CHAPTER 1

Introduction, or why open access?

WHAT IS OPEN ACCESS?

In the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century, the words 'open access' have been uttered with increasing frequency in universities around the world.[1] Beginning as little more than a quiet murmur in niche scientific sub-disciplines but developing towards a globally mandated revolution in scholarly communication, the ascent of open access looks set to continue. Despite this rapid, worldwide rise, however, many misunderstandings about the phenomenon remain. At the most basic level, this includes the key question: what exactly is 'open access'?[2] Regardless of the nuances and complexities that will be discussed in this book, 'open access' can be clearly and succinctly defined. The term 'open access' refers to the removal of price and permission barriers to scholarly research.[3] Open access means peer-reviewed academic research work that is free to read online and that anybody may redistribute and reuse, with some restrictions.

For a piece of academic research to be called 'open access', it must be available digitally for anybody to read at no financial cost beyond those intrinsic to using the internet; the removal of price barriers. This is similar to the majority of content on the world wide web but it is not the basis on which scholarly publication has historically relied. After all, most websites do not charge readers to access their content while, by contrast, most academic publications are currently bought by libraries as either one-off purchases or ongoing subscriptions. Open access means implementing a new system that allows free access to peer-reviewed scholarly research on the world wide web. The term also means, perhaps more contentiously, that people

should be able to reuse this material beyond the provisions of fair use enshrined in copyright law, as long as the author is credited. This is the removal of permission barriers that advocates claim is necessary to facilitate activities such as assembling a course pack of lengthy extracts for teaching. The removal of these two 'barriers' alters the current model of scholarly communications because, at present, access to research is only allowed when content has been purchased from a publisher and because, at the moment, one may only redistribute and use works in accordance with the fair dealings provisions of copyright.

The possibility of open access to scholarly research rests on several technological and economic bases, the contexts of which are all more complex than this introduction alone can suggest. That said, there are some key prerequisites that can be identified with ease. Firstly, open access relies upon the potential of the internet to disseminate work almost indefinitely at a near-infinitesimal cost-per-copy. This is because, in the digital world, the majority of costs lie in the labour to reach the point of dissemination rather than in the transmission of each copy. Open access was not, therefore, truly feasible in times before this technology; OA requires the digital environment and the internet.[4] The second aspect that makes open access possible, according to Stevan Harnad – one of the leading figures of the Open Access movement – is that the economic situation of the academy is different from other spheres of cultural production. Academics are, in Harnad's view, 'esoteric' authors whose primary motivation is to be read by peers and the public, rather than to sell their work.[5] While the labour of *publishing* still needs to be covered (and these costs cannot be denied), this situation potentially enables academics employed at universities to give their work to readers for free; this specific subset of researchers are paid a salary, rather than earning a living by selling their specialist outputs.

Stemming from the possibilities of these intertwined economic and technological roots, advocates of open access believe that the broadest global exposure to research outputs would be achieved through a system that did not require the reader to pay. These benefits are claimed to extend, among other groups, to academics whose libraries cannot meet the price of subscriptions and to the general public for whom much research material remains

unaffordable. As George Veletsianos and Royce Kimmons put it, 'Many scholars hope and anticipate that open practices will broaden access to education and knowledge, reduce costs, enhance the impact and reach of scholarship and education, and foster the development of more equitable, effective, efficient, and transparent scholarly and educational processes.'[6] As will be seen, however, some forms of open access have also proved highly controversial both for the inversion of the economic model that they might engender and for the more permissive reuse rights that they could bestow. In both cases, these objections have been prominently raised in the humanities disciplines in particular. The degrees of 'disruption' and objection to the current ecosystem are, though, tiered according to the ways in which OA is implemented. While, therefore, some forms of open access require new economic models to sustain the labour of publishing, other mechanisms seem to co-exist peacefully with a subscription ecosystem, at least at present.[7] Nonetheless, these potentially radical changes to the scholarly communications environment embroil OA uptake within a set of complexities, nuances and controversies, ranging from academic dissent through to corporate concerns over economics. In this light, it may be true that open access is a simple idea, in theory. In its real-world implementation and transition, however, it is proving to be messy and contentious.

