

Werner Ulrich's Home Page: *Picture of the Month*

Now "*Ulrich's Bimonthly*"

February, 2006



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Open doors: a plea for open access publishing (Part 1/2) The academic community crucially depends on the easy circulation of, and access to, ideas. Academic publishers – commercial publishers as well as university presses – have in the past served the academic community well in achieving this aim; but there is now a wide-spread and growing perception that this is no longer so. Rather than using today's technical means so as to facilitate the accessibility of scholarly works, publishers tend to impose copyright and cost barriers that work against the aims of easy and affordable access to published material. In an age whose technical facilities would in principle allow for easier and cheaper access to publications than any previous age could dream of, easy access to academic publications is increasingly becoming a problem. The solution that offers itself is open access (OA) electronic publishing.

The coming crisis of academic publishing The Internet today offers us fantastic possibilities for publishing and distributing academic work. Yet the academic community has, to an amazing degree, failed thus far to take advantage of this potential. As if the conventional way of publishing journal papers and books through commercial publishers and university presses were serving the academic community so well that no alternatives were conceivable! Already a cursory glance tells us that the situation is not as rosy:

- **Libraries** find themselves increasingly unable to serve their audience well, as both the volume and the cost of publications are growing much faster than library budgets. In addition, a majority of publications are out of print after only a short period of availability, so that it is almost impossible to build up new collections.

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- **Readers** find it increasingly impossible to remain in touch with all the literature that is relevant to them, as price barriers do not allow them to buy all these publications.
- **Authors** find themselves under pressure by commercial publishers to renounce their most elementary rights to using and distributing their own works, as the copyright conditions imposed by the publishers tend to protect more the rights of the distributors than those of the creators of the published work.
- **Publishers** find it increasingly difficult to publish academic work on the basis of its scholarly merits but must instead give preference to (often rather mediocre) work that addresses a larger segment of the market or can be made into a bestseller.
- **Universities, research institutions, and funding agencies** find themselves in the paradoxical situation that they have to buy from publishers the research that they financed in the first place.

Insufficient progress towards open access (OA) publishing It would appear that the Internet offers a welcome opportunity for the academic community to improve the situation and to emancipate itself from the grip of commercial interests and inadequate copyright regulations, by taking things into their own hands and organizing quality publication channels based on open-access electronic publishing. It is true that the established publishers are slowly complementing their conventional business with electronic services, particularly by offering electronic versions of journals. However, both as an author and as a reader of academic journal articles, I find the current policies of a majority of publishers regarding electronic access to published work unsatisfactory. I am dissatisfied with regard to two essential (among other) issues:

(1) Publishers tend to restrict electronic access to published work in ways that hinder the free exchange of ideas. Expensive subscriptions and high pay-per-view fees work against the basic requirement of openness that is indispensable for securing both the quality and progress of academic work. My plea is in favor of open access to electronic versions of all academic publications.

(2) Publishers tend to impose copyright conditions that undermine, rather than protect, the right of authors to use their own intellectual property. My plea is in favor of a reform of copyright laws that would protect authors' rights as much as those of publishers.

Definition of Open Access

"Open access is defined as free and unrestricted online availability to current content." ([Open Society Institute](#), October 1, 2004)

"We define open access journals as journals that use a funding model that does not charge readers or their institutions for access." ([Directory of Open Access Journals](#), Lund University Libraries, 2006)

"BOAI [Budapest Open Access Initiative] only seeks open access for the scientific and scholarly research texts that authors give to publishers and readers without asking for any kind of royalty or payment.... By 'open access' to this literature we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited." ([Budapest Open Access Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions](#), November 15, 2005. Compare the subsequent hint.)

The Budapest Initiative One of the first and still major collective efforts to promote OA publishing is the [Budapest Open Access Initiative \(BOAI\)](#) of December 2001. Join this initiative by signing it, see

<http://www.soros.org/openaccess/index.shtml>

Here are two extracts from the BOAI declaration of 14 February, 2002:

„An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly

journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the internet. The public good they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds. Removing access barriers to this literature will accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge.

[...]

The literature that should be freely accessible online is that which scholars give to the world without expectation of payment. Primarily, this category encompasses their peer-reviewed journal articles, but it also includes any unreviewed preprints that they might wish to put online for comment or to alert colleagues to important research findings. There are many degrees and kinds of wider and easier access to this literature. By 'open access' to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.”

