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Cardiff University Open Access

#OPENACCESSWEEK

Investing in our academic capital

25 October 2023



CardiffUniOA



by Dr Hugh Griffiths, Co-chair Cardiff University Press.

"We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us." John Culkin

One of the greatest promises of open access publishing is the chance to reclaim and reconfigure some of the most crucial knowledge structures of our academic disciplines. Although the case for open access is often dressed in financial terms, such as costs for access or the impact of article charges, there is a more fundamental opportunity. Open access publishing and, particularly the new generation of university presses, offers a far more radical proposition than just challenging the market. For me, the most exciting prospect is that it allows us to completely reimagine the relationship between researcher and publisher, and in doing so, strengthen the research culture and environment within our university.

This is reflected in the theme of 'Community over Commercialisation' chosen for this year's Open Access Week. Quite rightly, we are challenged to think critically and carefully about who should hold the means of production for our academic outputs. Again, this is about more than challenging the market – the question is how so we can better serve the interests of our research communities and the wider public

good. This redefinition of academic publishing – and particularly what type of bond should exist between ‘academic’ and ‘publishing’ – brings a fresh focus to this question as well as other fundamental, strategic issues for our universities.

Of course, we need to deliberate on how the benefits of open access publishing could or should be achieved. Not just in terms of choosing between the methods and models now possible with digital platforms and technologies, but also by reflecting on the strategic potential of developing university presses and professional publishing expertise within our institutions. There is certainly much to debate and discuss, but we must first recover a compelling vision of the wider value and purpose of academic publishing. As we have outsourced its tasks to commercial providers, perhaps we have lost much of our awareness of its fundamental importance.

It is difficult to express the extent of that value in a short article, but the value of academic publishing has many strategic and generative benefits that extend beyond the dissemination knowledge. For example, at Cardiff University Press, we have seen that our support for the open access journal *Martial Arts Studies* and the work of its editors and contributors has given both shape and substance to an emerging discipline. This journal has become the connecting tissue of a diverse research network and the locus for its academic enquiry. As it has been shared generously and openly, it has attracted and formed an academic community, developed a growing and engaged audience, given birth to an international conference as well as consequent academic outputs and activities.

It makes sense for us take very seriously the contribution of publishing in all these dimensions – in the facilitation of knowledge, in disciplinary formation, the creation of community and collaboration, as well the reach, reputation and international influence that becomes possible. A determined focus on publishing and, in particular open access publishing, can generate very significant academic capital in all these areas and more. For Cardiff University Press, publishing is about far more than supporting the sharing of knowledge. Whatever investment we can make in open access publishing also represents an investment in our most valuable resource – the many skilled and dedicated people who together form our academic community.

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