-----Original Message-----
From: Matthew Cockerill]
Sent: 15 December 2006 3:50 AM
To: maps@pc.gov.au
Subject: Response to report: Public Support for Science and Innovation

Dear Sir,
I am writing to provide input from BioMed Central in response to your recent draft report:

Public Support for Science and Innovation
http://www.pc.gov.au/study/science/draftreport/index.html
The report identifies that "There is scope for the ARC and the NHMRC to play a more active role than they currently do in promoting access to the results of research they fund. They could require as a condition of funding that research papers, data and other information produced as a result of their funding are made publicly available such as in an 'open access'
repository."

The report is right to identify open access to the results of research as being of vital importance.
If research is funded, but is then not made available as widely as possible, some of the value of that research is being squandered. Open access as a standard policy can address this issue,

To date, actions in support of open access by Australian institutions and funders have tended to focus on the creation of institutional repositories, into which authors can 'self- archive' open access copies of the research that they have published (often in traditional, subscription-only journals). Houghton et al.'s recent study for DEST on the
issue of R&D effectiveness and open access emphasized the benefits of such open access repositories,

The progress that Australia is making towards implementing national policies requiring
the open access deposition of research results in digital repositories is admirable, but repositories are only part of the solution to the open access issue.
Institutional repositories and open
access journals are a highly effective combination and play complementary roles.

As long as journal publishers rely for their revenue on restricting access to the final version of articles, there are will be inherent limits to the extent of the open access that repositories can provide. Traditional publishers often only allow the author's version of the manuscript to be archived, not the final published version. Many publishers also do not allow articles to be made openly accessible in a repository until an embargo period has elapsed. While such limited repository-based access is a great step forwards, it is not a full solution to the access problem.

It is understandable that traditional publishers do not want to allow the final version of their articles to be made immediately available in repositories since if 100% of published articles were available and

findable via open access archives, it would clearly make little sense for libraries to pay subscription fees for access to that research.

This is supported by a recent survey of librarians views on repositories and serial cancellations:

http://www.publishingresearch.org.uk/prcweb/PRCWeb.nsf/homepages/Researc
h+Reports!OpenDocument

Repositories depend on journals to provide peer review, and to grant an authoritative stamp of quality to published research. The only problem is that subscription-based journals which depend on restricting access for their revenue have a clear conflict of interest with repositories. It is entirely feasible for journals to change their business model, however, and to move towards an open access publishing model in which they do not charge for access, but instead charg for the service of publication.

For example, the field of physics is sometimes cited as an example of how subscriptions and open access repositories can co-exist, but in fact, the physics community has become increasingly aware of the incongruity of paying to subscribe to journals when articles are generally accessed as preprints via arXiv. CERN is now leading the way in encouraging physics journals to move to an open access model that does not depend on limiting access to subscribers:

http://public.web.cern.ch/press/PressReleases/Releases2006/PR16.06E.html

There is no reason to expect that open access publications will cost the research community any more, overall, than the cost paid currently for subscription journals. In fact increased competitiveness and transparency of pricing under the OA publishing model should bring costs down. But what is certain is that open access journals can deliver vastly more access than subscription-only journals, and are a perfect complement to institutional repostitories. Every article that is published in an open access journal can be fed automatically and immediately into the relevant institutional repository in its official, final form.

Thus, open access repositories and open access journals are best seen not as competing alternatives but as two sides of the open access coin, both equally important. For this reason, it makes sense that at the same time as setting up institutional repositories, Australian research institutions and funders should follow the lead of Wellcome, the NIH, and RCUK, by ensuring that their researchers have funds available to them to allow them to publish in open access journals which charge a fee for publication, rather than forcing them to publish in journals with no fees but which are not fully open access.

The following comparison table
http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/authors/funderpolicies/
shows that around the world, most the funders that have policies supporting open access also explicitly
  allow their funding recipients to use funds to pay publication charges to publish in fully open access journals. The ARC and NHMRC in

Australia are currently two exceptions to this, but this could easily be addressed.

In short, the combination of institutional repositories with open access journals provides a viable, achievable, and sustainable way forwards towards a fully open access future. Both open access repositories and open access journals should be supported by funders and institutions that wish to bring about a rapid transition to full open access

Best regards,

Matthew Cockerill

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