

EDITORIAL: OPEN ACCESS JOURNALS AS A JUSTICE ISSUE

The journal communication process is critical to scientific and professional practice. If, indeed, “science can help” when it comes to addressing serious social concerns and supporting human rights, access to the best and most recent information is clearly important. Unfortunately, in recent years, the journal process has broken down in significant ways. According to Create Change (an effort sponsored by the Association of Research Libraries, the Association of College and Research Libraries, and the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resource Coalition [SPARC]):

- Worldwide journal prices continue to rise significantly faster than inflation and library budgets. In North America, for example, research libraries spent 227% more on journals in 2002 than in 1986, while the consumer price index increased 64%. In the UK, journal prices rose 158% between 1991 and 2001, compared to a 28% increase in inflation.
- These increases have led to continued journal cancellations, with fewer journals being purchased by libraries.
- Despite cuts in subscriptions, a few publishers continue to post large profits—up to 40% in some cases. Commercial journal publishers are expanding their market control through acquisitions, mergers, and the purchase of individual titles from learned and professional societies. Mergers typically result in significant increases in subscription prices.
- While a growing number of journals are now available online, this access often comes at an extra cost, further stretching library budgets. Many colleges and universities cannot provide this access for their faculty and students. (Create Change, 2003)

There are other important results of these trends. Create Change notes, “As libraries are forced to spend more on journals, they are able to spend less on books. Academic libraries in the UK purchase 19% fewer books per student today than they did 8 years ago due to high journal prices. In North America, research libraries are purchasing 5% fewer books in 2002 than in 1986, despite spending 62% more.” Not only does this reduce access to potentially significant works, it also makes it harder for authors to publish books, especially first-time authors.

Why does this matter? In a time of shrinking academic and library budgets, colleges and universities with the fewest financial resources, particularly in more economically stressed countries, also have access to the most limited intellectual resources. In many cases, these may be the colleges and universities with the most familiarity with critical issues, and scholars there may be in a position to contribute groundbreaking work to addressing those issues. Accelerating costs mean that

scholarly communication is reduced, and potentially crucial responses to important issues thereby delayed or lost with substantial collective costs, especially for the most vulnerable. For these reasons, in December 2003 the U.N. World Summit on the Information Society met in Geneva and approved a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action explicitly endorsing open access to scientific information and open access journals (Suber, 2004). Some private funders are also beginning to demand open access to findings of research they fund.

The corporate publishing system is unlikely to respond positively to such calls, because the contingency matrices within which corporate actors behave reinforce practices likely to maximize profits—which often requires that scientific information remains a scarce commodity. The larger corporate system, particularly through advertising dollars, has already attempted to limit scientific information in very significant ways, for example by attempting to block requirements that clinical trials with negative results be published. Universities and libraries, however, despite their extensive and increasing integration into the corporate for-profit system, have as their mission the generation, conservation and transformation (including transformation for application) of knowledge (cf. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2004). The evidence suggests that maximizing profits, and the generation and application of new knowledge to address human and social issues, often do not emerge from the same sets of interlocking publishing practices.

Create Change and its sponsors have identified a series of possible strategies for addressing these problems, particularly through expanding open access to scientific information, including through scientific and professional journals. Some of those steps can be taken by individual scholars (including shifts in how one handles copyright agreements), some by universities and libraries (including centralized repositories), and some by journal editors and editorial board members. (Full information can be accessed at www.createchange.org.) A number of these strategies are relevant to *Behavior and Social Issues* and its readers, and there are a number of ways that the science of behavior analysis can contribute to the open access movement.

Open Access

One major strategic direction is the encouragement of open access journals. An open access journal is one that anyone can access without cost. The often workable ideal is no-cost access; in some cases keeping costs low may be a necessary reasonable alternative, but any cost reduces access for some. SPARC and its affiliates are working to develop new business models and arrangements that can facilitate open access efforts. Open access supports the free distribution of knowledge, and the open access movement is accelerating (Suber, 2004). In some cases alternative open-access journals have been initiated by senior scholars in fields in which the core journals have become too expensive for many institutions. High-quality, peer-reviewed on-line journals, with their relatively smaller production and distribution costs, are becoming a major factor in many disciplines,

though in some fields additional steps need to be taken to increase visibility and acceptability.

On-line access by itself is not a total solution, however. On-line access through commercial publishers, as noted above, has in many cases increased costs, in part due to “bundling”—in which institutions must subscribe to a large number of journals to obtain the few they really need. On-line publication, while relatively low-cost, is not free, and some means of covering such costs as proofreading, typesetting, digital production, and marketing needs to be identified if a journal is to survive. (People need to know about a journal and have reading behavior potentiated in some way regardless of cost of access, so marketing remains important.) In some very well-funded areas, open access authors are now being required to contribute to publication out of grant funding. Covering the costs in less well-funded areas (including much of behavior analysis, particularly in the social and cultural areas) remains an only partially resolved issue. Print subscriptions from those who can afford them and who would like to maintain archival paper copies can be helpful as a first step, as could small grants from funding sources interested in maintaining open access.

