# Open Access: how to benefit from it reasonably and how to make the own contribution in its development?

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## Abstract

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Nowadays it is a standard that academic libraries subscribe to several paid e-resources – to provide a high level of education and to give equal opportunity in access to knowledge. In other words - that is the next aspect of globalization with all its consequences: if an university does not have enough funds, users are on the lost position. However, do only expensive databases have exclusivity to be the best quality e-resources? Who decides about it?
The proposed paper aims at presenting how to integrate Open Access resources into the library's holdings and how to select the most valuable ones. Subject librarians as "the sieves of information" - responsible not only for choosing the pertinent resources, but also for gaining the balance between 'free' and 'paid'.
Another goal is to show how universities can contribute to the development of OA treasury. The vogue is currently to build digital repositories. However, copyright significantly limit the creators – if nothing changes in this domain, the repositories will be nothing but collections of national heritage produced with worthy intentions but not too useful in everyday life of libraries' users who need the most the contemporary manuals written by their lecturers and the access to academic dissertations. How to persuade academic teachers to publish in OA and how to organize effectively the electronic OA e-collection of thesis? These are the next tasks set before the librarians.

## Introduction

Nowadays it is a standard that academic libraries subscribe to several paid electronic resources – to provide a high level of education and to give equal opportunity in access to knowledge. Universities provide access to data bases containing abstracts, journals full texts collections, e-books and other materials necessary to support educational programme and scientific research.
The most of our time is spent on caring about technical aspects of subscription – purchasing, paying invoices, signing license agreement, providing remote access and promoting e-resources in the academic milieu. We are doing our best to inform and train library users, to show them how the resources that we bought can be useful in their education.
Unfortunately, all our efforts are mostly connected only with the commercial e-resources. It can seem logical – as we are paying for subscriptions and this is always one of the biggest amount from our libraries' budgets, we are obliged to inform the users as widely as possible about the content of these precious holdings.
Regrettably, regarding the electronic resources only from the angle of the commercial ones causes that we often forget about the richness of Open Access documents – available free of charge, from every place, representing all fields of sciences, published in many languages.

In the effect we leave our users totally alone in this "Web chaos" where the materials of very high quality are interspersed with the low quality ones.

There were many publications attempting to describe the modern library users – generally, following Douglas Rushkoff - we can name them 'screenagers' or 'digital native' (both terms used in Rushkoff's books from 1996 and 2006). This is a new breed of students entering educational establishments. They are techno-savvy young people, reared on television, computers, Internet, mobile phones, MP3 and MP4. They have grown up with digital technology, using it since infancy.

This type of users wants to receive needed information as quickly and easy as possible. They will not spend hours on paging through many bibliographies or directories – if they do not find the information in their library (more precisely - at the library web page – they do not have to visit library building to be its user), they will at once search in sources like Google, Yahoo or Wikipedia, treating them as a scientifically valuable base for their research.

Thus, librarians must play a role of "the sieves of information". This is a serious task for us if we want to provide a high level of education at our universities. We must be the Open Access advocates who will choose the most valuable resources and present them to our users. We must convince users' opinion that not only the expensive databases are valuable and show that Open Access gives a wide range of opportunities, too.

In my paper I will focus on the concrete, practical aspects of use of Open Access resources in the libraries. The article is divided into two parts - in the first part I will attempt to give the ideas how OA can be embedded in our work. The second part will show how we can make our own contribution in its development.

**Part 1. How to profit and promote Open Access resources?**

Librarian does not have to be an all-rounder – he is not obliged to know everything. But she/he must know where to search for information. It is not possible for one person to grasp all Open Access resources (which increase quickly), but sometimes it is enough to follow the services dedicated to Open Access, for example by subscribing to RSS feeds. Below I present two interesting initiatives which agglomerate OA materials.

1. **eIFL.net (Electronic Information for Libraries)**. An independent foundation began in 1999 that negotiates and advocates for the wide availability of electronic resources by library users in transition and developing countries. A central part of eIFL.net mission is to assist in the building of national library consortia.

Last year eIFL.net started three new programs aiming at widening of sharing information and knowledge. These are: eIFL-IP (Advocacy for Acces to Knowledge: copyright and libraries), eIFL-FOSS (Advocacy for free and open source software) and, the most important from this paper's point of view, **eIFL-OA (Open Access Program)**.

eIFL-OA Program advocates for the best practices of Open Access as defined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative. Each country has its national eIFL-OA coordinator who is a liaison between the national consortium and eIFL.net. The OA Program offers training and advices on OA polices and practices and it is going to build a global network of open repositories and Open Access journals. The important goal is also to empower library professionals, scientists and scholars, educators and students to become OA advocates.

