# The Open Access interviews: Johannes Fournier, speaking for the Global Research Council

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During a two-day inaugural Global Summit on Merit Review held in Washington last May — which was organised by the US National Science Foundation (NSF) at the request of the White House Office of Science & Technology (OSTP) — a new organisation called the Global Research Council (GRC) came into being.

Explaining the rationale for the new organisation, NSF Director Subra Suresh said, "This global summit is the first step toward a more unified approach to the scientific process. Science can rise above economic and cultural differences to help develop trust and clear the path for agreements in other areas. Global scientific collaboration expands the pool of knowledge that belongs to everyone and serves as a tool to improve health, security and opportunity throughout the world. Good science anywhere is good for science everywhere."

The first initiative of the GRC was to publish a Merit Review Statement. Released at the end of the Washington summit, this outlines a set of principles for assessing funding applications, including the need to provide expert assessment, transparency, impartiality, appropriateness, and confidentiality, as well as integrity and ethical consideration.

But for Open Access (OA) advocates, a more interesting outcome of the Washington summit was the news that the GRC had decided to take up the issue of OA. As a result, at a second summit — to be held in Berlin at the end of May with representatives from around 70 research agencies — GRC will release consensus statements on both merit review and OA.

But what exactly is GRC, how will it be funded, what is its remit, and what precisely are its aspirations so far as Open Access is concerned?

To find out more I conducted an interview with Johannes Fournier, who works for the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Fournier is Program Director for the Scientific Library Services and Information Systems group, the unit within DFG's head office which looks after information infrastructure and Open Access. As host of the upcoming GRC annual meeting, the DFG has taken the lead on the issue of OA, and Fournier took part in all the regional conferences that have been held in preparation for the May event.

Fournier is also assisting the GRC's International Steering Committee in developing an action plan on Open Access.

The interview follows below.

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**Johannes Fournier**

## The interview begins …

***RP: Can you begin by saying why the Global Research Council was set up, how it is funded, and what its primary mission is?***

**JF:** It is a characteristic feature of modern research that often times work needs to be carried out in large international settings. Bringing together funding agencies from around the world, the GRC aims at facilitating and enhancing global scientific cooperation.

A main objective is the sharing of data and best practices so that individual researchers in their respective countries may eventually find very similar frameworks and enabling conditions. With words from its website, the GRC's primary mission can be described as "to explore mechanisms that support the global science enterprise and the worldwide research community".

The GRC does not actually fund research. Moreover, as a mere virtual organisation, the GRC has no headquarter or administrative support unit which need to be funded. Costs connected to the GRC mainly result from the annual global meeting and the preceding regional conferences. Participating funding agencies send their delegates to these meetings at their own expense, thereby making the GRC a truly global endeavour.

***RP: You say the GRC does not fund research. Should it therefore be viewed more as a "talking shop" than an executive agency?***

**JF:** Well, this sounds as if nothing fruitful would result from exchange and discussion. Yet exchange is absolutely crucial to discuss best practices, and eventually agree on common principles and a framework for research funding which serves to facilitate multinational scientific collaboration. Of course, the implementation of such principles might differ with regard to the specific needs, remits, and maturity grades of each organisation. Considering funding, all individual organisations have their respective budgets to do good things.

As I say, the GRC is not and will not become a global funding agency; organisations participating in the GRC will remain completely sovereign as regards e.g. their funding decisions. Yet once a common framework is put in place, a basis for potential multilateral research collaboration exists.

***RP: Who was responsible for the initiative to create the GRC? The National Science Foundation (NSF), the European Research Council (ERC), or some other organisation?***

**JF:** Ideas like that for the establishment of the GRC are often inspired from various sources. A strong impetus certainly came from the observation that research cooperation in Europe is so advanced in comparison to other parts of the world because it can also rely on established networks of research funding and policy. The establishment of Science Europe provides a most recent example of funding agencies joining forces to improve the conditions for cooperation.

Yet the initiative which led to the summit in May 2012 was in fact prompted by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) which invited the National Science Foundation to host a meeting to discuss global standards of peer review for basic research funding and to develop principles by which international research cooperation could be enhanced.

***RP: How many of the world's research agencies are represented by the GRC, and is it expected that the organisation will eventually be truly global?***

**JF:** The GRC is a truly global endeavour in that it brings together funding agencies from both more advanced and still emerging science countries. What we envisaged is a broad regional participation of key players in research and research funding.

This has been achieved by involving all interested key players in research and research funding worldwide through a set of regional conferences held around the world.

Participation in the annual global meeting, on the other hand, must be limited to a number of organisations which still allows discussions and work to be performed. A working group has been charged to develop rules for participation and to ensure that, for legitimation, the GRC's annual global meeting represents a high percentage of the world's research potential.

The 2nd Annual Global Meeting from 27 to 29 May 2013 in Berlin will likely bring together heads of research councils from up to 70 countries across the world.

***RP: You say that the heads of research councils from up to 70 countries across the world will attend the Berlin meeting. I note* Nature *reported that 50 agencies attended last year's Washington meeting. But can you say exactly how many of the world's research agencies are now represented by the GRC? I am wondering what percentage of the world's research agencies the GRC now speaks for.***

**JF:** As I said, I would assume that this year's annual meeting brings together around 70 organisations. More important than percentages are clear regulations for selecting the participants.

For example, the participation rules will make sure that organisations from countries that are responsible for at least 2,000 publications per year will be invited. In addition, each world region shall be represented at the summit by at least three organisations.

## Merit Review

***RP: As noted, the first summit was held in Washington last May. This was the Global Summit on Merit Review. Out of that summit came a "Merit Review Statement", and indeed the creation of the GRC. Is that correct?***

**JF:** Yes, it is. What is interesting, though, is that the discussion on merit or peer review began in Europe even before the Washington Summit. The European Science Foundation (ESF) and EUROHORCs roadmap for actions to help construct the European Research Area (ERA) already suggested addressing peer review of research proposals on a European level at a much earlier stage.

