

Transitions in Scholarly Communications – a portfolio of research projects

The scholarly communications landscape has been transformed over the past few years, in the UK and across the world. Technological change has brought – and continues to bring – profound changes in the roles that researchers, funders, research institutions, publishers, aggregators, libraries and other intermediaries play in disseminating and providing access to quality-assured research outputs, in their goals and expectations, and in the services they provide and use. There are shared ambitions for significantly enhanced access, but no consensus on how best to achieve it.

Understanding the nature and implications of these changes, and the interrelationships between them, is thus of critical importance if we are to exploit the potential of new technologies and services to the full. The Research Information Network (RIN), the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), the Association of Learned and Professional Society Publishers (ALPSP), the Publishers Association (PA), the International Association of Scientific, Technical & Medical Publishers (STM), the Publishing Research Consortium (PRC), the British Library (BL), Research Libraries UK (RLUK), the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), SPARC Europe, Research Councils UK (RCUK), Universities UK (UUK), the Wellcome Trust and others have been working to this end. They are now seeking to establish a joint portfolio of work to underpin and facilitate transitions over the next few years.

The joint portfolio will focus initially on four projects, though more may follow:

- ? **Transitions to e-only publication**, which will investigate the barriers – from the perspectives of libraries, publishers and users – to moving to e-only publishing of scholarly journals, and ways in which those barriers might be overcome;
- ? **Gaps in access**, which will investigate the extent to which journal articles and other research outputs are available, or not, to different parts of the research and other communities which could make use of them; and to identify priorities in seeking to fill gaps in access, barriers to filling them, and actions that might be taken to that end;
- ? **Dynamics of improving access to research papers**, which will provide evidence for a better understanding of the dynamics of the transitions needed to reach a selection of plausible end-points, and the costs, benefits, opportunities and risks that this entails. Transition is understood to relate to changes in practice, business models and organisational culture within the relevant constituencies, and any new entrants, over defined timeframes. The end-points, to be defined in advance of the project, will be associated with four broad models: open access journals (gold OA); open access repositories (green OA); extensions to licensing; and transactional solutions. The project will be founded on a comparative description of the transitions that (i) are taking place now, and (ii) would need to take place over the next five years, in order to reach each of the selected end-points. There will also be an analysis of the drivers and mechanisms underlying these transitions, and associated costs and benefits (both cash and non-cash).
- ? **Futures for scholarly communications**, which will seek to develop a series of challenging scenarios for scholarly communications in ten years' time, bearing in mind current trends and underlying drivers in user cultures, needs and expectations; and likely – and more speculative - developments in technologies and services. Through the process of developing the scenarios we shall promote constructive dialogue between stakeholders, and seek to establish priorities for action.

The bodies listed above will work together on these projects with the aim of building a common understanding of the incentives, constraints, costs and benefits associated with the shared goals of widening access to research outputs; and of promoting the continuing development of a scholarly communications system that is sustainable, efficient and effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of the research community in the UK and globally.

Each body will also share information about other projects that they undertake related to those shared goals.

