

International Convention of Asia Scholars, Macau, 2013
Panel 218, 'Open Access and Academic Publishing on Asia'
26 June 2013

This panel featured presentations on Open Access (OA) by three speakers representing the publishing world: Paul Kratoska, NUS Press, Singapore (panel organizer and chairman); Michael Duckworth, head of the University of Hawai'i Press (until June 2013 head of the University of Hong Kong Press); and Robert Chard, Managing Editor of IJAS, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia at the University of Tokyo. One more speaker, Charles Fosselman of the Stanford University East Asia Library, gave an assessment of the implications of Open Access and electronic publishing for libraries.

Kratoska, Duckworth, and Chard gave presentations on the history, current situation, and future of Open Access from the perspective of journal and book publishing. Open Access got its start with the advent of electronic publishing, which made the production and distribution of text easier and more flexible. Open Access was adopted early in the natural sciences, where 'discovery races' create an incentive for scientists to publicize their most recent findings as soon as possible. More recently, the extremely high subscription fees charged by commercial publishers for academic journals has led to accusations that these publishers are extracting high profits from the captive market represented by university and other institutional libraries, and this has given new impetus to the Open Access movement in recent years.

Open Access takes different forms: a 'Gold' model where the author (or supporting institution) pays the journal an 'Article Processing Charge' (APC, anywhere from several hundred to several thousand US dollars), and the article is then made accessible upon publication at no cost. There is also the 'Green' model, where publications are placed in electronic repositories which anyone can access; items published in refereed journals are usually subject to an embargo period of six to twelve months, during which only subscribers can access the work, after which it goes into the repository. Over the last several years, some research funding bodies (such as the Wellcome Trust) have been requiring that work they fund be accessible at no cost to the public, and last year the US and UK governments adopted similar policies for publicly funded research.

Charles Fosselman of the Stanford University East Asia Library gave a librarian's perspective on Open Access and electronic publishing in general. Open Access for journals is welcome from the standpoint of strained library budgets. However, long-term storage and access of electronic material poses

many problems. File formats and media are changing, and many librarians are concerned that they cannot yet guarantee the same permanence as printed paper. Also, electronic documents need metadata for indexing and searching; incompatible metadata formats, or the lack of metadata, can mean that user searches for an item can fail to find it. Such issues are not always understood by people in charge of creating and maintaining repositories of Open Access research publications, with the result that material cannot be found through search engines like Google, or even in the same university's own library catalogue system.

Widespread adoption of Open Access could have both positive and negative implications for scholars in poorer countries in Asia. Positive, in that they could access material previously denied them because of high subscription charges; negative, in that they and their institutions could not pay the high charges required by prestige refereed journals using the 'Gold' model. Another possible negative consequence of Open Access is the effect it would have on academic societies which publish journals – their subscription charges, which are usually much lower than those of commercial publishers, along with per-download income from fee-charging services such as JSTOR for older articles, help sustain the academic societies financially. The loss of such income might threaten their existence, and their ability to continue producing their journals.

IJAS has profited greatly from being published and distributed by Cambridge University Press. Though subscription rates are high, and journal content not normally available for free, Cambridge's marketing of subscription bundles to consortia of universities has meant that IJAS is accessible to large numbers of users: according to Cambridge University Press, downloads from IJAS in 2012 reached a monthly average of 2079. And, the copyright agreement signed by authors of IJAS, though it assigns the actual rights to Cambridge, at present allows the authors to distribute PDFs freely themselves.

The Institute needs to monitor IJAS's relationship with Cambridge University Press. Cambridge is not a private company, and charges less than commercial journal publishers, but still stands to lose from Open Access, especially now that the US and UK governments are implementing policies to force all publicly-funded research to be made available at no cost to industry and taxpaying citizens. The UK government has expressed a preference for the 'Gold' model, and from 2013 is including funding for APCs (article preparation charges) in block grants to universities in the UK. The likelihood is that for several more years at least journal publishers like Cambridge will be able to maintain sufficient profits to continue operating more or less to their current business models. IJAS will need to monitor the situation carefully, however,

since the current arrangement does depend on IJAS making a profit for Cambridge.

Robert Chard
19/7/2013