TALKING ABOUT OPEN ACCESS
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One of the issues that have been vigorously debated in the academic community in recent years is Open Access (OA). Studies and reports on access or the lack of it, have been performed both on a national and international level, conferences and workshops have OA on the agenda, and there are discussions for and against in professional fora, some of them quite heated. Many parties have an interest in the area, from commercial publishers and scientific journals' editorial boards to funding organisations, research councils, research institutions and of course the individual researcher.

Knowledge Exchange is a partnership between Denmark's Electronic Research Library (DEFF), Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in the UK and SURFfoundation in the Netherlands. Through the years KE has worked to raise awareness of OA and has been contributing to the pile of reports and studies that exist in this area. During 2011 we decided to take a slightly different approach and present the good story peer to peer in order to relate the more fundamental discussion to daily life and reality – a reality that might look different depending on where you are in the food chain. This has resulted in the launching of the oastories.org website.

There are known examples of successes, including BioMed Central, the big English Open Access publisher and PLoS (Public Library of Science), a non-profit publisher and membership organization. What we in KE wanted was to focus on examples where OA has made a difference, a difference to the author, to the publisher and to the end user at the receiving end.

We hired a journalist to trace people, journals and organisations with a good story to tell. She followed hints and traces, often directed from one story to another, and we realised that at all levels success stories popped up, telling that publishing OA is a viable option.

One of stories is the story about First Monday, a 15-year old Open Access journal on the internet with a broad readership. The journal was launched in May 1996 by editor Edward Valauskas together with the Danish publisher Munksgaard, who was interested in experimenting with new ways to publish. The journal is now among the longest established and most respected peer-reviewed electronic journals on the Internet and read in 180 different countries.

The Tetris game can be used for more than entertainment. This is the result of research and findings of Professor Emily Holmes and her colleagues. Their research showed that the game can be used to treat flashbacks in patients suffering from severe trauma. The results were published in an Open Access journal and have won great interest among both specialists and laymen.

Yet another story concerns Professor Richard Clapp of the University of Boston, who in 2006 published an article in the Open Access journal Environmental Health on mortality among IBM employees. To make the article publicly available to everyone - other scientists, IBM employees, the industry and the general public - may seem obvious, but it took more than two years of struggle to get there. It included a boycott from the editorial board of an Elsevier journal, media awareness about rights and court cases. The article was published in the Open Access journal Environmental Health - one of the first Biomed Central journals where the editor-in-chief Philippe Grandjean from the University of Sothern Denmark gladly accepted it.

Over 30 stories are in the first batch and we get many inquiries from interested parties willing to tell their story. The site will be updated with stories on a regular basis and with the opportunity to comment on them. Also the site, in whole or in part, can be downloaded and reused in other contexts, as it is released under a Creative Common license. Read more stories on http://oastories.org and if you have one to share, please contact the Knowledge Exchange Office office@knowledge-exchange.info.

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