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Abstract: *This paper presents a critical re-consideration of the problems in achieving a greater embrace of the praxis of open access (OA) to research publications within the UK academy. It offers an ideological critique of the underlying subversion of scholarly communication by an industrialised publishing sector. It also considers the ideological and financial drivers that have caused the emergence of an open access to research publications movement. Through examining this developing open access paradigm, it problematises aspects of the UK academy's reluctance to engage. While examining academics' imperative to disseminate research, through exploring the legacy publication model, it proposes that that the higher education policy landscape must also be accounted for, when considering engagement barriers. Hence, the paper concludes that the conditioning of academics by a neoliberal policy-saturated environment likely contributes to their reticence to embrace the praxis.*

Keywords: publishing, resistance, culture, open-access, academics

Introduction

This paper presents a critical re-examination of the perceived obstacles operating within the UK's academic culture to engaging with open access (OA) dissemination praxis. Drawing on broader research, it seeks to problematise and challenge some of the orthodoxies operating within academic publishing discourse over the past two decades.

The production and dissemination of academic research through legacy publication vectors has, like many communicative forms, been subject to digital disruption (Weller, 2011). This disruption has been exacerbated by the economic impacts of the serials crisis and institutional funding austerity (Hess & Ostrom, 2007; Wyness, 2010). At the same time efforts to shift the academy to more open forms of research communication have been met with practical reluctance and ideological resistance (Suber, 2012; Owens, 2012). This is despite considerable infrastructure investment, promotional efforts and moves to mandate OA dissemination (Science and Technology Committee, 2004; RSP, 2013; RCUK, 2014). Additionally, notwithstanding the arguable '*self-evident*' societal good that OA represents (BOAI, 2002) and the reported global academic community's intellectual willingness to engage (Rowlands & Nicholas, 2006), collectively British academic culture has been perceived to have lagged behind comparable nations (Finch, 2012).

Consequently this paper challenges the orthodox questioning of '*why haven't UK academics engaged with OA more?*' (Johnson, 2015), arguing that it becomes conceptually flawed in the light of the UK's neoliberal policy environment.

This environment has seen the reframing of research praxis within a neo-Taylorised discourse, and has resulted in ontological tensions between a Nemanian scholarly ideal and the extant neoliberal managerialised Higher Education (HE) praxis (Newman, 2014; Saunston and Morrish, 2011). Thus this paper contends that the question of academic openness becomes reconstructed as '*how has OA managed to make any impact within a marketised sector?'* It is to consider this neoliberal influence that the paper first turns.

1. Neoliberalisation of Higher Education

> A university training is the great ordinary means to a great but ordinary end; it aims at raising the intellectual tone of society…It is the education which gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them and a force in urging them. (Newman, 2014, p.138)

Newman imagined the academy as a community of scholars engaging in critical thought and disinterested rationalised discourse, standing apart from society as one of civilisation's crowning jewels (Fillitz, 2000). Today, the modern research university has to juggle its role in creating workers for the developing knowledge economy and evolving itself to function within a neoliberal policy environment (Newfield, 2008). The traditional construct of a higher education is predicated on an ideology of social hope, that the next generation will become developed intellectually, socially, ethically and transformed into citizens who can readily engage in the betterment of a democratic society (Barnett, 2011; Williams, 2009). This lofty vision is an ideology which is perhaps less commonly embraced today than it was, with institutions more commonly configured in economic terms. For example, *Universities UK* states its vision of universities' roles as:

> ...an autonomous university sector in the United Kingdom that, through excellence in teaching, research, and knowledge exploitation, raises aspirations, has an international reputation for innovation, and contributes to the wider economy and society (UUK, 2013).

The Jarratt Report (1985) is usually cited as the instigating agency for this shift from Newmanian to neoliberally configured institutions. Although as Caffentizis and Federici (2007) argue, the university should represent much more than a glorified mechanised scholarly production-line creating educated worker drones and new knowledge. Drawing on Newman's (1982) construct of an ideal institution, universities are also vital sites of genuine ideological and intellectual struggle, where the broader debates of society are addressed or challenged.

