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► To cite this version:

Hans Dillaerts, Ghislaine Chartron. 'Héloïse': towards a co-ordinated ecosystem approach for the archiving of scientific publications?. *Learned Publishing*, 2013, 26 (3), pp.173-179(7). 10.1087/20130304 . sic_00834411

HAL Id: sic_00834411

https://archivesic.ccsd.cnrs.fr/sic_00834411

Submitted on 14 Jun 2013

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DILLAERTS Hans, CHARTRON Ghislaine (2013). 'Héloïse': towards a co-ordinated ecosystem approach for the archiving of scientific publications?. *Learned Publishing*, 2013, Vol. 26, No 3, pp. 173-179(7) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1087/20130304>

“Héloïse”: Towards a co-ordinated ecosystem approach for the archiving of scientific publications?

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Abstract:

With the continued development of open access policies, it is important to promote consensus-building projects with the various stakeholders. This article gives an account of how such collaboration has facilitated the construction of the project Héloïse. This project is a French information service dedicated to describing the policies of French publishers on the self-archiving of scientific publications. Héloïse represents a real tool of mediation whose development involved much debate between publishers and research stakeholders. This article seeks to demonstrate that the development of trust between the actors involved in the project was a major component of its success.

I Introduction

On 17 July 2012, the European Commission published a series of recommendations requiring open access to articles based on R&D financed by the EU: either by the researcher him/herself, by means of a deposit mandate in an open repository after a 6-month embargo for scientific, technical and medical (STM), and 12 months for humanities and social sciences (HSS) ('green' route); or by the publisher, in an open access or hybrid journal ('gold' route). In its desire to see 60% of all the European research publications freely available by 2016, the European Commission also recommended the Member States to provide similar mechanisms for the results of publically funded research by national programmes. [1].

In this context, consensus-building projects should be promoted by the various stakeholders involved in open access as pointed out recently by Geneviève Fioraso [2], French Minister of Higher Education and Research, during the open access conference organized by the Academic Consortium for Electronic Publications (COUPERIN) [3] on 24–25 January 2013. It is indeed important to promote all possible ways to develop open access. As a recent press release from the French Professional Group for B to B Information and Knowledge (GFII) [4] emphasizes, it is important to “find a balance between the largest possible dissemination of publications from the work of researchers and the existence of business models which allows a real publishing work and the promotion of scientific texts to all their potential readers”. [5]

The construction of a national information service dedicated to the open access policies of French publishers with both public and private actors requires dialogue and collaboration between the various parties involved. In 2010, following the publication of its report “Summary of Discussions of the Working Group on Open Access” [6], the GFII [4] Working Group on open access recommended the establishment of a “French language, shared, standardized and transparent information site to display each publisher’s policy with regard to open access repositories” [7].

The information service Héloïse [8] [9] was officially launched during the year 2012 and is the result of much mediation and numerous debates between publishers and research stakeholders. The purpose of this information service (hosted by the Centre for Direct Scientific Communication (CCSD) [10] and with a contractual relationship with the “French Publishers Association” (SNE) [11] and the “National Federation of the specialized Information Press” (FNPS) [12]) is to display the policies of French publishers concerning the self-archiving of scientific publications.

II The open access embargoes: an issue at the heart of the project

Massive and systematic deposition of scientific publications in open repositories may have a negative impact on the economy of scientific publishing for it could lead to progressive cancellation of journal subscriptions. For the moment, there is still no raw data on the impact of self-archiving [13] on the market of scientific publishing in the long and medium term: we remain in the realm of the hypothetical. On these issues, the publisher is alone with all the doubts he might have: cancellation of journal subscriptions, loss of profits, anxieties concerning financial balances. [6] [14] [15] [16][17]

It is important to reflect on the setting up of sustainable business models to enable the coexistence of archiving with scientific publishing. This issue is all the more important because a certain number of national publishers, especially small and medium-sized national publishers in the field of HSS, are already very fragile. [18]. Large publishing groups account for the majority of publications in Scientific, Technical and Medical (STM) sciences on a global scale. This is however not the case for the French publishing industry in HSS. One of the present authors (GC) describes the general situation of this sector as follows: "A recent study in France confirmed the very (perhaps too) atomized research publishing in the HSS, by counting journal SHS 1.34 per research unit. A study realized in 2005 for the Ministry of Research led us also to highlight this atomicity of this sector in several countries : the vast majority of publishers of these three countries publish only one or two journals, the situation being extreme in Spain, a bit more nuanced in France where a core of publishers accumulate between 3 and 9 titles. The distribution between public and private was also very different by these countries." [15]

The development of the green road is a major part of achieving open access in certain fields including humanities and social sciences where the author-pays model, often funded by research laboratories seems unlikely and certainly discriminatory. Embargo periods "represent a compromise between the model of "pure" [19] "green" open access and the legitimate interests of publishers" [6]. It should be emphasized however that embargoes are only meaningful if they are respected by the authors. Several studies show that authors have little respect for the publishers' self-archiving policies because of both ignorance and indifference [20] [21] [22] [23].

