increasingly concerned that if too many academics do self-archive their papers on the Web then libraries will stop subscribing to journals.*

AS: True. Many publishers, particularly learned society publishers, express a great deal of concern about how self-archiving will detrimentally affect their business. Indeed, so great is their concern that they are imposing embargoes on self-archiving by their authors — trying to prevent them from self-archiving articles until six months after publication, or in some cases even 12 months. But these concerns are all based on speculative anxieties. I call it self-terrorising.

RP: *In your most recent survey you specifically examined these speculative anxieties didn't you?*

AS: Actually, it was not part of a survey. It was a separate exercise I carried out. But yes, I wanted to establish whether publishers' concerns over self-archiving have any foundation. To that end I asked learned societies in physics — specifically the [American Physical Society](#) (APS), and the [Institute of Physics Publishing](#) (IoPP) — about their experiences living alongside the physics e-print [arXiv](#).

RP: *Why physics?*

AS: Because self-archiving has been taking place in physics since 1991, when the physics eprint repository arXiv was created. Indeed archiving in arXiv is now a long-established way of working for physicists in certain areas — high energy physics, condensed matter and astrophysics for example. For 14 years they have been depositing their preprints and, increasingly their postprints in arXiv, which now has around 300,000 articles in it. This means that each year about one third of all the published articles in physics are archived in arXiv.

RP: *What does 14 years of arXiv tell us about the impact of self-archiving on traditional journals? Can the two things co-exist?*

AS: It appears so. I asked both APS and IoPP what their experiences have been in carrying out their business activities alongside this massively successful example of a self-archiving repository. They both said that they had not noticed any greater downturn in subscriptions to those journals that cover the same sort of physics as arXiv than for any of their journals covering other areas of physics.

RP: *So despite the fact that physicists are making their papers freely available on the Web, libraries are not cancelling their subscriptions to physics journals?*

AS: Exactly. APS and IoPP could not ascribe any subscription cancellations to arXiv, and — importantly — neither of them said they considered arXiv to be a threat to their business. In fact, the APS has even helped to establish one of the arXiv mirror sites at the [Brookhaven National Laboratory](#) and both societies appear to consider arXiv a positive help to their publishing business. At the very least this suggests that present anxiety from other quarters is ill-founded.

RP: *But can we conclude that the physics model is applicable to all other subjects, and that the impact of self-archiving will be equally benign elsewhere? Perhaps physics is a special case?*

AS: Why should it not be as benign in other areas? Why assume something more complex than necessary when there is no evidence for the assumption? It is possible that physics is special, but we should not assume that it is unless there is good reason, and nobody's made a convincing one to me yet.

RP: *Maybe, but this is a serious matter for publishers: their businesses depend on libraries continuing to subscribe to their journals?*

AS: Of course publishers must look to the future of their businesses, but it's terribly unsatisfactory to plan a business on the basis of imagined scenarios. Yes, business schools teach scenario planning as a legitimate technique, and used in conjunction with other strategic planning techniques it has its place, but not as a primary methodology, and especially not when used alone.

RP: *So they should quit the self-terrorising habit!*

AS: They should. I simply can't see the attraction of surmising that there is a worse case scenario without evidence suggesting that there might be. If evidence starts coming to light, we'll monitor it, assess it and report it, but at the moment it's just not there.

The point is that, OA aside, there are going to be huge changes in scholarly communications. This will be driven by digitisation rather than OA *per se*. It is likely that one consequence of these changes, for instance, is that the primary research journal as an entity may no longer be the answer to user needs.

RP: *What other changes do you see going forward?*

AS: As a result of the Internet, scholarly communication is entering an extremely exciting phase, with avenues opening up that have never been available before. In the print age, with toll-access [subscriptions-based access] dominating the scholarly communication arena, scholars were limited to communicating with each other in a one-to-some, non-responsive, severely-delayed way. Now we're seeing new, additional opportunities for one-to-few or one-to-all (both options available), immediate, response-integrated communications.

