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Reassembling Scholarly Communications

Histories, Infrastructures, and Global Politics of Open Access

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Introduction

Martin Paul Eve and Jonathan Gray

It can be tempting to view digital publishing in terms of a fundamental paradigm shift; a “disruptive innovation” that breaks as radically with its past as did Gutenberg’s printing press.¹ As commonly noted by economists and policy makers, the ability instantly to copy material between visual display units across vast geographical distances, after all, is of a fundamentally different character to the dissemination of the rivalrous materiality of print. Yet path dependencies and social histories from print forebears condition the ways in which publishing acts in the digital space. One need only consider that the metaphor of “scrolling,” for instance, persists in the digital era, centuries after that form of writing was most frequently replaced by the pages of the codex. For publishing, the digital environment is at once a rupture and a continuation, reformed by “new” accelerating technologies, recapitulated by “old” traditions of the academy.

Questions of intersecting traditions and technologies also have relevance, though, for the ongoing rapid transformations of research and learning that are taking place in the early twenty-first century. It is to this issue that this book devotes itself: how has the translation of publishing into the digital space, and the subsequent imaginaries, practices, and infrastructures of “openness” that have logically followed, been conditioned by histories, present discussions, and future projections of the scholarly communications environment?

The contributors to this volume have provided a range of pithy responses to these questions, designed as stimuli for the interested reader. None of the chapters herein yields a conclusive historical or future direction but each frames, either through a theoretical lens or empirical engagement, an apparatus with which we can begin to understand the present moment for

scholarly communications beyond a merely instrumental orientation. In this introduction we outline the reasons for this volume's composition, the rationales for the formats of the chapters herein, and the logic behind the project descriptions that comprise parts of this book's contents.

* * *

The traditional story of open access goes like this: the most commonly cited moment of change for contemporary scholarly communications came in 2002 with the publication of the three declarations on open access: the “triple-Bs” of Bethesda, Budapest, and Berlin.² Open access, by these definitions, refers to conditions under which price and permission barriers for accessing peer-reviewed research work are removed.³ That is, using the power of the internet and the World Wide Web to duplicate material at an infinitesimal cost-per-copy—using, that is, the move of publishing to the digital space—the Open Access Movement proposed to make research work freely available to anyone who wishes to read it.

Such a stance is premised on the idea that education is fundamentally different to other forms of commodity in two ways. First, in that education should be freely available to anyone, since a widespread well-educated population, worldwide, confers benefits upon us all. Second, in that higher education, where much research is produced, operates on an economic model that is conducive to the dissemination of such work. This is because academics are not paid based on the volume of their research that is *sold* but are rather given a salary to conduct the research work because it has social, scientific, or humanistic import. Academics and researchers are among the few classes of worker who are not primarily measured and assessed by sales (although this is less true in the brave new world of tuition fees and student recruitment, where insufficient enrollments can imperil a department's survival).⁴ This dissociation of sales as a metric lends a type of academic freedom, a freedom from the market in order to investigate niche ideas and hunches that may not come off. Research is a risky business and the freedom to follow an instinct, not knowing the result in advance and not being beholden to its commercial potential, is important. Hence, it has been argued, academics with stable jobs and/or tenure are ideally placed to be able to give their work away to readers, for free. This is where open access enters.

There are several forms of open access, usually assigned on a color spectrum of “gold” and “green” but even going so far as “platinum” and

“diamond” (although these last two are category errors: gold and green do not denote business models, while platinum and diamond do). Gold open access refers to conditions where a publisher makes the material openly available to read and reuse (but again, it does not specify any particular business model to make this possible). By contrast, green open access refers to instances where an author deposits a version of the work into a subject or institutional repository. Arguments for the change to open access have been spread across a range of axes, from taxpayer funding via easing library budgets through to the public good.⁵ As above, open access is possible, in this area of cultural production (academic research), it is claimed, because researchers are free to give their work away; they are paid a salary by their institution, rather than making a living by selling their research work. The benefits would be a world in which nobody was unable to access research material that could further their understanding of the universe.

When couched in such terms, open access sounds easy, logical, and almost inevitable. However, the social, technical, and economic conditions of academic research publication practice make the entire endeavor far thornier than might be imagined.⁶ On the economic side, scholarly publishing is big business. Particularly in the natural sciences, where a handful of large commercial publishers dominate the landscape, profit levels are regularly in the region of 30 percent (even while smaller mission-driven publishers can often be just one lawsuit away from bankruptcy).⁷ This is the case even as the costs of subscribing to all academic serials have risen by nearly 400 percent above inflation since 1986.⁸ Yet, for those entities whose existence depends on profiting from selling research publications, open access poses a potentially serious threat.

