

# Managing Expectations for Open Access in Greece: Perceptions from the Publishers and Academic Libraries

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## Abstract

In Greece, there seems to be a growing level of awareness regarding open access among scholars, faculty staff and information professionals. Indeed, consensus regarding the necessity of open access initiatives in Greece is gradually established. The present of open access in other European settings may however be revealing the expected, though distinct, future of open access in Greece. This work focuses upon some current aspects for open access and attempts to investigate them for the Greek setting. The investigation includes five (5) important aspects of open access, i.e. a) ETDs management from the academic libraries, b) university repositories development, c) regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material quality requirements, d) cooperation and competition between libraries and academic publishers, e) understanding the role of scientific work dissemination in developing future professionals and scholars. The paper initially provides an outline for the Greek publishing industry, focusing on STM publishers and on the way they take advantage of the changes mainly in editorial and marketing terms, in a hybrid technological era. The Greek publishing industry may be representative of other national small publishing markets. Further, an empirical research is providing in order to illuminate open access from two different points of view: that of STM publishers and that of academic libraries' directors in Greece. The empirical investigation took place in February and March of 2007 and is based on seventeen experts' perceptions. The methods employed are outlined and include the development of the questionnaire for semi-structured interviews. Finally, the unexpected agreement from both publishers and academic libraries' directors regarding open access development is discussed and some specific for Greece conclusions are drawn.

**Keywords:** open access; publishing industry; academic libraries management; scholarly communication; Greece

## 1 Introduction: Setting the Scene

In Greece, there seems to be a growing level of awareness regarding open access among scholars, faculty staff and information professionals. Indeed, consensus regarding the necessity of open access initiatives in Greece is gradually established. Academic libraries, and for that matter university authorities in Greece, realize nowadays that cannot purchase access to all the scientific information their researchers expect, although some association agreements and research programs, involving publishers, the National Documentation Centre and other institutions, have assisted [1]. Publishers in Greece have been considering the development of distinct pricing models for making available books, monographs and scientific articles, so they cause further pressure on institutional budgets. Overall, the current scholarly communication model, that the academia employs, seems to currently disconfirm expectations of scholars and of the Greek scholar community as a whole. A novel information and research strategy for academic libraries is required involving scholar publications which are digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing, compatible with printed edition.

The present of open access in other European settings may be revealing the expected, though distinct, future in Greece. Open access for Greece may constitute a greater challenge due to the language barriers, which may form two (2) distinct types of scientific publication: the ones written in Greek and the ones that are not. The expectations of the scholar community relate to the Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETDs) management, the development of university repositories and, finally, the regulation of the digital versus printed material quality requirements. The academic libraries in Greece ought to enhance their role within the current scholarly communication setting. On the other hand, it may safely be assumed that the scholarly community in Greece has nothing or little to gain from any publishing pricing model. Scholars mostly wish to publish their work in high

impact journals (or as monographs) either open access or not, realizing gradually that openness has a positive effect on impact factors based on citations and/or other traditional and frequently used measures of research impact.

This work focuses upon some current aspects for open access and attempts to investigate them for the Greek setting. The investigation includes A. an outline of the Greek publishing industry, focusing on STM publishers and on the way they take advantage of the changing environment mainly in editorial and marketing terms, in a hybrid era. In that framework, novel publishing strategies and policies are developed. From that point of view, the Greek publishing industry may be representative of other national small publishing markets. B. the expectations of the directors of the academic libraries about open access. It is interesting and fascinating to illuminate open access from two different points of view: that of STM publishers and that of academic libraries' directors. C. an empirical investigation based on seventeen experts, that took place in February and March 2007 through a semi-structured questionnaire, in order to portray the specific aspects in Greece. The methods employed are outlined. D. the unexpected agreement from both publishers and academic libraries' directors regarding open access development is discussed and some specific for Greece conclusions are drawn.

## 1.1 The Present Scenario in the Greek Publishing Industry

The publishing industry in Greece may be characterized from the absence of conglomerates and of large foreign publishing houses. Furthermore, it is rather traditional (family owned and managed enterprises) in comparison to international markets. Specifically, the Greek Scientific-Technical-Medical (STM) publishing production [3] represents about one third (35,1%) of the annual book production. There is a steady increase, during the last five years, in the annual production of new scientific titles, that may express a turning point of the Greek STM publishing industry. In 2004, 2692 new scientific titles were published (out of 7.888 new titles of the total annual book production), while, in 1999, 2410 were the new ones [4]. It is significant that small and medium-sized STM, on the one hand, and general publishing houses, that also produce scientific publications on the other, manage to develop the profile of the Greek publishing industry; at the same time, they play a central role in scholarly communication in Greece, collaborating with the academic community.