RP: *In other words much more complex, and presumably richer, forms of scholarly communication?*

AS: Absolutely. In print, only textual or graphical material can be communicated. In the future, any digital output form can be accommodated. Scholars will be communicating in many different ways in the course of a week's work — talking one-to-one, talking to the world via webcasts, talking to a selected audience via computer-conferencing, outputting material in digital text form, in digital graphical form, in digital audio or video form, in the form of terabyte-sized datasets or as one, critically-important statistic. They'll be responding to one another's output in real time, or as near as damn it, collaborating as never before, sharing data and views in ways not previously possible.

And I haven't even started on all the opportunities that come from changing patterns of research globally, new research from new producers, the increasing scientific-literacy of the developing world and the way digital technologies are providing enhanced communications channels for its output.

RP: *This will bring benefits right?*

AS: Yes. Research will be the primary beneficiary, with increased efficiency, shortened cycles, less duplication and going over old ground, far less lost for all time in obscure, small-circulation publications. It will be possible to collate and integrate research output in ways we've never seen yet, and data mining and allied techniques will reveal new, unrealised relationships and connections. In time we will all experience the benefits.

RP: *In what sort of timescale do you envisage these changes to scholarly communication taking place?*

AS: I think we will see very dramatic changes, and probably pretty fast. It's exciting. You need, by the way, to differentiate between scholarly communication and scholarly publishing. There are going to be all sorts of outputs from scholarly endeavour that form raw material to which a publisher can add value and then persuade someone else it is worth paying for. There is likely to be a plethora of new formats for research output, for instance, and new requirements from researchers to satisfy.

RP: *In distinguishing between scholarly publishing and scholarly communication you are also signalling that many of these outputs could by-pass the publishers?*

AS: Some forms of scholarly communication will be just that — scholar-to-scholar, without a third party involved. But others will require additional, expert, input.

RP: *How can publishers and learned societies ensure they have a stable future?*

AS: What's a stable future? None of us have the luxury of that, do we? I don't see why either commercial publishers or learned societies should not have a future, but stability is probably asking rather a lot unless we're all going to move to command economies, which we're not, Richard. In short, we're in for a roller-coaster ride, and everything's going to be in a state of flux for a long time yet.

But the good news is that all these changes will mean loads of opportunities for scholarly publishing too. It's going to be an interesting time, the next couple of decades, and I believe there will continue to be a role for publishers.

RP: *So it's going to be a scary new world — all the scarier since scholarly communication is currently in such a mess. Indeed, many argue that publishers brought it all on themselves. Why do you think*

scholarly publishing is in such a mess?

AS: Scary? Exciting and challenging, yes. Not too scary, though. There's a bit of a mess at the moment because the whole system is completely bizarre. First, it's not a perfect market, so no journal or article can ever be a true substitute for another.

Second, the users of the items purchased are not the purchasers, so the people who have to make the purchasing decisions are constantly trying to match these decisions with the interests of the ultimate users, which is not an easy task.

Third, the ultimate consumers are also the raw material suppliers, and they are extremely unusual in any capitalist market situation in that they happily supply their raw material for free — and almost as happily pay to have it back again to use later.

And fourth, — to confound things just a bit more — these same raw material suppliers/consumers also carry out one of the stages of production (peer review). Add to these ingredients the fact that it is a global enterprise, so there is little room for tailoring to local economic conditions, and you have all the ingredients of a mess.

RP: *What then should publishers do about OA?*

AS: Publishers will need to define their roles with a great deal of thought. They have vast opportunities here. Their roles will change, I've no doubt. There will be blurring of the boundaries between traditional publishing models — between, for instance, primary publishing, secondary publishing, and tertiary publishing (where massive value is added in the form of additional content types).