There are many interesting links and information on the eIFL-OA web page: obviously they are open for public, not only for OA Program members. It is worth subscribing to RSS (*Rich Site Summary*) feeds or newsletter. Every librarian from every country will find interesting information there. Moreover, the eIFL members are not only the European ones, so at once we can be very well informed about interesting Open Access initiatives in Asian or African countries – sometimes it is good to know what is happening on other continents for example to overcome old, unjust stereotypes saying about underdevelopment of some parts of our world.

Besides, use of RSS is very popular in internauts society. It eliminates the need of systematic browsing of single sites. RSS feeds readers collect news from subscribed sources and present them to user in one place.

Available at: http://www.eifl.net/cps/sections/services/eifl-oa



2. **Les Signtes de BnF (Bookmarks of the French National Library).** On its public web page FNL offers a service named "Les Signets de BnF". This is a selection of web sites, chosen by the Library staff, quality controlled and reviewed once for two months. It was created in 1998 and currently offers more than 7300 resources in over 1150 thematic categories and in several languages. Contributors are 120 persons from 13 Library departments coordinated by one central service coordinator.

About four topic are chosen yearly to the "Thèmes d'actualité" (Current topics) bookmark. They always refer to the current activities offered by the Research Library of FNL.

The resources are described bibliographically in Dublin Core (with 8 obligatory fields). Les Signets de BnF have their own interior search engine based on Google – this is the another example of 'digital natives' and 'screenagers' friendly tool.
Available at: http://signets.bnf.fr/

**Part 2. How to make the own contribution in development of Open Access?**

**Digital libraries**

Digitalization is the best method for exploring the most precious holdings from our collections. We can widely show our treasures to public. It is also the excellent way to multiply the number of users without a danger of damaging the publications. Building digital libraries and scientific repositories, we have a chance to participate in and develop the European (or even global) educational space.

The European Library (TEL) and Europeana are good examples of digitalization projects on national scale. But they are considering mostly the national libraries. For example, Polish National Digital Library – Polona, actively participates in TEL activities. But what solution can be applied for smaller libraries, very often storing great value historical documents? In Poland, we have been working on it for 10 years.

1. **dLibra** – the first Polish system for building digital libraries. Developed since 1999 by the Poznań Supercomputing and Networking Center. It is now the most popular software of this type in Poland, used by over 150 institutions to build regional and institutional digital libraries. It enables building professional repositories of digital documents.

The Polish phenomenon are regional digital libraries. Currently, there are 18 libraries of this type – this is the effect of the cooperation between libraries and other cultural institutions of given region. In a few cases this regional cooperation is even international: it crosses borders of Poland. It is the best example of the impact of Central and Eastern Europe history. The fact of 123 year period of the Partitions of Poland and twice anew demarcation of our country borders after the First and the Second World War caused the situation that in our libraries collections we have holdings originally coming from Russia, Germany or Czech.

