

Revisiting ‘the 1990s debutante’: scholar-led publishing and the pre-history of the open access movement

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Abstract

The movement for open access publishing is often said to have its roots in the scientific disciplines, having been popularised by scientific publishers and formalised through a range of top-down policy interventions. But there is an often-neglected pre-history of open access that can be found in the early DIY publishers of the late ‘80s and early ‘90s. Managed entirely by working academics, these journals published research in the humanities and social sciences and stand out for their unique set of motivations and practices. This article explores this separate lineage in the history of the open access movement through a critical-theoretical analysis of the motivations and practices of the early scholar-led publishers. Alongside showing the involvement of the humanities and social sciences in the formation of open access, the analysis reveals the importance that these journals placed on experimental practices, critique of commercial publishing and the desire to reach new audiences. Understood in today’s context, this research is significant for adding complexity to the history of open access, which policymakers, advocates and publishing scholars should keep in mind as open access goes mainstream.

Introduction

Open access publishing (OA) is rapidly changing the ways academics communicate their research. Not only has uptake of OA increased drastically in recent years (Severin, Egger, Eve, & Hürlimann, 2018), it is also now firmly on the policy agenda for governments across the world (Else, 2018) and for libraries looking to reduce expenditure on journal subscriptions (Gand, 2019). Open access is also big business for commercial publishers who make millions each year from article-processing charges (APCs) levied to funders and researchers in order to make their research freely available to the public, with Elsevier, Wiley and Springer-Nature taking almost half of the total APC revenue to date (OpenAPC, no date). With such support from businesses and governments, one would be forgiven for believing that OA has always been a top-down pursuit.

It is also often assumed that the origins of open access are in the sciences and that the humanities have come 'late' to open access (Mandler, 2014, p. 166). Certainly, uptake of open access is most prevalent in scientific disciplines and least prevalent in the arts and humanities (Severin et al., 2018). Further still, many of the highly successful open access projects, such as the arXiv, BioMedCentral, PubMedCentral and the Public Library of Science, originated in the sciences. The association of OA with the sciences has influenced many developments relating to OA, particularly in

the policy arena as governments in the UK and Europe mandate forms of open access that would negatively impact disciplines without extensive grant funding, such as those outside of biomedical science.

However, the origins of OA are more complicated than the preceding paragraphs suggest. Although it is widely adopted in the sciences, one important lineage in the history of OA is the presence of scholar-led humanities publishers on the Net and early-Web. By exploring the practices and motivations of these journals, this article takes issue with the framing of OA as a top-down, science-led movement and instead reveals the importance of DIY, grassroots, humanities researcher-led journals as predating many of the important developments in the movement for public access to research. A key aspect to this study is the importance and influence of critical humanities research, i.e., theoretical work concerned with understanding and critiquing power structures, resisting the growth of capitalism and experimenting with the very idea of what publishing means. When the influence of such early scholar-led publishing is taken into account, it is clear that a richer understanding of the motivations of early OA advocates is needed.

The article explores the motivations and practices of early scholar-led journals through analysis of a range of source documents including editorials, positions statements and contemporaneous scholarly literature on these journals. It takes a critical-theoretical stance to the material, conceptualising early scholar-led

publishers using Christopher Kelty's idea of 'recursive publics' (2008) to illustrate the importance of self-sufficient, community-based, experimental forms of publishing to the OA movement and its subsequent development. In addition to making a significant contribution to the literature on the history of the OA movement, this research is also timely in the context of recent calls for researcher-owned and researcher-led publications and infrastructures (Bilder, Lin, & Neylon, 2015; Lewis, Goetsch, Graves, & Roy, 2018). Ultimately, the article shows that such calls were present in the OA movement from the beginning.