Indeed, for publishing entities that have staff and bills to pay, open access implies a change in business practice. For although green open access has not been shown definitively to cause any revenue loss in terms of subscriptions, if the publisher is giving material away then it must, by default, find another source of revenue to sustain its operations and/or surplus/profit. The most well-known, although by some measures not the most widespread, adaptation of publishers' business models is to levy an article processing charge.⁹ The logic runs that, if one cannot sell material to readers, then one might instead sell professional publishing services to authors.

On the surface, this makes sense. It appears to be merely a direct inversion of the current economic model. However, this is not so. For such a system

both radically changes the distribution of payments from the subscription environment that has existed for many years while also creating new exclusions. By reducing the ways in which payments are currently distributed—from hundreds or thousands of subscribers around the world all paying less than the cost of an article and moving instead to a single payer who must cover the entire cost—the processing charge model effects a substantial concentration of costs within high-output, research-producing universities.

This economic cost-concentration can be demonstrated through a simple thought experiment. Imagine that there are 100 people in a room. Each of these people has \$10. The academic speaker will give them a talk, but the venue wants \$50 to cover its costs (and any profit/surplus). There are 40 such talks per year. There is a final indefinitely large group of people (let us call them “the general public”) who might want to hear the talk but who can afford to pay nothing. The total cost all year of running all the events is \$2,000. The total pool of funds is \$1,000. By default, then, some events are not viable to run under this economic model.

Under subscription logic, each person pays \$0.50 and gets access to the talk. If a person does not pay, s/he/they may not hear the talk. This logic is implemented to introduce a classical economic system. With the funding available, each person can choose to attend this talk or another. However, each of the 40 talks is different and doesn’t cover the same material. The attendees do not really know whether a talk will be useful to them in advance. They can attend 50 percent of the talks. This model spreads costs but limits access; 50 percent of the talks could be attended by 100 percent of the attendees but nobody from the “general public” group gets to hear the talks. Further, it is unlikely that all 100 participants will attend the same 40 talks, so knowledge of the talks’ contents is diffuse. It is also the case that, in reality, not every speaker has \$10. Some would have \$20 and others only \$0.50. Some believe this is, nonetheless, the best way of ensuring the venue is compensated and remains open for talks because it incentivizes people to pay. The speaker doesn’t necessarily get the largest possible audience from this model. This is also the most unrealistic part of the thought experiment. In reality, some participants have \$90 and some only have \$1, often as a result of colonial legacies of global wealth distribution.

Under an article processing charge (APC) or book processing charge (BPC) logic for gold open access, the speaker will pay the venue’s cost of \$50 and let anybody hear the talk for no charge. This makes sense to the

academic as her only motivation is to be heard (she is one of the lucky ones who has an academic post). The problem is, she, the speaker, only has \$10 herself. This model concentrates costs (sometimes impossibly so) but allows the theoretically widest access. In this particular case, though, an idealized logic led to no access since no single individual can afford the total cost. APCs and BPCs have a problem within the current distribution of resources.

Another alternative model has been proposed to help with the economics. Under consortial open-access funding logic, five people attend each talk. They each spend their full allowance of \$10 on that single talk. However, they let everybody else attend any talk for which they have paid, in expectation of reciprocity and for the public good. They record the talk and let others view this for no charge. This model spreads costs and allows broader access than the subscription model; 50 percent of the talks could be heard by not only 100 percent of the attendees but also by the group who can't afford to pay. This appears to be the logical choice for those present, but some are worried that they may pay while others might not return the favor.

There are also arguments that the \$50 venue fee is extortionate, since it appears that 35 percent of it (\$17.50) is pure profit for the venue organization, which is in fine financial health and is motivated by return for its shareholders, rather than the dissemination of education. Some point out that were this closer to 6 percent (\$3.00), as it is in other sectors, the organization would still be fine and could pay all its staff but each talk would only cost around \$35. At that rate, it would be possible to host approximately 29 of the planned talks and, with the distribution in the different models, allow other groups to have access. A new startup venue is willing to offer the space at much cheaper rates. The problem is, though, that speakers are rewarded by their institution with promotions and jobs if they speak at venues that are already known. The new venue does not carry such reputational clout, even as it performs the same functions as the older venues (including organizing the screening of the talks for quality). Of course, in reality, not all "venues" are for-profit publishers; many are university presses who are under much tighter financial constraints, even as they are viewed as revenue rather than cost centers.