RP: *I'm conscious that most discussion about the threats that OA poses is focused on primary publishers, but there are presumably implications for secondary publishers like [ISI](#) too, particularly in a world where OA and [Google Scholar](#) look set to become dominant. Is ISI under threat for instance?*

AS: You said 'implications' and then changed to 'threat'. There certainly are implications, but I would think in an OA world they should be viewed mainly as opportunities not threats. OA material needs to be searched for and retrieved just as effectively as non-OA material so there's plenty for ISI and the like to be getting their teeth into if there's something there that will enhance their business.

RP: *But what about Google Scholar? Effectively this will be offering what ISI does, but for free?*

AS: Google Scholar doesn't do anything like ISI or [Scopus](#) do. It's just a technology exploiting the 'good enough' tendency of the average researcher. At the moment it's pretty poor, judging from my own little experiments using it, although that will no doubt change. I'm also prepared to buy the argument that these new kinds of search technologies will grow ever more sophisticated, but it will be a long time before they have the functionality of one of today's good indexing services.

RP: *And [Elsevier](#) has spent its investment dollars wisely on Scopus has it?*

AS: Only Elsevier's management knows how that question can be answered thus far. At first I was surprised at it, but after some reflection I saw the logic, and a lot of dollars have gone into it, so Elsevier is clearly serious about it. There are some good business reasons for having such a service and it will be interesting to watch how it is employed strategically. It's certainly created a new battlefield in

the secondary publishing theatre of war.

***RP:** We've talked about primary publishers, we've talked about secondary publishers. But what learned societies? Many believe that it is learned societies who are most threatened by OA. Do you agree?*

AS: You differentiate between commercial and society publishers. Commercial publishers will continue to do what every business needs to do — analyse where the value lies in the business and concentrate on developing that. And since many large society publishers operate in ways that are to all intents and purposes indistinguishable from their commercial counterparts they will do the same. They have the same sort of structures, operational procedures and overheads.

***RP:** How do you mean?*

AS: A commercial publisher may call us in, tell us what they want us to try to achieve and say, “But remember, whatever you end up recommending we must have a bottom-line figure of 25%”. A society publisher may call us in and say, “We must have a 25% surplus from our publishing operation.” Where exactly is the difference? They both need a strategy that produces 25% on the bottom line. Both are working under the same imperative — a financial return for the owners of the business — and both will have to adopt the same sort of tactics in the marketplace to achieve the result.

***RP:** So there is no difference between a commercial publisher and a society in terms of publishing?*

AS: Well, some society publishers operate under quite different sets of requirements and aims. In a sense they are freed up to do much more creative and far-reaching things. These are the ones that can take a look at their publishing operations and say “how can we go about facilitating the best scholarly communication within the subject area we represent?”

The answer to that so far has been to publish journals, but there may be different answers in the future. There is room for immense creativity in this regard. Peer review will always be with us, for instance, and who better to mediate it than a learned society? As the spokesman for the American Physical Society said to me, “As long as peer review is valued by the community, we will be doing peer review.”

***RP:** This assumes that peer review will continue to be valued, but does not the future you paint have implications for peer review too?*

AS: No. There will always be a need for a peer review system and where there is a cost involved this will need to be paid for each article.

***RP:** I find it interesting that people in the OA movement will argue about most things, but (with a few exceptions) most seem to agree on the need for traditional peer review to be preserved. At the same time everyone agrees that peer review is far from perfect. Could we not hope that the coming changes will improve on peer review too?*

AS: It's true that peer review is not perfect now, but like Winston Churchill said of democracy, it's the best we've come up with so far. Moreover, there is potential for new ways of going about peer review that will improve it.

It may change form for instance. In fact, it's almost inevitable that it will. Digital communications mean that peer review can now be not just pre-publication but can usefully continue after publication. It

will become part of a new system of assessment for research and as such will improve. However, it will play the same role that it has always played, which is to stamp a mark of acceptable 'quality' on an article.