Background

OA has a complicated history. It is striking that a seemingly simple movement for making research freely available to the public can hide so many motivations, lineages, understandings and conflicting definitions. Many scholars have grappled with its history and have tried to understand OA's basis in a variety of ethical, political and disciplinary commitments. Nathaniel Tkacz, for example, seeks to reveal the neoliberalism present in the OA movement, particularly through its connection to Silicon Valley and open source cultures (Tkacz, 2014). Martin Eve describes the convergence of two distinct lineages of OA that stem from the birth of free culture on the one hand, and the desire to free up declining library budgets on the other (Eve, 2014, p. 21), while John Willinsky argues that OA is aligned ideologically with other digital movements that treat 'intellectual properties as public goods' (Willinsky, 2005).

But there is also a great deal of difference in the OA movement, concerning routes to open access (repositories vs. journals), Creative Commons licencing, journal embargos and the acceptability of making profit from academic publishing. I have previously explored how these different motivations, practices and understandings of OA constitute an antagonistic movement that has no firm ideological foundations (Moore, 2017). Yet despite these singular motivations, 'open access' is a broadly recognisable term denoting free research, even if the motivations, political underpinnings and understandings of the term are more nuanced within individual communities or disciplines. Furthermore, for Janneke Adema, the term 'open access' is 'a concept without a fixed meaning, easily adopted by different political ideologies', or what Ernesto Laclau termed a 'floating signifier' (Adema, 2014). At most, all one is able to say about the motivations, politics and ethics of OA is that 'open access' simply refers to some form of publicly accessible research available on the open web.

However, despite such a divergent range of understandings and opinions within the movement, one unquestionably important event in the history of OA is the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) declaration that many consider to be canonical and a catalyst for the movement more generally. Signed by sixteen senior researchers, librarians, charitable foundation staff and publishers at a meeting in Budapest in 2002, the BOAI declaration codified the term 'open access' as research that users can

'read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose [...]' (BOAI, 2002). The declaration has a particularly scientific bent to it, not just due to the signatories (who mostly came from scientific backgrounds) but also due to the explicit mention of 'scientists' and no mention of non-scientific disciplines. There is also a distinct liberal, techno-solutionist tone to the declaration, especially in the claimed potential of OA to 'accelerate research, enrich education, share the learning of the rich with the poor and the poor with the rich, make this literature as useful as it can be, and lay the foundation for uniting humanity in a common intellectual conversation and quest for knowledge' (BOAI, 2002). This passage is indicative of liberal, utilitarian conceptions of the marketplace of ideas based on 'uniting humanity' in a shared 'conversation'.

Although it is certainly not my intention here to argue that the BOAI declaration was the explicit beginning of the OA movement, it is often cited as the definition of open access (Suber, 2012, p. 7; van Leeuwen, Tatum, & Wouters, 2018) and has influenced much of the foregoing development of OA publishing and policy. Instead, in the foregoing discussion I hope to illustrate some of the pre-history of open access that is less frequently discussed with respect to historical understandings of the movement. The publication of electronic journals on the Net and early Web reveals a distinctly different set of values and motivations around publishing than were reflected in

either the BOAI declaration or much of the subsequent OA movement that developed.

Scholar-led publishing in the early '90s

Though the BOAI declaration may have formalised the term 'open access' (inasmuch as it relates to publishing), electronic publishing had been a common practice since long before 2002. For example, in 1971 Michael S. Hart founded Project Gutenberg, which is often considered the first electronic book publishing project (Lebert, 2009; Yu & Breivold, 2008, p. 10). Similarly, throughout the 1980s, as the internet grew in uptake, high-energy physics researchers increasingly shared working papers through personal emails and later through larger email lists (Ginsparg, 2009, p. 96). This led to the birth in 1991 of the xxx.lanl.gov email/FTP server for high-energy physics research papers that later became the arXiv preprint database after the launch of the Web in 1992 (Ginsparg, 2009). Scholars were therefore quick to understand the potential of digital technologies for creating and sharing academic research.

Yet the present discussion focuses on academic journal publishing, as opposed to article sharing, particularly those journals that were organised and maintained entirely by working academics. In the late '80s and early '90s, a host of new journal titles launched on listservs and (later) the Web. Journals such as *Postmodern Cultures*,

Surfaces, the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* and the *Public Access-Computer Systems Review* were all managed by scholars and library workers rather than publishing professionals. Many of these new journals are listed on the timeline pages of the Open Access Directory (Open Access Directory, n.d.). Especially noteworthy in this timeline is the number of scholar-led journals published by researchers in the humanities, social sciences and library and information sciences. Furthermore, many of the articles in these early journals were authored by notable figures such as Kathy Acker, Jacques Derrida, bell hooks, Isabelle Stengers, and Samuel Weber, to name a few.

