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Scholarly Publishing & Open Access within CUNY: One Faculty Looks at Changing the Paradigm

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Author Abstract

The author reports on what brought him as a CUNY faculty member to the position that he holds on Open Access as a new paradigm for scholarly publication and dissemination of information, knowledge and creations. He relates his experiences in bringing this topic to the attention of his CUNY colleagues and his understanding of what may happen in the future at CUNY as a response to the open access model. He will also relate his current efforts related to the archiving of the academic creations of faculty and of governance materials.

He presents his views on tenure and promotion review related to open access and how this has been discussed by CUNY administrators and faculty and briefly touch on intellectual property issues related to open access.

On the one hand this presentation is one of the easiest I have ever made as I was directed to report on what brought me as a CUNY faculty member to the position that I now hold on Open Access as a new paradigm for scholarly publication and dissemination of information, knowledge and creations. I was invited to recount my experiences in bringing this topic to the attention of my CUNY colleagues. I am also to relate current efforts related to the archiving of the academic creations of faculty and of governance materials. That much is simple enough.

On the other hand it is one of the most difficult tasks I have ever attempted as am also directed to report on my understanding of what may happen in the future at CUNY as a response to the open access model. I am unaccustomed to receiving requests for such predictions and must at the outset issue all the standard

expressions of denial of any gift at clairvoyance or precognition. I am no better at foretelling than is anyone else. But I am foolish enough to offer some extrapolations based on my observations of the current forces in play.

So this brief presentation will have three distinct parts:

Past Activities

Present Activities

Future Predictions-best guesses

Past Activities

So how did I come to where I am at present on the matter of access to the intellectual achievements of members of the academy?

I had in my life wondered from time to time what it would have been like to have lived at some other period of time when there was some major movement occurring or some school of thought developing. What would it have been like? Well a few years back I realized that this thing called the internet was nothing short of a major device for the transformation of more institutions than I or anyone else could possibly imagine. The scope of its growth strained the imagination and still does. I was not alive at the time that Guttenberg invented that printing press but I know the sort of impact it had on various social institutions. I thought that the creation of the internet was going to have similar consequences and I was alive for it and for better or worse I was not going to miss out on observing what it would bring.

It occurred to me that as the world wide web was a depository for information and a conduit for the transmission of information it must have a major impact on the institution of education and in particular on higher education. It came as no surprise at all to have learned that much of this most amazing development was the

result of scientists and mathematicians wanting to have more direct access to what they were thinking and doing.

Back long, long, ago in the year 2000 I began developing class sites and materials for presentation of instruction in an online mode. I figured that I would go with the new movement and be part of the new “Guttenberg” revolution. I spent scores of hours searching the web for what are now called “learning objects”. I discovered that there were institutions and individuals who were making books and articles available to the entire world on websites available with no cost. I immediately concluded that this was the future and I was now part of it.

It seemed to me that making the world’s knowledge available to the entire world without restrictions was the way to go to most rapidly improve on the intellectual capital of all humankind. I would be part of it and would not worry about how the various institutions would need to reform in order to take account of the revolution and to keep up with the inexorable movement of information into digital form and deposited in a manner permitting world wide access. The results of my labor over five years is available for anyone with internet access at:
<http://web.acc.qcc.cuny.edu/SocialSciences/ppecorino/default.htm>

I observed faculty placing class notes and articles and even books on websites of academic institutions and academic societies. I resolved to do the same. I cared not what others in the academy would think of what I was doing. I observed that there would be colleagues who would never fully comprehend the magnitude of the impact the new information technologies would be making on all social institutions, let alone the institution of education and the institution of the scholarly academy.

I had during the construction of my own learning objects on the web only some slight understanding about how those in the sciences were using the web. It would be a few years before I would come to learn of the revolt amongst scientists and mathematicians against the old order for scholarly publication and the movement that is sometimes called “Open Access”.

UFS Committee on Libraries and Information Technology

A few years ago I not only was placed on the UFS Committee on Libraries and Information Technology but was also made its chairperson. In short order I became aware of many of the problems being faced by our libraries including the ever mounting costs associated with the electronic database but also the alternative paradigm for publication that offered not simply the answer to the crushing costs for maintaining journals but also the manner in which the internet was altering the world of publishing.