Yet, as reductive as it is in some ways, the above scaled-down thought experiment shows a few of the challenges for implementing open access on the ground. The situation is even worse when it comes to open-access books, for which the production costs are much, much higher.¹⁰ The economics of

distribution—at the global, national, institutional, and disciplinary levels—are critical to our understanding of what it means to transition to a world in which academic content is free on the reader side, even while it is not free to produce or, importantly, to publish.¹¹ Economics, though, is not the only contested political area for open access. Among accusations that open access will encourage plagiarism, or degrade the quality of academic work, has come the more recent assertion that open access is entangled with the neoliberalization of academia and the academy, as well as the commodification and platformization of online spaces and digital infrastructures.¹²

* * *

Neoliberalism, an often poorly defined and overused term, can nonetheless be specified as the extension of economizing, quantifying thought to all areas of life and, in particular, the replacement of politics with economics.¹³ Born out of the ordoliberalism movement in early twentieth-century Austria, the most forceful and notable proponents were those known as the Chicago School of Economics.

It is easy to chart a narrative of neoliberal incursion into higher education. In the UK, for instance, the proliferation of target-driven assessment mechanisms and financialization appear to confirm the notion that the bastions of liberal humanist thought have been colonized by quantifying urges that seek to metricize and operationalize education in utilitarian fashions.¹⁴ This neoliberalization certainly also extends to scholarly publishing. The recent demands that Stanford University Press be self-sustaining—that is, as a revenue, rather than cost, center for the university—can be and have been read in this light of neoliberal politics.¹⁵

The actual history of higher education is more complex than this, though. Racial and class-based iniquities in access to university before the late-twentieth century (and still persisting in many spaces, particularly through the hierarchy of prestige between different schools) make a mockery of the idealized prehistory to which such narratives sometimes resort. Furthermore, critics of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in the UK are slow to point out that this exercise is firstly one that disburses public money, gleaned through general taxation, to universities for research, and secondly one that reshaped the landscape of UK higher education to be more inclusive. It is not likely that new, younger universities would have been given a share of the funding pie without mechanisms such as

the REF. This is to say neither that there are not terrible consequences of metricization—for individuals and for the higher education system as a whole—nor that we should not continue to fight for a system of universities that bring a true social good, but it is to note that overly linear and simplistic narratives of the purpose and context of such structures do not capture the whole story.¹⁶ Higher education had a perfectly unequal and checkered history long before it became neoliberal.

That said, open access has become associated, for better or worse, with such assessment mechanisms. Over the previous two decades, research funders realized that who pays the piper calls the tunes and they began mandating for open access to publicly funded research work. This has led to the unfortunate situation in which many scholars encounter open access for the first time as a product of a need to comply with systems of bureaucracy and finance, rather than any genuinely critical engagement with scholarly communication practices in the digital age.¹⁷ Of course, this varies from region to region and sometimes discipline to discipline. It is notoriously difficult to mandate in the United States, for instance, apart from in the instances of federal and/or private funding. Likewise, funders have less clout in the humanities disciplines, where project research funding has dried up to nearly desert status. Nonetheless, from this entanglement comes the critique that open access is a means by which neoliberal government agendas of “knowledge transfer” and “impact” can be forced upon researchers.¹⁸ In this respect, many from the humanities disciplines have argued that open access should not apply to their work and is being driven by the agenda of the natural sciences. However, such a world would be a worrying space, for it would be one in which the general availability of natural-scientific research would be coupled with the near-total digital invisibility of the humanities disciplines.

In particular, though, criticism has fallen in this respect on the more liberal of the Creative Commons licenses and especially those without an NC (noncommercial) or ND (nonderivative) clause.¹⁹ Prominent commentators, such as John Holmwood, have voiced fears that without a noncommercial clause, private higher education providers (who can issue degrees without doing any teaching in the UK, for instance) will swoop in to bundle open-access research content into textbooks, thereby undercutting the research university in its present form.²⁰ Given the current standard of discourse around higher education in government policy circles, this is a far from irrational fear.