In a seminal article published in 1992, Ann Okerson described this new breed of journals as the '1990s debutante', positioning academic-led publishing as a new and exciting alternative to traditional forms of publishing (Okerson, 1992). For Okerson, journal publishing was in a 'dismal' state with over 71% of journals published by the for-profit sector, which resulted in a 'loss of ownership' of scholarly publishing from the academy (Okerson, 1992, p. 171). However, Okerson writes, 'by publishing through electronic networks instead of print, members of the academy are recovering ownership and distribution of their own creations' (Okerson, 1992, p. 170). These journals were unique, Okerson argues, because they were totally unconnected to university presses, surviving on a 'minnows' budget (with no institutional support) and staffed by working academics who managed the journals

'by the light of the moon' rather than as part of their day jobs (Okerson, 1992, pp. 172–173).

Although Okerson's article is part of the scholarly record, my contention is that the contribution of the early journals she describes is either forgotten or considered somewhat adjacent to the OA movement that developed, rather than a key part of it. In opposition to a picture of the OA movement as 'top-down', scientific and pro-business, one can see in these journals the contribution of grassroots humanities and social sciences journals to OA, especially those disciplines connected to critique and critical theory. I argue here that scholars of scholarly communication need to revisit the 1990s debutante of scholar-led journals to get a fuller understanding of the development of the open access movement, particularly the unique set of motivations associated with these journals.

Motivations and visions of early scholar-led journals

Researcher governance of scholarly communication was not a new idea in the 1990s. As early as the 1960s (and no doubt earlier), researchers understood the potential of scholar-led and -governed forms of publishing over those provided purely by market forces. Aileen Fyfe uncovers the importance of scholar-led publishing to the Royal Society in a proposed 'code for the publication of new scientific journals'. This code stipulated that the 'ideal body to run a journal is a scientific society, but if that

is not possible, then editorial and financial policy should be in the hands of academics, and that copyright should be retained by authors' (Fyfe, 2017). Yet it was not until the emergence of electronic publishing and digital technologies that such researcher control was put into practice. This section focuses on the motivations of four early scholar-led journals: *Postmodern Culture*, the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, *Surfaces* and *Public-Access Computer Systems Review*.

As one of the founders of the *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (BMCR), James J. O'Donnell wrote in 1995 (looking back on five years since the journal's launch) that:

the availability of electronic mail meant that a great deal of the correspondence in producing the journal could be done more swiftly and cheaply than ever in the world of paper. It remains true that, even if we published only in paper, we could not do what we do without computers and the Internet, if only for the way they facilitate and reduce costs for the production side of the operation (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 224).

For O'Donnell, BMCR was founded not out of the fetishization of new digital technologies, but rather that such technologies facilitated a 'good old fashioned editorial idea' to publish something that people would want to read (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 226). To this extent, *BMCR* was actually quite conservative in its editorial

approach, despite being progressive in terms of technology and researcher governance.

Some of the scholar-publishers were more explicitly antagonistic towards the publishing industry and were hoping that electronic publishing would be a space unoccupied by profiteering publishers. Jean-Claude Guédon, one of the BOAI signatories and publisher of *Surfaces*, wrote that: 'the hope is that they may remain free while providing stable platforms for high quality, academic publications. But powerful commercial players, such Elsevier in Holland or Springer-Verlag in Germany [...] are actively exploring ways to sell electronic scholarly publications profitably over the Net' (Guédon, 1996a, p. 8). This critique of, and desire to resist, the practices of commercial publishing was an early motivation of scholar-led publishing and has remained a consistent theme throughout the OA movement, despite the continued presence of for-profit actors. John Unsworth, one of the founders of *Postmodern Culture (PMC)*, saw the journal as preserving the 'traditional values of scholarly publishing against economic and intellectual decay' (Unsworth, n.d.).