In an era before the 1980s' waves of marketisation, academic, not financial priorities, were paramount in universities' operating philosophies (Foskett, 2011). However, as a consequence of the increasing neoliberal competition for resources and students, they have had to reposition themselves as "*simulacra of business*" (Saunston and Morrish, 2011), with all the managerialism apparatus of appraisal, evaluation, and quality audits that this entails. Additionally, modern universities not only serve the nation's economy, but have also become organisations increasingly seeking to emulate business practices over their own traditions (Harvie, 2006). Notably, institutions such as Warwick and University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) are often identified as harbingers of this movement (Barchiesi, 2009; De Angelis and Harvie, 2009). This neoliberalised environment also generates tensions within those disciplines, particularly the humanities and arts, which are not perceived as significantly contributing to the national economy (Preston, 2015). With its central role in academic praxis, it is unsurprising that scholarly publication is subject to these influences. Hence, before considering these recent impacts on academia, it is valuable to consider the historical rationale and functioning of research dissemination.

2. Academic Publishing Imperative

Since the 17th Century the academy has relied on the dissemination of research findings. For scholars this dissemination represents an essential aspect of their immaterial knowledge productive labour for a variety of reasons. They seek to propagate novel ideas and thought while engaging in peer discourse. Through participation in this discourse their work becomes subject to review by their peers, achieving a crucial measure of quality assurance. Functionally the accumulation of peer-prestige capital acquired through other scholars citing their publications, represents an essential career progression metric (Barassi, 2012; Fry et al, 2009). However, this particular metric aspect has arguably also evolved into a neo-Taylorist driver for the modern neoliberal HE institution (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004), especially since the introduction of national research assessment exercises (Shaw 2013). It is not simply 'publish or perish', but rather 'publish high-quality, world class research or perish'. For academics, direct financial rewards remain only a minor publication incentive, with only a handful of particularly high-profile academics receiving any such recompense.

Publishers though, have long controlled the essential apparatus and vectors of distribution, as well as demanding exclusive economic intellectual property rights over published work. This places them into an unequalled Gramscian hegemonic dominant position (Jones, 2006) over the global HE research landscape. Consequently, and especially during the 20th Century, this key facet of the HE environment became increasingly commodified, with toll-gate barriers erected to extract considerable revenues in return for permitting access (Lilley, 2012; Suber, 2012). Thus, as academics labour to produce novel research, they are situated in a subservient and arguably exploited power-relation as knowledge producers and consumers within the publishing domain.

Nevertheless this traditional, legacy publication system was constructed as a pre-internet *rivalrous* necessity, in that the physical collation, reproduction, and dissemination of journals and books required an infrastructure far outstretching that possessed by most institutions or learned societies (Weller, 2011). Understandably this function became increasingly centralised within what became a commercial academic publication industry, an industrialisation representing for institutions and scholars a practical saving in time and effort. At the same time, this signified a gradual shift in the extant power-relations in publishing away from the academy, centralising them also within the publishing industry. This, perhaps, suggests why in the wake of the possibilities presented by digital, *non-rivalrous* distribution, that the new forms of dissemination represent attractive possibilities, because of the potential to reconfigure this power imbalance. However, in the late 20th Century other tensions became reified, challenging this publishing hegemony.

3. Legacy Publishing and the Serials Crisis

While the opportunities presented by digital dissemination represented one spur towards a more open form of academic dissemination, other drivers existed. Most notably the economic impetus of the *serials crisis* rose to particular prominence in the late 1990s, although some suggest it had begun to manifest a decade earlier (Dames, 2012). Conceptually, the serials crisis centres on the disproportionate and continuing escalation of journal subscription costs, which rose at three times the retail price index during the period 1986-2010 (Science and Technology Committee, 2013), significantly faster than library budgets could accommodate (Hess & Ostrom, 2007). As publishers enjoyed profit margins closer to those in the illegal narcotics trade or petrochemical industry (Economist, 2013; Harvie et al, 2014) and subscription costs outstripped the ability of even wealthy institutions, the legacy publication model's legitimacy was challenged (Owens, 2012).

