



**Chapter Council Presents
Sharing Roundtables
MLA Annual Meeting
San Antonio, TX
Monday, May 16, 2005**

Table 19B: Open Access

Facilitator

Karen Albert (Fox Chase Cancer Center)

Recorder

Sheryl Stevens (Medical College of Ohio)

Additional Participants

Frances Delwiche (University of Vermont), Jan LaBeause (Mercer University), Laura McLellan (*Annals of Family Medicine*), Elizabeth Pregill (New York Academy of Medicine)

Discussion

Participants introduced themselves and gave brief statements about their interest in and familiarity with the topic. Subsequent discussion areas are summarized below.

Status/Impact of Open Access

- OA “challenge” to traditional scholarly publishing system and its out-of-control prices continues to gain momentum and is even getting press coverage in mainstream papers – e.g., *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*.
- But libraries’ journal costs haven’t decreased – prices and profit margins for commercial STM titles are higher than ever, and in addition many libraries are now paying institutional membership fees for OA (author pays) journals.
- Long-term success of OA depends greatly on acceptance by faculty and researchers, who in theory support, but for practical reasons – e.g., promotion and tenure, career development, ability to get grants – continue to submit to premier commercial journals.
- Attempts to encourage researchers to boycott publishers who refuse to provide free access to articles after a designated time period have been disappointing.
- Not clear at this point if any OA titles will succeed in developing enough clout and prestige to seriously compete, although several ranked fairly high in recent citation impact factor studies.
- Also not clear if current OA business models are sustainable in the long run – e.g., non-profit Public Library of Science is still running off a private \$9 million startup grant; “for-profit” BioMed Central has yet to turn a profit. [Note: Roundtable participant from

Annals of Family Medicine, an OA title, said that it is published/funded by several family medicine organizations and does not charge author fees.]

- Another unknown – what role will libraries play in the scholarly communication process if OA becomes an unqualified success and researchers can just get what they need online and for free?
- Commercial publishers have not exactly endorsed the OA model (though ironically been imposing page and color charges on authors for years), but have acknowledged its reality and made “concessions” –
 - Nature Publishing and EMBO recently launched an open access title (*Molecular Systems Biology*)
 - Oxford University Press made *Nucleic Acids Research* fully open access as of 2005
 - Springer and National Academy of Sciences USA now provide authors with an open access option
 - Elsevier and Nature Publishing now permit self-archiving of postprints at institutional repositories
 - Elsevier has opened up a portion of its Cell Press archives
 - Many scientific society publishers now provide free access some/all of their online archives

National and International Access Initiatives

- New NIH public access policy (effective May 2) *requests* that NIH-funded researchers submit final version of their articles to PubMed Central, but House Appropriations Committee originally recommended that this be *required* – lobbying by commercial publishers evidently successful. Will authors who have signed away copyright to publishers have to get permission to submit to PMC? If version submitted is not the finished PDF as published, how is this version to be cited? What are the submission procedures? Has anyone submitted articles yet? [Note: Roundtable participants did not have definitive answers to these questions!]
- Strategies libraries might use to promote the new NIH policy at the local level: post announcements at their Web sites; submit stories to institutional newsletters; send e-mails to faculty and researchers; organize brown-bag sessions for faculty, researchers, and departments involved in grant administration.
- Consortium of U.K science groups announced plans a few days ago to develop a U.K. “mirror” of PubMed Central – earlier this year U.K. government rejected House of Commons recommendation that it fund a network of OA institutional repositories.
- Last week scientists from all major Dutch universities launched a Web site (DAREnet) that provides free access to their research materials
- Physics researchers worldwide have utilized a freely accessible disciplinary digital repository since the early 1990s.

Institutional Repositories

- Libraries are taking an active role in building these repositories.
- Open-source software is available but creating and maintaining isn't free!
- OAI (Open Archives Initiative) protocol makes it possible for content in separate repositories to be systematically harvested and cross-searched – e.g., OAIster Web site provides single-search interface for OAI-compliant repositories and other scholarly resources

Conclusions

- No easy answers to dealing with scholarly publishing crisis – open access is not necessarily the solution
- Imperative for librarians to keep informed and to keep faculty and researchers informed on the issues and implications