New audiences

This interplay between tradition and progression was a common theme in the motivations of early scholar-led publishers. Alongside the 'old fashioned' editorial ideas of *BMCR* and the traditional publishing values of *PMC*, the editor of *The*

Public-Access Computer Systems Review (PACSR), Charles W. Bailey, Jr., claimed in the journal's inaugural issue that he had taken a 'middle-of-the-road' approach to publishing that incorporated 'certain aspects of traditional journals (e.g., pages) that may be artifacts of the print medium. More radical approaches were discussed, but I decided to start off a more moderate initial strategy' (Bailey Jr, Charles W., 1990). Despite recognising the radical possibilities of electronic publishing, many scholar-led journals saw the need to adopt a more traditional approach that incorporated many of the features of print publishing, so as to 'legitimate the idea of networked publishing', as Unsworth later claimed (n.d.).

However, by the journal's second issue, the editor of *PACSR* was already indulging in radical fantasies of the networked world. Bailey Jr. writes:

As computer network interconnections and capabilities increase, the "global village" may become a much more immediate day-to-day reality in libraries. Government-funded networks for businesses and general citizens may also develop over time, and these networks may be linked to scholarly networks. Both of these potential developments could greatly increase the size and heterogeneity of the network user population (Bailey Jr, 1991).

Even before the Web was invented, and long before internet access was common for the general public, early scholar-led journals could see the potential of networked

technologies not just for distributing scholarship but for increasing its audience as well. These journals were developed without access controls and the hope was that the audience of scholarly material would increase as internet access did. This point is emphasised by one of the *BMCR* founders who, writing five years after the journal's launch, claimed that the network has increased the diversity of their audience, specifically: 'people who do not define themselves as professional classicists' and what they term 'The Enlightened General Reader' (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 227). For O'Donnell, classical scholarship ran the risk of becoming a 'hermetic club for experts, dwindling over the years, if we do not find ways to address a wider public with our best work' (O'Donnell, 1996, p. 227). *BMCR* was seen as one of the ways of reaching this wider public.

This desire for public access research was also noticeable in *PMC*, whose editors wrote in 1990 that 'in order for a publication in electronic media to succeed in serving even the most traditional purposes, such publication obviously needs to be available to the public--to students, to researchers, and to interested readers' (Amiran & Unsworth, 1991). This was grounded further in a subsequent article written in 1996 by *PMC* co-founder Eyal Amiran, who argues that the electronic serial fulfils the 'utopian promise of the serial form' because it heralds a new era of 'equality of information and access' (Amiran, 1996, p. 213). Public access was clearly a unifying theme across the early-scholar-led journals.

Experimentation

Yet as the introduction of new technologies entails obsolescence of old technologies, electronic publishing, for Amiran, represented a simultaneous threat and a promise that realises the potential of the print codex by destroying it. For this reason, Amiran argued that attitudes to journal publishing need to be reassessed in order to 'distinguish our needs from the ones produced by the genre' (Amiran, 1996, p. 217).

Amiran provides a sophisticated assessment of the influence of print culture on scholarship, particularly the ways in which the form of journal publishing impacts on its content. In doing this, Amiran introduces the idea of electronic publishing as *experimentation through openness*, showing how the 'utopian promise' of the journal form is both public-facing *and* experimental in its ability to unsettle paper-centric essentialisms. *PMC*, in particular, were explicit in their encouragement of 'experimental scholarly writing' such as 'works in progress, collaborative essays, and interviews' alongside fiction and poetry (Amiran & Unsworth, 1991).

Undermining the journal form through open experimentation was thus embedded into its beginnings.

The inaugural issue of *PMC* is remarkable for its promotion of experimental ideas relating to publishing and academic writing. For example, in a work-in-progress essay on the relationship between black identity and postmodernism, bell hooks explores the tensions between theory and practice in academic communication, writing:

It is sadly ironic that the contemporary discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentered subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience, one that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge. If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact then a critical break with the notion of "authority" as "mastery over" must not simply be a rhetorical device, it must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter (hooks, 1990).