The impacts were amplified by the domination of the academic publishing market by a small number of actors. This was achieved through acquisitions of smaller publishers, mergers such as the Wiley-Blackwell amalgamation (Spilka & Handley, 2006) and the continued outsourcing of learned society publication. In accordance with the prevailing neoliberal ideology (Harvey, 2005), this marketised publication sector should ideally ensure completive pricing for the academy, but this is not so. Within academic publication there is no like-for-like ability for academics to function as consumers and switch between journal brands. Simply put, publishing or reading for example the *Journal of Communication* is not functionally equivalent to doing the same in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, and thus access and subscriptions must be maintained. The crisis has been exacerbated by the illusion of abundance (Hess & Ostrom, 2007) and the isolation of academics from the true costs of publication. This isolation may in part be ascribed to the ability of academic libraries to successfully manage their budgets, trimming other expenditures. Moreover, the bundling of journal titles into package deals created a quantitative façade of plenty, although qualitatively questions as to the value of included titles should be highlighted. Additionally due to the nomenclature and associated discourse, the serial crisis was long perceived as a library concern rather than an academic one. Hence the academic community was positioned to be largely complacent and complicit with the legacy publication status quo.

However, in recent years the inability to access research publications began to cause greater problems for the academy. Learned societies found their operations threatened by the loss of revenue streams, as libraries increasingly cut niche titles to fund big package deals (Harington, 2014). This in turn represented a narrowing of publication destinations for scholars who work beyond the mainstream, particularly those outside the sciences. Furthermore, since the 1990s, libraries have continued to shift proportionally greater amounts of their operating capital to fund journal acquisitions. This has a deeper impact on the arts, humanities, and social science communities, as it has diminished the market for monographs. Since monograph publication is seen as an essential step on the career ladder for these scholars (Terras, 2014), and as publishers lose the incentive to commission them, early career researchers risk particular disenfranchisement from the academy and career progression.

Finally, the government's push to increase the proportion of secondary education school leavers who attend university, has resulted in over 40% of UK 18-21 year olds attending higher education in the current decade (Wyness, 2010). Yet this educated public becomes cut-off from continued engagement with scholarly discourse upon graduation, negating the potential societal benefits from this enlarged educated class (Gatti, 2014). Furthermore, given that much research conducted in Britain funded by the Research Councils draws from public taxation, the publishing industry seemingly denies the general populace access to publically funded work. While some such as Beall (2015) argue that this access is not a public right, it still remains a matter of concern for some (Gatti, 2014; Suber, 2012).

4. Challenges, Opportunities, and Benefits

> An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. (BOAI, 2002)

It is therefore unsurprising that efforts would be expended to rectify this situation, and this was given form in challenging the publication status quo, seeking to bypass rent-control mechanisms and restrictive reader barriers through enabling OA to academic knowledge (Suber, 2012). Through taking advantage of emerging Internet based platforms and channels, it has become possible for scholars to make their work openly available to all, not only those able to afford the rental charges. OA arguably also represents a key component in the creation of a scholarly information commons, and presents a challenge to the publishing industries' property-based hegemony over academic information exchange (Hess & Ostrom, 2007; Eve, 2014a). The potential liberation of research publications from their control seems a globally attractive proposition. Yet this had not spread within the UK with the anticipated rapidity or evenness (Finch, 2012), despite significant governmental infrastructure resourcing for over a decade (Science and Technology Committee, 2004 and 2013).