In an effort to arrive at a number of ways in which the committee could be of assistance to the CUNY libraries the idea of promoting the adoption of the open access paradigm for scholarly publication became an obvious project. After doing some research on this the committee created a website to educate CUNY faculty and administration. George Thorsen of the QCC library staff assisted in this. We began to publicize its existence amongst members of the UFS in an effort at education that we hoped would lead to a UFS resolution adopting the new paradigm and recommending that faculty observe one of the world wide conventions or protocols. That site is still available at:

http://web.acc.qcc.cuny.edu/library/open_access/

The concept of Open Access had been endorsed by the Association of Research Libraries, Association of College and Research Libraries, and SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition. Within CUNY it had been endorsed by the Council of Chief Librarians as they adopted the position of the library associations.

I presented the concept to Senior Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, Allan Dobrin and to then Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Louise Mirrer. At the time there was no University Librarian to champion the cause and so I persisted. We represented the endorsement of the Council of Chief Librarians. The

committee sent recommendations for the incorporation of the adoption of the open access paradigm at least through the offering of self archiving to the Master Plan drafters through the process involving the UFS. I believe that due to the statement of the Chief Librarians there was language in the CUNY Master Plan (2004-2008) starting in its second draft that made reference in some fashion to the idea. What has survived into the current operative document (p.90) is the following:

Establishment of partnerships among academic and library faculty, IT officers and appropriate organizations such as the New York State Higher Education Initiative to establish regional archival repositories;

UFS Committee on Libraries and Information Technology was less successful in getting the UFS itself to endorse the proposal to encourage CUNY Faculty to follow the Budapest Open Access Initiative. There was a direct attempt that resulting in the measure being tabled. The committee sponsored the appearance of Dr. Martin Blume of the American Physical Society and editor-in-chief of their various journals, to present his ideas on open access to the UFS in the Spring of 2004. The UFS was not willing to move to adopt the resolution. Some senators expressed fears of the end of printed materials and their concern for the loss of the aesthetic of holding a book.

As we had the endorsement of CUNY in the Master Plan rather than persist in an attempt to secure the UFS endorsement the focus of the committee turned to the work of educating CUNY faculty as to the emergence of the new paradigm for scholarly publications and the long term positive impact of its adoption by the world's faculty for CUNY and CUNY faculty.

The committee began to discuss the support and sponsorship of a CUNY-wide and city-wide conference on Open Access in the Fall of 2004. We then learned of this LACUNY conference and were very pleased.

Present Activities

I am engaged in several efforts at the current time related to the archiving of the academic creations of faculty and of governance materials. One is related to the Open Access paradigm and as current chairperson of the CUNY University Faculty Senate Committee on Libraries and Information Technologies I am still observing the progress of the University towards the creation of a mechanism for the self-archiving of faculty scholarship and research and publications. The committee will continue to invite the CUNY University Librarian Curtis Kendrick, to appraise it of progress on implementing the item in the CUNY Master Plan. Reports will be made on this matter as needs be by the Committee to the UFS.

I am also involved with an effort to obtain the support of the university for the archiving of other faculty creations and for the archiving of materials related to governance. The development of such a repository or archive is needed to meet the research needs of future generations. It is yet unknown to us and unknowable what the future will hold of interest and of importance. We can be confident that there will be something rather than nothing to interest future scholars and so it behooves us now to act on our best judgments to place materials in a manner that secures them for and makes them available to the future. The library of Congress has received support from the Congress to set a standard for digital archiving. Several major universities are participating in that project. In CUNY we are asking for digital archiving of that which we as faculty think is needed to be preserved.

This effort has thus far reached the point where it has been recommended to the University Faculty Senate's Executive Committee that there be either an action by the UFS itself asking for the University to provide for the digital archiving of governance materials at the levels of the local campuses and with the UFS along with the archiving of the academic materials related to the instructional program of the university or that the request be taken directly to the Chancellery by the UFS EC. The last I have been informed the latter course is being pursued. I and our committee will monitor this item and we will keep urging that it move forward until CUNY provides some form of archiving of that which we do and which we think of as worth preserving for future references.