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This book is dedicated threefold to an exploration of the claimed potential benefits of open access for the humanities disciplines; to unravelling the problems that must be dealt with if these are desired; and to giving fair voice to the controversies that have arisen as a result. It is written for academics, policymakers, librarians, funders, curators, publishers and the generally interested public: in short, each of the groups for whom open access could be important. Although this work may serve as a primer for those unfamiliar with open access, it is designed less as a comprehensive introduction and more as a critical investigation into the effects that open digital dissemination and reuse might have upon humanities disciplines and academic publishing. Those looking for a more general introduction would do well to consult Peter Suber's *Open Access* (itself freely available online).

By way of cartography, with respect to this book's subtitle – 'contexts, controversies and the future' – this work is mapped thematically rather than chronologically. This book does not begin with 'contexts' for open access and the humanities, then move to 'controversies' and end with 'the future', but rather weaves these elements throughout its investigations. To this end, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to terminological basics; to unpacking the history of the Open Access movement; to addressing the problems of and potential lessons from the genesis of open access in the scientific field; and to exploring the objections from various stakeholders in outline. The first two of these areas may be superfluous to those already familiar with the basics of open access, while the latter two may present fresh angles for those coming with a scientific perspective.

Because any transition to open access must necessarily interact with the value systems of the academy and its publishing mechanisms, the second chapter unpacks the economics of scholarly publishing in the two interlinked senses of an 'economy' of academic prestige and of finance. Beginning with the ways in which ideas of academic symbolic capital ('prestige') intersect with real-world pricing, this chapter also examines the commodity form of research work; the contexts of humanities scholarship; and the rhetoric of 'crisis' that pervades these disciplines. Concluding that there are, paradoxically, both supply-side and demand-side 'crises' affecting scholarly publishing (itself a heterogeneous term with a great deal of international variance in practice), the chapter ends with an examination of the different economic models that have been proposed for OA in the humanities. This chapter will hold value for librarians, funders and researchers but also to anybody more broadly interested in the economics that shape the research activities of the humanities disciplines.

The third chapter focuses on the contentious issue of open licensing, explored most thoroughly through the Creative Commons licenses.[8] This chapter gives a historical background to open licensing and copyright before describing the reasons why it might be needed and the objections that have been mounted. There are also some observations, in this chapter, on the differing political rationales for desiring open licensing and the ways in which these merge with

broader concerns about the future of the public university, which have been most notably voiced by John Holmwood. This chapter will be of interest to anybody who has ever signed a copyright assignment form, to those who are curious about the controversies of open licensing and to those who wish to understand why various factions differ politically on this aspect of OA.

The fourth chapter of this book examines the context of monographs and open access, which comes with higher barriers to entry than the journal sphere for a variety of reasons. This chapter begins by setting out what these differences are before detailing projects that have studied open-access monographs and the economic models that are emerging to support them. Some consideration is also given here to the nature of trade crossover books and the potential difficulties that appear in such a scenario. This chapter will be of interest to publishers, researchers, librarians and funders; in short, all the major stakeholders in the humanities' monograph production and consumption cycle.

The fifth and final chapter of this book unearths potential innovations that are possible with OA. Although, as I take pains to point out throughout, open access entails no more than the lowering of price and permission barriers, this historic juncture does also afford a space in which critically to reappraise several other practices. In this chapter, I provocatively think through just two such potential realms of change: peer-review and editorial work. The volume concludes with a glossary of terms that may prove useful to the newcomer.

The geographical scope of this book is international because open access is a worldwide phenomenon. However, the urgency of implementation has greater impetus in some nations because of strong OA mandates from large, centralised funders. While open access therefore has global histories and international implementations, particularly in South America, the current wave of controversies and scrambles for transition has taken place within the Anglophone academy. Nowhere is this embodied so clearly as in the anxieties surrounding the UK government's Finch Report into open access and the subsequent Select Committee inquiry in 2013, which will be discussed at length below. It is also the case that wherever greater degrees of funder centralisation can be found, there is more scope for mandates to trigger a full-scale transition. Once more, the UK is a

good example here. With its state-sponsored research funding councils as the primary sources of research income for many in the humanities, it is clear that if these bodies require OA, as they now do, a greater degree of interest will emerge than in nations with more devolved and/or autonomous funders. To that end, deriving partly from these observations and partly from my own situation, this book may tend at times towards an Anglo- and/or Euro-centrism, despite the extensive discussion of international challenges and descriptions of global projects throughout. That said, the vast majority of the debates covered in this volume have re-emerged in every new location where OA has come to the fore. This seems to indicate that even when dilemmas appear local, they usually have global applicability.

