Meaning and Meandering in the Language of Open Access

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RESEARCH QUESTION

This research began as a simple inquiry into how important topics related to open access were defined across various stakeholder groups. Using a grounded theory approach, we coded definitions and aimed to answer these questions: Are there shared definitions across all groups examined? Do different groups have different topics/themes of emphasis? What patterns of words and concepts emerge as important both within and across stakeholder groups?

The most pervasive challenge in this process was the complexity vs. simplicity of language. We wondered: what is the relationship between complex information delivery and understanding of concepts?

Cognitive Load Theory suggests that the learning process can be impeded by too much or conflicting information, in effect preventing or shutting down the creation of new knowledge (Sweller 1988).

Introducing more and more choices for users can increase the impact of cognitive load. **Status Quo Bias** refers to the preference of individuals for the default when provided with multiple options. Status quo bias is a form of loss aversion, in that "the disadvantages of a change loom larger than its advantages" (Steinfeld 2016, p. 200).

CONCLUSIONS

From this inquiry, we propose that complexity and inconsistency in open access language may reinforce status quo bias and inhibit the advancement of open access publishing by providing uncertainty and perceived disadvantage in the form of "choice,"

- Cost shifting is overly complex, and often reinscribes unequitable and unsustainable economic models
- There are multiple pathways to language complexity - often through more and less specificity. Publishers tend towards more specificity of guidelines/policies/ procedures. Advocacy organizations are more inclusive of OA models and less precise in their language, leading to difficult interpretation. Libraries adapt language from both Publisher and Advocacy organizations.

METHODS

Selection of Organizations: All organizations selected provide a definition of "open access" on their website, and a sample of both publishers and "non-publishers," as well as for-profit and nonprofit organizations, was selected as evenly as possible. All subscription publishers, with the exception of Elsevier, are members of OASPA.

Selection of Text: 29 organizations' definitions of "open access" were gathered and text was gathered on eight general topics related to open access. Text associated with each topic was gathered from a sample of three web pages: a primary page where open access was defined and two pages linked to that page.

Coding of Text: Definitions were coded for the inclusion of ten concepts related to open access (creating what we are calling an "inclusivity factor"). Other than definitions, two topics were coded for this poster. These topics were coded thematically by the frequency of certain words, concepts, or framings mentioned within the text.

Inclusivity Factors in Definitions Coding:

Free Access	Permanent	Read
Reuse	Redistribute	Unrestricted
Remix	Immediate	Scholarly Literature
Online		

Thematic Frequency Coding:

Hybrid OA Cost of OA

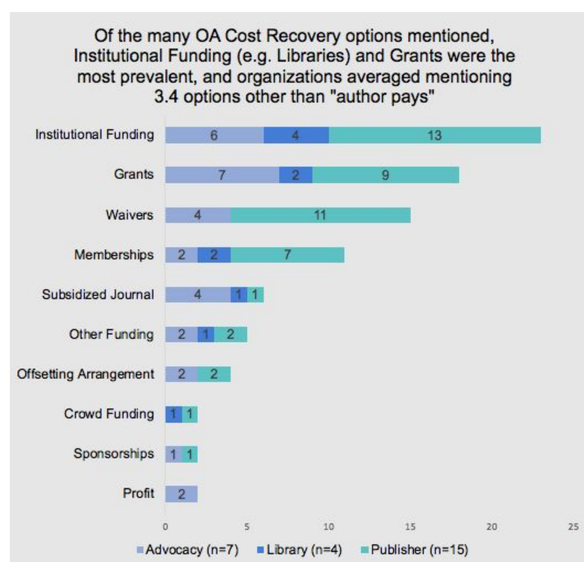
RESULTS: Hybrid and Cost

Hybrid and Cost Language:

With only a few exceptions, for-profit publishers lead in using "Choice" framing when providing information about OA cost and hybrid OA on their websites.

	Author Always Pays	Author Usually Pays	Author Sometimes Pays
Choice Language Used	Oxford UP Nature Wiley BMJ SAGE	Springer Cambridge UP Taylor & Francis Brill	Elsevier IOP Publishing DeGruyter Right to Research Coalition MIT Libraries OASIS
Choice Language Not Used	ProQuest Hindawi SHERPA PLoS One	Cornell Libraries ACRL	Harvard Libraries Peter Suber Overview BOAI KU Libraries Wikipedia

*Notably, one organization (SPARC) did not use "choice" language and makes no mention of authors paying fees.

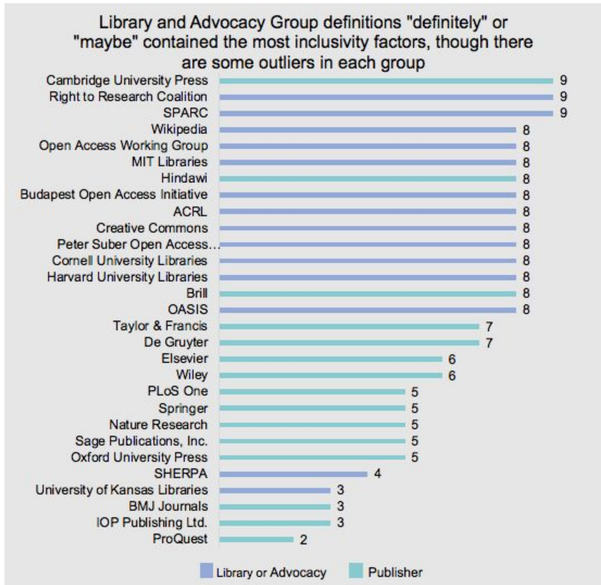


Three organizations (all Advocacy organizations) did not mention any alternative cost recovery options, even though Advocacy organizations mentioned more alternative cost recovery options (4.3) on average than did publishers (3.1) or libraries (2.7).

RESULTS: Inclusivity

Participate in our research by providing feedback about selected definitions with a quick survey!

bit.ly/OALanguage



However, definitions that "definitely" contained inclusivity factors were more evenly spread across Publishers and Library or Advocacy organizations, suggesting the presence of more flexible or "squishy" language amongst Library and Advocacy groups.

REFERENCES

1. **Steinfeld, Nili (2016). "I agree to the terms and conditions": (How) do users read privacy policies online? An eye-tracking experiment. *Computers in Human Behavior 55*(B), pp. 992-1000. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.09.038**
2. **Sweller, John. "Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning." Cognitive science 12.2 (1988): 257-285. doi: 10.1016/0364-0213(88)90023-7**

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