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Open Access Awareness and Perceptions in an Institutional Landscape

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine the awareness of open access among the academic staff of a research-oriented Spanish university, their use of the institutional repository and their satisfaction with its services. An anonymous survey of 37 questions was sent to all professors, researchers and doctoral students of the *University of Navarra*. A total of 352 responses (17%) were received. The responses showed statistically significant differences in opinions concerning open access journals and services created on top of the repository. Although there was general agreement on the need for open access, half the respondents adopted open access practices (which included the use of the institutional repository, and other pages and academic platforms). This percentage increased with the older respondents, who were also senior members of staff with tenure and positions of authority at the university. The decision to make publications accessible in open access depends on academic reward and on professional recognition. The services offered by the repository were generally perceived positively, with differences according to the age and subject area of the respondents. The awareness of those differences might help the university library to provide faculty with training and products that suit to their needs and habits.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the birth of the open access movement, one of its main objectives has been to free scientific output, mainly generated with public funds, from the economic barriers and copyright restrictions that prevent it from being freely accessible online. Universities and research centres that support and encourage open access to scholarly outputs have created institutional repositories to facilitate the dissemination, access, reuse and preservation of the work arising from the scientific and academic activity of their staff. In addition to fulfilling the functions of access, dissemination and preservation, repositories provide support services derived from their content and aimed at the academic and research community, such as usage statistics and metrics, generation of curricula vitae, links to social networks, and search engines. Knowledge of the services most demanded by researchers will allow repository managers to develop the most useful ones and foster the use of their repositories (Lynch, 2003). Only in this way will institutional repositories become an important channel in the cycle of scientific communication.

Many universities have adopted their own institutional open access policies. However, this is not sufficient to create change in the habits of researchers. It is important to determine their awareness and degree of

compliance, and to find ways of monitoring compliance. With these aims, several studies have investigated the attitudes and habits of agents involved in the generation and dissemination of knowledge with a view to analysing the advantages and difficulties arising from this paradigm shift towards open access by default.

Kim (2007) proposed an explanatory model of the factors that hinder or encourage the contribution of researchers to the institutional repository. The model classifies the motivations that influence researchers to participate in the institutional repository into four categories: costs, extrinsic and intrinsic benefits, contextual factors, and individual characteristics. The costs refer to obtaining copyright and the extra time and effort involved in archiving their publications in the repository. The extrinsic benefits that can be obtained are accessibility (a permanent URL of their document), visibility (wider dissemination and greater possibility of citation), confidence (social processes that ensure quality, based on the standards of a specific community: e.g. the peer review system), academic reward and professional recognition. The intrinsic benefit is altruism (a desire to share the benefit of their publications with others). The contextual factors are related to incentives for collaboration with the repository, the creation of a culture for change in the habits of researchers, and the quality of the repository. The same author (Kim, 2011) published the results of a survey conducted in 17 universities with repositories, including questions about self-archiving and awareness of the institutional repository, perceptions of self-archiving, and plans for self-archiving in the future. The results showed that only

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40% knew of the institutional repository, that professional category influenced participation in the repository, and that tenured professors were more likely to participate in the repository than tenure-track professors, who were under pressure to obtain a post. According to this study, the two reasons that most influenced self-archiving were preservation of the work and concern about violation of the copyright of published works.

Xia (2007) conducted a survey in seven repositories of Australia, Sweden and the UK in four areas of research: chemistry, physics, economics and sociology (in physics and economics there is a prior culture of depositing in subject repositories), with the aim of investigating whether self-archiving was more likely in some subjects than in others. The results showed that experience in depositing documents in subject repositories did not lead to an increase in the number of these documents in institutional repositories. However, it was found that mediated deposit and the existence of an institutional mandate of the university concerned influenced the depositing of documents. No differences between researchers from different disciplines were found.

