Guest Editorial

Open Access from a Publisher’s Perspective

In July, the UK government announced its support for policies that require authors with government-funded research grants to publish under an open access business model. This was the recommendation of the Finch Group report on access to scholarly information, which was welcomed by Elsevier and other publishers.

Then the European Commission followed suit, making a similar (though less detailed) announcement that starting in 2014, its grant recipients also would need to make their articles available in open access publications. The Commission also recommended that the 27 individual European Union (EU) member states develop policies to provide access to publications resulting from publicly-funded research.

The influence of the new UK and EC policies will grow gradually over time as awareness and compliance grows and, more critically, as funding and infrastructure are established to support open access.

What is Elsevier’s position?

Elsevier, along with many other publishers, is comfortable with open-access approaches, where provided these methods are economically sustainable for all stakeholders. Elsevier has always supported business models that help researchers communicate and access information in a sustainable way. Ten million researchers from 120 countries use Elsevier’s platforms each month. 85% of researchers have access to this platform, including researchers in 105 low-and-middle-income countries through the Research4Life program. But access is important to others, too, which is why we provide a wide array of programs to enable access by members of the public, and by businesses both big and small. We already use all kinds of open access models too. For example, Elsevier has 31 open access journal titles and more than 1500 of our journals offer authors the option to make their article open access (additional information about each of these programs is online at http://www.elsevier.com/about/open-access/open-access-options).

Therefore, while Elsevier believes that the subscription model will remain popular among our customers, the company is well-prepared to scale up our open access publishing as this becomes more important to researchers. We have the global reach and technology to offer these publishing services efficiently and we are committed to working with all stakeholders to help ensure that open access policies are implemented in a way that is economically viable.

Our dedication to access extends beyond publishing models as well. For example, we support technologies so people with disabilities can read our content, we provide text and data mining services, and we offer various access options for patients and other purchasers. We refer to this spectrum of activities, and the vision of access-for-all which underpins it, as universal access. More information about the full spectrum of our open access and other access initiatives is available at www.elsevier.com/access.

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