Finally for this preamble, in the service of upfront disclosure, it is important to state that I have worked heavily on open access in the belief that it is a positive force that could transform scholarly communications for the better. I am not, however, so naïve as to think that this is a view shared universally and I also recognise the difficulties in practical implementations. This disclaimer is, therefore, necessary: this book aims to represent fairly, to the best of my ability, the arguments of those who dissent while laying out reasons why advocates remain in favour. This book is not meant as a pro-OA polemic, even if I do eventually side with OA, but attempts to give information and arguments conservatively from both sides; it is intended to open a space in which it is possible to think critically (and sometimes more abstractly) about the research and publication practices of the academy and to allow others to join these debates. Indeed, an account that did not critically consider all aspects of open access would '[limit] the validity and credibility of the field as a site of serious academic endeavour', as Neil Selwyn has put it with reference to the positivist bent in educational technology.[9] That said, total neutrality is, of course, practically impossible; even by selecting various sources I will advance an interpretation. I accept, therefore, that it is unlikely that all stakeholders will feel entirely content. *Caveat lector*.

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Before beginning any work in earnest, it is worth highlighting the fact that open access is a deeply politicised issue. Indeed, given the number of stakeholders involved, it would be surprising if such a

radical overhaul of the scholarly communications system were straightforward and universally accepted. That said, any alignment of OA with specific political positions is complex. As Nigel Vincent and Chris Wickham noted in the foreword to a British Academy volume on the topic, open access 'has a current force, however, which is not only moral but now political, with Conservative politicians in effect lined up with unequivocal egalitarians'.[10] This political ambivalence has been seconded by Cameron Neylon, a prominent figure in the OA world of the sciences, who recently likewise pointed out that to work on open-access projects is to find oneself accused one day of being a neoliberal sell-out and the next of being an anti-corporatist Marxist.[11] In reality, open access was born within various contexts of both corporate and radically anti-corporate politics in which one side proclaims the benefits for free-market business and the other believes 'in an ethical pursuit [of] democratization, fundamental human rights, equality, and justice'.[12] This means that it is extremely difficult to situate the entire phenomenon at such political polarities; different aspects of open access perform different functions that may align with different political agendas.[13]

Fundamentally, however, there is also an understanding of OA emerging that seems desirable to a large number of stakeholders, regardless of political position: open access would function simply to allow researchers and the general public to have access to academic research material when they otherwise could not. Broader motivational differences for desiring this, of course, remain. Some also think open access to be pragmatically impossible, particularly on the economic front. As an ideal goal, though, the proposition of OA is fairly well accepted by a range of figures, with a seeming tipping point of consensus reached in 2013, as can be seen in the section of Chapter 2 on international mandates for open access. It is now more often the practicalities of achieving such a goal that are the focus of disagreement: how should open access be implemented? How is the labour underpinning this operation to be subsidised and who will pay? Such questions are hardly tangential and, even if OA was deemed desirable across the majority of the stakeholder spectrum, without satisfactory answers, it may remain under-realised. In other words: while many different factions now agree that open access is a

good idea in principle, there are a number of remaining real-world challenges to be overcome if it is to become the norm. Advocates of open access strive to work around these problems (or, on occasion, deny that the difficulties exist), while sceptics wonder whether the potential disruption is worth the claimed benefits (or whether these hurdles are insurmountable).

Furthermore, the danger of this political minefield is intensified by the fact that open access is a treacherous territory for the newcomer, despite the fundamental simplicity of the concept. As with many other aspects of policy, so it is also with OA: it can appear to the paranoid as though there might be a conspiracy to make the subject so dull and laden with jargon that people are unable to pay attention. Likewise, though, as it is with almost all policy elements that seem tedious and terminologically dense, to ignore these changes would be a catastrophic mistake for anybody who works within a university and a research context. In this light, in order to make this engagement as pain-free as possible, I will try to use as few jargon terms as possible throughout this book. However, there are certain base elements that are so taken for granted when thinking about open access that they are worth unravelling from the outset.

