Chapter 35
A Lost Dimension in the Open Scholarly World:
Authors' Experiences and Open Access Publishing

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ABSTRACT

The movement of free accessibility of scholarly literature on the public Web has brought uprising in the intellectual class of the digital world. Though several studies have been carried out to understand the end-users' awareness level and the benefits they avail from this revolution, researchers/authors who play a pivotal role and without whom Open Access (OA) could not have seen the dawn and could not have been successful so far, have remained least studied, if not, unnoticed. Regardless of the use of OA platforms, earlier research has to some extent indicated the experiences, behaviour, and attitudes of authors towards open access. The way they think about OA has been explored by authorities from various dimensions. The current chapter is an attempt to understand their experiences, perceptions, and the opinions they hold about open access publishing. The chapter highlights the growing awareness, views, and perceptions of 336 authors in the field of medicine towards OA publishing. The survey instrument, an online questionnaire covering e-mail invitation to participate, was sent to the authors publishing their works in OA journals. The authors who had made recent submissions in the open access journals were consulted and the journals were selected from the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). The study explores the attitudes of authors to open publishing models, including OA journals and OA repositories. The research work is not a reflection of all the authors in the field of medicine, and hence, the findings should not be generalized to represent the views of all the authors contributing to open access platforms in the field of medicine. Neither should the findings be generalized to represent the views of all the authors in the open access world. The study can further be extended to divulge the views of authors in the field of medicine on the basis of geographical locations and gender. A follow up study can also be taken to monitor the opinion shifts of the authors in the sub-fields of medicine.

INTRODUCTION

The open access movement is commonly considered as having been born out of the Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2002. However, its birth also represented the culmination of a number of earlier initiatives that were carried out with the active involvement–to varying degrees–of researchers/authors, librarians, and university administrators (Keefer, 2007). Currently, open access continues to be one of the most profitable investments, researchers can make in the scholarly world. During economic crisis, open access provides excellent scholarly appreciation and untold profits. It is commonly recognized that OA originated in the West, specifically the USA and Western Europe, and then spread over the scholarly communities in the rest of the world (Suber, 2009; Swan & Brown, 2005). This transnational diffusion of the OA concept and practice is the result of advancement in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), mainly the Internet, at various levels across different countries in response to the deteriorated access to scholarly information due to sharp increases in the cost of publication subscriptions internationally (Chan, Kirsop, & Arunachalam, 2005; Suber & Arunachalam, 2005). The open-access model is expected to revolutionize the way scientists access, search, process, and disseminate scientific findings and ideas (Bjork, 2004; Doyle, Gass, & Kennison, 2004). Open access performs an array of tremendously valuable functions for the elements associated with it ranging from more visibility to higher dissemination. Open access has been defined by a number of authorities in their own ways. The Budapest declaration defines open access as "the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all" (Budapest Open Access Initiative, 2002). It is defined as an idea that the public and universities should not pay publishers for something–usually scholarly journals, though now books are on the radar as well–they have already paid to produce (Amiran, 2010).

To achieve open access, necessary infrastructure has been created in the form of OA journals and OA repositories (both institutional and disciplinary based). Scholars participate in the OA movement by making contributions to these digital mechanisms through publishing freely accessible articles in OA journals or by self-archiving their research outcomes in OA repositories. OA journals and repositories represent two complementary open access vehicles that function by collecting and publishing scholarly literature, and providing free access to everyone (Xia, 2012).

Open access, the most buzzing concept in the digital world, has captured the attention of every element associated with it and especially the authors who are the backbone and foundation of an established and a growing platform, open access. Open access, which aims to make the scholarly output to be utilized free of cost has been visualized and researched by different authorities in different ways. Since the inception of open access, the tiers associated with it have been directly or indirectly concerned with its different facets. Whether it is users, publishers, or authors, everyone has articulated it in different ways. The potentialities of open access are enormous, and with the passing time, they are in a trend to grow progressively. Author community, in particular is becoming more and more concerned about the open access publishing because it is here, where their intellectual output is recognized at a global level, with least encumbrance. Authors have become more concerned about their works and their ultimate destination, i.e. where, when, and how to publish them. It has really become a daunting task for them to get an active involvement with the open access world. Many issues correlated with open access publishing have made the author community to think beyond publishing. Until now, many studies have been carried out with the user community as base, but much less work has been done to explore the preferences and behaviour of authors towards open access. What authors think, and what they expect from open access is still a

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