RP: *I suspect the issue that may prove most controversial is copyright. Today many publishers remain unconvinced about OA and view copyright as a tool for resisting change. Even those who are sympathetic to OA clearly hope that it will enable them to retain control of scholarly communication — allowing them, for instance, to insist on embargoed self-archiving. Given this, I'm surprised that OA advocates frequently dismiss copyright as irrelevant. What's your take on copyright?*

AS: OA proponents state that self-archiving the final author-version of an article does not contravene copyright in any way, and this view appears to be supported by the copyright experts. So in most instances where the content of an article is generated solely by the author copyright cannot be used to stop that author from self-archiving.

That said, I do think copyright is an important issue. The fact is that copyright raises its head all the time when authors are asked about OA and it is acting as a deterrent to self-archiving. So it can't be ignored.

RP: *Is it mainly an education issue then?*

AS: More than that I think. There is talk now, for instance, of the big research funders stipulating that the authors they fund retain copyright on their published articles themselves. And institutions are taking a great interest in this from their own intellectual property point of view. There is, after all, the longstanding example of industry-funded research, where commercial companies have always insisted that copyright is not signed over to a publisher.

RP: *This would have implications for the OA movement wouldn't it?*

AS: Right, because ownership of copyright still remains at issue. There are also many instances where copyright becomes a major concern even without OA entering the scene. People publishing articles on the history of art, for example, need to seek out copyright to publish images they themselves have not generated, such as a painting by Michelangelo — or a painting by a living artist with his own copyright on an image, for that matter.

RP: *This has always been an issue in publishing hasn't it?*

AS: Sure, it can be a tortuous procedure even in the traditional publishing process. The added complication in an OA environment is that the additional work required to get all the permissions necessary to ensure a self-archived article could carry such an image adds further complications.

I'm not saying it can't be done, and I'm not trying to throw a spanner in the works. I'm just pointing out that there are situations where the complexity can be quite marked — and the OA movement needs to take this on board.

RP: *Wherever you look, of course, copyright is contentious today!*

AS: It is. And we can also see all the signs that copyright in general is about to undergo change. The [Creative Commons](#) movement is setting the pace, and the [Science Commons](#) has also got off the

ground now too.

Coupled with this there is a general shift in attitudes — in western societies at least — towards information sharing and increased and unfettered access to information. All this suggests, to me, that the days of publisher-owned copyright are numbered. That is perhaps the most important point concerning copyright so far as scholarly communication is concerned.

RP: Governments clearly have a role to play in adjusting copyright laws to meet the needs of the networked economy too. But what do you think governments — and indeed other research funders — should be doing to help address the current problems of scholarly publishing? Should they be doing anything?

AS: They should, because there is a big public-interest issue here. Funders have the right and responsibility to ensure that access to the work they fund is available to everyone they think can benefit from it. The same applies to governments, but governments should only get involved in the most minimal way.

RP: How do mean: minimal?

AS: I mean that if research is funded by a government (i.e. the public) then that government has the right and duty to make sure the results from it are available to all. Governments shouldn't have any role, however, in dictating how commercial publishers operate in a free market economy. And neither party needs to start interfering with a researcher's right to choose which journal they publish in.

RP: So what should governments do specifically?

AS: If they want the research to be freely available all they need to do is require researchers funded by their money to self-archive. That achieves access for all, whilst allowing the process of formally publishing the work to go on in the way researchers choose.

RP: My final question then: Reed Elsevier's CEO Sir Crispin Davis implied — if not directly stated — in [The Guardian](#) recently that the simple answer to solving the scholarly communication crisis is for governments just to pump more money into libraries? Does he have a point?

AS: No.

RP: Thank you for your time.

If you would like to comment on this interview please e-mail your views to me at richard.poynder@journalist.co.uk, or to comment publicly hit the comment button below.

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Wednesday, April 06, 2005

To the benefit of scholarship: Interview with Dr. Alma Swan

Co-founder and director of UK-based scholarly publishing consultancy Key Perspectives (KPL), Dr.

Alma Swan has thought a lot about Open Access (OA). More importantly, she has conducted research on OA. Given the controversy surrounding the subject it is unsurprising that her research has attracted considerable interest from OA advocates, and some criticism from commercial publishers and opponents of OA.