Prior to the availability of the World Wide Web, OA was not easily achievable on a global scale. While some academic communities, notably the sciences, made use of electronic means to exchange papers, access was generally restricted to people within particular institutions or research communities. Today, while digital distribution has removed the physical and technological barriers, there still remain many legal, economic, practical, and cultural barriers to achieving wide-scale access. It must be acknowledged that OA represents a broad spectrum of concepts, including *open education*, *data* and *science* and even *access to knowledge*. While conceptual overlaps exist, there are considerable differences between the specific policies, praxis, and personalities within each area. For reasons of clarity, this paper focuses solely on OA to research publications, defined as material that is "digital, online, free of charge, and most copyright and licensing restrictions" (Suber, 2012, p. 4). Crucially, OA does not circumvent peer review while removing most access and usage barriers. Should this approach become a normative part of academic research praxis, it is possible to speculate that in the longer term it could engender a greater ethos of openness across the academy's operations.

Conceptually OA represents an unqualified public good with its offer of ungated access to knowledge, but it also confers benefits to the researching academic community. The increased visibility stemming from OA publications has been equated to increased citations, and hence prestige capital, on numerous occasions, notably by Harnad & Brody (2004). It is reasonable to assume this is at the expense of citation levels for non-OA publications. Studies have also indicated that the sooner post-publication a work is made OA, the greater the impact it can achieve, leaving many to call for publisher policies to allow openness at the point of publication (Suber, 2012). However, as OA becomes a normative act it is reasonable to assume that this particular benefit will be reduced.

For libraries a longer term advantage is an anticipated reduction in the levels of journal subscription expenditure (Houghton & Swan, 2013; SPARC Europe, 2014). This benefit has yet to be realised, although limited overtures towards reducing subscription charges in return for article processing charge (APC) payments have recently been made (Research Information, 2014). The potential exists for the business community to also benefit, with many relying on developing academic intellectual outputs to bring novel products or services to market. Sequestering academic research behind toll-gates places it beyond the ability of many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to purchase. As a result they face a loss of profitability as efforts are expended duplicating research already conducted (Parsons, et al., 2011).

One final potential benefit is the widening of participation in and awareness of research beyond the academy (Fry *et al*., 2009). Societal benefits are however a contentious issue. Although a shift to a mass market HE means an increasingly university-educated populace, the strength of this ‘public good’ rationale is challenged in some quarters (Gatti, 2014).

5. Routes, Rights and Requirements

While OA may seem ideologically coherent to some observers, this is perhaps a reductionist view as different varieties exist. The two most recognisable routes are commonly differentiated as *gold* or *green* OA. While green has a longer history, gold is increasingly seen as the more desirable and sustainable form within the UK (Finch, 2012; Science and Technology Committee, 2013; RCUK, 2014). Gold ‘OA publication’, offers an alternative to legacy publication processes, references a practice whereby the final published version of a work is made accessible to all at the point of publication. While some larger commercial publishers levy APCs of around £2,000 (Finch, 2012), they are in the minority. Many purely OA titles, often run by university presses or disciplinary collectives, waive such charges, satisfying their operating costs through other routes (Eve, 2014b). Under a gold system, authors additionally benefit from a greater retention of their publication rights, although this varies between publishers. Gold has been criticised as too broad a notion, and one that is perceived significantly differently within the OA discourse. For example, a common misconception is grouping hybrid and pure OA journal titles together under the gold banner, since functional and economic dissimilarities exist between them (Shieber, 2013). Fuchs and Sandoval (2013) suggest that the term *diamond OA* should be introduced to differentiate forms of gold that do not embrace the APC pay-to publish model, citing academic-run journals titles such as *tripleC*, *Ephemera* or the *Open Library of Humanities.* This would reserve gold to refer solely to titles employing APC fees. However, the term has yet to secure a strong resonance within publishing discourse.