For hooks, the work of postmodernist researchers in the academy was paradoxically aimed at a 'specialized audience' even though its subject matter promoted difference and heterogeneity. In order for academic writing to have a transformative impact and to break with top-down notions of authority, hooks argues, the practice of scholarship must reflect the theory through newly cultivated 'habits of being'.

One sees similar calls for experimentalism and critique of authority in a work of fiction/memoir by Kathy Acker that was published in the first issue of *PMC*.

Responding to accusations of plagiarism (for which her publisher demanded a public apology) Acker writes that 'to copy down, to appropriate, to deconstruct other texts is to break down those perceptual habits the culture doesn't want to be

broken. Deconstruction demands not so much plagiarism as breaking into the copyright law' (Acker, 1990). Plagiarism (or 'autoplagerism') was part of Acker's experimental feminist praxis and a way for her to undermine traditional masculine modes of authorship (Sciolino, 1990). *PMC* recognised the value of such transformative 'habits of being' described by hooks and Acker through online scholarship that was experimental, critical and aimed at non-specialist audiences. From its inception, the editors of the journal were explicit in hoping to provide 'a place for experimentation, for opening discussions, for dialogue' (Amiran, Orr, & Unsworth, 1990).

Looking elsewhere, there were similar experimental tendencies within *Surfaces*, the online, interdisciplinary, bilingual journal founded in 1991 by Jean-Claude Guédon to explore transformations in knowledge and their relationship with power, culture, and emerging communities. Important deconstructionist writers featured regularly, including Jacques Derrida, Samuel Weber and Bill Readings (who was also an editor of the journal), alongside a host of others from a wide variety of disciplines.

Although Guédon did not publish any editorials in the journal, it is possible to understand his vision for electronic publishing through his writing from the time. Electronic publishing, for Guédon, was orthogonal rather than antagonistic to print; the two entailed different emphases and practices (Guédon, 1994). Electronic publishing was said to be more interactive, less authoritative, and its legitimacy needed to be constructed through 'social and institutional means' (Guédon, 1994).

It is through these new social and institutional approaches that electronic publishing could truly change the practice of publication. In a 1996 essay Guédon put forward his vision based on the 'seminar, the 'encyclopedia' and the 'eco-museum', all of which were proposals for a more interactive electronic scholarly future based on a more active, cross-disciplinary, participatory understanding of publishing (Guédon, 1996b). He writes:

A kind of living encyclopedia would progressively come to the fore, one where distinctions between teaching and research, as well as distinctions between domains and disciplines, would probably be deeply redefined. The limits of the encyclopedia would then become the shifting and moving limits of knowledge itself, and all involved with knowledge, be it teaching, learning, or researching, would envision their work as intellectual moves within the abstract, multidimensional space corresponding to a humanity-wide hypertext. Publishing would lose its function of re-presentation to become an integral, immediate dimension of the dynamics of human knowledge at large (Guédon, 1996b, p. 83).

Alongside prefiguring important web-based projects such as Wikipedia, this paragraph represents a truly radical re-envisioning of what publishing could be in a digital world: real-time, interactive, dynamic and collapsing pre-existing boundaries

between disciplines, scholars and ‘the public’, and research and teaching. Although it turns out that the future of publishing was more measured than the early scholar-publishers had predicted, it is possible to glimpse quite radical visions for publishing in their writing and practice.

Tempering the optimism

But it is also worth noting that not all scholar-publishers were so optimistic about the future of publishing, and I certainly do not want to portray them all as a homogenous unit with the same motivations. Bill Readings, one of the editors of *Surfaces*, published a playful yet remarkably prescient article on electronic publishing in 1994 (the year of his untimely death) that goes against some of the optimism of scholar-led publishing and instead prefigures a different future (Readings, 1994). For Readings, the technical and financial limitations of the digital world would persist as electronic publishing grew in popularity. In the absence of subscriptions, for example, the producer would need to subsidise publication costs as subscriptions decline – how would this be funded? Similarly, the limitless space that the Web affords would actually *work against* public engagement with scholarship as there would simply be too much for them to read and new standards would have to be developed upon which to judge scholarship¹. Readings concludes:

¹ One of these criteria, though tongue in cheek, was to count the number of page views that online articles receive. This foretelling of the metricisation of scholarship and the gaming altmetrics scores lead Readings to suggest that ‘technically minded research assistants could be deputed to write software that would repeatedly access given articles in order to ensure that end of year bonus’.

