**Information Program**

**Public Access to Publicly Funded Resources**

**Portfolio Review Outcomes Summary**

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**Participants:** Chris Stone (moderator), István Rév (discussant), Melissa Hagemann (lead staff), Darius Cuplinskas, Hugh McLean, Vera Franz, Hannah Draper, Piroska Hugyecz, David Knuth, Orsi Cseh, Martha Loerke, Laura Guzman, Elizabeth Eagen, Daphne Panayotatos, Krizna Gomez.

Introduction

Melissa Hagemann introduced the Information Program’s work to advocate for public access to publicly funded research and educational materials which has focused on seeding and strengthening the Open Access to Research and Open Educational Resources movements.  This body of work falls within the Information Program’s Access to Knowledge field. Through the process of the review, Hagemann observed that OSF has supported a top-down approach of advocating for policies at the national and institutional levels which require researchers to make their works openly available. The discussion explored, among other topics, whether the Program should complement its chosen strategy with a bottom-up approach of working with the community to create incentives for researchers to share their articles through Open Access.

Background

István Rév suggested it would be instructive to review how OSF entered this field. In 2000, the Information Program explored how best to provide online academic journals to those in the OSF region and was struck by the contradictions in the scholarly publishing system whereby academics write and peer review articles, while publishers make over 30% profit by organizing the peer review process and distributing the content. The research community tried to organize a boycott of the leading publishers in 2001, and when this failed, OSF realized that the time was ripe for developing alternatives to the traditional publishing system. Rév emphasized that when we embarked upon this journey, we did not know what the outcome would be.

General discussion

A common theme which surfaced during the discussion was the driving incentives of Open Access which go against market forces, and what the logic was for OSF’s pursuit of a strategy which faced such inherent challenges. This was coupled with the recurring question as to why OSF was unable to attract other funders to support Open Access advocacy. Hagemann noted that when OSF helped to launch the Budapest Open Access Initiative, which defined Open Access, she tried to bring other funders onboard, but was unsuccessful. Chris Stone asked why she didn’t pursue this further and if she could explain why she wasn’t successful. Hagemann thinks it was most likely an issue of branding and given OSF’s role in launching the Open Access movement, we were very closely identified with it, and this may have served as a deterrent for other funders. Rév acknowledged that at some point, he had stopped encouraging Hagemann to seek co-funders as he was proud of OSF’s role in developing the Open Access movement. Vera Franz observed that she had difficulty in attracting co-funders with whom to collaborate to support the WIPO Treaty for the Visually Impaired and in that campaign, OSF took a backseat, so the issue of branding does not necessarily play a role in deterring other funders. She believes that some issues which are controversial from a market perspective, such as Open Access and copyright reform, scare other foundations so they wouldn’t come onboard regardless of the issue of branding. Darius Cuplinskas added that Open Access did appear to be a far-fetched idea when it was launched and it only made sense that other funders wouldn’t want to collaborate with us. Stone noted that “other foundations may argue that going against the market isn’t a question of braveness, but stupidity. That is, they question the power of a small philanthropic foundation to go against the market.” He added that “after reading the portfolio review document, I would say you have two projects here: (1) Focused on changing the norm of scholarly communication, which was hugely successful (for example, the leading research funders in China have adopted Open Access policies and the major controversies in scholarly communication now revolve around *how* to achieve Open Access, not *whether* to embrace the model); and (2) The market intervention which is more of a failure as companies have figured out that as long as libraries are buying their journals, *and* there’s a tenure model, they can stay in business.” Rév noted that while the publishers are making the same profit, millions of people now have access to the scholarly content.

Stone then moved on to question the impact Open Access has had and who is actually using the materials which are now available. Hagemann acknowledged that OSF has been so focused on implementation, that we have not done an adequate job of collecting data and stories on the use and impact of Open Access. Cuplinskas observed that intrinsically is it harder to capture the stories of who is using open resources. Stone suggested it would be helpful to get an impression of who is using the materials. Hagemann will seek new partners to collect stories on the impact of Open Access and will also explore other suitable organizations to collaborate with on Open Access in developing countries (i.e. move beyond just supporting one organization as we are currently doing with the EIFL library consortium).

Future strategy

The discussion turned to future strategy with Stone observing that OSF has developed successful Open Access grantees and asking if “we could fund them, and sit back and allow them to drive future battles?” Hagemann noted that many of our core Open Access grantees are beginning to work on alternative metrics of academic evaluation, which could help to develop the incentives necessary to make researchers want to share their work. She believes alternative metrics have the potential to change the tenure model and should be the focus of OSF’s future strategy. Hagemann acknowledged that our leading grantees are spread thin and she does not believe that progress towards developing alternative metrics would happen as quickly if OSF did not step in to provide leadership. She suggested developing a concept around this area. Stone pressed her on this and asked “if the grantees are not strong enough to lead in this area, were we successful in field building?” Hagemann believes OSF has built a field to support the Open Access movement and our grantees are strong in advocacy, however, they do not have the bandwidth necessary to take on the additional work which would be required to properly develop incentives through alternative metrics. Hagemann indicated that there are grantees she would like to support to develop alternative metrics and advocate for their use, but this would appear to fall outside the public access strategy, which is the focus of our field support. She asked if incentives and alternative metrics could be supported under our public access strategy. Stone recommended providing our leading Open Access grantees with unrestricted funding which would test whether they are exploring incentives and alternative metrics because OSF thinks it is the right direction to pursue or whether they are doing it because they believe in it. In addition, he indicated that OSF could organize meetings and try to provide leadership in the development of metrics, while supporting our core grantees.

Cuplinskas added that he believes the leading Open Access grantees are ready for general support. Stone suggested having a conversation with our grantees in which we indicate that we are excited about alternative metrics, but are going to provide a general support grant to them which they can legally spend as they like. If the grantee agrees to prioritize alternative metrics, they could go to another funder with a specific project on metrics and if they receive funding for that project, they will be able to both strengthen their organizational capacity and carry out a project on metrics. This could be an interesting approach where OSF staff would play the role of highlighting opportunities for intervention and change with grantees (which is sometimes easier for us to do because we have a bird’s eye view of the field) and yet empower grantees – through general support – to independently set their organizational priorities.

Room for experimentation

Cuplinskas observed that when OSF began working on Open Access, it was an underdeveloped idea and he hopes that the foundation still has space to pursue projects like this, which aren’t “super fleshed out”, to see where they lead. Stone indicated that “part of the reason I’m trying to encourage general support with people we have thick relationships with is because it enables things like this to happen (i.e. the interesting underdeveloped ideas). If you can move a lot of money to organizations that you have strong relationships with, there is a lot of playfulness in that relationship. Projects that emerge from that will attract more people. Staff seem to view general support as losing power, but it’s not, or at least it shouldn’t be.”

Open Educational Resources

The discussion focused on Open Access to research materials with the result that there was little time for questions on our work to support Open Educational Resources (OER) by advocating for public access to publicly funded educational materials. Hugh McLean indicated that he was supportive of the strategy of working in target countries to support OER awareness raising, community building, and advocacy.

Final comments

In closing, Stone indicated that he understands the work and Hagemann acknowledged that she understands the funding mechanism. In addition, Rév suggested that other OSF Global Board members should be invited to participate in portfolio reviews as discussants and not merely reviewers, as he gained an appreciation for the portfolio review process from his direct participation.