The good examples of international cooperation are Silesian Digital Library, Lower Silesian Digital Library and Wroclaw Digital Library which have publications in German and Czech. The Silesian Digital Library has a collection "Czech Silesia", so the documents are mostly in Czech. The Lower Silesian Digital Library has a collection of Lvov manuscripts, so the interface in Ukrainian was created.
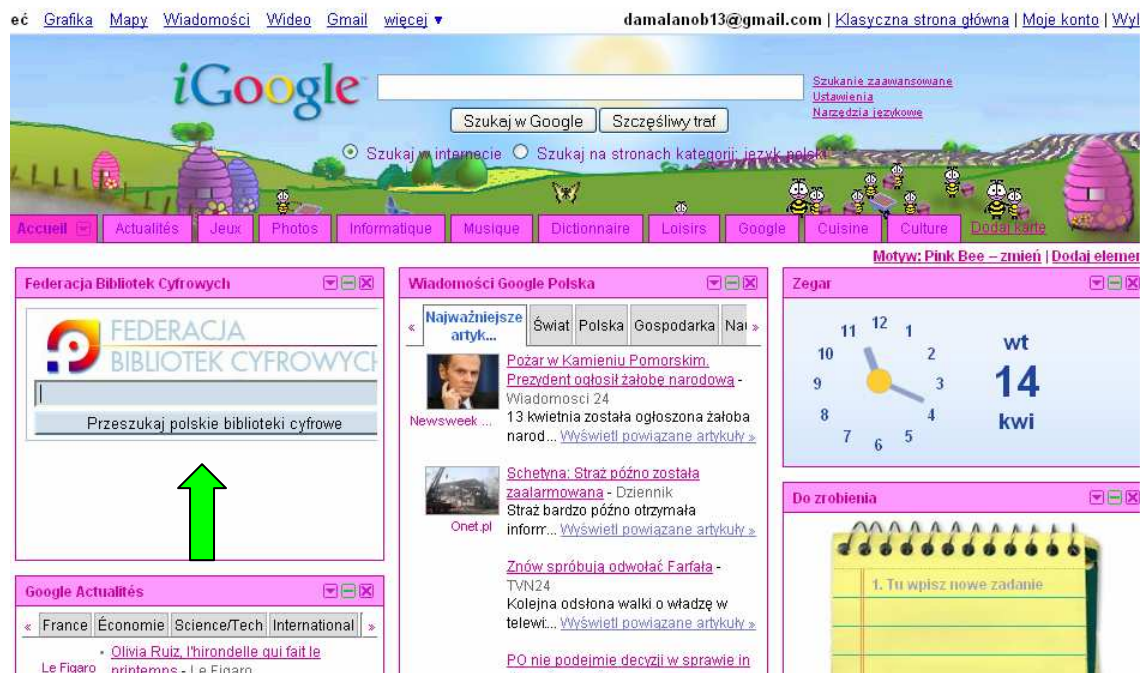
\* Interesting thing – the results of technical questionnaire held as a part of Europeana Local Project showed that dLibra software is probably the most popular publicly distributed software used to built digital libraries in Europe (among these digital libraries which want to join Europeana and filled in the questionnaire). But still the most common solutions are the systems developed for the purposes of particular libraries.

2. **PIONIER Network.** The next stage of building the network of digital libraries and repositories in Poland was Distributed Digital Library Platform in the PIONIER Network. It is a portal built to enhance the visibility and usage of the digital content from Polish digital libraries. The main function of the portal is a platform-level search engine browsing metadata from all digital libraries in the platform. When the end-user selects a link, the system redirects him to the owning digital library which presents appropriate digital object's web page.

Currently in the PIONIER network there are 18 regional and 19 institutional dLibra based digital libraries.
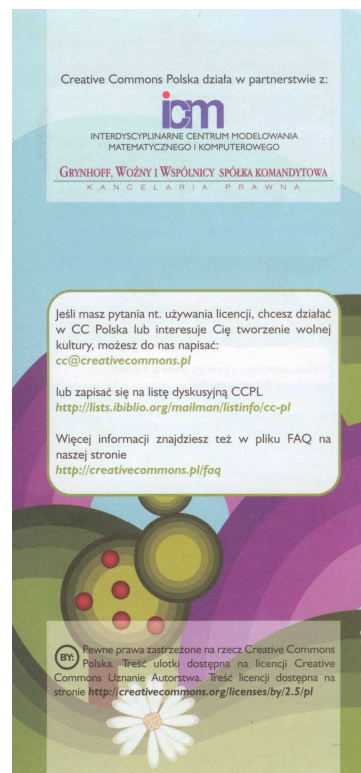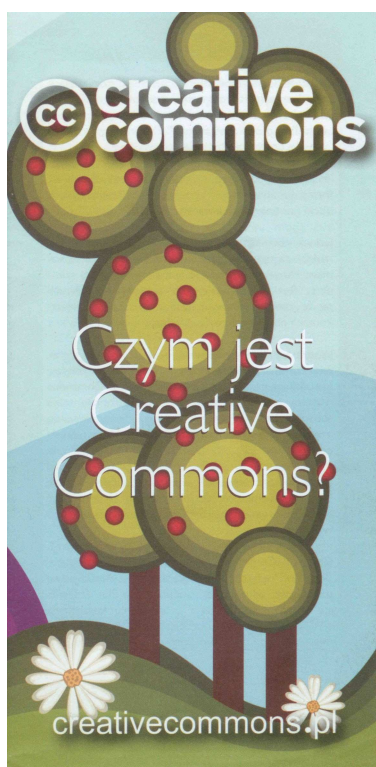
For those mentioned below 'digital natives' and 'screenagers', PIONIER portal offers a set of add-ons, like: search plug-ins for web browsers, search box which can be embedded on any web page or an iGoogle search widget.

## Repositories

Another current vogue is to build digital scientific repositories. However, copyright significantly limit the creators (i.e. mostly the universities and other academic centres) – if nothing changes in this domain the repositories will be nothing but collections of national heritage produced with worthy intentions but not too useful in everyday life of libraries' users. According to Polish copyright law, only works of authors dead at least 70 years ago can be freely and openly published (in the so-called 'public domain'). It causes the obvious difficulties in creating complete and up-to-date digital libraries and repositories. That is why the voluntary handing over an author's permission for presenting publications in the public domain will have a huge significance for future form of Polish Open Access holdings.