In regard to the Greek publishing industry, focusing on the STM publishing, a number of specific features can be synopsized as follows [5]. The Greek publishing market has a rather small audience of about 14 million people, due to the Greek language, which is unique among the European languages. Hence, that market has not yet been in the focus of international conglomerates or large publishing groups; on the other hand, the Greek publishing industry is deeply influenced by them in certain terms, such as in patterns of promotion and of management practices. One of the main features of the Greek publishing industry is that almost all the Greek publishing houses are companies, owned and run by members of a family, who continue and try to innovate, respecting the tradition. Concerning the STM publishers, it is characteristic that many of the publishing houses' names consist of the surname of the founder, who, in some cases, still runs the company: Sakkoulas, Papatotiriou, Siokis, Paschalidis, Ziti, etc.

The remarkable increase, during the last fifteen years, in the total annual production of new titles (from less than 3,000 in the beginning of the 90ies to 7,888 titles in 2004) reveals the prosperity and the turning point of the Greek publishing industry [6]. More specifically, concerning the STM publications, there is a steady increase, as it was referred above. Large publishing houses in Greece produce more than 80 titles per year, medium produce 10-80 titles, while the small ones publish less than ten (10) titles annually [7]. Only seventeen are large publishers; five of them are STM. The majority of STM publishers are medium. Generally, Greek STM publishers are competitive to academic presses and to organizations with publishing activities such as scientific institutions, museums, chambers and others.

Concerning the scientific publications, the publishing houses can be categorized as follows: a. strictly STM publishers, b. general publishers, which include in their catalogues scientific texts, c. organizations and institutions that publish or order and encourage publications. The well known and specialised in scholar work publishing houses are the market leaders. They can, through their policy, influence the structure of the book market in Greece. It is significant that the majority of the new titles published annually are works of Greek academics and scientists. Out of 2692 new titles published in 2004, only 770 were translations, something that demonstrates that the Greek STM market develops an interest and a taste in the national scientific production, for which there is need to be promoted. The academic community determines to a great extent, by its special needs and expectations and through collaborations, the STM production. Furthermore, the academic community is an important knowledge producer and co-operates with the publishing houses, not only by its works, but also by editing and being responsible of series. With its high expectations and with a very good judgement, this

particular audience is usually a force for change and for innovation. STM publishers are intended to a specialized and, therefore, specific, rather homogenous and steady reading audience. This target group is easily accessible, through economic ways of promotion. On the other hand, general publishing houses promote and advertise, sometimes even the scientific titles, in such a way so as to attract the majority of readers.

In the last five years, there are “new” needs in the traditional and rapidly changing Greek publishing industry. The profile of the Greek publisher was until recently formed in terms of a family company for a small market, something that gradually is changing; although family enterprises, the STM publishing houses are conscious of the competition, of the need for innovation and of the new role that they are called to play. New policies and strategies, competitive values, and new information technologies demonstrate the need of special studies and life long learning in the STM Greek publishing industry. In an era, in which information is the main product, the challenges for the STM publishers are great, and they should be innovative always bearing in mind that “publishing companies are content-acquiring and risk-taking organizations oriented towards the production of a particular kind of cultural commodity” [8].

## **1.2 Selected Research Issues for Open Access in Greece: Competition and Co-Operation**

This work provides some empirical results which are based on the perceptions of the Greek STM publishers and directors of academic libraries for five (5) important aspects of open access, i.e. a) ETDs management from the academic libraries, b) university repositories development, c) regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material quality requirements, d) cooperation and competition between libraries and academic publishers, e) understanding the role of scientific work dissemination in developing future professionals and scholars. However, the Greek publishing market and academia encompass some unique features, including the language and other exclusive features. These may further establish an additional set of research objectives that are referred here as the “language” and the “digital product” issues.

