

Open access in a developing country

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Abstract

Countries from all over the world celebrate the eighth birthday of Open Access (OA) Initiative. Open Access is a good way of science results dissemination and its more effective use in developing countries. Serbian OA Initiative is established and the Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition (KoBSON) and Centre for Evaluation in Education and Science (CEON/CEES) have a prominent role there. Numerous Serbian academic and cultural institutions accept OA publishing policy. For the first time, Commission for user services of Serbian Library Association organized OA Week events in two academic institutions during October 2009: at the Library of the School of Medicine (University of Belgrade) and at the Central Library (University of Novi Sad). Also, important activity to be mentioned is education of PhD students held by the information specialists from Department for Scientific Information (University Library in Belgrade). Topic "Open Access and Copyright" is obligatory module of the lectures' curriculum. Knowledge dissemination about OA movement and its activities to academic staff and other potential patrons is permanent part of the Department's work. On the Library website we publish recommended links for scientific information in OA regime, which are heavily used. Digital repository for dissertations in OA will be established in 2010.

Key words: Open Access, OA National Initiatives, Serbian citation index, user education.

Introduction

Official beginning of Open Access Initiative was at Budapest on a meeting organized by Open Society Institute (OSI) in December 2001, more than eight years ago. Well known words from the text of Budapest Open Access Initiative: "An old tradition and a new technology have converged to make possible an unprecedented public good. The old tradition is the willingness of scientists and scholars to publish the fruits of their research in scholarly journals without payment, for the sake of inquiry and knowledge. The new technology is the Internet. The public good they make possible is the world-wide electronic distribution of the peer-reviewed journal

literature and completely free and unrestricted access to it by all scientists, scholars, teachers, students, and other curious minds”. [1]

To our opinion, Open Access is not an alternative solution, especially not for “bad times”. On the contrary, Open Access is a logical way of scientific publishing, absolutely adequate and appropriate in era of information overload and “explosion of scientific everyday achievements”. Also, for researchers, lecturers, students in developing countries it could be a great opportunity to increase visibility of their own scientific and professional achievements and results without financial restriction on the first place. The most important fact is that via OA they have much wider access to highly ranked, peer- reviewed, latest information of science worldwide. Members from scientific community in developing countries could raise their own output on many different ways. For example, they could exchange opinions with colleagues abroad, follow and contact leading authorities and their teams, take participations in on-going projects etc. Actually, possibilities of Open Access could be broader than we can imagine at present, even unpredictable.

Main facts about Open access, stated in the article “Open Access Repositories: Maximizing and Measuring Research Impact through University and Research-Funder Open Access Self-Archiving Mandates” by Stevan Harnad, are: “No research institution can afford all the journals its researchers may need, so all articles are losing research impact (usage and citations) from would-be users whose institutions cannot afford paid access. Articles that are made “Open Access,” by self-archiving them on the web are cited twice as much, but only about 15 percent of articles are being spontaneously self-archived” [2]. Very impressive numbers in 2009 from the article by Odlyzko are the following: ”The approximately 25,000 peer-reviewed journals (and conference proceedings) that exist worldwide today publish about 2.5 million articles per year, across all disciplines, languages and nations. No university or research institution anywhere, not even the richest, can afford to subscribe to all or most of the journals that its researchers may need to use (Odlyzko 2006)”¹.

In the same article a brief and precise list of OA temporary and permanent advantages is listed:

1. Early advantage
2. Quality advantage
3. Usage advantage
4. Competitive advantage
5. Quality bias.

Introduction of OA in Serbia

Very important stakeholder for Open Access movement in Serbia is KoBSON - Consortium for Coordinated Acquisition (<http://kobson.nb.rs>). KoBSON is founded in 2001 by six main research libraries in the country – National Library of Serbia, Library of Matica srpska, University Library “Svetozar Markovic” University Library “Nikola Tesla” in Nis, University Library in Kragujevac and Library of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts. Academic libraries in Serbia are subscribed via KoBSON for over 35,000 electronic journals and 40,000 e-books. Ministry of Science finances access to all services available on KOBSON [3]. Among numerous activities of KoBSON, besides subscription management for the whole consortium,

¹ Odlyzko, A. (2006) The economic costs of toll access, in Jacobs, Neil, Eds. Open Access: Key Strategic, Technical and Economic Aspects. Chandos Publishing (Oxford) Limited.

are user education, information literacy promotion and promoting of the Open Access principles. In various kinds of user education - presentations, workshops, lectures for academic staff, researchers, students, mandatory part is OA promotion. On that way we try to change traditional attitudes and inform people about new approaches in contemporary science. Besides the resources that Consortium is paying for, the resources that are in open access are intensively promoted through the KoBSON's website and through websites of other academic institutions.

