Chapter 18
Negotiating Open Access:
Ethical Positions and Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the authors interrogate the discursive terrain of the open access phenomenon to position the processual as well as the discourse communities that open access is inevitably enmeshed in. The essay explores the current climate of open access and investigates the ethical dilemmas that its subversive sibling of guerrilla open access foregrounds. Further, the essay also recommends a viable model that can be deployed by state players as an exemplar of academic socialism that is flexible, accommodative, and a true reflection of the open-access philosophy which also counters the development of otherwise illegal and 'pirate' models of open access.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate the contours of Open Access practices in academic publishing vis-à-vis its ethical dimensions. The essay positions Open Access not merely as a processual dimension of academic publishing, but as a significant discursive field that inaugurates a wide apparatus for serious academic deliberations. Central to our exploration here is the emergence of the discursive apparatus of civil liberty and its intersectional ethical axes--the State apparatuses, corporations, and Open Access as an episteme--as crucial vectors of Open Access publishing. While most discussions on Open Access concentrate on the financial, academic, and intellectual dimensions, our exploratory essay here draws crucial attention and immense scope in furthering research around civil liberties and ethical dimensions

in academic scholarship. We demonstrate how the engagement with the discourses that Open Access presents also opens up a field of potentially illuminating deliberations around academic scholarship, ethics, and civil liberties.

We study existing literature around Open Access and outline the significant discourses of ethics that manifest in these explorations. Potentially adding value to epistemologies of internet knowledge vis-à-vis ethics, this essay delineates the different philosophies, policies, and practices of Open Access to generate a network of interlinked social, political, economic, and cultural discourses that can potentially generate the currency of Open Access today. Drawing from the work of Willinsky and Alperin (2011) on academic ethics in the field of research and scholarship and through extrapolation of evaluative ethical models, Open Access practices are scrutinized to ascertain how 'ethical action' can enable a positive action within academic publishing. The essay also makes recommendations and charts directions for institutional and accreditation bodies, higher education institutions, and State actors in generating new knowledge ecologies disencumbered by regimes of monetization and instead, driven by a free flow of global systems of knowledge exchange for the developing countries.

We begin with an explication of the current Open Access policies. Emerging literature points to the presence of several different models of Open Access that are available. The inroads made by the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), spearheaded by Lund University, are reviewed to position countries and their contributions towards the proliferation of knowledge via Open Access (Sahoo et al., 2017).

METHOD

Beginning with a narrative review design, the essay here explores and highlights crucial concerns with the phenomenon of Open Access. Further, it applies the advocacy research paradigm to emphasize the emerging ethical dilemma and perspectives often not foregrounded in Open Access discourses. Following this, the essay provides a recommendation of an alternate model that is believed to bear fruition of the philosophy of Open Access. The existence of Open Access is scaffolded by mapping emerging discourses built around the prevailing philosophy, legislations, state and non-state actors, and other stakeholders. Similarly, acquiring knowledge about the Open Access phenomenon will not be possible without examining it from the stand points of the diverse ethical positions and perspectives. In this light, specifically, the essay is informed by social constructivism as its ontological stance and interpretivism as its epistemological stance.

TOWARDS AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF OPEN ACCESS

Open Access (OA) has been growing enormously as a significant movement within academic scholarship. One of the significant Open Access statements that has governed the Open Access phenomenon is the influential public statement of the Budapest Open Access Initiative in 2002. This statement prioritizes free availability of research literature on the public internet that provides users permission to read, download, distribute and copy, provided there is proper acknowledgment and citation (Suber, 2012. p7). Similarly, the Bethesda and Berlin statements also echo similar sentiments with qualifying that the copyright holder's consent for the distribution and download should be sought in advance (Suber, 2012. p8). Thereby, the removal of monetary and permission barriers is central to the Open Access philosophy.

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