We have to recognize that the university as an institution is becoming more and more corporate [...], information is a unit of value within the system and serves to procure advancement within the university. In this context, the increased quantity, speed, and distribution that electronic publishing brings will not simply prosthetically improve existing practices; it promises to significantly alter the basis on which the system functions (Readings, 1994).

Readings understood deeply the symbolic capital that publication offers. Despite the economic benefits of electronic publishing he cites, his conclusion was perhaps more measured than the rest of his cohort and implores the academic community to 'think very carefully about what the transition to electronic publishing implies for the scholarly community as a whole' (Readings, 1994).

Notwithstanding these potential drawbacks of electronic publishing, the pioneers of scholar-led publishing clearly had designs for an experimental scholarly communication landscape based on researcher control of publications and articles aimed at non-specialist audiences. Although nascent or implicit in their practices, these journals espoused both a commitment to the 'open access' philosophy (although the term was not invented yet) and to forms of digital publishing that

were both critical and experimental. Before situating the 1990s debutante against the broader OA movement, however, I would like to propose (following Christopher Kelty) that it is useful to theorise these scholar-led publishers as ‘recursive publics’.

Scholar-led journals as ‘recursive publics’

The scholar-publishers of the early 1990s were unique for their technological self-sufficiency. This self-sufficiency was a direct result of developments in computer and networked technologies, something that would only develop further with the launch of the Web and Gopher protocols. Through a mixture of their disciplinary commitments and technological interests, these scholar-publishers pioneered a new form of entirely researcher-managed publishing online. For Okerson, the innovativeness of these publishers originated largely in their ‘excitement and curiosity about the new medium, which is suitable for broadening and quickening scholarly communications of all kinds, for building knowledge collaboratively, for more rapid peer review, for superior access via sophisticated searching strategies and software’ (Okerson, 1992, p. 174). Technology was thus the enabler of a range of new practices that circumvented traditional, commercial publishing.

By distinguishing itself through technologically-enabled researcher control, this early ecosystem of scholar-led publishing can be theorised as a series of what

Christopher Kelty terms 'recursive publics'. In his ethnographic study of Free Software communities, Kelty defines a recursive public as:

[...] a public that is vitally concerned with the material and practical maintenance and modification of the technical, legal, practical, and conceptual means of its own existence as a public; it is a collective independent of other forms of constituted power and is capable of speaking to existing forms of power through the production of actually existing alternatives (Kelty, 2008, p. 3).

Much like Free Software creates 'actually existing alternatives' to proprietary software, the early scholar-led publishers positioned themselves in opposition to commercial publishing through a variety of alternatives to the status quo. Recursive publics differ from regular interests groups, Kelty argues, because they are concerned with the 'radical technological modifiability of their own terms of existence' (Kelty, 2008, p. 3). Scholar-led publishing in the early '90s is noteworthy for how different groups of academics began utilising new technologies to publish in a way that was self-managed and unconnected to commercial forms of publishing.² This allowed scholar-led publishers to pursue a set of motivations unencumbered (although still influenced) by what had come previously.

² Ann Okerson notes at the time that university presses were 'probably unaware' of the existence of scholar-led journals (Okerson, 1992, p. 173).

When conceived as a series of recursive publics, early scholar-led publishers reveal the experimental potential of new forms of publishing that were distinct from commercial presses. For the first time, academics were able to dictate forms of publishing that were connected to their own theoretical, disciplinary or ethical commitments. This is why so many of them wrote about their craft so extensively, particularly for its ability to reach new audiences, reimagine authorship practices, and generally expand what publishing could mean in a digital age. Publishing was therefore an extension, or instantiation, of the editors' theoretical work, rather than simply a service to the community. Digital technologies allowed scholar-led publishers to negotiate the standards of publishing that had come previously and position themselves towards a self-governed, digital future. To this extent, early scholar-led publishing represented the exciting potential of new forms of publishing that were embedded in scholarly communities and were designed to promote difference and experimentation.