The STM publishers in Greece are focusing on the conventional printed material production, and hence they do not consider openness as a “real” threat until now. Furthermore, academic libraries have recently invested a significant amount of money and effort in personnel development and information technology, have initiated additional university policies and/or mandates regarding the Electronic Thesis and Dissertations (ETDs) management, the development of university repositories and finally the regulation of the digital versus printed material quality requirements. The academic libraries in Greece are “better” organizations than Greek publishing enterprises in “gathering” scholarly work and have better access to digital distribution channels [9], as they have taken advantage of the new digital technologies [10]. The amount of accessible digital information is increasing due to the advent of information technologies, the Internet and other international networks. However, the diversity in the content of the material and in the languages text are written in, is also significantly increasing. The Greek language forms a barrier that has to be crossed. Large international publishing enterprises are intensive on digital STM publications produced mostly in other languages than the Greek language, while national publishers are resolving quality issues for Greek scientific work and thus they are developing highly prestigious conventional STM products based on the scientific work.

A realization that arose with this research is that “open access” is redefining information “transaction” for the Greek scientific and technical STM market. However, if “transactions” are costless, the most important issue is that the rights of the various parties involved should be well defined and the results of legal actions easy to forecast [11]. It would therefore seem desirable to further focus on the stakeholder’s views, taking their perceptions into account when making economic decisions and/or investigating market characteristics. In that respect, “openness” is less of a substitute product within the competitive forces in the publishing industry in Greece, and it may be rather be treated as a factor that characterizes the nature of competition (and co-operation) within this particular industry. Greek publishers may co-operate and compete with the academic libraries, in regard to the language of the text and/or the nature (printed and digital) of the produced STM material.

## **2 The Empirical Research Conducted**

The objective of the empirical research is to identify and then investigate the perceptions of Greek STM publishers and the perceptions of the directors of academic libraries, through five (5) important aspects of open access: a) ETDs management from the academic libraries, b) university repositories development, c) regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material quality requirements, d) cooperation and competition between libraries and academic publishers, e) understanding the role of scientific work dissemination in developing future

professionals and scholars. In the following paragraphs the methods employed as well as the results of the empirical study are presented.

## 2.1 Methods Employed

The empirical research was based on semi-structured interviews that were directed to large publishers and directors of central academic libraries in Greece. Therefore, the interviewees were organization representatives (experts) selected on the following criteria: a) have an in depth experience managing STM material, b) academic libraries with central administration as well as publishers with more than 30 titles annual production were selected. The academic publishing houses are not included in the research, mainly, due to their small annual production (less than 30 titles). On the other hand, within the group of STM experts a number of participants represent publishing organizations as the Technical Chamber of Greece.

A questionnaire was designed for the survey and a pre-test was conducted. The questionnaire includes both closed and open-ended questions. For the closed-ended questions a five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1="strongly agree" up to 5="strongly disagree", in order to determine the extent of agreement and/or disagreement of the participants to specific statements regarding open access in Greece. The questioner included seventeen (17) questions as follows:

- Research Questions 1 to 12: aimed at investigating characteristics of the experts participated in the survey (organization title, address, telephone, email, full name, position in the organization, education, years of employment) and the organization they represent (number of employees, nature of services and/or products –conventional, digital, hybrid–, presence of electronic thesis and dissertation system, presence of repository);
- Research Questions 13 and 14: aimed at assessing the degree of agreement of the participants to the following statements, "the information provided to the scientific community in Greece is sufficient" & "clear need for the open access development in Greece";
- Research Question 15 for "ETDs management from the academic libraries": aimed at assessing the degree of agreement of the participants to the following statements, "support other activities", "produce economic value", "support scientific work", "support co-operation" & "is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers";
- Research Question 16 for "university repository development": aimed at assessing the degree of agreement of the participants to the following statements, "support other activities", "produce economic value", "support scientific work", "support co-operation" & "is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers";
- Research Question 17 for "law and regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material": aimed at assessing the degree of agreement of the participants to the following statements, "sufficient for ETDs", "sufficient for repositories", "sufficient for copyright issues", "support co-operation" & "is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers".

The research questions 13 through 17 were accompanied with open questions, so that the participants could state in free narrative form their additional comments. The survey was not aiming in providing results that could be generalized, although, in the lines of Behrakis [12], the information recorded and the qualitative analysis provided, produce indicative results based on expert's opinion. Furthermore, it was found that the distance in the scale between 1="strongly agree" and 2="agree" was small, as well as, that the distance between 4="disagree" and 5="strongly disagree". Hence, the initial form of the scale was reduced from five to three [agreement (+), rather (=), disagreement (-)]. The percentages were computed and graphs were produced, while for the open-ended questions content analysis was employed in order to determine frequency of statements of interest [13].