The second route, known as *green OA* 'self-archiving', is the practice of academics or their surrogates, placing a version of their publications online via institutional or community websites (*repositories*). Green operates alongside legacy publishing, with the Physics *arXiv*[1] service often cited as its progenitor. The praxis of green OA has rested for years on the assumption that the author's final submitted article while intellectually functionally equivalent to the published entity is legally disparate, allowing its open dissemination. Despite over two decades of praxis, and the *Harnad-Oppenheim* solution supporting this interpretation (Oppenheim, 2014), some publishing industry figures continue to question its legitimacy. However, the lack of any significant legal action has underscored green's legitimacy, or at least anunwillingness from publishers to directly antagonise academics (Holcombe, 2013).

Functionally, OA also possess a level of granularity related to the permissible degrees of user rights, where the terms *gratis* or *libre* are employed (Suber, 2012). Gratis items are shorn of barriers of price, but any reuse still requires permission from rights' holders. Libre items also have the price barriers removed, but additionally are free of most copyright and licencing restrictions. Thus there are many degrees of libre OA, depending on the level and types of permitted rights. In part because of these greater freedoms and because it represents the further sundering of the links between research literature and proprietorial capitalist control, libre remains the OA movement's aspirational goal (Swan, 2012).

Policy has played a significant part in the evolution of OA within the UK, notably the role of *mandates* requiring academics to comply with ideas of openness. The introduction of mandates by funders has been espoused as potentially stimulating academics towards greater adoption of OA. *Institutional mandates* are policies variously enacted and enforced within individual universities, slowly growing in number (ROARMAP, 2014), although they continue to be regarded as enforced insufficiently to compel academics to engage with OA (Peekhaus, 2012). Research funders also make use of mandates, increasingly following the Finch (2012) report. These *funder mandates* have a greater impact that both expresses a policy position, yet also defines clear publication expectations to be met by grant holders. In the wake of Finch's recommendation that all UK research should be available through OA (Hall, 2012) many major UK funders introduced requirements (RCUK, 2014; HEFCE, 2014), necessitating the open dissemination of work, arguably reducing the publication destination choices for academics. Publishers are also affected, as increasing numbers of mandates pressure them to revise their licence agreement terms to permit green self-archiving or make gold routes available – potentially risking a downturn in UK academics publishing in their titles. Given the UK's unilateral move towards a gold OA centric policy (Houghton & Swan, 2013), against a more hybrid green/gold approach in the rest of the world, this remains a problematic area.

OA's emergence can also be considered part of broader radical shifts in knowledge labour practice such as peer production, or the Access to Knowledge and Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) movements. These more socialised economic models (Benkler, 2006; Restakis, 2015), like OA, are impacting business and government practices (Moore & Karatzogianni, 2009). In common with the OA moment, these shifts largely originated autonomously within their respective practitioner communities, evolving community norms and arguably forming discrete cultures with disparate hierarchical contributor niches. But as Moore and Taylor (2009) discuss, the degree to which these have successfully realigned society's economic identities and regimes on the macroscale remains questionable. Yet even the most radical of these community members remain situated within capital's domain. An alternative social economy does exist, that opposes the neoliberal free market, driven by mutuality and reciprocity. However, as Restakis (2015) suggests, to operate it requires a pre-existing culture that has already normalised such mutually-beneficial ideological traits within society. If so, the peer production community's experiences suggest that an ideological radical, commons focussed form of OA faces a stiffer challenge to emerge successfully in the academy.

This relates to and validates Marx's construct of the persuasive power of capitalist domination, since knowledge has always been a social product, and one over which '*hegemonic battles over the power to rule and regulate'* will be contested (Vadén & Suoranta, 2009). This resonates within academic publishing with the rising number of mandates and funding for gold OA[2]. Rather than embracing the more radical ideas of creating a scholarly digital commons, their pragmatic formulation seems to propagate a continued capital domination over the realm. Thus, OA like other peer production activities risks becoming subverted.