Unfortunately, though, the law is often unhelpful when it comes to the interpretation of the “noncommercial” clause. Often, charitable organizations—with missions that we might wish to support for ethical reasons—conduct “commercial” activities in order to fund their operations. Indeed, universities are commercial in this sense. To this end, a court in Germany ruled that noncommercial meant *strictly* for personal use.²¹ Likewise, in terms of allowing derivatives, or otherwise, it is unclear whether a course pack that used a mere excerpt might be ruled as a derivative rather than a compilation. In the quest to fight neoliberalization, the arguments against open licensing find themselves spinning too broad a web and, in the process, catching legitimate scholarly uses that could be worthwhile. The response has, on occasion, been to call for new licenses. Perhaps, it is reasoned, it is just that the Creative Commons licenses are not suited for scholarship. Yet, these licenses have been developed and legally tested over decades by some of the finest legal minds in the world. To rewrite them for scholarly purposes with watertight-enough language to facilitate “good” uses against those that are deemed undesirable would be extremely difficult. Further, it is not clear, even within the academy, what is agreed upon as acceptable. Are we seriously to have different licenses that must be legally tested for history than for biomedicine and computer science? It certainly might also be argued, under the “taxpayer argument,” that since commercial entities pay taxes, and that tax money supports university research in some cases, that the mandate for open licenses should stand (though this resort to taxpayer arguments could, itself, be construed as a neoliberal exercise).²²

Yet the fundamental contradiction remains that those who most loudly protest, say, precarious working conditions within universities, but who also contest open access on the grounds that it is neoliberal, find themselves in a double bind. For in perpetuating the unequal situation of access to research, which remains the precondition for producing further research and thereby securing a faculty position, those who disdain open access become those who uphold a system which remains extremely difficult for those outside of the university to benefit from and participate in. Further, it is hard also to ignore the fact that worldwide access (in both read and write modes) to scholarship from the Global North is almost exclusively the preserve of scholars from this region.²³ In attacking the claimed neoliberalism of open access in general—as opposed, say, to just the APC model—such scholars (inadvertently) uphold a

system of neocolonial access to knowledge, as several commentators in this volume point out.

It is also curious that often those most opposed to the supposed neoliberalization of the academy are also those who will speak, in throwaway comments, of “top journals” and the importance of their perpetuation. Yet, it is this reliance on a proxy measure for quality—Impact Factors or even just prestige—that allows the neoliberal systems of assessment to continue to function. For how long do we really think that systems such as the UK’s REF or European funding structures would last if panels could not find recourse to a frame of value within which a work is situated? Put otherwise: if panels had to read 200 book manuscripts as part of a search, rather than judging 200 books placed at well-regarded university presses, would the system not crumble away?

This evaluative reliance on “containers” is absolutely entangled with the current system of open access. Although, for a long time, the standing of a journal has determined the price that a publisher could charge for a subscription, in the present moment this is being made entirely transparent. For instance, in its recent IPO, SpringerNature explicitly noted that “[s]ome of our journals are among the open access journals with the highest Impact Factor, providing us with the ability to charge higher APCs for these journals than for journals with average Impact Factors.”²⁴ Elsevier, the largest scientific publisher in the world, notes that its pricing of open-access fees is also based upon measures of the journal’s standing, rather than purely upon the labor the publisher has provided through its services.²⁵ Research material has become a positional good, in which the status of the venues in which it appears bear more upon its market worth than the actual content of the work. (Although, one might also consider the same effect under a subscription model and conclude that it would be worse. Imagine, for instance, if the most important articles in biomedicine, with huge implications for public health, cost the most to access. Yet this is, to some extent, what a pricing system based on prestige implies.)

Such a stance only makes clear what has been fairly obvious to anybody in an academic library purchasing department for some time: that the symbolic economy of prestige in academia translates, as Pierre Bourdieu would appreciate, into a real-world financial economy.²⁶ Indeed, what appears as a matter of academic judgement and of practices protected by laws of academic freedom has dire market consequences for access to knowledge

around the world. The ways in which we appraise “excellence” determine what, and who, is able to read and now to publish material.²⁷ Choices by academics of where to publish—on one set of criteria of appraisal—determine the ability of people around the world to afford access to that work.

* * *

All of this is to say that open access is intensely messy. Open access is perceived through a set of contested institutional histories, argued over various theoretical terrains in the present, and imagined via diverse potentialities for the future. And it is at this point, amid such an untidy set of circumstances, that this book makes its intervention. At the present moment, we are overdetermined by an inflexible historical understanding of open research practices that risks leading us into either overly instrumental conceptions or critiques that foreclose the possibility of other arrangements. How, we wanted here to ask, might our thinking differ if we had an alternative historical frame of reference? What experiments have people conducted, in the present, that might lead to other possible trajectories? And what different futures can we foresee, even as we are historically determined in our imagination, from our current vantage point?