Behavior and Social Issues is an open-access journal. All journal content for the last several years (with the exception of a small amount of reprinted material for which we do not own the copyright) is available online without cost at www.bfsr.org/BSIONLine.html. We also publish the hard-copy version for archival purposes, at prices that are below our costs (a hoped-for modest increase in numbers of subscriptions would resolve this deficit, currently covered by contributions from members of the editorial board). *Behavior and Social Issues* is also taking steps to increase access to information about content (we are now included in the PsycINFO database, and continue to work on listing in other indices and resource lists). The journal will also, as of this issue, be included in full text in the EBSCO online database to which many universities subscribe (this should increase visibility, but is not no-cost).

In addition, consistent with recommendations developed by Create Change, *Behavior and Social Issues* is no longer requiring transfer of copyright for articles published, but is rather using a non-exclusive license for publication. Our authors, who maintain copyright, can therefore also distribute their material in any other forms they may wish.

Cultural Practices Supporting Open Access

Create Change has developed a number of recommendations that behavior analysts would describe as shifts in cultural practices. A few of the suggested practices are briefly discussed here; for the full set, refer to www.createchange.org. Behavior analysis can contribute to this movement in several ways, including by analyzing the interlocking matrices of practices necessary to initiate and maintain practices consistent with open access in organizations and institutions. Many of the step supporting open access involve the construction of alternative equivalence relations (a similar analysis can be done using relational framing), and shifts in

rule-governed behavior. The critical equivalence to be constructed is, roughly, {open access scholarship | high value scholarship}. If scholars, and particularly senior scholars, follow some of the Create Change recommendations (e.g., by publishing in open access journals themselves; or modifying contracts signed with publishers to ensure the right to use one's own work in other ways, including posting on a public archive), this and related equivalence relations are likely to be strengthened, and the justice potential of open access realized.

Other supporting practices, some of which have been identified by Create Change, are also required to encourage open access publishing practices. One critical factor is the quality of open access journals; only if such journals actually are of high quality will the essential equivalence be constructed and maintained. There are many steps scholars can take to encourage quality, certainly including preferentially submitting one's own work to open access journals, but also reading and citing open access articles in one's own work, using open access articles in the classroom, volunteering to serve on editorial boards or review manuscripts for such journals, and placing a high priority on quality peer-reviewed electronic publications in promotion and funding discussions. For example, if young scholars observe that open access work is highly valued in promotion and tenure decisions and that senior scholars publish in such outlets, they are likely to adopt practices consistent with a strong open access system. Members of scientific and professional societies can advocate for and selectively reinforce actions within those societies that (a) support expansion of open access and reduction of costs for society publications, (b) explore alternatives to contracting or selling their publications to a commercial publisher, and (c) maintain reasonable prices and user-friendly access terms. Scholars can examine the pricing, copyright, and subscription licensing agreements of journals they contribute to as authors, reviewers, or editors, and advocate for changes. Scholars can also consider using their influence by refusing to review for expensive journals; declining to serve on editorial boards of such publications; supporting the library's cancellation of expensive, low-use titles; and encouraging colleagues to take many of the same steps.

All of these efforts are directed toward strengthening the equivalence between open access scholarship and quality scholarship, and strengthening rules like, "If I submit my work to a quality open access journal, it will contribute to availability of my research findings to those who need them most," and, "Supporting open access is one way I can ensure that I remain on the cutting edge of current scholarship." There are many ways that readers of *Behavior and Social Issues* can support and contribute to the open access movement, only a few of which have been discussed here. Simple first steps, however, would be to examine the Create Change website, initiate serious discussions of the issues with colleagues, librarians, and policymakers to whom you have access, and volunteer one's behavioral expertise to efforts in one's own organizations and institutions to increase the incidence and prevalence of practices consistent with a strong open access system. Contributions to *Behavior and Social Issues*, be they through submissions of quality work that you might otherwise submit elsewhere, citations

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of articles, willingness to review, financial support, or marketing efforts, are among local ways behavior analysts can act on this global issue. Open access is a strategy for addressing one of the most important external challenges currently facing the scientific and professional communities, and ultimately the communities-in-need that they serve, and is an area in which behavior analytic scientists and practitioners have much to contribute.

Mark A. Mattaini

Jane Addams College of Social Work-UIC

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