***RP: Just to clarify: Merit Review here implies peer review, although the review of funding applications rather than research papers?***

**JF:** As you say, merit review refers to reviewing funding applications which should follow certain principles, such as expert assessment, transparency, impartiality, appropriateness, confidentiality, and integrity as well as ethical considerations.

In that sense, the declaration issued in May 2012 describes the key principles for a rigorous and transparent review system and can be regarded as a standard to which organisations participating in the GRC adhere in order to foster international cooperation and help those countries that are developing new funding agencies.

***RP: Was the intention simply to harmonise existing peer-review practices, or was it felt that there was no existing standard for reviewing research funding applications so one needed to be created?***

**JF:** The work on peer review was motivated by the necessity to review proposals in joint calls by several funding agencies. Such reviewing requires a standard which is accepted by all agencies involved.

In order to define commonly accepted principles, already existing review practices had been collated to figure out what can be seen as the basic premises which were likely to gain broad consensus.

***RP: Following last year's Global Summit there have been a number of GRC regional meetings, and, as you noted, there will be a second Global Summit Meeting in Berlin in May. What will be the focus of this year's Summit?***

**JF:** The logic is slightly different because the so-called regional meetings always precede a GRC annual meeting. Even before the inaugural meeting in Washington in May 2012, five regional conferences had been held as forerunners to the Washington meeting to collect regional input and prepare the discussion.

The term 'region' refers to five world regions, i.e. the Americas, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, as well as the Middle East and North Africa.

The most important reason for having such regional conferences is that participation in the annual global meeting — for practical as well as logistic reasons — has to be limited to still allow discussions and work to be performed.

By involving all interested key players in research and research funding worldwide, regional conferences represent most of the global scientific enterprise and ensure a broad participation and discussion.

The annual meeting in May 2013 will discuss an action plan for the implementation of open access as the main paradigm of scientific communication in the following years, as well as endorse a statement of principles of research integrity.

## The process

***RP: Can you elaborate on how the GRC governance process works, and how decisions are made?***

**JF:** Since the GRC only came into being last year, statutes and by-laws are still in the process of being worked out. Without going into too much detail, the most visible process relates to the steps that lead to the annual global meeting.

Let me explain it from this year's summit: following the GRC inaugural meeting in Washington, DC in May 2012, an International Steering Committee was set up to host regional conferences to gather input from interested stakeholders across the world.

The ISC comprises representatives from regional host organisations and NSF as well as from CNPq [the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development] and DFG [German Research Foundation] which co-host the annual meeting in Berlin.

Between October and December 2012, regional conferences were held in Belgium, Mexico, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.

The ISC was then charged to develop an agenda and draft a Statement of Principles and an action plan for the implementation of open access. Both documents are currently being revised and will be expected to be approved by the GRC's Governing Board before being presented and endorsed by the Heads of Research Councils at the annual global meeting.

***RP: As you indicated, the number of research agencies able to attend the global meeting has, of necessity, to be limited. So is the process akin to representative democracy: a small group of people represent the interests of a larger group?***

**JF:** I would not agree with such a description because the GRC is not something like a global government of research funders. It is a bottom-up organisation of funders which share the same interests in facilitating cooperation beyond their individual frameworks.

Decisions are not taken by majority votes, they rather require the consensus of participating organisations.

***RP: I assume the views of research-intensive countries carry more weight? I note, for instance, that membership of the Governing Board consists of funders from the more powerful countries.***

**JF:** The regional conferences provide ample opportunity for an open dialogue between all interested key organisations in research and research funding, regardless of their countries' research productivity. However, as I already indicated, participation in the annual meetings must be limited to still allow discussions and work to be performed.

For legitimation, on the other hand, the meeting has to represent a high percentage of the world's research potential. Therefore, primarily organisations from countries with a substantial share of the world's output of fundamental research are represented at the annual meeting.

While there should be a minimum of three organisations per world region, a cutoff-line in tables on publications per country is being applied to identify the approximately 25-30 top countries for this purpose, and a cutoff-line at a minimum of 20,000 publications per year is being applied for the participation of any second organisation from the more research intensive countries.

Membership of the Governing Board reflects a similar rationale: it is to be drawn from all regions of the world, but for purposes of legitimation, organisations from those world regions with a higher research output are in the majority.

Nevertheless, members are expected to be fully representative of their region's interests, which may also include the interests of emerging research countries, and one-third of the membership will rotate on an annual basis.

***RP: Are the names of the members of the Working Group and the International Steering Committee published anywhere?***

**JF:** No, and this is not necessary either — for the following reasons: as I already mentioned, the GRC aims at addressing issues of common concern in the support of research and education and improving communication and cooperation among funding agencies by providing a forum for regular meetings of the Heads of Research Councils (HORCS) whose names are well known.

In preparation of the annual meeting, the Governing Board establishes an International Steering Committee (ISC) which is to include one nominee each from the host and co-host of the annual meeting and one nominee each from the host and co-host of the regional meetings.

It is more for reasons of practicality that both members of the ISC as well as representatives at the regional conferences are working level staff members, but theoretically speaking it could also be the HORCs themselves.

In any case, it is expected that participants are sufficiently representative of their national and subnational stakeholder as well as their organisations. They do not act as individual persons.

## Two topics

***RP: Based on what you said earlier I am assuming that the initial focus of GRC was on the integrity of the research process, but subsequently the organisation decided to take on the issue of OA as well?***

**JF:** There was no step-by-step decision. Both issues, research integrity as well as open access, are topics that need to be dealt with in order to enhance cooperation beyond national borders.

Of course there is a reason for addressing two topics at once: the GRC expects to approve a statement of principles of research integrity. This could be published at once and can easily be seen as outcome of the next annual meeting.

