

Open Access Journals Support in Canada

Rationale

Open Access (OA) is literature that is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions (Suber). OA is optimal for dissemination of scholarly literature, particularly the peer-reviewed journal article that is traditionally given away by authors. OA is strongly supported by libraries and philosophy by most scholarly publishers. A key challenge to making OA happen is transitioning support from subscriptions to open access.

The purpose of this research was twofold: to establish data indicating the current extent of support for open access publishing at Canadian university presses and libraries, and to identify economic models for further transition most likely to enjoy broad-based support. This research builds on an ARL study of journal hosting support by ARL member libraries, a qualitative investigation of open access publishing in Canada conducted by Kathleen Shearer, and models for transition developed by a number of initiatives, such as the Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Particle Physics Publishing (SCOAP3) and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

Methodology

An online survey was designed to determine the level of journal hosting activity amongst Canadian university libraries and Canadian scholarly presses and to determine levels of support for various Open Access economic models. The survey was designed in English and then translated into French. A total of 92 requests to participate in the survey were sent out – 73 to university libraries that constituted the membership of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network as of January 2010 (to heads of collections or the university librarian) and 19 to scholarly presses (to the director or manager of the press). Scholarly presses were considered to be all university presses in Canada and also presses operating at Canadian universities but that are not “university” presses. 33 responses were received out of a total of 92 surveys for a total response rate of 36%.

Journal Hosting Results

Of the 33 respondents, 55% (18/33) provide journal hosting services, with 15 of the 18 being responsible for the maintenance of their own journal hosting platform. Two sites (one library and one press) hosted over 20 journals each. Also, 16 of the sites are hosting open access journals, with the majority of sites hosting only open access journals. 17 of the 18 sites have 1.5 FTE or less dedicated to hosting journals or less maintaining journal hosting services, with the mode being an FTE of between 0.6 and 1.0.

Service levels are high for technical support amongst organizations offering journal hosting services, with the vast majority providing “a lot of” technical support, but support levels are much lower when it comes to providing services for the management of the publishing workflow.

Support for Open Access Publishing and Canadian Academic Journals

Respondents were asked to indicate current and potential support for a range of options for supporting open access publishing and in particular Canadian Academic Journals, with the first range of options being funded internally by the organization, and a second set of options being funded externally from the organization (e.g. funded by granting agencies, governments, etc). When responses indicating some level of support (Currently Support, Would Support, Might Support) are added together, every option presented would be supported at some level by a majority of responses. The most strongly supported internally funded options were: “have library consortia transition to a consortial purchase of open access publishing services (e.g. SCOAP3 model)” and “commit subscription monies to create an endowment for ongoing open access (e.g. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)”. The internally funded options with the highest number of respondents indicating “currently support” were “Support Canadian academic journals through subscriptions” (19 of 33 respondents) and “Host preprints or postprints of articles in the institutional repository” (16 of 33 respondents). The most favoured model of the for externally funding options was for “external funding agencies to extend financial support to OA publishing”.

Contributions of the research

This survey presents a picture of hosting and support services for journals at Canadian university presses and libraries which is useful for Canadian publishers looking for support options, and will form a basis for future comparative studies. The support level and FTE count information is useful to journal hosting service providers. Responses to questions about economic support for open access indicate an overall willingness to consider many transitional models for open access, as well as the desirability of library consortial coordination. This research was intended to inform practice, and has been presented at a meeting of the Canadian Association of Research Library Directors (Calgary, May 2010), the Canadian Association of Learned Journals *Annual General Meeting* (Montréal, June 2010), and the *Berlin 2010 Open Access Conference* (Beijing, October 2010).

References

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