

Overview

Open access is a phenomenon that is being pursued for multiple reasons, ranging from pragmatic concerns such as speeding up the accumulation of scholarly knowledge by making the process of sharing information more frictionless, to ideological drivers such as making access to the scholarly record – and participation in its creation – more equitable. This thesis will address political issues arising from the conflict between alternative means of pushing for open access.

Chapter 1 outlines different histories of openness. It begins by describing the quintessential modern open movement – open source software – and analysing what *open* means in this context. We see how this concept of openness is found in other open movements, especially open access, and by drawing parallels between open source and open access some of the political questions arising within the contemporary open access movement are revealed to be well established areas of concern. A second kind of openness is found in a discussion of liberalism, a political philosophy which promotes openness in both politics and economics through the twin pillars of parliamentary democracy and free markets.

Chapter 2 builds on the discussion of liberalism by analysing *neoliberalism*. Neoliberalism, defined here as the expansion of markets and market-derived forms of measurement and evaluation into previously non-economic realms, claims freedom and openness as explicit aims. Drawing on the work of critics of neoliberal theory, I will argue that in reality the opposite is occurring – that neoliberal regimes are creating political closure. This argument has particular resonance for those who are critical of the increasing encroachment of neoliberal governance in the realm of higher education and research.

Chapter 3 begins with a historical description of open access policy – placed within a wider higher education policy context – focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on the UK. Analysis of the political decision-making processes and ideologies which have led to the current policy environment brings in elements from the earlier discussions on openness and neoliberalism. By combining a critique of neoliberalism with the political questions found within the open access movement, we start to get a more complete picture of the political implications of current open access policy. A case study of open access funding – article processing charges (APCs) paid by UK higher education institutions – complements the theoretical argument by analysing the real effect of one aspect of open access policy.

Chapter 4 will examine possibilities for an alternative, non-neoliberal direction for open access policy. It will look at work on the commons, especially commons-based conceptions of

scholarly knowledge, and assess whether it provides a vision of knowledge production and dissemination which is more aligned with the social justice aims of some open access advocates. If actually-existing open access policy is found to be leading away from these aims, alternative policies will be proposed – albeit recognising that drastic that drastic changed may need to be accompanied by corresponding moves in the broader higher education environment.

Plan for the rest of Year 1:

- Continue to develop Chapters 1–3.
- Concentrate on strengthening the theoretical material about liberalism and neoliberalism.
- Prepare for session at UKSG conference in April 2016.
- Produce first yearly report for Jisc by September 2016.