Open access, however, is a much more complex issue. This is reflected in the fact that our goal for the annual meeting is to discuss and agree on an action plan which needs to be implemented in the years to come.

***RP: I am wondering why these two topics in particular were chosen as priorities for the GRC. I can see why there might be a wish to develop common standards for reviewing funding requests, but why is OA seen as sufficiently important that it has become one of the two key issues taken on by the newly-founded GRC?***

**JF:** Again, the ultimate goal of the GRC is to foster international cooperation. As publications are essential for research, the question of disseminating research results and of accessing and possibly re-using research results from others, i.e. the entire paradigm of scientific communication, is crucial for the advancement of science.

***RP: You said that the topic of OA needs to be dealt with "in order to enhance cooperation beyond national borders". I assume you mean that since OA is now viewed as an inevitable development it is important to establish common global approaches, not that effective cooperation in research requires OA?***

**JF:** Well, although effective cooperation in research might be facilitated by open access, researchers did work together even before the advent of the internet and of open access.

As regards the GRC work, your assumption is right that the GRC's focus clearly lies on designing common policies that help foster open access.

***RP: What would you say the GRC has achieved so far? And what are your expectations for 2013?***

**JF:** The regional conferences provided valuable input both for a statement of principles of research integrity as well as for the open access action plan. My expectation is that the International Steering Committee and the Governing Board will refine the already existing draft documents in a way to enable a really productive discussion between the annual meeting's participants.

Apart from these more concrete achievements, it was very good to see that the GRC regional conferences obviously motivated participants to consider whether they should have more regular discussions in the respective regions — even independently of the GRC — in order to form and strengthen regional research networks. This is a very welcome development.

## Open Access

***RP: Ok, let's focus in on OA if we may. First, can you clarify for me what the GRC means when it talks about open access?***

**JF:** There was a discussion paper as input for all regional conferences, and that paper says that "open access stands for the principle to provide scholarly and research information (from publicly funded research) in a way that neither access to nor further re-use of this information is impeded by any financial, organisational, legal or technical barriers, apart from access to the internet as such".

The paper also clarifies that open access, in principle, relates to a broad range of scholarly outputs like journal articles, books, research data, images, animation or software. The envisaged action plan, however, will focus on open access to journal articles.

***RP: Open data will be dealt with at a later date then?***

**JF:** At the meeting in Washington, members of the Governing Board considered whether research data should be regarded as well. However, realising that developing and, what is more important, implementing an action plan on open access to journal articles alone poses many challenges, dealing with data had been postponed.

I regard this as a wise decision, because dealing with research data would require addressing many additional questions, e.g. regarding the basic infrastructure. Furthermore, I realise that an emerging global organisation named Research Data Alliance (RDA) will look into sharing and the re-use of research data.

***RP: Can you say what precise goals the GRC has set itself with regard to OA? What is the expected programme and what is the nature and timing of the hoped-for end result?***

**JF:** At the risk of disappointing you and the readers: the action plan will only be decided upon at the annual meeting so I cannot really talk about details which are still under consideration.

However, looking back at the regional conferences I would assume that the action plan suggests measures to raise awareness for open access as well as to actively support and implement open access by addressing related financial, organisational, and legal issues. Furthermore, there is the need to monitor future developments that will result from implementing the action plan.

All in all we are talking about a process which has only been started with the regional conferences in late 2012.

***RP: I was told that Science Europe is driving GRC's OA deliberations. Is that correct?***

**JF:** There certainly is a very mature and developed open access discussion in Europe, and Science Europe does play an important role in this.

However, considering the truly global nature of the GRC it is important to realise that an action plan will only be successful if the needs and demands of all world regions are taken into account. Since I attended all the regional conferences, I had a good opportunity to realise how diverse the discussion related to open access is. This needs to be reflected in the action plan.

***RP: You say that the GRC will produce an "action plan" (which I take to be an OA policy). I wonder what this will mean in practice. In speaking of merit review you said that the implementation of agreed principles might differ from agency to agency. I assume therefore that the OA policy will essentially be a set of guidelines, and so will not be binding on members of the GRC?***

**JF:** I am afraid it might be misleading to refer to the action plan as an open access policy.

Of course the organisations participating in the GRC need to agree on some basic principles to support open access. Yet the action plan as such won't be a set of guidelines, but — as the name suggests — a list of concrete activities that are proposed to the research organisations.

I probably need to provide one or two examples to make that clear: participants in the African regional conference suggested organising workshops in order to increase awareness on open access and its implementation, so that could be an item for the action plan.

In Europe, it has been suggested to revisit the hybrid model of open access in order to examine how subscription licenses could be adjusted to the growth of publication charges. Along these lines, another action item could suggest to further explore how the hybrid open access model needs to be designed to stimulate the transition.

***RP: Will the policy that emerges as the action plan be evidence-based, or will it be more a case of putting together a document that all members of the GRC can agree to?***

**JF:** As you see from what I just explained, the idea is not to agree on a policy, but rather to discuss concrete actions that need to be carried out in order to transition to open access. And not every single organisation will carry out the same actions.

Rather, individual organisations or maybe consortia of organisations will reflect which action items are most relevant to their own needs, and exactly these actions will then be dealt with by the respective organisations.

***RP: As you know, there are two main types of OA: Gold OA, where the publisher makes a paper immediately and freely available on the Internet, normally on payment of an article-processing charge (APC), and Green OA, where researchers continue to publish in subscription journals without incurring any publication charge, but then make their paper freely available on the Web themselves, usually after an embargo period of anywhere between 6 months and three or more years — a delay intended to allow the publisher to recoup the costs of publishing the paper.***

***I am told that you personally prefer Gold OA. Can you confirm whether that is so? If not, what is your personal view, and why do you take that view?***

**JF:** Well, the DFG's position paper "Taking Digital Transformation to the Next Level" with its suggestions for specific Gold OA activities might have made some people believe that the DFG tends to neglect the Green Road. However, there is a number of DFG-funded projects in the repository area, and together with the major research organisations in Germany, the DFG is lobbying the German Government to modify the copyright legislation in a manner that would facilitate self-archiving.