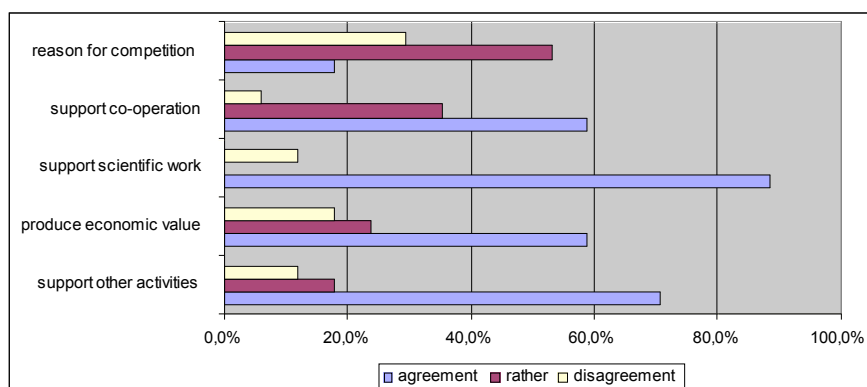


Figure 1: Experts points of view regarding the "ETD's management" aspect of Open Access in Greece

## 2.2 Results of the Empirical Research

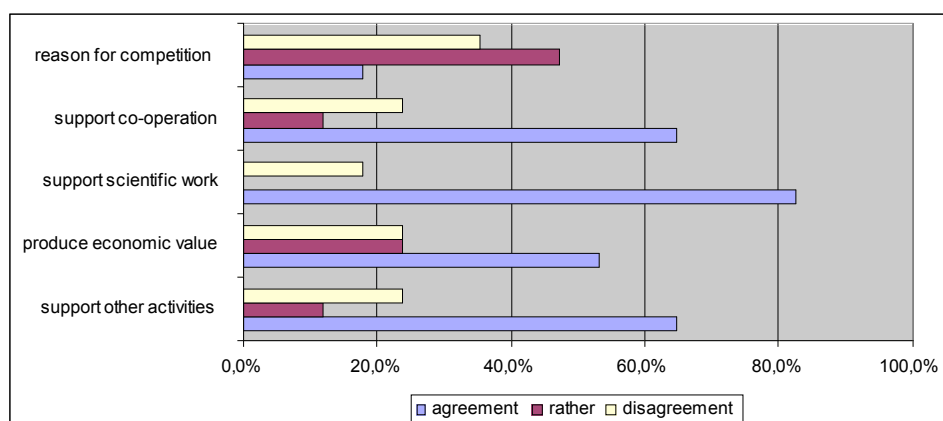
The empirical research was conducted through structured interviews based on a specially designed semi-structured questionnaire, within February and March of 2007 (a pilot study took place in January 2007). Among the twenty two (22) academic libraries and the twenty (20) large Greek STM publishers conducted, representative of ten (10) academic libraries and seven (7) STM publishers agreed to participate in this survey (i.e. the 45.5% of the libraries conducted and 35.0% of the STM publishers). The overall profile of the group of experts was considered sufficient for our purposes in consideration of the following, a) the group of experts is representative including participants from the academia and the STM publishing industry, b) the group of experts consist of highly skilled and educated information professionals (the participants are all university graduates mainly from Library Science and/or Information Science departments, six of them hold a postgraduate diploma, while four of them hold a Ph.D.), c) sufficient working experience (fifteen out of the seventeen were employed in the organizations they represented for more than five years), and d) specific organizational features (six organizations employed more than twenty five professionals, while thirteen organizations provide services of both conventional and digital form). The results for each of the close-ended questions are provided bellow (Table 1 and Figures 1 to 3), while the analysis of the open-ended questions follows.