Future Predictions-best guesses

What is my current understanding of what may happen in the future at CUNY as a response to the open access model? This is my first question requiring the foolhardy abandon of what evidence will support to extend beyond that into a mix of reasonable extrapolation and wishful thinking.

Open Access to scholarly publications and self archiving will be a project under Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Selma Botman. I do not know as yet what her position is on this but as it is in the Master Plan I do expect that CUNY will partner with SUNY and others in a state wide program to provide for self archiving. Why? The answer is as simple as it is obvious. It is in its interest for CUNY to support the new paradigm as it will eventually lead to a lessening and then an elimination of the need to subscribe to professional journals made available for a toll and to the profit and advantage of large multinational corporations.

For some time CUNY has not been known for being an innovator of anything significant to higher education or to research and scholarship and it is a good distance yet from making marks that might suggest its candidacy for a position in the forefront or on the edge of any academic development. As major universities adopt mechanisms that support the movement to the new open access paradigm CUNY and SUNY will take due note and move to create some similar device to encourage and assist faculty in their embrace of the new mode for publication and dissemination of their work. I expect some partnership or even a state-wide consortium that will create and maintain the archives.

I fully expect that CUNY administration will be way ahead of CUNY faculty with regard to open access paradigm. It will take a long term concerted effort at educating faculty to bring about a significant number of faculty adopting the new paradigm by observing the Budapest Open Access Initiative or some other protocol. The recognition of such a protocol and of the values of self archiving in the tenure and promotion review process would greatly support the adoption and adaptation of such protocols.

So it is that I have been tasked to offer some views on tenure and promotion review related to open access and how this has been discussed by CUNY administrators and faculty and briefly touch on intellectual property issues related to open access.

As the forms of publication change so too will their recognition by the academy undergo some change. In the tenure and promotion process there has always been scrutiny of the manner of scholarship and publication and the quality of the publication and the peer review process. There will continue to be refereed journals. They will be delivered in a new way but they will remain with us. The academy has need of the peer review process and so it will continue albeit in a slightly different form but essentially the same. The academy has need of the peer review process and so it will continue albeit in a slightly different form but essentially the same.

The same applies to books and to textbooks. It is highly likely that they will be delivered via the internet and that the clients served will have a variety of choices as to how they wish to view or possess their copies of the text. The process for having the quality of the content reviewed prior to official publication in any form will change from what it is now but there will be a critical review.

I do not see the large commercial publishers surviving. Nor do I see large printing companies and book binders. I do see university presses as flourishing and along with them custom printing and binding operations available in many locations from stationeries and office supply shops to internet cafes and bookstores and supermarkets. I see virtual (online) and actual physical bookstores allowing the selection of many more texts to be printed out in a variety of formats and made ready for the consumers “while you wait” or better yet while they peruse the nearly innumerable offerings of texts and the plethora of physical modes for their physical manifestations for the hand to hold and eye to behold. Paper type and size, fonts, colors, bindings will all be offered in more combinations than the average consumer would have time to consider.

The tenure and promotion process will note the existence of works that have been placed in archives and that exist as grey literature. Such works will be given less worth than those that have been made available in any form after a peer review

process by a source recognized within some academic or artistic profession. The equivalent of the criteria currently used for the appraisal of the quality of research and publication is being and will be developed and applied. I know of no efforts within CUNY to deal directly with this matter of operating during a period of paradigm change.

As for the Intellectual Property issues I think that there will be a new paradigm here as well. The notion of copyright was a non-issue before Guttenberg and it will undergo some fundamental rethinking and reorientation after the arrival of the internet and the world wide insistence upon the immediate unfettered access to the cumulative knowledge of the world community of researchers and scholars. I fully expect that authors will continue to be credited with being the originators of works but that they will no longer control in any way the dissemination of their works and creations.

As governments fund research and want the results of that research available to the public, in a more general sense the world-wide community funds research and scholarship and comes to depend upon it for a variety of benefits and that community, humankind, will expect access to human intellectual capital and will make available the means for the rapid dissemination of the investment of that capital. More significant will be the need to review the research and the scholarship and publications to insure that what is being made available is worth accessing.