The Finch Report and RCUK Open Access policy: How can libraries respond?

Open Access is now central to academic publishing, regardless of whether your team colours are green or gold. Ahead of Open Access Week, **Natalia Madjarevic** *writes that she has witnessed increased media coverage as a result of green OA and that libraries must respond with a touch of creativity to open access policies.*
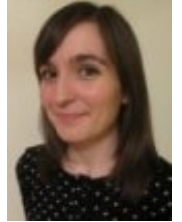
Libraries have always been advocates of Open Access (OA), providing repository services to collect, share and preserve open access versions of research papers. The Finch Report and the new RCUK OA policy mark a transformation to the way in which research is published and made available in the UK. Making government funded research free at the point of access will inevitably affect the way in which institutional repositories such as LSE Research Online (disclosure – I manage this service) develop in the future. However, it is now more than ever that academic libraries must continue to advance services which support open access to research during what was recently dubbed the 'biggest change for four centuries in the way that the public gets to read academic research'. Libraries must provide services, whether that be repository infrastructures or OA support, to ensure research and underlying materials are widely disseminated and meet funder requirements.

Authors are now faced with growing requirements to make publicly funded research OA. Gold OA is strongly recommended by RCUK, involving the payment of article processing charges (APCs), yet the policy allows both Green and Gold OA routes as clarified in a recent RCUK blog post. There will consequently be a mixed Green and Gold economy as policy changes are adopted and journals establish various modes of compliance. During this time, libraries must promote existing OA knowledge and provide advice on identifying compliant journals and interpreting embargo procedures depending on specific funding bodies. For authors going down the Green route (i.e. making a post-print version of their paper, including changes made after peer-review, available in a repository within a certain timeframe) libraries must continue to provide repository services to collect, share and preserve outputs. Repositories will also serve as platforms through which to enable text and data mining, a key driver of the CC-BY licence requirement. During this transition period, with both Green and Gold OA in use and with authors faced with various publishing routes and requirements, it is important that libraries continue to enable authors to fulfil research council policies and disseminate their work as widely as possible.

Institutions will also need to build processes to manage APCs incurred by Gold OA. Many libraries already manage similar funds, such as OA funds allocated by the Wellcome Trust, often alongside institutional research divisions. Libraries are in a central position to coordinate the implementation of OA payment systems, including online payment platforms designed to mediate OA payments between universities, publishers and funders. In addition, libraries must assess how funds are eventually shifted and reallocated from traditional subscription models to avoid 'double-dipping.'

Research Data Management is the next big development. As libraries have taken the lead in storing and preserving traditional research outputs via archiving in institutional repositories, so they will also play a part in the development of research data repositories. Many institutions are already drawing up Research Data Management policies, and digital repository services for open data are emerging at universities across the country (see University of Oxford and University of Essex). The RCUK OA policy states that peer reviewed papers in receipt of RCUK funding must: *include details of the funding that supported the research, and a statement on how the underlying research materials – such as data, samples or models – can be accessed.* Libraries, and institutions as a whole, must respond by ensuring researchers are able to share underlying research materials in a way that fits into the researcher workflow and meets funder policies. Many institutional repositories already hold research data sets yet

this is a huge area of growth. Building on the expertise of implementing and managing research repositories, libraries will facilitate sharing research data.

Additional Finch Report recommendations include the need for libraries to broaden digital collections in preserving items such as grey literature, digital archives, theses and dissertations. Although many libraries already curate such materials, particularly with deposit processes in place to collect electronic copies of PhD theses upon submission, such collections have scope for advancement. An example of a forward-thinking grey literature repository is the Institute of Education's UK Digital Education Repository Archive which collects official publications in the area of education. Preserving such materials builds upon traditional librarianship fundamentals: building unique and relevant collections, sharing and storing for posterity. Further growth areas for digital repositories include providing OA journal publishing platforms using existing repository infrastructures.

Many UK institutional repositories will also be the source of bibliographic data for the Research Excellence Framework 2014. Providing quality bibliographic metadata for the REF is an important facilitating role of libraries in reporting accurate publications information to HEFCE. It is likely that all material submitted to the next assessment of research quality after REF2014 will be required to be made available via OA. Libraries must be enablers and encourage REF2014 papers to be made OA as extensively as possible.

The Finch Report and the RCUK OA policy acts as a signal for libraries to evolve in supporting the academic publishing process. OA is now a central HE topic regardless of the advantages or disadvantages of Gold and Green OA routes. As someone who manages an institutional repository, I've already seen the benefits of increased media coverage in encouraging researchers to deposit full-text versions of their papers via Green OA. Libraries must therefore follow developing policy directions closely in order to engage with the academic community and to ensure we proactively support access to research as widely as possible. It is the role of libraries to be facilitators and respond creatively during the mixed Gold/Green economy and throughout future policy developments.

Note: This article gives the views of the author(s), and not the position of the Impact of Social Sciences blog, nor of the London School of Economics.

About the author:
Natalia Madjarevic is the manager of LSE Research Online and is co-hosting an Open Access Week 2012 event: Opening Research and Data, Monday 22 October at Birkbeck. Book your place here: http://bit.ly/SC5uJQ