

Academic BRASS

Published by the
BRASS Business Reference in Academic Libraries Committee

Vol 4(2), Fall 2009

Charles Lyons
Business Librarian
University at Buffalo

Open Access in Business and Related Disciplines

At first glance, open access, which basically means giving academic journal articles away for free instead of charging for them, looks like a scholarly chemistry experiment with explosions guaranteed. Just look at the rumblings in the newspaper industry where readers can access large swaths of the articles they need without any payment whatsoever. However, while newspaper publishers are struggling to stem the flow of free access to articles, essentially closing the barnyard doors after the horses have already left, academic publishers still have seemingly sturdy barriers in place in the form of often hefty subscription prices. And academic publishers of business journals aren't showing any ill-effects from articles being made freely available as the average cost for a journal subscription has increased from \$664 in 2005 to \$862 in 2009, with another 9% increase expected in this year.

So, what sort of inroads is the open access (OA) movement making in business and related disciplines? One indicator of OA awareness within disciplines is the number and status of OA journals. The Directory of Open Access Journals currently lists 109 OA journals in business and management. While that number may seem high, most OA business journals lack prestige. Prestige, usually measured by a journal's impact factor, is a major influence on publication choices made by business faculty because the system they work in rewards publication in prestigious journals, rewards that come in the form of promotion, tenure, grants, and recognition among fellow scholars. Of the 109 OA business journals, the African Journal of Business and Management is the only one that has been assigned an impact factor and it ranks 77th out of the 77 journals in business and 88th out of the 89 journals in management.

But OA journals are only half the story of OA. The other major way, and some believe the more promising and effective way, to free up academic literature is through archiving. Archiving occurs when someone – typically the article author, but increasingly a librarian acting on behalf of the author – makes a copy of an article available on the Internet, usually in a repository. OpenDOAR (Directory of Open Access Repositories), the major source for data on repositories, lists 1,586 repositories, 77 of which are classified as “Business and Economics.” Repositories come in two flavors – institutional (for archiving the work of scholars at specific schools) and disciplinary (for archiving the work of scholars in specific

disciplines). SSRN (Social Sciences Research Network) and RePEc (Research Papers in Economics) are the two disciplinary repositories that, from my experience, are the most popular with business scholars.

While OA journals (which have been dubbed “gold OA”) are new entrants into the academic journal publishing market, archiving (called “green OA”) works in parallel to the existing journal publishing system by simply creating copies of existing articles. Most, though far from all, archived copies are early versions of articles, often referred to as pre-prints (before peer-review) or post-prints (after peer-review, but before actual publication in a journal). SHERPA RoMEO tracks publisher policies regarding whether or not they allow archiving and 63% of the over 700 publishers they track now allow some form of archiving. The prestigious business publisher, the Academy of Management, however, does not allow any archiving.

While many publishers are fine with archiving, most business faculty members still do not do it. Some OA activists believe that the only way to get more scholars archiving is to require them to do so by instituting mandates. ROARMAP (Registry of Open Access Repository Material Archiving Policies) reports that the number of OA mandates worldwide now numbers over 200. The Copenhagen Business School (CBS) was the first business school to adopt an OA mandate and it requires that all faculty archive their scholarly output in the school’s institutional repository called [OpenArchive@CBS](#). More recently, the Harvard Business School adopted a similar mandate.

Leif Hansen at the Copenhagen Business School Library has written about the prominent role his library played in establishing the mandate and, more generally, in creating interest in OA publishing by the business faculty at his school. He writes that the two biggest concerns expressed by faculty at his school were the aforementioned lack of quality of OA journals in business and the prospect of having to pay author fees in order to make their work freely available. Author fees are a justifiable concern as some OA journals require authors to pay a fee in order to publish their article. One solution being used at CBS and other schools is to set up a fund that pays these fees for authors that publish in OA journals.

