

„Researchers and Open Access – the new scientific publishing environment”

Report from the “1st European Conference on Scientific Publishing in Biomedicine and Medicine” in Lund / Sweden, 21st – 22nd April 2006

Christian Gumpenberger, NKC Vienna

Under the title „Researchers and Open Access – the new scientific publishing environment” the “1st European Conference on Scientific Publishing in Biomedicine and Medicine” took place at the Scandic Star Hotel Lund organized and hosted by Lund University.

123 participants (incl. speakers) mainly from (Northern) Europe, but also from America, Asia, Africa and Australia followed the call to Sweden. The audience was a mix of scientists, publishers and information professionals from academia and industry.

The two days-conference offered the participants top-class speakers, who presented the topic Open Access on the first day in interesting talks and in several more specific workshops on the second day.

Friday, 21st April

The opening address was presented by **Bo Åhrén** (Medical Faculty, Lund University), who welcomed all conference participants and valued Lund highly as a historic university city. He especially emphasized the importance of the Medical Faculty with its modern facilities in Lund and Malmö, which highly contribute to Medicon Valley (= biotechnology cluster of the Region Copenhagen and Skane).

Eugene Garfield (Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the Institute for Scientific Information / Thomson) opened the first conference day with the topic „Identifying Nobel Class Scientists and the Vagaries of Research Assessment“. Garfield stated that Nobel Laureates publish five times the average number of papers but are cited 30 to 50 times the average. Nobel Laureates also appear on ‚ISIs Highly Cited authors listings’, and most have high h-indexes. Nobel Class Scientists follow the ‚Law of Concentration’ and publish in a small group of high impact journals only. Garfield was sceptical about a rapid change in that behaviour due to the influence of Open Access.

Authors of „hot papers“ (= frequently cited) may also be leading candidates for future awards.

To conclude Garfield shortly mentioned his self-developed software HistCite which allows miscellaneous bibliographic and historiographic analyses and the visualization of the results.

Jean-Claude Guédon (Montreal University, Canada) focused in his talk „Open access in the bio-medical fields: why it is important for researchers, practising physicians and patients“ rather on the practising doctors, particularly in remote areas or not connected to research hospitals, and patients as endusers. For him Open Access signals a turning point in the dissemination of knowledge no longer only restricted to experts with exclusive access rights.

Frederick Friend (JISC UK) gave an overview concerning the diverse Open Access activities of leading organizations in the UK (Research Councils UK, Wellcome Trust, JISC = the Joint Information Systems Committee) themed „Improving access to biomedical and clinical research literature: the work of UK organizations“. Friend pointed out the nuisance of ‚Big Deals‘ that restrict the dissemination of research findings increasingly only to the high impact journals included in those packages. JISC aims to provide better access to scientific literature through different initiatives and supports Open Access Publishing as well as Open Access Archiving, e.g. the development of a ‚UK version‘ of PubMedCentral.

Under the title „Journal Publishing: The Future of Science Publishing“ **Graham V. Lees** (Founding Editor & Publishing Director of TheScientificWorldJOURNAL) gave a short overview of the history of Open Access Publishing. Lees emphasized the importance of the internet as the real invention itself. This would allow the distribution of information (the validated data) rather than the traditional packaging (= the article) as primary literature. Based on these considerations he founded TheScientificWorldJOURNAL, a non-traditional, multidisciplinary Open Choice journal.

Jan Velterop (Springer Verlag) tied in with the Springer Open Choice concept. In his highly informative and also optically very appealing presentation „Open Access, the choice is yours“ he went back in history to the beginning of scientific publishing. In Velterop’s opinion neither journals nor publishers are needed for the communication of research results nowadays. Deposition in a repository would suffice. However, publishers are still needed and highly important for the validation and certification process. This process is expensive, but under reference to the Bethesda Statement publication costs should be seen as an integral part of the overall costs for research. It’s up to the authors to choose either the traditional or the Open Access model. Publishers can only provide the options. However, publishing will never be free and either model requires payment.

In the consecutive talks **Mark Patterson** (PLoS = Public Library of Science) und **Natasha Robshaw** (BioMedCentral UK) demonstrated impressively the steady growth and the increasing impact of their Open Access Publishing products. Patterson cited Antonio Panizzi (1836, Principle Librarian of the British Museum) showed that the idea for PLoS is not a new one:

„I want a poor student to have the same means
of indulging his learned curiosity,
of following his rational pursuits,
of consulting the same authorities,
of fathoming the most intricate inquiry
as the richest man in the kingdom...“

Striking was also the projection of a cartoon showing 5 monkeys desperately trying to grab an unreachable journal dangling over their heads. The cartoon’s text said „You write the papers, you review the papers Why should you pay to read them?“ But as the participants already learnt from Velterop – publishing will never be for free.