Two workshops in Belgrade concerning Open Access were organized by KoBSON. In November 2003 the opening lecture was presented by Melissa Hageman, followed by presentations concerning Serbian journals, their visibility and evaluation. In 2005 KoBSON organized a workshop concerning open access citation indexing. Lectures were given by Melissa Hagemann, Jean-Claude Guédon, Lilian van der Vaart, Tim Brody, Pero Sipka, Biljana Kosanovic, Dejan Pajic, etc. Both workshops were held at the National Library of Serbia and were very well attended, with more than 200 attendants each. The PDF of those lectures are permanently available on KoBSON's website at http://kobson.nb.rs/možda_vam_zatreba/open_access.121.html.

University Library "Svetozar Markovic" promotes open access resources on its website, through "recommended links". Librarians from the Department for Scientific Information and Education search regularly for quality open access resources on Internet, collect the links, write a short description of the available resources and put them on the list for the adequate subject group. Chosen links are few and highly selective for every subject group, because users do not like long lists. This part of our website is for years one of the most used.



Figure 1: Recommended links at the University Library's website

Important role in Open Access promotion has the Centre for Evaluation in Education and Science (CEON/CEES), independent non-commercial professional organization, partly financed through projects by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (<http://ceon.rs>). Main goals of CEON/CEES are evaluation and improvement of the science quality in Serbia, with wide spectrum of activities as: development of information systems for evaluation scientific results, promotion, archiving journal, producing journal bibliometric reports etc.²[4].

Formula of his work is very simple:
Visibility→Availability→Relevance→Quality→Impact [5].

Also, on CEON/CEES's home page it is possible to find its program:

- Maintaining national citation index
- Integration and harmonization of SSTI
- Monitoring and evaluation of locally published journals
- International promotion of the best quality national journals
- Open Access to scientific information [6]

Serbian citation index - SCIndex (<http://scindeks.nb.rs>) is one of the greatest achievements of the Centre for Evaluation in Education and Science. Actually, SCIndex as citation index database consist of articles from Serbian scientific journal and its very important feature is Open Access regime. In April 2010 SCIndex included 357 Serbian scientific journals with 106,363 articles and 35,187 of them are available in full text, which means that their publishers accepted Open Access (OA) policy. Journals from natural, medical and technical disciplines are represented from 2000 onwards, and social sciences, arts and humanities are represented from 1991 in SCIndex.

General opinion is that in Serbia exists hyper production of scientific journals, and Ministry of science is trying to impose measures to provoke transformation from quantity to quality. It seems that Serbian science is on the right way, since 19 journals are indexed in Web of Science (WoS) in 2010 and a few years ago there were only four journals on that list.

On CEON/Case's website there is a proclamation about OA:

“The purpose of this program is to promote Open Access (OA) in Serbia and within the region. The purpose is to make OA a dominant model in periodical and serial S&T publishing in the country.

OA is a publishing mode which provides freely and directly to all internet users direct and permanent access to scientific contents in digital form, most of all to the papers published in reviewed scientific journals.

CEON/CEES is a supporter, promoter, and practitioner of OA. We see OA as a democratic concept and the all-win economic model. It is especially in the best interest of small, less advanced research environments and countries. We are therefore the signers of international declarations on OA and co-organizer of events on OA held in Serbia. All databases and evaluation procedures developed by CEON are available under Open Access.” [7].

In July 2009 Bora Zivkovic, Internet manager of PLoS (Public Library of Science), gave two lectures at University library and library of NCRC (National Cancer Research Center). First was dedicated mostly to information specialists and second one to researchers. Generally, we got very precisely instructions about publishing in OA regime and much useful information about these organizations. particularly of course about PLoS, Some very important points about scientific publishing are very simple in PLoS, for example, duration of peer reviewed process is very short, a couple of days, certainly less of 1 month. Also, system of payment is simplified, so even researchers from developing country can afford themselves publishing in PLoS journals.