Most of us are probably way behind Mr. Hansen and CBS – I know that I, and the faculty at my school, certainly are. Last fall, here at the University at Buffalo (UB), we started a major initiative focusing on the myriad issues around scholarly communication, especially OA. We’ve formed a committee that regularly meets, organizes events on campus, maintains a website that serves as a central place for finding information, and we are developing our institutional repository. Additionally, each subject librarian, with involvement from their faculty, recently completed an “opportunity assessment instrument” to gauge the overall state of scholarly communication in our disciplines. The most striking finding of the assessments was that awareness of and opinions on OA issues vary greatly from discipline to discipline. Based on my assessment of the School of Management at UB, I think business librarians might want to focus on the basics, as awareness of alternative publishing outlets in business seems to still be in the formative stages. Even Mr. Hansen at CBS writes that for business faculty at his school OA is “unmapped territory” and “still a very new thing.” Indeed, OA is fraught with

misconceptions and we would all be well-served by first becoming well-informed ourselves and then helping clear up some of these misconceptions among our faculty.

Most misconceptions relate to OA journals. First, many faculty believe that OA journals are the only way for articles to be made freely available, and are not aware that archiving articles is equally as important, especially in a field like business where there are not yet any high-impact OA journals. There is also a pervasive sentiment among faculty that OA journals are not peer-reviewed, but this is not the case – any OA journal editor knows that in order to become highly-regarded, they must have rigorous peer-review in place, so, of course, many do. Another misconception is that all OA journals charge exorbitant author fees. The truth is that some do (as high as \$3,000 an article), but most do not. Peter Suber, a central figure in the OA movement, estimates that 67% of OA journals do not charge any author fees at all.

The Internet is offering faculty new ways to disseminate their scholarly output and I would argue that radical transformations in scholarly communication are inevitable, unbounded, and ameliorative. No one knows exactly where we are headed or when we'll get there, but there are roles for us to play in selling business faculty on these emerging publishing alternatives and the advantages they offer. These advantages include: speedier publication times, reduced publishing costs, and increased access to their research. Perhaps the best element in our sales pitch to faculty today is that by removing the barnyard doors, that is, by making their articles freely accessible to everyone, more people will likely cite their work. Extensive research has shown that OA articles are cited more highly than traditional subscription-based articles (Wagner provides an annotated bibliography of this research). Do you know any business faculty members who wouldn't be interested in bumping up their citation counts?

Websites Mentioned

Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) <www.doaj.org/>.

Peter Suber's Open Access Overview <<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm>>.

[OPenArchive@CBS](http://openarchive.cbs.dk) <openarchive.cbs.dk>.

OpenDOAR (Directory of Open Access Repositories) <<http://www.opendoar.org/>>.

RePEc (Research Papers in Economics) <<http://repec.org/>>.

ROARMAP (Registry of Open Access Repository Material Archiving Policies)
<<http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/>>.

SHERPA RoMEO <<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>>.

SSRN (Social Sciences Research Network) <<http://www.ssrn.com/>>.

University at Buffalo Scholarly Communication Website <<http://library.buffalo.edu/scholarly/>>.

References

Hansen, Leif. "Greater Access to Scholarly Publications from Copenhagen Business School – The CBS Open Access Policy 2009." *Sciecom Info* 5.4 (2009). Web. 25 Feb. 2010.

< <http://www.sciecom.org/ojs/index.php/sciecominfo/article/view/1812>>.

Van Orsdel, Lee C., and Kathleen Born. "Reality Bites: Periodicals Price Survey 2009." *Library Journal* 134.7 (2009): 36-40. Web. 25 Feb. 2010.

<<http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6651248.html>>.

Wagner, A. Ben. "Open Access Citation Advantage: An Annotated Bibliography." *Issues in Science and Technology Librarianship* 60 (Winter 2010). Web 25 Mar. 2010.

<<http://www.istl.org/10-winter/article2.html>>.