In this first part of a two-part interview with Richard Poynder Alma discusses the survey findings. She also talks about frogs' gonads and biology "hotspots", and explains why she believes it was her former employer, Robert Maxwell, who was primarily responsible for transforming scholarly publishing from the tiny, rather gentlemanly industry it was, into the highly efficient generator of profits it is today.



Dr. Alma Swan

RP: Can you say something about your background? I believe you initially worked as a researcher and lecturer in cell biology?

AS: Right. My research was on cell adhesion and motility, specifically on the control of these things. My PhD research was on intercellular adhesion in slime moulds, which is very useful for bringing tedious small talk to a halt at cocktail parties.

RP: OK, you've got my attention. Can you expand on this?

AS: Well, when I moved on to postdoc work we used a wonderful model system for cancer metastasis. Certain cells in the frog embryo that are destined to form the germ cells — the eggs and sperm — migrate through other embryonic tissues at a certain stage of development until they reach the primordial gonads, at which point they stop migrating, settle down and divide, just like tumour cells that metastasise from the primary tumour.

We were looking at what controls and directs the migration and then the cessation of that motile phase in the hope of understanding more about cancer. Latterly I worked on aspects of tumour immunology too. It was all fascinating stuff!

RP: So why abandon it?

AS: For several reasons. I wasn't suited to the reductionist approach of research and I wasn't good at it. I'm better at big picture stuff, and at taking loads of detail and distilling the essential messages from the mass. Also, I didn't like certain aspects of academic life. I loved teaching and the students, though, and I have continued with that to this day in certain capacities, though it's business studies I teach now rather than biology.

RP: Why was it publishing that you fled to, and why Robert Maxwell's Pergamon Press, which you joined in 1985?

AS: I got into publishing because I was on the editorial board of the Pergamon database Current Awareness in Biological Sciences (CABS) and I was offered the job of managing editor. It was a major change of direction but one I certainly don't regret at all. That said, biology remains a great love for me.

RP: Why? What's so compelling about frogs' gonads compared, say, to the big questions that physicists are allowed to ask?

AS: Sure, physicists and mathematicians will tell you they ask the more fundamental questions in natural science, but I have always been more drawn to the questions in biology. And nowadays these are even more fascinating. Look at some of the hotspots in biology now for instance?

RP: Genomics?

AS: Yes, genomics. But look also at what's happening in pharmacology, particularly neuroscience; look at virology, aging, systems biology. Biology is still the 'wow' subject as far as I'm concerned.

And the really exciting thing is that the reductionism that has characterised science for two centuries is giving way to a new integrational approach. Systems biology is a perfect example of this. And just wait until the theoretical physicists get hold of some of molecular biology's current questions! It's hard to sit still when you think about the exciting things to come in the next decade or two.

RP: But you settled on scholarly publishing; moreover, not primary journals but indexing services?

AS: Yes, I was in what people refer to as secondary publishing. It was great for me because all the issues of all the life science and medical journals that matter came through our offices each month. For a natural synthesiser, nothing could be more satisfying.

RP: What became of CABS?

AS: The database still exists and is part of Elsevier's secondary publishing services. It was moved to Amsterdam in a restructuring exercise in 1996 and renamed [Biobase](#). CABS was pioneering in its time, thanks to its founding editor, and to Robert Maxwell.

RP: Pergamon was acquired by Elsevier in 1991. What changed when Elsevier took over?

AS: The family firm thing went out of the window, and in its place came a shareholder-focused enterprise. In terms of company culture, an autocracy was replaced by something very different. There was some reorganisation almost immediately as Mike Boswood (the CEO) got things as he wanted them and then we all settled down to living under a different regime. From my personal point of view it was a time of great development and satisfaction.

RP: Maxwell was a controversial figure. But what was his legacy to the scholarly publishing business in your view?