Research Question	Issues addressed in the survey for Open Access in Greece	Agreement	Rather	Disagreement
13	"the information provided to the scientific community in Greece is sufficient"	53.0%	23.5%	23.5%
14	"there is a clear need for the open access in Greece"	88.2%	0.0%	11.8%
15	"ETDs management from the academic libraries"			
	"support other activities"	70.6%	17.6%	11.8%
	"produce economic value"	58.8%	23.5%	17.6%
	"support scientific work"	88.2%	0.0%	11.8%
	"support co-operation"	58.8%	35.3%	5.9%
	"is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers"	17.6%	52.9%	29.4%
16	"university repository development"			
	"support other activities"	64.7%	11.8%	23.5%
	"produce economic value"	52.9%	23.5%	23.5%
	"support scientific work"	82.4%	0.0%	17.6%
	"support co-operation"	64.7%	11.8%	23.5%
	"is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers"	17.6%	47.1%	35.3%
17	"law and regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material"*			
	"sufficient for ETDs"	17.6%	11.8%	41.2%
	"sufficient for repositories"	11.8%	11.8%	41.2%
	"sufficient for copyright issues"	17.6%	11.8%	35.3%
	"support co-operation"	11.8%	17.6%	35.3%
	"is a reason for competition between academic libraries and publishers"	11.8%	11.8%	41.2%

Table 1: Results of the survey for aspect in open access in Greece (\*6 of the responders could produce a reliable judgment for the statements)

In Table 1, the overall results of the survey conducted are exhibited. In the first column of Table 1, the statements under investigation are provided; while the columns that follow provide the percentages reflecting the perceptions of the participants (STM publishers and directors of the academic libraries). More than half of the experts (53%) state that the information provided to the scientific community in Greece is adequate (23.5% “rather” adequate and another 23.5% “disagree”), whereas the majority of the participants (88.0%) agree that open access initiatives are indeed required (Table 1, research question 14). The majority of the experts agree that the ETDs management from the academic libraries may “support other activities” and “support scientific work”, while they do not think that would be a reason for competition increase between publishers and academic libraries (Figure 1).

In Table 1 (research question 16 “university repository development”) and in Figure 2, the results indicate a significant agreement among the participants in the survey, stating that in Greece the development of university repositories may “support co-operation” (64.7%), “support the scientific work” (82.4%) and “support other activities” (64.7%) within the university communities. Once again the experts did not indicate that this is a reason for increasing the competition between libraries and Greek publishers. In Table 1 (research question 17) and in Figure 3, the experts point of view is presented, regarding “law and regulation of digital and/or printed scientific material” aspect of open Access in Greece. For the research question 17, six of the participants did not express any opinion within the survey, stating that they need further information. However, the majority of the participants in the survey stated that “law and regulations” in the present form in Greece do not support “scientific work” and “co-operation”, and they are not sufficient for the development of “university repositories”, and “ETD’s management” within the Greek universities.



**Figure 2: Experts points of view regarding the “repository development” aspect of Open Access in Greece**

The experts expressed their views, for the distinct aspects of open access examined in the survey, in a free narrative manner through a set of five (5) open-ended questions attended each research issue (from 13 to 17). The participants frequently commented on the following: **a.** improvements have been achieved in Greece in terms of quality and quantity of the scientific information services over the last 6 to 8 years, **b.** open access in a cost – benefit analysis framework seems to prevail, reducing management cost (although significant investments ought to be made for the management of openness) and gradually reduce the “need” for costly agreements with international publishers, **c.** open access development may support improvements in Greek scholar production in both the Greek and other European languages, through better information provision and “free of subscription charges” high quality scientific communication, **d.** apprehension and support within a centrally regulated legal and investment framework for open access in Greece is required, while Greek scholars should support openness within the university communities. The participants representing academic libraries in the survey stated that open access may be used as a vehicle for further improvements (e.g. in grey bibliography management, technical reports distribution, maintenance cost reduction etc.) and of course professional development. Furthermore, the library directors stated that education and empowerment of the library staff may be a key factor for making openness a reality and that the aspects of open access studied here, may support co-operative initiatives within the academic community. It is worth mentioning that both Greek academic library directors and publishers which participated in this survey, support open access development, and although sceptical, mainly the publishers, they state that with proper regulation, e.g. embargo on the time of scholar material provision, public and private sectors can find common grounds for co-operation.