(From the text of the Budapest Open Access Initiative of 14 Feb 2002, retrieved from <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml> on 10 Jan 2006)

Other initiatives

- **Berlin Declaration** on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, October 22, 2003
See: <http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin> or <http://oa.mpg.de/index.html>
- **UN World Summit on the Information Society** Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, December 12, 2003
See: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>
- **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** Declaration on Access to Research Data From Public Funding, January 30, 2004, and **OECD Principles and Guidelines for Access to Research Data from Public Funding**, April 2007

See: <http://www.oecd.org> and <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/9/61/38500813.pdf>

- **The Grants for Open Access Journals Program of the Open Society Institute, October 1, 2004**
See: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/information/news/openaccess_20041004
- **The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Statement on Open Access to Scholarly Literature and Research Documentation, February 24, 2004.**
See: <http://www.ifla.org>
- **Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)**, an alliance of universities, research libraries, and organizations pioneered by the [Association of Research Libraries](#) as "a constructive response to market dysfunctions in the scholarly communication system"
See: <http://www.arl.org/sparc/about/index.html>
- **Create Change - Shouldn't the way we share research be as advanced as the Internet?**
See: <http://www.createchange.org/>
- **Creative Commons Attribution License**, a web facility for licensing the public use of your works according to your specific copyright requirements
See: <http://creativecommons.org/about/licenses>
- **GNU General Public License (GPL)** of the [Free Software Foundation](#), a "copyleft" alternative to conventional copyrighting that allows you to publish free software (freeware) or any other uncopyrighted work without risking that uncooperative users convert it into proprietary work
See: <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/>
- **GNU Free Documentation License (FDL)**, a short version of the previously mentioned GNU GPL that can easily be attached to text documents
See: <http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html#TOC1>
- **SHERPA List of Publisher Copyright Policies**, a web facility to find out how open your publisher is towards OA policies!
See <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>
- **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)**
See: <http://www.doaj.org/>
- **Directory of Open Access Repositories (DOAR)**
See: <http://www.openoar.org/>

An invitation A commitment to open access publishing by a majority of researchers and research institutions is probably key to paving the way for

OA publishing. Hence:

Don't just ask what others have done to facilitate open-access electronic publishing; ask what you can do to give it a chance!

Four basic practical recommendations to begin with:

1: Publish in OA journals. Before submitting your work to journals that are not committed to OA, try to find an OA alternative. The above-mentioned **Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)** may help you in finding such alternatives.

2: Amend copyright agreements. If a publisher requests you to sign a copyright transfer agreement, amend the preprinted agreement so as to retain your right to circulate the original HTML or PDF file of your article, to post it in personal or institutional web sites or OA repositories, and to authorize others to use them for non-commercial purposes (e.g., for teaching purposes), all on the sole condition that accurate reference is given to the original publication. As a help, you may want to use the **Author's Addendum form** offered for download by SPARC, the above-mentioned Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition.

See: <http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/addendum.html> and

http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/docs/AuthorsAddendum2_1.pdf

3: Read and quote OA journals. In your references to the work of other authors, make sure you primarily base yourself on the quality and relevance of their published work, rather than on where it is published.

4: Support the development of quality OA journals and OA repositories in fields in which they are not yet available. Where they are available, submit quality work to them and offer your services as a careful reviewer!

(To be continued in March 2006 with Part 2/2)

This month's picture: technical data Digital photograph, taken on 18 August 2005 around noon in Schaffhausen, Switzerland. Shutter speed 1/60, aperture f/2.8, ISO 50, focal length 7.8 mm (equivalent to 35 mm with a conventional 35 mm camera). Original resolution 1200 x 1600 pixels; current resolution 776 x 998 pixels, compressed to 88 KB.

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Open doors for access to academic work!

„Take care of freedom
and truth will take care of itself.”

(Richard Rorty, *American Philosopher*, 2006)*

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* Eduardo Mendicta, ed.:
*Take Care of Freedom and
Truth Will Take Care of
Itself: Interviews with
Richard Rorty*. Stanford, CA:
Stanford University Press,
2006.

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Notepad for capturing
personal thoughts »

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Just be sure to copy them elsewhere before leaving this page.

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http://wulrich.com/picture_february2006.html

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