AS: Maxwell created a thriving publishing company which had some spectacularly successful products in its list. It also had a unique position in terms of academic relations. By the way, I'm talking about relations with academics here, not with librarians. They would have another story to tell you.

RP: What was special about the relationship with academics?

AS: Right from the start Maxwell understood very clearly the value of researchers to a scholarly publishing enterprise. He put great effort into establishing connections and relationships with distinguished, key people and in keeping them involved. The downside of his legacy was that we once had a splendid pension scheme with some money in it, and then suddenly we didn't!

RP: These days Elsevier is viewed as the "bad boy" of scholarly publishing, but you personally believe Maxwell was responsible for many of the major changes in the industry? Is that right?

AS: Yes, but you imply Maxwell was a "bad boy" too. In certain ways he was, but he was much more than that.

RP: How do you mean?

AS: How long have we got here? Until Maxwell began Pergamon Press, scholarly publishing was a tiny and rather gentlemanly industry. Maxwell saw its potential for growth and profits and exploited that potential. There has been anguish for librarians ever since. He was even then a figure of hate for his price-gouging, profit-maximising ways, and for those who worked for him this meant taking the flak from librarians all the time; but there was another side to all this.

RP: Are you going to tell me he was really a good guy?

AS: I'm not going to tell you he was cuddly, but he was a man of great creativity and drive. You never knew what he was going to suggest next. There was a department at Pergamon called 'Special Projects' which really meant 'Mr Maxwell's pet ideas'. Some of the things that they had to tackle were hilariously eccentric and destined for failure, but many were extremely successful, respected around the world, and made great contributions to scholarship.

And this suck-it-and-see culture pervaded the whole company to some extent. Life at Pergamon was never dull, whatever the tribulations that came with it. If you move around the industry today you'll find lots of people who were there at the time and who still beam at the memories. Wherever two are gathered together, the reminiscences will start.

RP: Can you give me some examples of his innovations?

AS: In terms of conventional scholarly publishing Pergamon published a great many highly-acclaimed reference works and multi-volume encyclopaedias, and was well-known for doing so. Maxwell was personally involved with some of them.

There were also some extremely good titles on Pergamon's booklist, both specialist titles aimed at the market for researchers, and textbooks; and again Maxwell had a hand in commissioning some of them. Pergamon's flagship journals such as Tetrahedron, Tetrahedron Letters and what is generally called 'The Red Journal' (*Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics*) were — and still are — outstanding in their field.

RP: He was also an early pioneer in electronic publishing I believe?

AS: He was; he saw the 'information revolution' on the horizon very early and invested hugely in electronic publishing initiatives, of which our CABS database was one.

He also started a company called Pergamon InfoLine, which hosted dozens of databases in business, technology and science. And one senior figure in the information science world of today — [Charles Oppenheim](#) — cut his teeth there in the early 80s.

RP: You left Pergamon in 1996 to establish KPL. Why?

AS: I decided it was time to do something different and to take the plunge and see if I could run my own professional life. In fact, I immediately teamed up with Sheridan Brown, who was taking the same decision at the same time. I had worked with Sheridan for some time a few years earlier, and I knew he was an incredible person in many ways. Leaving a settled career in a large company is always risky for all sorts of reasons, but it's worked for us. We're just completing our ninth year in business.

RP: What does KPL do?

AS: KPL carries out consultancy work across a range of publishing-related issues, mainly — but not exclusively — for scholarly publishers. We've deliberately stayed as a two-person operation, though we do contract people in on some jobs when we need extra manpower. We like the fact that we remain close to all the clients, we personally attend to the work they want done, and we build up lasting professional relationships with most of them.

RP: Can you give me an example of some of the clients you do work for?

AS: It would be unprofessional to list them but we have around 50 clients today. More than half of them are repeat clients who have come back to us with more projects over the years; and we have one client for whom we are doing the ninth major project.