Alma Swan (Key Perspectives Ltd.) reminded everybody in her subsequent talk what is deemed to be most successful at the moment: „Open Access by self-archiving: it's an author thing.“ She made it clear that despite an increasing numbers of repositories and the increasing publishers' permissions to self-archive only a small percentage of authors opt for the “Green Road“. This is due to ignorance or false reservations and non-existent mandatory policies.

But evidence is accumulating that Open Access papers are being read and cited more often, which is every author's primary intention.

Swan mentioned the few (currently 5) institutions that already mandate self-archiving and proved with impressive figures the success of this strategy.

Stevan Harnad (Université du Quebec, Montreal & University of Southampton, UK) took the same line with his presentation „Extending Institutional ‚Publish or Perish‘ Policies and Incentives to “Provide Open Access to Publications” as Alma Swan. Creating Institutional Repositories and providing library help for depositing alone are not enough. Only mandatory policies will guarantee successful self-archiving. 2 international, cross-disciplinary JISC surveys found that >90% of the authors would comply.

Robert Terry (Wellcome Trust UK) as representative of an independent research funding body was the last speaker of this day and talked about „Research Funding and Open Access“. He touched on the economics of the Open Access Publishing model and gave insight in the evolving costs that accrue from funding the alternative publishing models. Wellcome Trust also supports Open Access Archiving and is the only funding body so far with a mandatory policy. Trust-funded authors are obliged to deposit into PubMedCentral.

A closing panel recapitulated the day's topics and also featured a lively discussion on peer-review with all its known associated problems.

Saturday, 23rd April

On day 2 of the conference the participants had the difficult choice between different workshops mostly held in parallel.

Following workshops were on the agenda:

Morning:

1. Entrez Life Sciences Hands-on Training → **David Herron** (Karolinska Institute)
2. Research Output as the basis for Resource Input → **Hampus Rabow** (Lund University)
3. The New World of Webmetric Performance Indicators: Mandating, Monitoring, Measuring and Maximising Research Impact in the Open Access Age → **Stevan Harnad** (Southampton University)

Afternoon:

4. Practical Use of the Impact Factor and Citation Analysis using ISI Web of Knowledge, plus the introduction of a new archive from BIOSIS → **Simon M. Pratt** (Thomson Scientific)
5. Publishing of research results – what are the copyright issues? → **Annette Persson** (Lund University)
6. Peer-review training → **Sara Schroter & Trish Groves** (BMJ Training, UK)
7. Faculty of 1000 – Medicine and Biology workshop – demonstrating the literature awareness services of the future. Hands-on Training → **Natasha Robshaw** (BioMedCentral)

The author chose 3. und 4. und therefore can only comment on these.

3. **Stevan Harnad** took the participants on a journey into the perfect future of scientific publishing. In his vision all estimated 2,5 million annual articles in 24.000 peer-reviewed research publications are openly and legally accessible and also citation-linked. And of course all 'OAI-compliant' metadata as well as full texts would be harvested, inverted and indexed by services like Google, OAIster etc. Moreover Boolean full text search would be enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI) Based on these and further assumptions Harnad explained several metrics for measuring research impact.

How it works - at least in a microcosm - can be tried out at <http://www.citebase.org>. The search engine uses the UK arXiv mirrorsite as its data source.

4. With **Simon M. Pratt** the participants came down to earth again after lunch. Pratt gave insights into the Web of Science, into the Journals Citation Reports and into BIOSIS. Pratt emphasized that the impact factor is only one of many scientometric indicators intended to evaluate journals and not articles per se. Research assessment should always be based on a variety of indicators and statistics and on common sense. Data need always be put in context and only like to like should be compared.

To conclude Pratt gave a preview of new Thomson products to be launched in the near future. Regarding the Open Access theme the launch of the Web Citation Index this summer will be of major interest, which will be an index of all institutional repositories containing direct links to these.

The presentations of all speakers are to be found at:

<http://www.med.lu.se/english/library/ecspbiomed>

Résumé

All in all this was a very interesting and well organised conference with many opportunities to talk to speakers and colleagues.

Open Access has become a favourite topic on conference agendas within the last years. However, this was the first time one had the impression it was no more a question of „Yes or No?“ but rather of „How soon and In which form?“. The „2nd European Conference on Scientific Publishing in Biomedicine and Medicine“ has already been announced to take place in two years. One can only wonder how much the world of scientific publishing will have changed until then.

Dr. Christian Gumpenberger, MSc
Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research
Novartis Knowledge Center Vienna

Knowledge Center Manager

ATWI, 20/47

Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research GmbH & Co KG

Brunner Strasse 59

A-1235 Wien

Austria

Phone: +43 1 80166 251

Fax: +43 1 80166 724

Email : christian.gumpenberger@novartis.com

Web : <http://www.novartis.com>