When we envisaged this collection, we specifically aimed to do something different to a conventional edited volume. Certainly, the contributions in this volume are rigorous and backed by often decades’ worth of intellectual or practical experience of work in the area of this book. What we also wanted, though, were pithy, shorter chapters that would serve as introductions to different perspectives, as gateways to alternative approaches. We have achieved this in many cases, although some of the chapters simply required more space than others, hence some variance in length is to be expected. Finally, we wanted to construct an archive of practical initiatives and to preserve it as history. For it is only in the documentation of practical enterprises that one can see the forks in history’s otherwise apparent determinism. That is, in hindsight everything can appear as though it could never have been different. By describing efforts to change the future, in our present, from around the world, the notion of “history as timeline” may be complemented by another conception of contingent branching events. We perceive this as a model akin to one of the baseball player Yogi Berra’s famous malapropisms: “when you come to a fork in the road, take it.”

Chapters and Structure

This book is divided into six parts: colonial influences; epistemologies; publics and politics; archives and preservation; infrastructures and platforms; and global communities. Of course, these various parts should not be taken as an indication that we regard them as distinct entities or processes. They are rather a reflection of our editorial efforts to cluster together the various chapters around shared themes and into a reasonably well-balanced set of sections, and there are certainly overlaps and conversations between them. For how can one write of preservation and selection, for instance, without an appreciation of the value structures that we use to select? And these value structures of selection have been historically conditioned by worldwide colonial and then postcolonial positions, as well as epistemological concerns and biases, and infrastructural changes.

This volume opens with a section on colonial legacies. We as editors acknowledge that, as two (half) white men based in Europe, our positions on open access, open science, and other open digital transformations of research have been shaped not only by our geographical stance but also our own historical proximity to former empires and their associated social, cultural, political, and economic circuitry, which often continue to operate. The four chapters in this section reflect upon issues of global inequality and paint a very different picture to the tableau with which those from the Global North may be familiar.

Indeed, we open with a somewhat less optimistic chapter about the spread of open access. In his chapter, Thomas Hervé Mboa Nkoudou shows how the spread of particular business models for open access, in particular, can be intensely problematic. Thus, on the one hand, it is argued, while the widespread accessibility of work may be advantageous for those working on the African continent, the perpetuation of the article processing charge system is, on the other, incredibly dangerous. For Nkoudou, the frame of the *pharmakon*—the simultaneous poison and cure—is helpful for understanding this dual-edged phenomenon. Nkoudou ends with a series of proposals for how we can decolonize knowledge for a more epistemically just world.

In their chapter Charlotte Roh, Harrison W. Inefuku, and Emily Drabinski continue this theme and examine the important ways in which our present systems of scholarly communications worldwide, here and now, are rooted in colonial histories of empire that have fostered deep inequalities.

Roh et al. identify a set of perpetuations of race, ethnicity, gender norms, and inequalities in research production and promulgation that all have their roots within colonial systems of privilege.

All, though, is not lost. In chapter 3, Reggie Raju, Jill Claassen, Namhla Madini, and Tamzyn Suliaman detail the ways in which the concept of Ubuntu—a Zulu term advancing communal justice *en route* to promoting an egalitarian society—can be seen in new library publishing initiatives in South Africa. At present, for Raju et al., there is a serious problem in the current open publishing landscape: equitable participation is not fixed by the equitable ability to read. Without the more systemic and bottom-up approaches that they detail, it seems likely that open practices will merely continue to perpetuate damaging legacies.

Finally for this first section, Denisse Albornoz, Angela Okune, and Leslie Chan consider what it might take to transform our notions of pragmatic open access, in the present, into future realities that address inequality. Examining several worldwide systems of scholarly communications from decolonial and feminist perspectives aligned with thinkers such as Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Jean and John Comaroff, Walter Mignolo, Anne Mahler, Maria Lugones, Arturo Escobar, and Raewyn Connell, they propose a model that will address the social justice and educational issues that sit at the heart of open access. For “the infrastructures we build and the practices we enable,” they write, “need intentionally to aim to highlight voices, worldviews and epistemologies that have been historically excluded from the system.”

