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BY PETER SUBER

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Reviewed by Rob Harle

(Leonardo, 2012)

This is a very important book, which, I suggest, is a must read for all scholars and researchers who publish their own work or consult the peer-reviewed published work of others—in other words, virtually all academics. As Suber notes, catching the attention of overworked, underpaid academics is a difficult task. Understanding the basics of Open Access (OA) publishing is not really a career option anymore but a core requirement. The time taken to read this well written rather slim volume will repay the reader many times over.

Open Access is not to be confused with Open-Source software or open educational resources. If you do not know the difference between *green* OA and *gold* OA, or the difference between *gratis* OA and *libre* OA then it will definitely reward you to find out, this book explains these modes of OA publishing in clear detail.

Peter Suber is a Faculty Fellow at Harvard; Senior Researcher at the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition; and Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College. He is known as the *de facto* leader of the worldwide OA movement. The book is divided into 10 sections covering all aspects of OA including; copyright, economics, future scenarios, policies, funding agencies and so on.

One does not need a crystal ball to see that the current *laissez-faire* capitalist economic model is no longer globally sustainable. Recent global financial disasters and difficulties indicate that a new sustainable model is urgently required. OA and OS

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are part of that new model and the rapid expansion and acceptance of these movements and associated practical outcomes is an encouraging sign. Very few would expect a company not to make a profit but it is the size of the profit that is the contentious issue. It is difficult to justify the outrageous cost of commercial Office Software Suites when OS applications, such as Open Office, are totally free, equally as good and completely compatible!

If you doubt the relevance of this obscene profit making to academic publishing, Suber presents the sobering fact that the largest journal publisher earned higher profits than the world's largest oil company, *"In 2010, Elsevier's journal division had a profit margin of 35.7 percent while ExxonMobil had only 28.1 percent."* (p. 32)

If this extreme profiteering is not distasteful enough and damaging for libraries and public knowledge, it is even more so because all authors provide their research papers at no charge to the publisher and generally relinquish copyright as well! My partner is constantly lamenting the fact that I get no payment for my peer-review editorial work nor for my own published academic papers. As Suber notes this is the way of the academy and has been so for close on 350 years. Academics write for impact and the advancement of the public knowledge, not money.

Open Access as Suber explains throughout this book is really a win-win situation when analysed carefully and without being motivated by the agenda of greed driving publishing companies. This greed is holding back knowledge, reducing access by the smaller institutions to research findings and reducing journal subscription rates dramatically. Even Harvard and other top universities have had to clip their library budgets in recent years. With the Internet and electronic access one would expect the reverse to be true.

The quote below was included in an email I recently received from the *International Journal of Medicine and Medical Sciences* for a CFP. It illustrates Suber's thesis perfectly and indicates that the "writing is on the wall" so to speak for academic

publishers who refuse to accommodate OA in their business plans.

“IJMMS is an Open Access Journal. One key request of researchers across the world is unrestricted access to research publications. Open access gives a worldwide audience larger than that of any subscription-based journal and thus increases the visibility and impact of published works. It also enhances indexing, retrieval power and eliminates the need for permissions to reproduce and distribute content. IJMMS is fully committed to the Open Access Initiative and will provide free access to all articles as soon as they are published”.

It is interesting to consider that virtually everyone in society is hurt by unnecessary fiscal restriction to research papers and data. Advances in medicine may be held back because of lack of access, this affects those waiting for a cure for a disease as well as frustrating the researchers trying to find the cure. It is not only urgent high level research that suffers. So called, developing nations, have appallingly limited access to academic journals (and the Internet). A paper I recently peer-reviewed showed they have just as important and urgent cultural concerns as we do, in this case the destruction of their traditional buildings.

By insisting on (at minimum) *green* OA for your research papers and other published work the OA movement will gain more momentum and result in a better and more equitable world.

[Courtesy: Review first published in Leonardo Online Reviews August 2012]

Bio

Rob Harle is a writer, artist and academic reviewer. Writing work includes poetry, short fiction stories, academic essays and reviews of scholarly books and papers. His work is published in journals, anthologies, online reviews, books and he has two volumes of his own poetry published – *Scratches & Deeper Wounds* (1996) and *Mechanisms of Desire* (2012). Recent poetry has been published in *Rupkatha Journal*

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(Kolkata), Nimbin Good Times (Nimbin), Beyond The Rainbow (Nimbin), Poetic Connections Anthology (2013), Indo-Australian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry (2013) and Rhyme With Reason Anthology (2013), Asian Signature (2013), Building Bridges Poetry Anthology (2014). Voices across The Ocean Poetry Anthology 2014) His art practice currently involves digital-computer art both for the web and print. His giclée images have been exhibited widely. He is especially interested in promoting the inclusion of visual art in academic and scientific journals.

Formal studies include Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Architecture, Literature and Psychotherapy, his thesis concerned Freud's notion of the subconscious and its relationship with Surrealist poetry.

Rob's main concern is to explore and document the radical changes technology is bringing about. He has coined the term techno Metamorphosis to describe this.

He is currently a member of the: Leonardo Review Panel: Manuscript Reviewer for Leonardo Journal; Manuscript Reviewer for the Journal of Virtual World Research; Advising Editor for the Journal of Trans-technology Research; Advisory Editor for Phenomenal Literature (India); Member Editorial Board, Episteme Journal (Bharat College).

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