Personally, I see one definite advantage of the Golden Road: it brings with it clear regulations as regards re-use. Contrastingly, self-archiving will often not provide the legal basis that allows for specific forms of re-use like text- and data-mining.

***RP: You mentioned earlier Hybrid OA, a form of Gold OA that allows authors to publish in a subscription journal but — on payment of an APC — ensure that their paper is placed outside the journal's paywall. Hybrid OA is generally more expensive than pure Gold and many of the university OA funds created to help researchers pay publication fees (e.g. those set up by members of COPE) will not support it. What are your views on Hybrid OA, and its proper place in the OA mix?***

**JF:** The German Research Foundation shares the reservations as regards the hybrid model: funds from our funding programme "Open Access Publizieren" must not be used to cover charges for hybrid open access. The obvious reason is the ongoing discussion on how to correlate the payments for licenses with the publication charges.

In early February, the DFG invited representatives of the library and of the publisher community to a round table to discuss exactly this issue. There were two main topics during discussions: First of all, it became clear that reductions in license fees need to be applied locally — that is exactly what some Science Europe presidents discussed with publishers after the European regional conference in Brussels.

Secondly, there were strong statements that the hybrid model must not be supported as such, but only to design the transition to full open access. Yet so far it seems hard to name examples of renowned journals that used hybrid open access decidedly for transitioning.

***RP: Do you expect the GRC to support both Gold and Green OA? If so, do you expect it to favour one type over the other in the manner of the [RCUK OA Policy](#) — which has a stated preference for Gold OA?***

**JF:** Participants in all regional conferences stressed that the GRC needs to support both the Green and the Golden Road and should also be open to support new approaches towards open access which might emerge in the future, possibly related to social networks.

Rather than giving a preference to one particular approach, I would assume that the action plan leaves it to individual organisations whether they want to focus on one road only or will be active in various ways. This approach seems to be the most sensible solution, given the diversity of organisations and their remits.

## Shift in focus

***RP: One of those who attended a GRC meeting told me that the initial discussion document on OA was focused on, as he put it, "how to make Gold OA work". To this end, he said, the document included specific draft recommendations for the various stakeholders (i.e. funding agencies, research institutions, researchers, scholarly associations etc.). He also said there was a strong focus on how to involve publishers, governments, industry and the public.***

***However, he added, following discussion at the Brussels regional meeting, Green OA came more into focus and a revised version of the document included paragraphs outlining the strengths and weaknesses of both types of OA.***

***I understand your reluctance to talk about the details of the draft action plan, but this appears to have been confirmed publicly by Sage's Zivad Marar, who told*** **The Bookseller** ***in January that he thought GRC's coming May meeting would refocus energies on the Green route to open access. Can you confirm that there has been this shift in focus? If so, why do you think it has happened?***

**JF:** You give an accurate description of what happened. The discussion in Brussels where the first of the five regional conferences took place clearly showed that an action plan addressing only the Golden Road would not be feasible.

Participants in that meeting gave valuable input into how the various stakeholders could be involved also when dealing with self-archiving; and so a revised version of the paper could be used for the regional conferences in Addis Ababa, Riyadh, and Sendai.

That all other regional conferences confirmed the necessity to address both Green and Gold is clear evidence that modifying the original outset was the right approach.

There is one funny thing, however, as regards the discussion in Brussels. It seemed to me that participants firmly believed this discussion paper respectively its revised version was already the draft action plan. However, this paper was merely intended to stimulate discussions in the regional conferences, whereas the action plan as such is a completely new document, not a third revision of the discussion paper.

***RP: A publisher told me that RCUK had hoped to use the GRC as a vehicle for promulgating the UK approach. However, in*** **The Bookseller** ***article I referred to above, Sage's Marar suggested that the change of focus within the GRC has raised questions for the UK "on whether it makes sense to go it alone on the Gold route".***

***Earlier you rightly said that the issue of OA is "much more complex" than that of peer review. There are clearly a lot of politics involved. How do you expect to see this play out?***

**JF:** Certainly, the action plan will not bring a "one size fits all" solution. The idea is rather that the action plan describes a number of areas where specific activities are needed and invites individual organisations or possibly consortia of organisations to look into these areas.

Depending on the organisations' interests, remits, and opportunities, they are likely to address one specific road towards open access only or to choose a broader approach.

## Reuse rights

***RP: You said earlier that you prefer the Golden road because it brings with it clear regulations with regard to re-use. Some research funders (e.g. RCUK, and I think the DFG and Wellcome Trust) argue that re-use rights should now be viewed as the default for OA (which, as you indicated, would appear to put Green OA at a disadvantage).***

***I assume that this stress on re-use rights implies the use of CC-BY licences for OA papers (as RCUK specifies). It might help here to distinguish between open data (that you earlier referred to as research data, which I take to mean the raw data produced during scientific experiments, and discussion of which GRC has placed on the back burner) and text- and data-mining, which I suspect you are thinking of when you talk about the advantages of re-use rights, and which refers to data that is associated with, or extracted from, scientific papers (e.g. by allowing third parties to access the data underlying a paper, or allowing them to treat papers as though they were data rather than text, and mine them with computers).***

***Some OA advocates argue that text- and data-mining is a minority interest, and that there is a danger that the larger OA endeavour could be held back by the needs of the few disciplines that have an interest in mining papers (e.g. chemists). As Stevan Harnad puts it, "Don't let the 'best' become the enemy of the better." Do you have any thoughts on this? And do you have any sense of the percentage of scientific papers being produced that researchers would want to text- and data-mine today?***

**JF:** Before answering your proper question, let me point out that re-use is not restricted to text- and data mining. Assembling papers from various sources to produce a printed text book, translating articles or simply depositing a research paper into a long-term archive are only some further, simple examples of possible re-uses that would be facilitated if licenses made explicit what users could do with a paper.

