

iConference 2020 Workshop Proposal

Title:

Open access in theory and practice: The theory-practice relationship and open scholarly communication

Organizers:

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Abstract (up to 150 words):

This proposed workshop will focus on two phenomena and explore the relationship between them: firstly, open-access (OA) publishing and dissemination of research outputs as part of scholarly communication; secondly, the interactions of theory and practice (and, theorists and practitioners), in the Social Sciences and Humanities in general and Library and Information Science in particular. It will explore the ways and extent that theory and practice have interacted in the development of OA approaches to scholarly communication, and discuss what this reveals about the nature of the OA phenomenon and the relationship between theory and practice. The workshop will be based on the findings of an 18-month research project completed in 2019 involving contributions from both theorists and practitioners. It will explore the significance of the project's findings for both theory and practice, for LIS and SSH theory and OA-focused practitioners, currently the focus of a monograph at the drafting stage.

Description (up to 1,000 words):

Purpose and Intended Audience:

This workshop will be aimed at academic researchers and practitioners with an interest and/or involvement in open access (OA) and open science. It will also be of interest to those working on or affected by the question of the relationship between theory and practice, in library and information science (LIS) in particular, and the social sciences and humanities (SSH) more generally. These different participants will be able to make a contribution to the session and it is hoped to attract a variety of them to attend in order to reflect a range of perspectives in the discussion. The workshop will combine the findings of a major research project with the contributions of participants to identify key trends which may inform future research agendas and practice-based activity.

The workshop will discuss the findings of an 18-month research project (funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council) investigating these issues. It will include a detailed discussion of the theoretical foundations of the study, a content analysis of relevant literature, and analysis of empirical data gathered during the research. The data comprises about 40 interviews with practitioners and policy makers associated with OA (funders, publishers, OA service providers, consultants, librarians and OA advocates) as well as researchers, about their views on the extent to which theory has been helpful in explaining the OA phenomenon and has been used to inform action by practitioners. The workshop will

include discussion of models theorizing the results of the project, not yet published or previously presented at conferences.

The research discussed in the workshop aims to contribute to a better understanding of OA itself, including the views of some of its key implementers, on the ideas which shape their perceptions of OA. It will also contribute to a wider understanding of the relationship between theory and practice, an ongoing focus for debate and policy. The workshop will cover the following themes: the nature of theory in LIS and SSH, the theory-practice ‘gap’ (as it is often characterized), theoretically-informed (and other) understandings of OA, the way in which OA policy and practice have been formed in relation to theory and other factors, and bridging the theory-practice gap.

The workshop will focus on five main issues:

1. How existing theory has been used, or new theory developed, in relation to the phenomenon of open access;
2. The extent to which practitioners (including policymakers, information professionals, publishers and others involved in implementing OA) been influenced by or have themselves influenced theoretically-informed accounts of OA in their attitudes, policies or activities relating to OA;
3. The nature, purpose and role of theory as perceived by researchers (particularly those who have incorporated theory or generated theory in their research on OA), practitioners and policymakers (involved in implementing OA);
4. What the (perceived) relationship between theory and practice tells us about OA as a phenomenon and movement;
5. What it tells us about the relationship between theory and practice in general, and how the relationship between them may be studied, for LIS in particular and SSH more widely.

Proposed Format:

The workshop will take the form of a set of facilitated discussions on major themes each introduced by a short presentation by the workshop organizers.

	Theme	Timing
1.	Welcome and introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions and workshop overview 	10 minutes
2.	Theory and open access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conceptions of ‘theory’ – what it is and what it is for (including various typologies of theory in LIS and SSH) • Exploration of the use of theory to explain OA, based on the peer-reviewed and practitioner literature 	45 minutes
	Break	20 minutes

3.	Theory and practice in open access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of empirical findings of the research – including perspectives practitioners and policy makers (funders, publishers, OA service providers, consultants, librarians and OA advocates), as well as theorists • The nature of ‘practice’ and ‘practitioners’ (particularly relating to OA), and the ‘theory-practice gap’ 	40 minutes
4.	Theory and practice in open access and beyond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Models of theory and practice in OA, LIS and SSH 	20 minutes

Engagement:

The workshop will be run as a conversation. Depending on numbers, there will be whole group or small group periods of discussion associated with each of the sessions above. All workshop attendees will be contacted in advance with background material. At the same time, discussion group leaders will be identified amongst attendees (those with a particular interest/expertise in the topic) and asked to prepare initial comments.

Goals or Outcomes:

It is envisaged the workshop will identify and clarify key current issues in this area of scholarly communication and as such highlight areas for future research. We hope that it will attract people who might take part in future research collaborations, which may or may not involve the session organizers. The session will also help to inform any practitioners of the value and applicability of theory, and help researchers consider how their theory-informed approaches are received and used by practitioners and how their interaction within and beyond the academy can be improved.

Relevance to the iConference:

The workshop, focusing as it does on the relationship between theory and practice in an important area of innovation in scholarly practice, fits well with the themes of the 2020 iConference. At the heart of open access is sustainability, both economic sustainability (aiming “to ensure cheaper, easier and better access to information”) and social sustainability (“to ensure equitable access in order to build a better (well informed) and healthy society”) (Chowdhury, 2013). Openness is an increasingly important means of creating a more sustainable scientific communication system and one that has the potential to benefit the academy globally, and also to create economic and societal benefits more widely. Understanding how this can be theorized and how that theory relates to practice is an important question for information science and other disciplines.

Duration:

The workshop is intended to be a half-day event.

Attendance:

The workshop is expected to be attended by 20-30 participants, although larger numbers can be accommodated.

Special Requirements:

There are no special requirements.