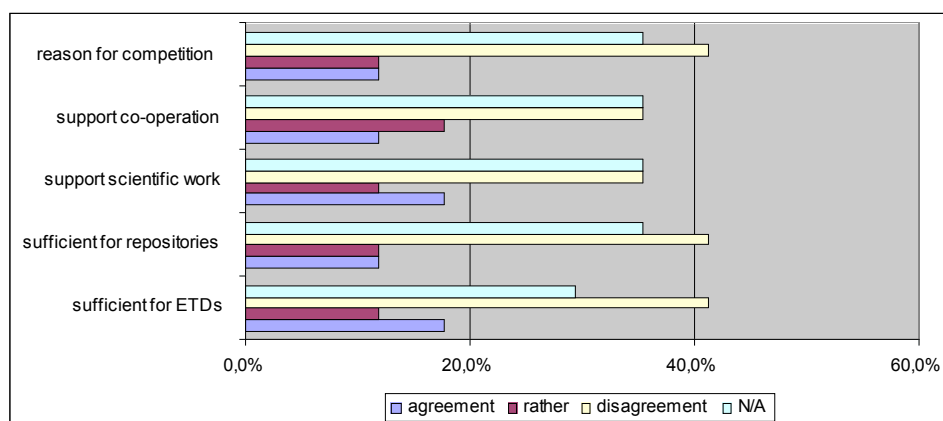


Figure 3: Experts points of view regarding the “law and regulation” aspect of Open Access in Greece

### 3 Discussion

The directors of the academic libraries pointed out that an important factor for ETDs management and repository development in the universities are the education and the empowerment of the library staff. Furthermore, they thought that centralized university initiatives may provide a way forward regarding the academic quality requirements for either printed or electronic scientific publications. Repositories, in particular may provide articles, pre-prints, post-prints, dissertations, PhDs, monographs or chapters from monographs, proceedings, rare material, to the scientific community, while ETD management undoubtedly enhance the quality of the scholar work production.

Some academic libraries in Greece have developed or they are developing ETD's and/or repositories: In the University of Macedonia in Thessalonica a repository has been developed and a mandate is regulating thesis and dissertations standards for digital submission. Similar efforts are undergoing in the University of Athens, for example at the Faculty of Law, where an ETDs management initiative is under development for the postgraduate courses of Civil Law. Similarly, in most Greek universities (e.g. University of Piraeus, Ionian University etc.) such initiatives are under consideration. Furthermore, a number of Greek universities have an academic press (e.g. University of Crete, University of Macedonia, etc.), that it is closely related to the academic community and the library. The academic libraries directors finally expressed their belief that the unrestricted reading, downloading, copying, sharing, storing linking and accessing scientific work, which open access incorporate, will lead to more efficient scientists and professionals in the future. However, a number of economical, political, legal and technical aspects ought to be addressed as soon as possible for satisfying user needs [14]. Universities ought to provide to all members access to the information; especially, to the information that is produced inside the university campus.

The international publishers usually resist to Open Access due to a. economic investments, b. issues of co-competition (cooperation and competition) with academic libraries c. legal and copyright issues. The STM publishers in Greece publish for a homogenous small market. They are engaged in printed scientific books and conference proceedings, and they collaborate with scholars and universities. Thus, the challenge for STM publishers in Greece is to realize and take advantage of open access rapid development, shaping a novel marketing strategy for the printed and/or the digital publications. It has been indicated that the author would prefer to communicate directly with the reader-user, without the intervention of the publisher. The scholarly community in Greece must become conscious that open access journals have high impact factors and thus, to gain their trust [15]. On the other hand, it has been pointed out, regarding publisher – author relation, that diachronically the publisher has been the one that takes the risk [16]. Innovation has been proved to be highly valued within the publishing industry [17].

## 4 Conclusions

A significant reason for the frustration surrounding openness in Greece is not so much the concept itself nor the economic issues involved, but the way openness is presented by the decision makers in scholarly communication. Open Access in Greece is possible, authorized, and beneficial for all those involved. The results drawn from this work may enlighten the main trends and the current issues for Open Access in Greece. It is clear that, if a rather unexpected co-operation -fruitful for open access development- among STM publishers, the academic libraries and the scholarly community in Greece is established, this should be on the ground of well defined roles and legal arrangements. A very interesting question to be further investigated in the future arises: Is Openness a threat for small publishing markets, such as the Greek STM market? Publishers in Greece “do not perceive openness as a threat” but on the contrary, if the roles are clearly defined and their investments secured, they might build upon openness innovative novel strategies and co-operative policies with the academic libraries in Greece.

Like in every innovation, such as the concept of open access, dilemmas and/or threats arise, because we don't really know what benefits we are getting from that. Hence, we should establish the research needed to find out the technological, political consequences of open access. Furthermore, empirical results can shed light on whether publishers and academic library directors may find in Greece a common ground for improving the quality of scholarly communication in Greece and in Europe.

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