The PEER (Publishing and the Ecology of European Research) project brought together the various actors in academic publication (editors, researchers, libraries, repositories and target users) to study the relationship between open access and scholarly communication. The study showed that, although there was a good general understanding and appreciation of the effectiveness of open access, there were clear differences between researchers from different disciplines in their understanding of depositing their publications in institutional repositories and their motivations for doing so (Creaser et al., 2010). Although two thirds of the respondents knew what open access was, their understanding of it differed according to the discipline. Researchers in medicine and life sciences associated open access with the gold road, whereas researchers in physics and mathematics and social sciences and humanities associated it more with the green road. Researchers in physics and mathematics preferred subject repositories, whereas researchers in social sciences and humanities preferred the institutional repository. Researchers of medicine and life sciences preferred publication in open access journals with a strong reputation that follow the “author pays” model, and they linked this factor to the building of their academic reputation. By areas, the most important reason for depositing works in social sciences and humanities was the increase in citations; in life sciences it was free access to all; in medicine it was peer review of articles; and in physics and mathematics it was rapid publication. In general, all the authors indicated that there was a conflict between institutional mandates for depositing research results in open access and the growing pressure to publish in journals with a high impact factor. The difficulties most mentioned were lack of knowledge of journal permissions and embargo periods for self-archiving. When asked about the future, although some thought that open access might jeopardize the current peer review system, the results suggested that the review of articles could be organized outside academic journals, perhaps using 2.0 tools. The second stage of the project analysed the behaviour of researchers when they disseminated their research results and the adoption of the green road of open access according to disciplines (who deposited, how, why, which versions, and the difficulties encountered). Among the results obtained, it is noteworthy that more than half the respondents deposited a version of their articles, either themselves or through mediation. The data were studied by disciplines, and some differences were found between the behaviour of researchers in physics and mathematics and that of researchers in medicine and life sciences: the former preferred depositing in subject repositories (a consolidated habit in Arxiv) and the latter in institutional repositories. Physicists and mathematicians tended to self-archive voluntarily, even in the institutional repositories. On the other hand, researchers in medicine and life sciences delegated the archiving to third parties when they were required to do so by the repository manager or the institution. As for which version was deposited, the final version was the most common among researchers in medicine and life sciences, while the rest

(physics and mathematics, social sciences and humanities) used the pre-print or the accepted and corrected version of the manuscript (Spezi, Creaser, White, Fry, & Proberts, 2013).

At the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire (UWEC), a small public university focusing more on teaching than on research, a survey was conducted in 2011 to ascertain the degree of awareness of open access among professors, which potentially had a direct relation to the depositing of material in the repository. Of the respondents (105, 26% of the total), 30% were unable to give a basic definition of open access, and the rest had limited knowledge of it. The motivations that most led them to publish in a journal were career advancement, the impact factor of the journal, the importance of the journal in their discipline, and rapid publication (Kocken & Wical, 2013).

In another study conducted at the University of Rosario in Argentina (Bongiovani, Guarnieri, Babini & Lopez, 2014) to obtain the views and practices of researchers regarding open access and their needs regarding the institutional repository, the results indicated that 80% of respondents agreed with open access, but only 13% used the institutional repository to disseminate their research because they were not aware of it. The main motivation for depositing publications in the repository was the use that could be made by their colleagues, students and the general public. The most valued services offered by the repository were advanced searching and statistics.

In 2012, the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation of the European Union carried out an international survey on scientific information in the digital age (European Union, 2012). The survey addressed four areas: Europe's role in the circulation of knowledge; access to scientific publications; access to research data; and the preservation of digital scientific information. Among its most important results, it is noteworthy that 90% of respondents believed that publicly funded research data should be in open access. More than half the respondents thought that the issue of preservation had not been sufficiently addressed.

In 2013 and 2014 Taylor & Francis Publishing carried out surveys on open access and repositories among authors who had published in their journals (Frass, Cross, & Gardner, 2014). The survey asked their opinion on open access and on the future of open access publication. It also asked about the licences they preferred for publishing in open access, the practices they followed in submitting articles for publication, repositories, mandates at the regional level, and desirable services under the open access umbrella. The results showed that the respondents thought that open access journals had a greater circulation and visibility, were published more quickly and had more readers. However, they did not think that they received more citations. The most frequent reasons for depositing were personal responsibility to place research in open access, requests by colleagues for published articles, the request of the institution, and placing in open access by the publisher. The most frequent reasons for not depositing were lack of knowledge of editorial policies, lack of time, and lack of knowledge of how to deposit documents in the repository.

In a survey in medical schools in Tanzania, a country with a lesser development of repositories, most respondents claimed to use open access journals to disseminate their articles. The barriers to open access found were low internet bandwidth, lack of knowledge of open access and lack of skills for depositing documents in the repository. It was also found that senior researchers were more likely to offer open access to their publications than junior researchers (Lwoga & Questier, 2015). The Texas A&M University has had an institutional open access policy since 2013, and despite its short existence, the degree of awareness of the policy and the institutional repository among professors and researchers is high (Yang & Li, 2015). However, the biggest difficulty found by its researchers was how to deposit documents, followed by concerns about copyright issues and the feeling that the contents of the repository were of lower quality.

A study was recently published on the knowledge and experience of researchers of German public universities regarding open access

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