The second section of this book focuses on epistemologies; the ways in which we think about knowledge itself and how this shapes our understandings of digital and open transformations of research publishing. Opening this section, John Willinsky draws on his extensive research into the history of copyright and intellectual property to paint a picture that differs substantially from the mainstream narrative. Turning back to the Statute of Anne from 1710, Willinsky details the ways in which the original purpose of copyright—in the encouragement of learning—has been lost. Indeed, for Willinsky, if we want to take seriously proposals to modify contemporary copyright law, we could do no better than to retrace our historical steps. For the intentions that many now seek, Willinsky argues, were there from the start.

In a slightly different vein, while still thinking about the ways in which conditions of practice loop back into the theoretical considerations that inform them, Robin de Mourat, Donato Ricci, and Bruno Latour document

their *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence (AIME)* project and the theoretical consequences that arise from it. Taking a social approach to infrastructure—and recognizing that there are competing demands upon any single system because any public is composed of multiple “modes of existence” (a fact reflected in the chapters in this volume, such as Babini’s, that recognize different “publics” for research work)—this open project forces us to question the difference between books and blogs, and the challenges of understanding how different intersecting groups can be captured in infrastructure design. Indeed, in their analysis of how a “format” might itself constitute the public to which it speaks, their work touches on vital issues of remediation that have become central to much work in archival studies.²⁸

Perhaps one of the most crucial “formats” though, for scholarly communications, is that of the “peer-reviewed work.” To address this matter, we turn to the questions raised by David Pontille and Didier Torny in their chapter. Namely: how does the material that is published become so in the present day? What are the evaluative mechanisms that sort the wheat from the chaff? And, in conjunction with Aileen Fyfe’s chapter, how can we understand the historical development of these systems of peer review into the present day? Tracing peer review back to the seventeenth century, Pontille and Torny yield a historically informed investigation into the roots of contemporary review practices, functioning, in their terms, as a technology. At the close of their piece, they turn to the ways in which future imagined structures of review sit within such paradigms of thought, but also counter them as continuous instances of judgment.

Finally for our section on knowledge cultures, Pamela H. Smith, Tianna Helena Uchacz, Naomi Rosenkranz, and Claire Conklin Sabel revisit our historical assumptions about epistemology and science in the light of their openly accessible web project. Indeed, Smith et al. draw our attention to the way in which early scientific experiments were conducted by Renaissance artists, historians, and humanists, blurring the distinctions between humanistic and scientific practices, but also focusing on the transmission of this knowledge and the genealogies of craft dissemination. Smith et al. achieve this by documenting their project—the *Making of Empirical Knowledge*—and the finds that they there unearth.

The third section of this book turns to different audiences and publics, and the politics of the open dissemination of research work. For Aileen Fyfe, in this space, we have overlooked a history of publication in which

the desire to make scholarship widely available and free to read is far longer than we might otherwise presume. Turning to what is broadly acknowledged as the first scientific journal publication—*The Philosophical Transactions*—Fyfe traces the financial context of its production through gift economies and reprints to one with an *aspiration* for open access, in an era without the technological promise so hailed by the Budapest Declaration in later years.

That said, we are also notoriously bad at revising our pasts in a romantic light when it suits us, as Stuart Lawson shows. In their chapter, Lawson seeks to retell the story that we tell ourselves that public libraries have always been institutions of progressive social change. Instead, as Lawson details, these institutions were embroiled in conflicts of class, race, and empire. This is not to say that public libraries have not yielded public benefits, but it does give us cause for concern if we seek a historical narrative of actual library practices. Perhaps in contrast to Willinsky, Lawson posits, sometimes it is what we have become, rather than whence we came, that matters most.

Continuing this exploration of the present and the current status of open access is taken up in Maura A. Smale's chapter on the contemporary public library in the United States of America. Furthering other work in this volume on the different models of library infrastructure, Smale argues that libraries—whether they be public, academic, or even high school-level—should embrace open access for its transformative potential. Rooting her analysis in Sirkazhi Ramamrita Ranganathan's 1931 volume, *The Five Laws of Library Science*, Smale's chapter is perhaps among the more concrete and hopeful in this volume. At the same time, though, Smale's chapter also brings to the fore the very real dilemmas faced by libraries in our present. While this chapter may present familiar ground for many readers, the direness of the contemporary situation for libraries cannot be underscored enough.