This is the next task set, among others, before the librarians. How to persuade academic teachers to publish in OA *pro publico bono* and how to effectively organize the electronic OA collection (e-library) of alumni's thesis?

International non-profit organization **Creative Commons** seems to be a solution for this restrictive copyright law. It offers several copyright licenses which allow creators to communicate which rights they reserve, and which rights they waive for the benefit of recipients or other creators. The project Creative Commons Polska is being well developed in the cooperation with the ICM Supercomputer Centre of University of Warsaw.

The ICM Supercomputer Centre holds also two other Polish Open Access initiatives.

1. **DIR (Domain of Internet Knowledge Repositories)** is a project of creation the first Polish scientific digital library which aims to facilitate and promote an access to scientific publications. Several types of documents: text, graphics and multimedia from all fields of science will be published. All publications will be available for free, according to Open Access idea. Also a full text collection of Polish scientific serials will be created as a part of DIR project.

Nowadays in Poland, there are two biggest barriers in digitalization and free circulation of scientific publications. The first is low edition for print versions. The older publications are not reissued too often while the current publications are edited in limited number of copies. That is why it is worth presenting these works in the Internet – what gives an access to them for everybody at any place. It is also an opportunity to disseminate scientific publications. The second is copyright what I mentioned above.
Available at: http://dir.icm.edu.pl/

domena internetowych repozytoriów wiedzy

Zasoby Polskie

**Biblioteka Wirtualna**

*System sieciowego udostępniania naukowych baz danych poprzez ICM*

Biblioteka Wirtualna Nauki

**Kolekcja matematyczno-fizyczna**

SŁOWNIK GEOGRAFICZNY KRÓLESTWA POLSKIEGO

Blog o Open Access
http://boa.icm.edu.pl

BazTech

Warsaw University Faculty of Biology
InterEDEN
**Baza roślin Ogrodu Botanicznego UW**

**Baza AGRO**

Biblioteka Wirtualna Nauki

Kolekcja Nauk Przyrodniczych

2. **Open Access Blog (BOA – Blog o Open Access).** It gives basic information about OA history and current initiatives in Poland and abroad. It also informs how to promote OA and provides many useful links. The blog is being published on Creative Commons Attribution (BY) license.

Available at: http://boa.icm.edu.pl/

3. **White Rose Research Online.** A shared, open access, multi-disciplinary repository for the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York (United Kingdom). The repository holds research papers which have been or are in the process of being published. It can be journal papers, conference papers or book chapters. Materials in WRRO are accessed from around the world, with most users finding them through Google and other search engines. Contributors (members of those three Universities) create an account themselves and upload their publications through a simple web form.

**Conclusions**

Open Access initiative let the less rich countries to develop. They have the possibility to profit from the newest scientific publications what would be economically impossible if they were forced to rely only on commercial resources.

Librarians support OA movement – it well illustrates an eternal strategy of library – 'access to knowledge for everybody free of charge'. But still a lot must be done to increase the awareness of Open Access value and its huge impact on development of world science.

A good idea for promotion the Open Access is the **Open Access Week. October 19-23, 2009.** The first international Open Access Week to broaden awareness and understanding of Open Access. A wide range of promotional materials has been created to help promote the event. They can be downloaded and customized with information about our organization. See: http://www.eifl.net/cps/sections/services/eifl-oa/openaccessweek.

There is also a blog dedicated to this event where much precious information can be found. Available at: http://www.openaccessweek.org/



Librarians can be excellent advocates of OA – so, let's not forget about Open Access Week in October and organize something in our environment.

In Poland, we are at the very beginning of the OA way. We do not have too many Open Access scientific journals, also the repositories are still under construction. The most developed are digital libraries which publish the bibliographic data in OAI format. But the content available there is constituted in majority of the materials from public domain.

However there are some initiatives propagating OA idea. The biggest ones were described in this paper. Also the Polish Librarians Association [PLA] tries to do a lot in this domain. It created a web platform EBIB which gathers very useful information about Polish and foreign Open Access initiatives as well as about Polish and foreign digital libraries. PLA edits also an electronic bulletin *Elektroniczna Biblioteka* (*EBIB*) [Available at: http://ebib.info/biuletyn/] published on Creative Commons Attribution (BY) license with English abstracts. In 2007 PLA organized a conference "Open Access. Internet in libraries".

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