But we also have some who have only used us once: an example is the [Competition Commission](#). When there was a proposed merger in the industry that looked as if it might constitute a monopoly situation they called us in to advise and help them analyse the market. The [European Commission's Merger Task Force](#) asked us to help in the same way.

We do jobs that range from that sort of market analysis through new product development, business planning, strategic planning, market research, and investment appraisals.

RP: How did you get involved with the Open Access (OA) movement, and why?

AS: We were selected to carry out a survey for [JISC/OSI](#) on OA journals. It was just another job at the time. We weren't trying to 'get involved' with OA. We had already carried out some studies for publishers where OA was part of the story, including one that we did for [ALPSP](#) (the Association of Learned & Professional Society Publishers) on electronic publishing, which report is in the public domain. However, the JISC/OSI contract was the first we had that was specifically on OA.

RP: As a result of this work, however, KPL is now seen to be an expert on OA matters?

AS: Certainly since then almost every research job we've taken on has addressed OA at least in part — because publishers are very exercised by it. But we're only considered to be "involved"

with the OA movement because of the public reports that we have published on the topic.

The fact is that these reports are just a tiny fraction of our output, and the bulk of our work is client-confidential and so unknown to a wider audience. In reality, we are involved with a lot of other topics and themes around scholarly communication as well.

RP: The public reports on OA you refer to are based on [two surveys](#) you conducted into researcher's attitudes to Open Access?

AS: Yes, we've done two surveys, plus a big study for JISC in which we were asked to develop a model for a national eprints service.

RP: What were the main findings of the OA surveys?

AS: The first survey was on authors who had published in OA journals. This showed that the principle of Open Access is a very strong motivator and that the majority of people who have already done so will continue to publish their work in OA journals.

The survey also identified the main concerns that authors have about OA, including quality control, IPR and copyright issues, and fears that it would threaten the publishing status quo, particularly the publishing activities of learned societies. These, by the way, are all baseless concerns when examined carefully in the light of evidence.

RP: And the second survey?

AS: The second survey was on self-archiving. As you know there are two ways of practising OA: the so-called Gold Road, in which researchers publish in OA journals, and the Green Road, where researchers continue publishing in traditional subscription-based journals but then self-archive the papers — either in a central subject-based repository or an institutional archive.

So our second survey looked at the alternative — green — solution. It was carried out specifically as a follow-up to the study on OA journals, because we wanted to establish the state of play for both methods of OA provision. This second study is not yet published: I'm just finishing the report.

RP: Can you say what its main findings are?

AS: That self-archiving is a growing activity, that there is still a considerable level of ignorance about it as a means for researchers to provide OA without having to change publishing habits and preferences, that it takes very little time to do, and that the vast majority of authors have no objections in principle to being required to self-archive by their employer or funder.

RP: What do we learn from this?

AS: We learn that there are no significant philosophical or logical barriers to providing OA by self-archiving, but there remains a very significant issue to do with awareness, and this has big advocacy implications.

RP: [Anthony Watkinson](#), who also works as a scholarly publishing consultant, and is one of the

founding directors of the publishing research group [CIBER](#), recently [publicly challenged](#) the authority of your OA surveys, arguing that the sample sizes were too small.

AS: Anthony dismissed our work with the phrase "KPL's surveys are well-known but are based on small numbers". In fact, we have only published the results of one survey so far. That was indeed based on small numbers, but it was a valid approach and that's why I defended it in the public discussion forum which Anthony chose for his commentary. So, yes, there are people — Anthony is obviously one of them but there are others — who go round condemning this work because of the small sample.

RP: People who disagree with the results of research findings will often challenge their validity, but how clear a picture do you think your survey gave of the true state of affairs?

AS: OK, let's lay this ghost, shall we? For the survey in question the client asked us to survey 100 authors who had published in OA journals. When you're in the consulting business the one thing you always make sure you do is what the client asks you to do, so the methodology was set out for us. In the event, I think we actually included some 150 authors who had published in OA journals, plus the same number who had not, for comparison.