Finally, for our section on publics and politics, John Holmwood turns in his chapter to the ways in which the openness of social media systems and scholarly research are part of a broader turn to neoliberal practices in government policy around higher education. Even as it may be well-intentioned, Holmwood warns, open access ends up providing data to organizations that wish harm to our universities—and this must be stopped. More broadly, though, Holmwood also questions the ways in which notions of truth, democracy, and public knowledge circulate in the digital era, bringing a political-economic slant to his chapter. Specifically, how are

we to understand the spread of “fake news,” even as more and more original research work becomes openly available?

The fourth part of this book turns its focus to archives and preservation. Bethany Nowviskie turns to the ways in which we might encode Afrofuturist thinking and assumptions into our current and future practices. For Nowviskie, as for Lawson, the colonial assumptions about knowledge production and reception condition the possibilities for our understanding. In Nowviskie’s thinking, we must understand openness as an openness to broader community ownership and involvement, openness to richer scholarly endeavors, and openness for creative or speculative ends.

In her chapter, April M. Hathcock documents the difficulties here in the silences of the archive that we are creating. Chiming with Roh et al.’s chapter on the inequalities of the scholarly communications system, Hathcock’s analysis here makes clear the ways in which our choices of selection in the present—shaped by problematic histories and discriminatory contemporary politics—condition the futures of scholarship that are possible. Presenting a complex set of temporal conditions for thinking about digital preservation, Hathcock’s chapter warns us of difficulties of archival silence. For one of the biggest concerns of scholarship in the present is that it be rigorously preserved for the future. Since the footnote constitutes, for the most part, our only way of verifying the epistemic claims of scholarship, such matters of preservation—but also matters of *what material is selected for preservation*—are paramount.²⁹

Turning inward toward the academy, next, and Dorothea Salo identifies the ways in which problematic politics manifest themselves in university career pathways that continue to turn scholars toward print. Riffing on the well-known Stanley Fish essay, “Is There a Text in This Class?,” Salo’s “Is There a Text in These Data?” shows us how difficult it is to jettison print for reasons of scarcity and prestige, even as we might be tempted to think that a switch to digital open publishing is merely a matter of time.³⁰

In contrast to this, though, is István Rév’s chapter. Rév has spent a substantial amount of time working on sensitive archives; documentations of conflict, persecution, and other terrible events of great personal consequence. It would be of great benefit to the collective memory of our world for access to these archives to be open. Yet the dangers at the individual level are substantial and, Rév provocatively argues, the archive should

destroy or keep inaccessible portions of its collection in order to serve the whole of society, rather than just historians.

Opening the fifth section of the book, on infrastructures and platforms, Jonathan Gray explores how scholarly communication infrastructures can be understood not just as neutral vehicles for the dissemination of outputs, but as embodying and enabling different forms of value, meaning, sociality, and participation around research activities. Drawing on a range of recent examples, he looks at how such “infrastructural experiments” can enable and materialize different kinds of collective action, participation, and imagination around who has access, what counts, what matters and how relations are organized.

Indeed, it is easy to argue that open access depends upon new technologies and that, as a consequence, a type of technological thinking has made its way into most thinking about open access—at the neglect of community and the social. In their chapter, Penny C. S. Andrews conducts an examination of the ways in which new technological constructions function as platforms, at once enclosing and elevating the scholarship that is platformed. This, though, comes with the dark side of enclosure and totalizing ideas of “platforms” that exhibit negative ideas of “open.”

Further to this, as Martin Paul Eve illustrates in his chapter, the digital realm also offers us a solution to a particular problem of proliferation—so long as we can get access. Namely, in an era when there is more published than can possibly ever be read, text and data mining procedures might afford us methods for navigating the vast ocean of scholarship. Exploring initiatives such as The Content Mine led by Peter Murray Rust at Cambridge, this chapter asks, in counterpoint to Salo’s, what it means to think of scholarship as data.

The infrastructures that would enable such technological advances are not always in place, though. Indeed, on the ground this type of computational initiative requires extensive work in order to implement machine-readable structures. In their chapter, Arianna Becerril García and Eduardo Aguado-López detail the ways in which such infrastructural improvements could result in greater discoverability and integration of South American research cultures within broader global databases.

Finally for this section, in his chapter, Abel Packer details the history, present, and future of the important SciELO platform in South America. For in many ways, the economic systems by which we are ensnared in the Global North are traps of our own devising. South American countries

have pioneered the way in open access and achieved much more than their northern counterparts, as this chapter shows. As the Director of the SciELO project, Packer is uniquely placed to give an informed perspective on one of the longest-standing and most widespread open-access platforms on the planet. He here details the ongoing roadmap that will allow for technical standardization of the SciELO infrastructure and its potential futures.