But despite its importance, the influence of scholar-led publishing in the humanities and social sciences has been somewhat neglected in the history of the open access movement, even though many of the values and motivations of the 1990s debutante are still present today, and perhaps even gaining popularity. The final section of this article contextualises early scholar-led publishing against the backdrop of the broader OA movement in order to illustrate its importance today.

Scholar-led journals and the open access movement

I argue here that the open access movement owes an unacknowledged debt to the pioneers of scholar-led publishing in the early 1990s. Many of the motivations of the OA movement present in the writings and practices of scholar-publishers, such as public access to research and lowering library expenditure, long before the OA movement had gained momentum. Furthermore, many of the motivations of these scholar-led publishers were omitted or less emphasised in the ensuing movement (wilfully or otherwise) and are only now taking centre stage in contemporary debates on open access, such as researcher control of publishing infrastructures, experimentation of form and the promotion of difference in publishing. Put simply, early scholar-led publishing was radical both for its prescience and for highlighting a distinct lineage of the OA movement that originates in the experimental practices of humanities and social science journals.

As I explained at the start of this article, the Budapest Open Access Initiative declaration was a significant event in the development of OA. It brought a number of foundations and senior figures together to advance the cause for public access to research and instigated much of the ensuing development of the OA movement, particularly in the policy arena. Yet, as Jean-Claude Guéron notes in an article written fifteen years after the BOAI was signed, the signatories were not all

simpatico in their analyses and instead had ‘divergent’ understandings of the ‘dysfunctional aspects of scientific communication’ (Guédon, 2017, p. 1). What emerged from the BOAI meeting, then, was a compromise rather than something based entirely on overlapping perspectives.

Indeed, as the publisher of *Surfaces*, Jean-Claude Guédon was a key figure in early scholar-led publishing. But despite his presence at the Budapest meeting, there is no mention of the humanities and social sciences, scholar-led publishing or researcher governance of infrastructures for scholarly communication. Instead, the sciences are mentioned explicitly and the need for a consensual approach between a range of stakeholders is emphasised, perhaps reflecting the make-up of the list of signatories from a broad range of positions and organisations. The BOAI declaration instilled the idea that OA research can be achieved without the dominant cultures of market-based publishing needing to change. As a stopgap while the ‘market’ figured out how to provide OA, the signatories recommended that researchers make research available via the new institutional repository systems that were emerging at the time (BOAI, 2002). The BOAI was thus favourable towards the sciences and agnostic towards the current political economy of commercial publishing, providing that publishers figured out a way to provide OA in the future.

I want to restate that although the BOAI declaration was only one event among many in the history of OA, it is indicative (rather than necessarily causative) of much

of what followed in the development of the OA movement. It is thus representative of the dominant discourse that impacted on the thinking of policymakers, publishers, researchers and OA advocates from the mid-2000s to the present day. It is a separate discourse to the self-sufficient philosophy of early scholar-led publishing. For example, the BOAI's definition of OA that is agnostic to the profits of the publishing industry has led to the rise of article-processing charges and the continued stranglehold of publishing by a handful of large for-profit publishers (Larivière, Haustein, & Mongeon, 2015; Pinfield, Salter, & Bath, 2016).

This stranglehold has only been tightened by policy interventions into open access, be they either journal-based (gold) or repository-based (green). In the case of gold open access, funder policies from institutions such as the Wellcome Trust, the Gates Foundation, or the governmental policies of the UK, have mandated OA by providing funding for authors to pay article-processing charges to their publisher of choice. For green repositories, primarily at the university and national levels, OA is provided *with respect to* publisher-dictated embargos, meaning research articles are not made available until a publisher allows them to be. In either the gold or green scenario, researchers are still beholden to the traditional publishing industry. There is little incentive for them to embrace a form of practice that promotes more equitable, researcher-controlled publishing environments.

