Positive Concepts of Open Access: an Academic View

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Senate Room
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Purpose

• What the purpose of this seminar is:
  – “...to raise awareness of this important mechanism of growing one’s research profile. This is important for individual academics as well as the University as a whole.”
    • “experiences – good or bad – with open access publishing”
  – Thus I will speak to individual academics about the rationale of open publishing

• What (other worthy efforts) this purpose can be distinguished from:
  – To increase Wits/other univ’s institutional profile via open publishing of say WitsUnivPress
  – To address the North/South publishing divide
  – To ensure ‘the future of the book’ – which is a project that some scholars at WiSER and UCT are embarking upon
  – To reduce private publishing rents and ensure value for public money, esp research subsidies
  – To increase knowledge via greater openness
Why Not?

• Unidentified Wits librarian: “Academics are reluctant to deposit copies of their papers in our institutional repository, WIREDSPACE, even when the publishers allow them to.”
  – Another general site is www.academic.edu; another is www.researchgate.net; in my disciplines, we also have SSRN and bepress; Wits Library/Research could make guideline list of repositories available? Wits Library/Research could assist with uploading to such sites (after WIREDspace)?

• Why Not?
  – Why the reluctance? Why not have your work available for use, reading, and citation?
  – Note that publishers allow this – they get ‘their’ work (your work) used, read, and cited.

Why Not? Imaginations of why not?

• WIREDSpace
  – Well, because it doesn’t list 17 of my publications together nicely
    • Klaaren, J (1) does not equal Klaaren, Jonathan
    • School of Law (12), Africana Library (1), CALS (2), Mandela Institute (1)
  – It only lists 17 publications; Google shows 106.
    • 16% of my publications

• Evaluation: these imagined reasons why not still don’t play in the real world
  – Still not bad for zero % Klaaren effort
Why Not? Myths

• 1) The only way to provide open access to peer-reviewed journal articles is to publish in open access journals
• 2) All or most open access journals charge publication fees
• 3) Most author-side fees are paid by the authors themselves
• 4) Publishing in a conventional journal closes the door on making the same work open access
• 5) Open access journals are intrinsically low in quality
• 6) Open access mandates infringe academic freedom
Why?

• Take the set of journals: Law & Society Review, Law & Social Inquiry, Law & Policy
  – Even at the top of the hierarchy, there will only be a few vanity/prestige paper copies in a few years
  – So, academic journal articles are now units within an archive
• This means
  – (a) Scholarly research search is increasingly public domain internet searching
    • E.g. rise of Google Scholar, demise of Lexis/Nexis and Westlaw
  – (b) Scholarly ‘work’/research is itself changing
  – (c) This is where quality articles and writing are going – towards short and more multimedia pieces -- the form/content itself is changing
1996 SA Constitution

• S 32(1): Everyone has the right of access to (a) any information held by the state; and (b) any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.

• S 32(2): National legislation must be enacted to give effect to this right, and may provide for reasonable measures to alleviate the administrative and financial burden on the state.