I am currently not aware of any numbers related to text- or data-mined papers. It is important, however, that today's policies and actions help to build the environment for future research. Even if text and data mining are not a commonly used approach in a given subject today, that might change in a few years' time.

Over the past months, I became aware that scholars in the humanities are also interested in text mining. I remember for example a thread in the Liblicense mailing list in early November 2012 where readings about text mining issues in the humanities had been proposed and debated. And although I assume that humanists might primarily wish to mine text editions and books, depending on your research questions mining journal articles would come into the mix easily.

***RP: I have a suspicion that some funders and politicians assume that the raison d'être for insisting that scholarly articles are made available with reuse rights is that by doing so national economies will reap direct economic benefit. I also suspect that open data and open access are sometimes conflated, as if open data implied text- and data-mining and vice versa. For instance, speaking to the Publishers Association about OA last May, UK Minister of State for Universities and Science David Willetts said that "every dollar of federal investment in the Human Genome Project has helped generate $141 for the US economy."***

***Willetts then went on to talk about the UK government's Gateway to Research Portal, which he said would "simplify networking between researchers and SMEs". Amongst other things, he said, "It will provide direct links to actual research outputs such as data sets and publications". I note that RCUK describes the UK portal in these terms: "Gateway to Research aims to provide a mechanism for businesses and other interested parties to identify potential partners in universities to develop and commercialise knowledge, and maximise the impact of publicly funded research."***

***Having looked briefly at the Portal, it seems to me that it contains little more than a list of grants awarded. If that is right, then I find myself wondering what this has to do with text- and data-mining or with OA (or indeed with open data). And I conclude that perhaps there is some confusion over the need for reuse rights, and the kind of benefits that providing them can deliver.***

***But here is my question to you: Is it your belief that if a country makes its research papers freely-accessible on the Web with re-use rights there will be a direct economic benefit to that country as a result? If so, how exactly will the process work? Will it be a case of SMEs going in and mining OA papers and then approaching authors and proposing that they set up a joint company in order to monetise the research, or is that too simplistic a view?***

**JF:** Well, I would not exclude that such things happen although the scenario sounds a little amusing. However, talking with my DFG hat on, we are concerned with basic research. So the idea rather is that fellow researchers apply mining techniques on openly accessible material where such techniques help to better understand their questions or even explore new fields.

And we all know that basic research can lead to interesting discoveries that might be exploited economically, but of course that's not the leading principle of basic research.

## Pros and cons

***RP: Can we explore a little more the pros and cons of Green and Gold OA. Green OA advocates believe that the best way of making research papers OA is to mandate researchers to self-archive their papers in a repository. By making self-archiving mandatory, Green advocates argue, it is possible to provide OA more effectively than Gold. And they add that mandates are particularly effective where they adopt the so-called Belgian model (pioneered I believe by the University of Liège), in which only those papers that have been deposited in the university's institutional repository are taken into account when a researcher comes up for tenure and promotion. I think this approach is also currently being considered by the Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE). What are your views on self-archiving mandates?***

**JF:** My views on self-archiving mandates are grounded in the philosophy of the organisation that employs me. The DFG is self-governed by researchers. Although the "Joint Committee" — that is the DFG body that decides on funding, proposals and policies — consists of researchers and politicians, the procedures ensure that the research community has actually the majority vote. And researchers don't like to be forced to do things, they like to be supported and encouraged.

For that reason, the DFG encourages open access by funding opportunities that facilitate providing research results in open access.

***RP: Stevan Harnad has done some research into the relative benefits of Green and Gold, looking at the number of papers made OA by both routes. Last year, he and his research team estimated that Green OA (21.4%) exceeds Gold OA (2.4%) in proportion and growth rate in all but the biomedical disciplines.***

***The same team did some further research in the wake of The Finch report's claim that "The [Green OA] policies of neither research funders nor universities themselves have yet had a major effect in ensuring that researchers make their publications accessible in institutional repositories…"***

***Harnad and his co-authors concluded from this latter research that the stronger the mandate the more deposits are made. I should point out that neither of the two Harnad studies have been published, but do you find such research persuasive?***

**JF:** First of all, it seems convincing that Gold OA is more widespread in the life sciences than in any other research field. Without knowing the studies by Harnad and his team, papers by Björk or the

"PEER Behavioural Research" obviously confirm that self-archiving is relatively common in mathematics, physics, social sciences and the humanities.

Yet I also realised, from Laakso's and Björk's article on the "Anatomy of Open Access Publishing", that the social sciences and the humanities come second to the life sciences as regards the open access article growth from 2000 to 2011.

Talking about mandates, it seems to me that each policy will be more effective if it is accompanied by specific support activities. For example, if authors know there is a dedicated person who is able to assist them in depositing articles wherever problems arise, it is certainly easier for them to comply with a self-archiving policy.