The last section of this book is dedicated to ideas of community and global community in scholarly communication paradigms. We here open with Eileen A. Joy's chapter on the ethics of care in open-access publishing. For Joy, open access is about far more than the pragmatics of compliance with mandates. Instead, she highlights here the importance of scholar-led infrastructural provision but also the interdependence of open access with other structural problems within the academy, notably the precarity of academic staff. For, if the claim of academic freedom through employment stability is undermined, what is left for the arguments for the freedoms of open access?

Yet care, integration, and thought must be considered not just in local realms but also at the level of the international. Dominique Babini, then, continues this theme in her chapter, noting the preconditions for success in South America to work on a global scale. While acknowledging the challenges, Babini details the work of CLACSO and other organizations in crafting a system of scholarly communications that caters for multiple audiences and addresses, systemically, access challenges both inside and outside of the academy.

On such matters of communality, Jane Winters asks, in her chapter, about the future of learned societies in a world of open access, particularly in the United Kingdom. Winters notes that, for a substantial period of time now, "there has been no need to question or perhaps really even to think about the role of the learned society as publisher" but that this is changing below our very feet. In her chapter, Winters addresses the future of Societies in both economic and social terms but also points toward helpful early experiments in open practice from organizations that have, traditionally, been less enthusiastic about open access, such as the Royal Historical Society.

Likewise, and finally, Kathleen Fitzpatrick brings her expertise of working at the head of a large scholarly society—the Modern Language Association—to discuss the ways in which such entities can resist the constant commercialization of platforms in recent years. Partly leading on from Andrews's previous chapter and partly documenting the creation

of MLA Core and Commons, Fitzpatrick fuses a theoretical and practical approach to building an open future for scholarly communications in the humanities disciplines.

Conclusions and Perspectives

In all, then, we intend for this book to perform a range of functions. First, we aim to provide a different set of perspectives on the histories of scholarly communications and to question the dominant narrative of the emergence of open access in the twenty-first century. We excavate a history of the present. Second, we examine how contemporary practices might suggest other alternative arrangements and trajectories, embedding different values and conceptions of the role of scholarship in the contemporary world. Third, we turn to the futures, imagined or in constitution, that might emerge from such differential thought. Throughout the volume we also intersperse case studies, to document for whichever future emerges the possibilities of difference that gave way to historical inevitability. There is of course the danger that this volume will quickly appear dated. Luckily our aim is not to provide a set of policy recommendations, economic models, or technical proposals, but rather to gather a range of perspectives drawing on research in different fields that we hope may continue to inform and inspire experiments and interventions around scholarly communications long after the conditions in which they currently operate have changed.

We also note that many, or even most, of the contributors in this volume are humanists or social scientists. This has been a deliberate decision: we originally set out to explore precisely what kinds of perspectives social and cultural inquiry might bring to the recomposition of scholarly communications. We acknowledge that this might perhaps not be a conventional approach for a book about open access. After all, the humanities can scarcely have said to have been at the forefront of these developments, and it has often been the natural sciences and “STEM” disciplines that have most significantly influenced the environments of research funding, evaluation, and policy. However, it is precisely because of the prominence of more narrowly economic, administrative, and instrumentally “policy-relevant” knowledge cultures that we have sought to surface other lines of inquiry and ways of making sense of the histories, contexts, conditions, and futures of scholarly production.³¹

Finally, the texts herein are not intended to cohere into a single outlook, line of inquiry or program—and, as readers will notice, there are numerous differences and tensions between them. For example, Rév's view on openness from his archival perspective is very different to others working on scholarship that would not be published otherwise. We have attempted, also, to think of access in various ways, although future work might wish to engage further with critical disability studies and *accessibility* in that sense, as do a few of the chapters herein. The audiences for this book will also be varied. This book is not, in many ways, an "introduction to open access"; there are certainly other works that are better positioned to fulfill that role.³² It may, for some, though, be an introduction to the ongoing task of bringing diverse, critical engagements with scholarly communications grounded in social and humanities research to bear on practical interventions to shape its future, as well as an introduction to the approaches of the various fields that have been working with this orientation for many years.³³ It is our hope that both newcomers and seasoned scholarly communication aficionados alike will find provocation in the coming pages, as well as prompts for the progressive recomposition of the systems, infrastructures, and environments across and through which research is shared, used, valued, commodified, challenged, pirated, promoted, and made meaningful.

Notes

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