Especially, really great news for us was the information that journal PLOS One will get impact factor in 2009 in Web of Science, and six PLOS journals are on JCR list, and also within the leading group of journals for their subfield. That point is crucial, because PLoS main motto is: "Impact factor is dead!" and it seems that it will become true. We were informed about their strategy on evaluation scientific articles called "Article Level Metric". [7]

OA week in Serbia

All of above mentioned happenings were really great inspiration for members of Serbian Library Association to organize OA week in Serbia. In organization the above lectures and OA week the main role as person had Ana Ivkovic, senior information specialist from National Cancer Research Center. For the first time, OA week was celebrated in two academic institutions during October 2009: at the Library of the School of Medicine (University of Belgrade) and at the Central Library (University of Novi Sad). These two meetings were organized on voluntary basis for academic population. Lecturers were mostly from the Commission for user services of the Serbian Library Association, information specialists from different libraries (academic and public) and lecturers from hospital and professional companies. Precisely, in Belgrade OA week opened Professor Tanja Simic, Vice dean the Dean for Research at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Belgrade. The speakers were from the University Library, Belgrade municipal library, Belgrade University - Faculty of Medicine, and GNU Linux Center.³

On numerous websites in Serbia and abroad slide presentations, podcasts and pictures from OA week in Serbia are presented. The common idea, which connects so different speakers, is the logical concept of OA. Audience in both academic centers were very interested and well informed about Open Access so after official part, discussions were really dynamic. The last but not the least important thing is that on both academic centers in audience were scientists, researchers, lecturers and information specialists. Because of that, we are convinced that OA does and will provide direct and the most immediate impact on science in our country.

The screenshot shows the website www.openaccessweek.org. The main content area features an announcement titled "OA Week at the University of Belgrade in Serbia" by admin. The text states that the University of Belgrade will host an OA Week event at the Library of the School of Medicine on October 14th. Two URLs are provided: <http://www.med.bg.ac.yu/?init=news&nid=3551&sid=9999> and http://www.citaliste.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1445&Itemid=148. A section titled "Highlighted speakers:" lists several individuals with brief descriptions of their topics, such as "Zoran Zdravkovic: Informaciona dostupnost - Access to Information" and "Sanja Antonic: Citatni indeks i buducnost Otvorenog pristupa - Impact Factor and the future of Open Access".

The left sidebar contains a "NAVIGATION" menu with links for Home and About, a "PAGES" section with links for About OA week, About the OA movement, Downloadable resources - English, Downloadable resources - International, Event images, Event in a box, List of participants, Sample program tracks, and You can sign up, and a "TAGS" section with links for Bireme Competition, DOAJ, eIFL News, OAD, and OASIS Open Access Day Open.

The right sidebar includes a "SEARCH THIS SITE" bar, an "ORGANIZERS" section with logos for PLOS, SPARC, students for free culture, eIFL.net, OAD, OASIS, and SURF, and a "PARTNERS" section.

Figure 2: Announcement on famous website www.openaccess.org about OA week in Serbia

User education about OA

Promotion of OA was a subject in all presentations and lectures organized as a part of KoBSON educational and promotion activities. From 2008 onwards it is one of six modules of a special and obligatory course designed for postgraduate students supported by the Ministry of Science. It becomes more and more important, since open access resources are always available to the users, anywhere and anytime, and that is not the case with commercial databases and electronic resources.

The Scientific Information Department at the University Library in Belgrade educates its users by organizing various presentations, courses and workshops. We are aware of the fact that many users are not familiar with the term and OA activities. Adjustment of the program is always necessary in accordance with planned time length and participants' age. Our youngest users, high school graduates, got to know the basics of OA initiative thanks to these educational activities.

Some academic librarians are already familiar with this initiative's activities, but anyway we stress importance of the OA initiative at all workshops and courses we conduct as a part of Serbian Academic Library Association educational program. It is important to spread the idea of OA at their home universities and to educate students and academic staff. Many researchers and professors support OA and OA repositories. They help us during the presentations, sharing their experience with the other participants.

Serbian Citation Index is the most successful project of Open Access in Serbia. It is very important for our younger users, because they can easily reach the required literature for their studies. It is also useful for researchers, since they can be easily informed what their colleagues

publish in Serbian journals, what literature they cite and what are the bibliometric characteristics of Serbian journals.

Digital repositories in Serbia

In Serbia a project of digitization of national cultural heritage has started three years ago. One million scanned pages from the holdings of old and rare books, serials and documents from libraries in Serbia are already set on the site of the National Library of Serbia, and are posted in open access regime on its website [8]. University Library also joined the project. About 250 publications of old and rare books belonging to the protected national cultural legacy are located in University Library holdings, as well as thousands of manuscripts, old photographs, maps and materials of great cultural significance and value. The digitized materials are accessible through the University Library website [9].

University Library "Svetozar Markovic" is the coordinator of the regional TEMPUS project "New Library Services at Western Balkan Universities", which started in January 2010. A part of the project is the establishment of digital repositories with open access at all partner universities for theses and dissertations, teaching materials, e-publications by university professors and other digital material of academic interest.

Conclusion

Open access is strongly supported in academic library community in Serbia. It will take time to disseminate the idea and reach all potential and active authors and users, but we strongly believe that open access will prevail in the future.

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