



**Open Access:  
What does it  
mean?**

**Discussion facilitated by  
David Worlock**

**David Worlock  
Chairman**

**Electronic  
Publishing  
Services Ltd**

**London & New  
York**

## UK House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology Enquiry on Scientific Publications

- Written evidence from 125 individuals and organisations
- Oral hearings have so far interviewed Blackwell, Wiley, Reed Elsevier, IOPP, OUP, PLoS, BioMed Central and Nature amongst others
- Further hearings for librarians, academics and UK government
- Report and findings likely for June

# How do we define Open Access publishing?

- Pay to publish, not pay to access
- Peer review, editorial process unchanged
- Copyright retained by author
- Acceptance payment made by author, or by university or research fund on his behalf

## **NOT**

- OAI
- Pre-print repositories

# 20 Questions in search of an Answer

1. 99% of researchers in the UK have “open” access already (Michael Mabe, to UK Parliamentary enquiry). In the developed world, does Open Access ever mean greater access?
2. Is Open Access a scholarly mass movement, or a sectarian enthusiasm by a small but vigorous theological interest?
3. Is copyright an issue in Open Access – wouldn't current practice work as well on a license as it does on an assignment?

4. Is Open Access inherently unfair, in that large research-based universities – Cambridge, Harvard, MIT – will pay inestimably more than their less research-orientated peers?
5. Is Open Access inherently unfair, in that journals with high submission (and their rejection) rates will be forced to charge accepted authors more than less prestigious journals?
6. Is Open Access inherently unfair, in that the 35% of commercial users of research articles will get a free ride?
7. How do you ensure, beyond partial schemes like HINARI and AGORA, that developing world researchers get access if you don't have Open Access?
8. Is Open Access more of a threat to the future of learned society publishing than it is to commercial publishing?

9. Are librarians in particular threatened by Open Access?

Does it mean a more pronounced drive towards individual, research project and departmental repositories?

10. Is the Open Access publishing model fatally flawed? If revenue comes only from accepted articles, will Open Access publishers have to create capital reserves to even out years of lower than normal acceptance?

11. Will the financial model pressure the Open Access publisher to publish more than strict peer review would suggest was appropriate?

12. Will Open Access move us from a profit system to a patronage system, and corrupt peer review in the process?

13. Will Open Access hasten the end of print publishing – but also disenfranchise those who cannot work online?
14. What interest would Open Access publishing have in archival maintenance and preservation?
15. Wouldn't it be fairer to charge submission fees as well as acceptance fees in the Open Access model?
16. If Open Access works, won't the major commercial publishers adopt it anyway? Is the mixed publishing economy inevitable?
17. Is Open Access just a distraction from the fundamental changes in scholarly communications (mixed media articles; evidential database publishing; sector portals) or does it arise because of them?

18. Most of the Open Access models at present lose money– OUP, PLoS, BioMed Central, IOPP – and need charitable or commercial support to survive. How can they move into profitability without sharply raising prices for accepted articles?
19. Will Open Access publishers be able to invest in new technologies, more complex article preparation etc?
20. Is the real centre of the market now searching and seconding Publishing (Scopus v. Web of Knowledge) not primary publishing at all?