6. Higher Education Praxis and Resistance

> Academic authors currently lack sufficient motivation to self–archive in institutional repositories. (Science and Technology Committee, 2004, p. 59)

With such pressures and opportunities it seems that the progression towards OA praxis would be inevitable. Yet this paper began by outlining two key points, that OA is not being holistically engaged with by UK academics, and that the evolving world of academic publication is situated within a neoliberal policy culture. It is understandable given the 2010-2015 coalition government's pro-business agenda, and the significant publisher representation on the Finch Committee (Finch, 2012), that policies driving the evolution of academic dissemination would be formed in a manner conducive to maintaining the publishing industry's economic well-being. This despite the understanding that a transition to a purely APC-based gold model will do little in the short-to-medium term to alleviate HE's costs, and will actually increase the fiscal pressure on universities during a transition period of uncertain length (Houghton and Swan, 2013).

Nevertheless, despite the orthodox presentation of OA as an inarguable public good, pockets of engagement (Johnson, 2015) and an espoused intellectual willingness to engage (Rowlands & Nicholas, 2006; Fry et al, 2009), its praxis remains far from being a normative function within the UK academy (Finch, 2012). This is despite extensive efforts by activists (RSP, 2013) to advocate to and engage with the community and the emergence of mandates. Perhaps, with the UK academy's shift over the past three decades away from liberal collegiality towards a marketised neoliberal operational ethos, it perhaps comes as little surprise that academics have not wholeheartedly embraced an open ideology. Where competition, individualism, and the quest for capital underlies every moment, perhaps we should celebrate that given these cultural obstacles that OA's progression has occurred at all.

While it may seem that the morphogenesis of OA is at the mercy of a governmentally driven neoliberal policy environment, it must be remembered that it is the academics themselves who remain at the centre of the web of possibilities. The orthodox obstacles to OA achieving a greater impact within the academy are generally ascribed to issues of labour, process, and opportunity (Fry et al., 2009; Finch, 2012). The community's apathy, antipathy, or anticipation for OA praxis may be influenced by actors within the academy, and those such as publishers, funders, and learned societies external to it (Johnson, 2015). Nevertheless, as immaterial knowledge labourers, academics have long controlled the means of production, quality assurance and, increasingly, through digital technologies the dissemination vectors too (Eve, 2014b). Hence it is not unreasonable to consider that the biggest obstacle to embracing OA praxis is not one of process or policy, but is reified through the cultural disposition of the academic community itself. Ultimately it is solely the academics whose responses will determine OA's long term success.

Conclusion

Prior work to overcome OA engagement problems usually situates solutions within an envelope of technological determinism, through software solutions, or through neo-Taylorist approaches compelling academics to achieve change (Harnad, 2014; Zhang, 2015). The epistemological and ontological roots of academic cultural inertia receive little consideration. Hence, the author has sought to problematise this environment through an ethnographically framed ideological critique of academic scholarly communication paradigms. Through this he seeks to better understand the basal causation for academy's disengagement. Early results suggest that awareness and comprehension of issues around OA dissemination remain generally low, although pockets of encouraging engagement are reported (Johnson, 2015). At the same time a shift towards a more pragmatic, less idealistic, OA movement has been exposed. This is perhaps not an unexpected consequence of the linking of research incomes with OA funder mandated requirements. This research will further contextualise the veracity of the commonly perceived barriers, via engaging with academics and other scholarly communication actors. It is hoped that this may also reveal some obfuscated cultural narratives existing within modern day academic publication praxis.

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Biography

Gareth J Johnson is a doctoral candidate within the School of Arts and Humanities, Nottingham Trent University; supervised by Dr Andreas Wittel. His research is concerned with developing an ethnographically framed ideological critique of cultural effects on emerging models of open academic scholarly communication within UK Higher Education. He is also examining the cycles of struggle and circuits of power extant in a scholarly dissemination environment encapsulated by a neoliberal marketised education sphere. He is the past Chair of the UK Council for Research

[1] The arXiv Physics Pre-Print Server, http://arxiv.org/

[2] 2012 announcement from the RCUK of the block grant to fund gold APCs for the UK HE sector http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/121108/

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