My defence of the methodology was that if you take a proper sample from the whole population, then the result should be statistically valid. If we had selected in this case, say, authors who were from Harvard or Oxford and then asked them questions about how easy they found it to pay a publication fee to an OA journal, then we should have been quite rightly criticised. As it was, we had a random sample with no bias, save the self-selection response bias inherent in all surveys.

RP: So it was a valid sample?

AS: Absolutely. It was a valid sample from a population which is, after all, not that big itself. I would add that for each job we do we take advice from a statistician before we proceed.

Just to ram my point home, if you compare the findings we obtained for that small sample with those for similar questions in our present survey (which has 1,296 respondents) and the big [CIBER Group survey](#) [PDF], which had thousands of respondents, then you'll find they match up very well. As such it should send out a perfectly clear signal about the state of affairs with respect to OA publishing as of the beginning of 2004.

RP: Shortly after Anthony Watkinson criticised your sample sizes Cliff Morgan, of Wiley, [publicly questioned](#) your objectivity?

AS: Yes, then Cliff Morgan piled into the fray! Great fun, although I was bit taken aback at his intervention because we were just that week finishing writing up a survey-based study — not on OA, I should add — for which Cliff was one of the commissioning team! But yes, he claimed our latest OA survey 'led' the respondents.

RP: Which you deny?

AS: I certainly do. As I pointed out, we asked only questions that required respondents to tell us about their experiences, not their attitudes — except for the very last question of all, which was the only one that asked about an intention. Now it's perfectly possible that respondents will

blatantly lie about their experiences, I suppose, but why should we assume they will when there is no conceivable personal advantage in doing so?

RP: I guess this just shows how contentious an issue OA has become?

AS: Yes, and so it is to be expected. Moreover, Anthony and Cliff are both seasoned and thoughtful industry characters whose job it is to question things that throw up data they might not welcome. I don't mind a bit of rough-and-tumble in public with them — especially when I'm right and can refute the allegations easily! There will always be flaws in my work — whose work is perfect? But in this case they picked on the wrong things. Now they'll probably go back and look for the real flaws, so I doubt we have heard the last of this!

RP: Much of this criticism appears to flow from a feeling that you have "gone native" over OA. I'd be interested, therefore, in your personal views. For example, is Open Access — to quote OA advocate [Stevan Harnad](#) — simply "optimal and inevitable", and thus a natural development of scholarly communication? If not, is there a sufficiently strong "social good" case for making publicly-funded research freely available that it has to be "made to happen"?

AS: OK, let's first address the 'going native' claim. What a thought! Our role is to collect data, analyse them and report on them. What we've done on OA so far is to collect data specifically on author/researcher experiences of OA journals and self-archiving, analysed them, and then reported them, factually. If the data add up to a burgeoning OA scene then that's a matter of fact, not of me going native or becoming unobjective or opinionated.

RP: So you have no personal views on OA?

AS: You should know by now, Richard, that consultants don't have personal views! But just this once, here are some views, for what they're worth, on that phrase of Stevan's. Yes, he uses "optimal and inevitable" frequently, and it's economical yet all-encompassing and exactly fits the bill.

No one with the good of scholarship at heart can possibly argue with the first of these things — that OA is optimal. All of society should have the good of scholarship at heart. It is a fundament of civilisation, and I want it to proceed as unhindered and untrammelled as possible. OA is entirely to the benefit of scholarship, so of course I personally view OA as optimal.

RP: And inevitable?

AS: Yes, that too — given time — because it's so obviously what is needed. It is optimal, and it will come to pass.

In the [second part](#) of this interview Alma Swan discusses whether OA poses any threat to traditional subscription-based journals and secondary publishers, and explains how she believes scholarly publishing — and publishers — will evolve in the future. She also talks about copyright and peer review, and outlines what she thinks governments and research funders should be doing about OA.

If you would like to comment on this interview please e-mail your views to me at richard.poynder@journalist.co.uk, or to comment publicly hit the comment button below.