But in contrast to this, the values and practices of early-scholar-led publishing are now re-emerging as a significant feature of the contemporary OA landscape through a new series of recursive publics. Although scholar-led publishing has continued as a practice since the birth of the Web, it has until recently been an activity on the margins. A recent report by Adema, Stone and Keene illustrated the increased uptake of open-access scholar-led publishing through a series of interviews with 14 publishers managed by working academics. The authors characterised these presses as community-led, not-for-profit and experimental in their approaches, with many hoping to change scholarly communication more broadly for the better (Adema, Stone, & Keene, 2017, pp. 46–47). There is significant overlap between the values of these presses and those of the 1990s debutante analysed here. One significant difference, perhaps aided by technological developments in the last 25 years, is that many of the new breed of scholar-led presses also publish books and not just journals.

Scholar-led publishing is also gaining momentum through initiatives such as the Radical Open Access Collective (Adema, Janneke & Moore, 2017) and the ScholarLed Consortium (ScholarLed, 2018). These projects seek to offer an alternative to commercial forms of open and closed access publishing, all predicated upon an idea of collaboration, experimentation and the promotion of difference (Adema, Janneke & Moore, 2017). It is notable also that these presses are firmly rooted in humanities and social science disciplines, with publishers such as Open

Humanities Press and Mattering Press alongside journals like *Zapruder World* and *Internet Policy Review*, to name a few.

The contemporary landscape of scholar-led publishing is a continuation of the work undertaken by the early scholar-led publishers discussed here. While their philosophies and digital practices may differ, they share a core set of motivations of researcher control, public access to research, non-commercial practices, experimentation and difference. The new scholar-led open access publishers perhaps owe more to the 1990s debutante and less to the form of OA defined in the BOAI declaration. As the OA movement became more top-down, commercial and policy-focused, new scholar-led journals begin to offer a counterpoint predicated upon researcher control. Seen in this light, the OA movement takes on a greater degree of complexity, not just as one movement but as a series of movements with different timelines and priorities that have resulted in the landscape that exists today.

This article has therefore illustrated that the history of the OA movement is more complex than one might suppose. Although scholar-led publishing was not reflected in the discourse of those who popularised the movement, it is a distinct lineage that originated in the pre-history of the OA movement and is now gaining significant momentum as an important model for its future. One might think of the 1990s debutante as a proto form of open access whose potential was latent until now.

Conclusion

I have endeavoured throughout this article to show the significance that early experiments in scholar-led publishing hold for the broader OA movement. Not only can their values be theorised as part of the often-neglected pre-history of OA, early scholar-led publishers also represent a distinct set of values to the OA movement that was popularised in the mid-2000s and dominates the landscape today. This adds a layer of complexity to open access, revealing that it owes much to the humanities and social sciences, critical theory, researcher control and experimentation. Advocates for open access to research would be wise to keep this pre-history in mind in order to fully understand the landscape that exists today.

This analysis also has significant implications for OA policy across the globe, but especially for 'Plan S', the multi-funder mandate currently being devised in Europe (cOAlition S, 2018). Policymakers need to understand the importance of researcher ownership of publishing to the history (and future) of the open access movement.

This does not mean that *all* publications need to be entirely managed by the researchers who edit them, which would be impractical and undesirable on a global scale. Rather it is to recognise that these experiments exist for a range of reasons, sometimes that the commercial publishing industry is not meeting the needs of researchers, other times that researchers would like more control over publishing outlets and infrastructures, and other times that academics simply desire a space to

experimentation with scholarly communication for its own sake. The architects of OA policies should facilitate this grassroots experimentation alongside their top-down mandates.

It is thus important to understand that the push for open access entails more than the mere desire for *public* access to research. Open access is more complicated and includes a range of stakeholder motivations, often conflicting, that require consideration of more than the basic provision of research access to the public. Instead, scholar-led publishers show us that OA entails a reassessment of the cultures of knowledge creation, not just accessibility of research outputs.

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