A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF AND INTRODUCTION TO OPEN ACCESS

While a more extensive glossary is available at the end of this book, by this point we already have definitions for 'open access' (the removal of price and permission barriers to research) and the title-case 'Open Access' (the movement to make this happen). There are, however, several ways in which open access can be implemented, each with its own terminology.

Gold open access is the most well known, but sometimes most sceptically viewed, of these 'flavours'. Gold open access refers to research being made available for free in its full, original form in the journal where it was published (or, in the case of a book, being made freely available by the publisher). Gold open access journals can either be entirely open access, or they can be 'hybrid', in which subscription publications carry a subset of articles that are free for all to read. For readers who encounter a gold open access article in a

journal or a gold open access book, there is no subscription or price to pay and no institutional login form to complete; they can simply access the material free of charge.

Clearly, this has implications for the economic models of publishers. If publishers cannot sell the work (because they are giving it away for free), they must find remuneration elsewhere. Therefore, some forms of gold open access require that the author or his/her institution pay a fee to the publisher, a move that constitutes an inversion of the current subscription model. This is known as an 'article processing charge' (APC) or a 'book processing charge' (BPC). It is true that many publishers are adopting this model for gold open access in which publishing becomes a service for which academics and/or their institutions pay. It is also true that, faced with a new and wholly disruptive proposition in which publishers are less sure of their revenue forecasts, the current pricing level of processing charges has sometimes been determined through a re-apportioning of the status quo.[14] As will be seen, this has often led to levels of pricing beyond the reach of humanities researchers who receive far less funding than those working in the sciences.[15]

Gold open access does *not* intrinsically mean, however, that the author pays and, indeed, this was not integral to the term as it was coined by Stevan Harnad.[16] At the time of writing in mid 2014, the majority of gold venues listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals do not operate on the basis of article processing charges and instead fund their operations through other means, covered in Chapter 2.[17] To this end, in this book, whenever I refer to 'gold open access', I mean open access delivered at source by journals, books or other output format; open access *at the publisher*. I am not referring to any particular kind of business model. It is exclusively in the instances where I write 'article processing charges' or 'APCs', 'book processing charges' or 'BPCs' that I will be talking about payment to publishers.

The 'opposite', but also complement, to gold open access is called *green OA*. Green open access is OA delivered by an *institutional* or *subject repository*. An institutional repository is a website, normally administered by a university library, that holds the metadata about and copies of affiliated authors' works. For instance, the repository at the University of Lincoln, UK can be found at http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/. Whenever

a staff member has published an article or book (even in a subscription journal or with a traditional, toll-access press) he or she is encouraged to add information about it to the repository and then to upload a copy of the work in accordance with publisher policies (which can stipulate a delay for the copy to be made open access: an 'embargo'). In instances where the publisher policy allows it, this work is then made publicly available, thereby achieving green open access. A surprising number of publishers allow authors to do this for journal articles and there are now a variety of tools to allow authors to check publisher policies, such as SHERPA/RoMEO, a project hosted at the University of Nottingham in the UK that aggregates information on journals.[18] Fewer publishers allow this for books, though, as covered in Chapter 4.

There are several ways, however, in which green open access on its own can be a poor substitute when compared to gold. Unlike gold open access, the version uploaded to a repository is not always the final publisher PDF, the 'version of record' (although some publishers do allow this). Furthermore, there is often (but not always and not by necessity) a delay period before the author is allowed to upload his or her work. This is usually stipulated to protect publisher revenues. In many humanities disciplines where there are strict normative citation standards to the version of record, green open access can also be problematic if the pagination/content differs in the green OA version. If there are lengthy embargoes, this can also reduce the value of green open access in some fields of contemporary study where the most current research is desired quickly.

A typical researcher workflow for a green open access deposit of a journal article would be one in which I, as an author, submit my article to a journal of my choice (including a traditional, toll-access journal). The journal carries out its usual peer-review, copyediting and typesetting procedures and publishes the article. At some time during the process, I check the publisher policies using SHERPA/RoMEO and create records on my institutional repository that carry the information about the article. If allowed, I might also, at this stage, upload my author version of the paper (the Word document that was accepted by the journal), or even the publisher PDF, to the repository. If the publisher specifies that there is an embargo on the release of material, I set this up in the repository, telling the software