***RP:** You mentioned earlier that the DFG has been lobbying to change copyright law in Germany in order to facilitate self-archiving. This issue was also discussed by German Ambassador Horst Freitag last July when he spoke to delegates at the Berlin 10 Conference in Pretoria.*

***Horst said, "The German government is currently introducing legislation guiding the implementation process of Open Access. It will take into account our constitutionally guaranteed rights, especially freedom of expression, freedom of scientific research and intellectual property rights. Against that background, the envisaged reform of our copyright and intellectual property law will, as a first step, most likely follow along the lines of the 'Green Road' business model. Under this model it would grant the author the inalienable right to publish his work for scientific purposes even after having published it for the first time and even in case he has renounced copy- or intellectual property rights. Any scientist or researcher is free, of course, to directly publish his or her work in open access journals or platforms."***

***There has long been a debate as to whether current German copyright laws forbid self-archiving. I guess the legislative changes that you and Ambassador Horst cite suggests that those who argued that it is illegal to self-archive in Germany were correct.***

***But can you clarify what the problem is, and how the proposed changes would fix it? Can you also say if this is an issue unique to Germany, or whether it affects other countries too? Indeed, from what Ambassador Horst said, I am wondering if the proposed changes in German law might not make it easier to self-archive in Germany than in other countries. Would that be correct?***

**JF:** Let me be very clear here: no one ever stated that German law forbids self-archiving. There is only the question whether *mandating* self-archiving would contradict with the freedom of research that is granted in the German Constitution. Many people seem to believe that there is no contradiction as long as *funders* would mandate self-archiving — yet I am not aware of any legal study that really answered this question.

The proposal for modifying the copyright law is relatively easy to explain. If the proposal became law, a researcher would be able to deposit his or her final peer-reviewed author manuscript after an embargo of twelve months, even if he or she already transferred exclusive copyrights to a publisher. You are absolutely right: if the proposal became law, self-archiving would be remarkably easy in Germany.

## Costs

***RP:** Having considered the pros and cons of Gold vs. Green. (E.g. Gold makes it easier to allow reuse; Green exceeds Gold in the proportion and growth rate of OA), I would like to discuss the related question of whether one form of OA should be prioritised over another, and if so which one. As you know, the RCUK model prefers Gold. However, it seems that this approach could have cost implications. During the recent hearings on OA conducted by the UK House of Lords, for instance, there was a lot of discussion about the relative costs of Green and Gold OA, during which the Houghton/Swan report was cited. First, can you say which form of OA you believe offers the most cost-effective solution?*

**JF:** Such debates are often led in a way as if we actually had the choice between Green and Gold. Yet the reality we need to work with is already more complex. An academic community might be in favour of self-archiving where another community already embraced open access journals. The boundaries between Green and Gold are not that distinct either.

I realise that universities with an open access publication fund ask publishers to deposit copies of funded articles in their repositories — there is no subscription cost involved, yet the repository infrastructure still needs to be maintained for good reasons.

I am afraid that the pre-occupation with a dichotomy between Green and Gold tends to obscure the question we really need to ask ourselves: what kind of mechanisms could be designed in order to shift money from acquisition budgets into publication funds? Because the transition to open access will only succeed if we find ways to reinvest those funds which are already used to pay for information provision.

***RP: I am sure you are right to say that it is not always helpful to become pre-occupied with a dichotomy between Green and Gold. Nevertheless, the relative importance attached to Green and Gold during the transition from a subscription-based system to an OA system does appear to have financial implications. This at least was one of the issues that emerged during the House of Lords inquiry, and both the UK government and RCUK were asked to consider whether perhaps they had paid too little attention to the cost implications of preferring Gold. Moreover, we could note that in his report Houghton concludes that while Gold may be less costly in the long run, prioritising Green is a more cost-effective solution during the transition period.***

***And it would seem that this is particularly important if a country (i.e. the UK) unilaterally decides to prioritise Gold over Green. The reason why this is important is that the UK accounts for just 6% of research output. As a result, UK universities will be unable to cancel their journal subscriptions (as they will need continued access to the papers arising from the 94% of research undertaken in other countries). Meanwhile, the RCUK policy urges them to start paying for their researchers to publish their papers in OA journals, so overall costs increase. These are the so-called "transition costs" — which Finch estimated at around £50-60 million a year, although some expect them to be much higher.***

***I think the House of Lords Committee concluded that preferring Gold would only work if all countries (or all the major research countries) adopted a similar policy simultaneously. Would you agree that where a country unilaterally opts to prioritise Gold OA it is not simply shifting money from acquisition budgets into publication funds, but paying twice?***

**JF:** Certainly, if only one country goes for Gold OA, the need to buy the subscription content remains. Yet although the transition requires additional money, it might not be necessary to really pay twice: one could operate more economically if the subscription prices for a local library or for a consortium were adjusted to the growth of publication fees. That's how to avoid so-called double-dipping *in nuce*.

I know this sounds very simple and might be rather complex in its implementation, especially because the implementation is likely to require that the funding streams are readjusted.

***RP: In the face of much criticism, RCUK has now amended its policy. Personally, I am not convinced that this changes things over much, since it still clearly urges researchers to prefer Gold OA. Moreover, this strategy seems all the more precarious in light of recent developments in the US. Both the introduction of the Fair Access to Science and Technology Research Act (FASTR) and the White House Public Access Policy Memo would seem to imply that the US is going to prioritise Green OA rather than Gold. And that seems to be the direction that the EU is moving in too. Would you agree?***

**JF:** I would agree as regards developments in the US, yet I do not see a clear preference for one or the other approach with the EU.

The policy papers in preparation of Horizon2020 always refer to both roads towards open access and the Commission sees open access publication charges as eligible costs so that the grants can be used to cover researchers' expenses.

I know, of course, that the European Union funded important projects like DRIVER and OpenAIRE in order to build an efficient repository infrastructure. Yet such infrastructure is not only intended for self-archiving. Repositories are also tools for research activities, and thus even a dedicated strategy for Gold OA won't make repositories redundant.

***RP: What feedback are you getting from other funders around the world? Do you expect other countries to prefer Gold in the manner of RCUK?***

**JF:** Although there is a variety of approaches, I did not have the impression that many other funders are inclined to support only the Golden Road.

Last autumn, Science Europe conducted an ad hoc survey on open access policies of its member organisations. The preliminary results show that a clear majority of 17 organisations embraced a complementary Green and Gold route, whereas a minority of 8 organisations opted mainly for Green and only 3 for mainly Gold.[1] I don't have figures for other regions of the world, yet from the discussions in the regional conferences I would assume that a majority of organisations is also inclined to support both Green and Gold OA.

