Press Release

January 27th, 2009: Sharing research information via a more open access publishing model would bring millions of pounds worth of savings to the higher education sector as well as benefiting UK plc. This is one of the key findings from a new research project commissioned by JISC.

Professor John Houghton from the Centre of Strategic Economic Studies at Melbourne’s Victoria University and Professor Charles Oppenheim at Loughborough University were asked to lead research that would throw light on the economic and social implications of new models for scholarly publishing.

The research centred on three models which include:

• Subscription or toll access publishing which involves reader charges and use restrictions;
• Open access publishing where access is free and publication is funded from the authors’ side; and
• Open access self-archiving where academic authors post their work in online repositories, making it freely available to all Internet users.

In their report, Houghton et al. looked beyond the actual costs and savings of different models and examined the additional cost-benefits that might arise from enhanced access to research findings.

The research and findings reveal that core scholarly publishing system activities cost the UK higher education sector around £5 billion in 2007. Using the different models, the report shows, what the estimated cost would have been:

• £230 million to publish using the subscription model,
• £150 million to publish under the open access model and
• £110 million to publish with the self-archiving with peer review services plus some £20 million in operating costs if using the different models.

When considering costs per journal article, Houghton et al. believe that the UK higher education sector could have saved around £80 million a year by shifting from toll access to open access publishing. They also claim that £115 million could be saved by moving from toll access to open access self-archiving.

In addition to that, the financial return to UK plc from greater accessibility to research might result in an additional £172 million per annum worth of benefits from government and higher education sector research alone.
JISC’s Chair Professor Sir Tim O’Shea said, “The argument for moving from more traditional subscription or toll-based publishing to a model that allows for greater accessibility and makes full use of the advances in technology cannot be ignored. This report shows there are significant savings to be made and benefits to be had.

“JISC will work with publishers, authors and the science community to identify and help to remove the barriers to moving to these more cost-effective models,” he added.

Sir Mark Walport, Director of the Wellcome Trust, commended the report and added that, "as a research funder that provides additional funds to its grantholders to meet the cost of open access publishing, I am delighted that this report vindicates this approach and shows that the benefits of enhanced accessibility outweigh the costs of supplementing research funds with 'author-pays' open access publishing fees".

Professor Ian Diamond, speaking on behalf of Research Councils UK said,"RCUK welcomes this substantial and interesting report. It will be of great use to the Research Councils as we develop our future policies in relation to publishing and in particular open access."

The full report is available online at http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/publications/economicpublishingmodelsfinalreport.asp

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