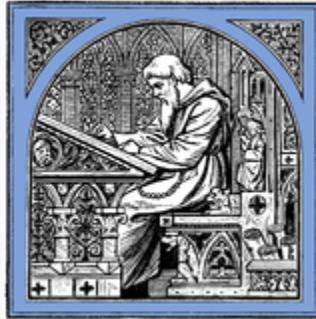


Finch Group report.pdf/5



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access to research and its results. For many of them, the only way in which they can gain access to quality-assured research publications is to pay up to £20 or more as a ‘pay-per-view’ (PPV) fee in order to read a single journal article.

The issue we are addressing, therefore, is how to expand and improve access to research publications for the benefit of all who have a stake or an interest in research and its results. Barriers to access—particularly when the research is publicly-funded—are increasingly unacceptable in an online world: for such barriers restrict the innovation, growth and other benefits which can flow from research.

The principle that the results of research that has been publicly funded should be freely accessible in the public domain is a compelling one, and fundamentally unanswerable. Effective publication and dissemination is essential to realising that principle, especially for communicating to non-specialists. Improving the flows of the information and knowledge that researchers produce will promote

- enhanced transparency, openness and accountability, and public engagement with research;

- closer linkages between research and innovation, with benefits for public policy and services, and for economic growth;
- improved efficiency in the research process itself, through increases in the amount of information that is readily accessible, reductions in the time spent in finding it, and greater use of the latest tools and services to organise, manipulate and analyse it; and
- increased returns on the investments made in research, especially the investments from public funds.

These are the motivations behind the growth of the world-wide open access movement. For it is clear that many benefits could result if we were to move world-wide to an open access regime, complete with peer review and with effective search, navigation and other value-added services currently provided by publishers, libraries and others. Moves towards open access have achieved a momentum that we believe will continue. The key policy questions are how to promote and manage the shift in an ordered way which delivers the benefits but minimises the risks. These are particularly important issues for the UK, whose researchers are world-leading in the quality as well as the quantity of the research they produce.

2. The current environment.

Research publishing already shows the influence of open access. There are now three principal interlocking channels for publishing, disseminating and gaining access to research findings.

- Subscription-based journals predominate, published by a wide range of commercial and not-for-profit publishers, including many learned societies. These include the most prestigious and highly-ranked journals, others that play a major role within the disciplines they cover, and yet others that have a more niche market. Many publishers provide ‘big deals’ under which institutions can subscribe to most if not all of their publications on discounted terms. But no single organisation can afford licences for all the 25,000 peer-reviewed journals currently being published; and people who do

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