It is important to note, however, that support for Gold OA is not restricted to covering author charges. There are also organisations that support open access journals or journal platforms like SciELO which do not belong to professional publishing companies.

I also got to know that KACST in Saudi Arabia funds six scientific journals with Springer Open so that neither readers nor authors need to pay for these.

***RP: A final question on costs. We discussed the serials crisis earlier, and it is clear that many people were recruited to the OA movement in the expectation that OA would address the affordability problem confronting scholarly communication. Houghton I think still believes it will lower costs. You, however, speak only in terms of shifting money from acquisition budgets into publication funds. I note also a recent report from HSBC Global Research predicts that OA will be earnings neutral for publishers.***

***If HSBC is correct, it suggests that the research community will make no savings as a result of OA. This in turn suggests that the "serials crisis" could simply become an "author's crisis". After all, if OA cannot reduce the costs of scholarly communication, how will universities pay to have their researchers' papers published in an all OA environment?***

***In other words, regardless of whether the research community prioritises Gold or Green, might it discover that while OA can solve the accessibility problem, it cannot resolve the affordability problem?***

**JF:** Well, let me start by pointing out that open access is primarily intended to increase the *efficiency* of research. Anyway, the request for open access is always accompanied by the request for transparent cost structures which will lead to more effective market mechanisms.

In the subscription world, we come across situations where e.g. one university in North America pays 2 million dollars to access the complete online journals of a large commercial publisher whereas another university also based in North America pays only 500,000 dollars for accessing exactly the same content. It is hard to imagine that an author from one university pays — in relation — so much more for his or her open access paper than a fellow researcher from another university.

[1] When this survey was cited by RCUK during the recent House of Lords Inquiry some OA advocates challenged both its findings and the way in which they had been presented. [Richard Poynder]

In addition to that, the "market" of course differs: in a subscription world, a journal cannot be substituted by another one. Yet in an open access world, the market is for authors who are able to select between various services. This will likely lead to more competition between those who provide these services.

## Differences and tensions

***RP: Watching the recent House of Lords hearings I formed the impression that OA is likely to see a split between the sciences and the humanities, not least in terms of which form of OA is embraced. Since scientists tend to have access to more research funding than humanists, they can better afford to pay APCs, and so seem likely to prefer Gold OA.***

***Humanists on the other hand, have very limited access to funds, and so appear to view Green OA as their best (or even only) option. Would you agree? If so, what do you think might be the implications of this for the development of OA, and indeed for scholarly communication at large?***

**JF:** The academic culture and the publishing habits between the sciences and the humanities are different anyway, and in supporting open access we must not ignore these differences.

Taking into regard that many open access journals in the humanities and social sciences are supported by universities or research institutes and thus do not ask for article fees, I would assume that funding is only one of the issues for different perspectives on open access.

Another issue is that we have a number of prestigious, well-known open access journals for the life sciences or the natural sciences, yet in the humanities it is much harder to think about well-known open access flagship journals.

The importance of national traditions and national languages for the discourse in the humanities and the social sciences is likely reflected here. And although journals are important for the humanities, books carry even more prestige.

In that regard, the relatively new discussion on open access books might lead to a renewed interest in the topic. The mutual increase between specific publication formats and specific benefits of open access is not new: I realise, for example, that historians embraced open access review journals since the speed of electronic publications is essential for the review format.

***RP: Earlier you stressed the global nature of GRC. Would you agree that there are tensions between the developed world and the developing world over OA? For instance, some have argued that OA means moving from a situation in which research institutions in the developing world are unable to afford access to the third-party research their scholars need, to a situation in which developing world researchers will be unable to afford to publish their own work.***

***As such, critics say, OA may (ironically) not be in the interests of the developing world, since it will create a worse situation. As Bangalore-based researcher Raghavendra Gadagkar argued in a letter to Nature, "although the 'pay to publish and read for free' business model of open-access publishing has helped to create a level playing field for readers, it does more harm than good in the developing world." I realise he wrote this in 2008, but I do not think anything has happened since then that might have changed his mind.***

**JF:** There are obvious differences between regions and countries, and such differences need to be taken into account in drafting and implementing an action plan.

However, from following the discussion in all regional conferences I have the strong impression that really no one called the objective of fostering open access into question.

You know that your question is focused on open access journals, but you also know that even a majority of open access journals do not operate on article charges.

Besides, researchers could still publish in traditional journals and choose to deposit their final manuscript version in open access repositories. I think what matters most is that the communication between the developing and the developed world will be improved by open access.

Let me give you an example I really like: there is a family of four journals that focus on political, economic, and socio-cultural issues in Africa, China, Latin America and Southeast Asia. In a DFG-funded project, this so-called GIGA journal family converted to open access. This brings a new situation: before the transition, western researchers tended to talk *about* these regions, now they can talk *with* them.

Another example for such fruitful exchange is “Bioline International” which shows that the local knowledge of developing countries can be essential for research in the western world. Both initiatives are described in the collection of open access success stories that Knowledge Exchange initiated.

***RP: You say that the majority of OA journals do not operate on article charges. But I wonder if this will still be the case if policies that prefer Gold OA become the norm?***

***On reviewing the initial RCUK policy Peter Suber said the following:***

***“The RCUK is offering strong incentives for journals to become compliant, and a significant number of journals will act on them. I expect to see two kinds of journals start to offer suitable APC-based gold options that currently do not do so: non-hybrid TA journals and no-fee OA journals.***

***“Non-hybrid TA journals will add APC-based gold options, or convert from TA to hybrid OA, in order to collect fees they are not now collecting. Nothing I've seen in the RCUK policy or Finch recommendations even prohibits double-dipping (charging APCs for OA articles and subscriptions for all articles, including the OA articles). Adding a double-dipping hybrid option is an easy move for a journal to make, and it's easy money.***

***“No-fee OA journals will add APC-based gold options, or convert from no-fee OA to fee-based OA, for the same reason, to collect fees they are not now collecting.***

***“If I'm right, we'll see a decline in full-TA journals and a corresponding rises in hybrid OA journals. And we'll see a decline in no-fee OA journals and a corresponding rise in fee-based OA journals.”***

***I am not sure if Suber might conclude that RCUK’s amended policy will mitigate this effect, but as OA develops, as commercial publishers increasingly enter the OA market, and as funders agree to underwrite APCs, it seems to me that “pay-to-publish” is set to become the dominant model, and most OA journals will soon be charging authors to publish their papers. Would you agree?***

**JF:** The development you or rather Peter Suber predicts does not seem unlikely. It shows to me how important it is that funding agencies and research organisations need to be aware of unintended consequences in designing policies and granting support.

A good example for that, to my view, is a mechanism I came across in a discussion about SCOAP3: there will be a cap on the number of publications that will be financed from the SCOAP3 budget. If a journal publishes more articles than defined by the cap, the publisher needs to bear these additional costs.

The rationale for this is obvious: there is no incentive for journals to lower peer review standards in order to publish as many articles as possible and earn as much money as possible.

With regard to the no-fee open access journals, it might still be a competitive advantage for them to stick to a no-fee policy. If such journals were able to build a pool of good authors, they would likely be very careful to do everything to keep these authors also in future. Introducing fees might not be the best idea, even if a funder covered the charges, since the authors might need to spend their funds for other publications.

***RP: In the wake of RCUK having to revise its OA policy, and in the wake of GRC having to refocus its initially Gold-dominant model, I am wondering if perhaps the fundamental issue here is that while you can mandate (or prefer) Green self-archiving, requiring or preferring Gold is not only financially risky, but can raise a host of sensitive issues.***

***Apart from anything else, a preference for Gold seems to raise the thorny issue of academic freedom. RCUK's policy as first conceived (and I suspect as revised too) was expected to lead to researchers being told where they can publish, and even how many papers they can publish — a point made by Finch co-author Adam Tickell last June.***

***But as Emeritus Professor of Library and Information Studies at Loughborough University Jack Meadows put it to me recently, "Who is going to tell a leading researcher that he/she has published up to the limit and won't get any more funding for publishing until the next research grant comes along? Likewise, who is going to say that it is OK to publish in this journal, but not in that? It might be no bad thing if people published less, but unless the restrictions are applied very flexibly, I would expect researchers to rebel. University researchers can get very touchy about anything that restricts their ability to publish."***

***Would you accept that requiring, or even preferring, Gold is in the end just too risky an approach?***

**JF:** Again talking from my DFG perspective, we follow the maxim that a researcher must be free to choose the journal in which he or she wishes to publish. The author knows best whether the journal is targeted at the relevant audience, whether it is suited to disseminate the research to the intended recipients, or whether it is the best outlet to advance the academic career. In that spirit, we support researchers to publish in open access journals, but we would not require it.

The limitation of publication funds is sometimes seen as a measure to avoid slicing of publications and the like although I wonder whether that is the right approach. I would assume that other mechanisms are rather suited to suppress being flooded with publications.

For example, the DFG introduced that a PI must not list more than two — or three, if there is more than one PI — project-related publications per grant year in his or her grant proposal because these publications are, together with the proposal, the basis for the review.

## Consultation and lobbying

***RP: I wanted to finish by asking a few more questions about the process of developing GRC's action plan. Can you say whether publishers, or any other commercial organisations, have been involved in, or consulted about, the draft OA action plan? Likewise, have any OA organisations like SPARC, Public Knowledge, or EOS been involved / consulted? If so, what level of involvement / consultation has taken place with these publishers / organisations?***

**JF:** It was up to those funders which were responsible for organising the regional conferences if and how to involve further stakeholders. Science Europe e.g. invited representatives from LIBER, SPARC Europe, COAR, or the European University Association to the regional conference in Brussels; the meeting in Addis Ababa saw representatives from the UNESCO or the African Development Bank.

Following the regional conference in Brussels, some presidents from Science Europe member organisations met with representatives from the publisher community, large commercial publishers just as society publishers and open access publishers. When implementing the action plan, such involvement of all stakeholders needs to be intensified.

***RP: Has the GRC been lobbied by any external organisations or agencies, including publishers, learned societies, or OA organisations. If so, what nature has this lobbying taken?***

**JF:** There is a huge interest in the GRC and in its activities which is very good. This became evident when so many representatives from the publisher community were able to follow the invitation to a meeting in Brussels, although the invitation was very short notice.

As regards specific activities, I am afraid I could only point out anecdotes. I remember for example that we have been approached by a colleague from the publisher community with the suggestion to include specific documents and studies on open access on the GRC website. Now, with the annual meeting getting close, we also receive a number of emails from people wishing to participate.

***RP: Did the GRC put the documents the publisher recommended up on its web site? Also, you said that the involvement of all the stakeholders will be intensified going forward. Does this mean that you expect publishers to be more involved in developing the GRC action plan in future than they have been to date?***

**JF:** After a conversation with the publisher, a number of the titles had been included, others had not because they did not really fit to the internal logic for the website. It is important to keep in mind that the website is only a starting point, but it was never meant to provide a complete bibliography on open access.

As regards the further involvement of publishers, the mere nature of many items in the GRC's action plan will require talking to them — not so much in the current phase of agreeing on the action plan, though, but for the next step of implementing it.

I would thus assume that not only individual research organisations will work with publishers — and the action plan is likely to refer to such cooperation explicitly —, but that also future GRC regional conferences will see more publisher involvement.

Of course, the concrete forms of such involvement will depend on the individual organisations that will be responsible for organising a regional conference.

***RP: Thank you very much for answering my questions. I look forward to seeing how the GRC action plan develops.***

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