Enforcement of the terms of deposit is necessary for the development of mutual trust between the various stakeholders in open access. The information service Héloïse relies on the assumption that the adoption and the display of transparent editorial self-archiving policies contribute to regulate the self-archiving practices in France.

III The existing information services: State of the art

Various information services exist to accompany the self-archiving practices of the researchers. SHERPA/RoMEO is thus known as an international reference. This service originated in the RoMEO Project (Rights Metadata for Open archiving) which was a project funded by the UK Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) in 2002–03 (1 August 2002–31 July 2003) to investigate copyright issues of self-archiving in the context of the Open Archives Initiative protocol for Metadata Harvesting protocol (OAIPMH) [24]. The creation of institutional repositories in order to archive, to make freely available and disseminate the results of academic research through the OAI-PMH was not a technical problem, but a legal issue [25]. As noted in the final RoMEO report, " if academics sign away their right to self-archive through journal publisher Copyright Transfer Agreements [...], the whole process may collapse at the first hurdle " [25]. The RoMEO project elaborated a list of copyright transfer agreements of 70 major publishers around the world to analyze if they allow authors to self-archive pre-prints and / or post-prints of their articles. SHERPA (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access) subsequently developed a information service for the results of this project through a searchable and exploitable database, and guarantees the continuity of the SHERPA/RoMEO service.

There is also a number of national projects. In Australia, the OAKList information service [26] was launched on 8th February 2008 and now contains more than 640 records. This was followed, in January 2009, by the construction of Dulcinea [27] in Spain with the project "Open access to scientific outputs in Spain: Current status, open access advocacy and implementation of open access policies". Dulcinea contains more than 1480 records. In both projects, there is a strong desire to put forward the policies of national publishers (and journals). The conference paper "Dulcinea: Copyright policies and types of access to spanish scientific journals" says : "ROMEO is a service to academic authors and repository managers around the world that summarises publisher's policies and copyright transfer agreements relating to open access archiving. It is still a long way from listing all existing journals, though especially those published at the national level and in other languages." [28].

Dulcinea has also been a source of inspiration for the French information service because it was the first project that is really independent of SHERPA/RoMEO: it is a national information service focused on the needs of Spanish researchers, institutions, and publishers. Dulcinea's data collection and database are independent. The Dulcinea project also provides an interesting innovation: the colour code is assigned to the journal and not to the publisher as is the case for SHERPA/RoMEO. A publisher can have multiple policies for self-archiving: it can be green for one journal and white (archiving not formally supported) [29] for another. It is the title of the journal which is important for the reference and not the publisher. As such, the database of Dulcinea can be considered as more representative and complete.

	SHERPA RoMEO	Dulcinea	OAKList
Involved stakeholders	Consortium of British Universities	Initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science	Australian project in the framework of the Open Access to Knowledge (OAK) Law Project
Project managed by	Dedicated staff	The research group "Open Access to Science" composed by academics	Librarians and legal researchers from the University of Technology Queensland
Objectives :			
To promote the development of open access	Yes	Yes	Yes
To list and centralize the policies of international publishers concerning self-archiving	Yes	No	No
To take an inventory of the policies of the national publishers	No	Yes	Yes
To classify the publishers according to their editorial policies	Yes	Yes	Yes
To promote better practices at the national level	No	Yes	Yes

To provide a service focused on the needs of national actors	No	Yes	Yes
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Table 1: Comparative table of existing information services

IV Features of the information service Héloïse

Héloïse specifically relies on the contribution of publishers: they participated in its establishment, they provide information about their self-archiving policies, and they sit on the management committee. The hosting of the information service by the CCSD is justified insofar as this unit of the CNRS already plays a major supporting role in the development of research infrastructures. By hosting and maintaining the service, the CCSD confirms its important role in the development of open repositories in France [30].

The establishment of Héloïse is not an isolated product: this project based on trust could never have succeeded without the "prior knowledge" gained by the GFII Working Group on Open Access: the working meetings for a period of 2 years and the direct exchanges between participants favored a certain degree of trust within the group. The dialogue process is more likely to have results because there have been meetings of the group over a long period: interactions between participants of the same group at regular intervals will normally increase trust of the participants in others, in itself and also in the process of dialogue [31].

Héloïse is not set up against the publishers, but with the publishers. The main advantage of this information service for the publishers is to try to accompany directly the authors in creating new self-archiving practices. The publishers are responsible for putting online their self-archiving policies: as a result, they ensure directly the quality of the data. If SHERPA/RoMEO is a good indicator for discovering the self-archiving policies of the publishers, the researcher seeking to deposit his article in an open repository must, however, make an additional check on the official website of the publisher and/or journal to verify if he is authorized to do so. One cannot always rely on the data quality of SHERPA/RoMEO's service.

Héloïse can also be seen as an awareness tool for researchers on the issue of open access, and more specifically on the self-archiving practices. It will be easier for authors to know the policies of publishers.

Héloïse also aims to facilitate the management of institutional repositories (and digital resources in general) in accordance with the editorial policies of the publishers. Professional mediators (information professionals in particular) can better supervise and guide the author-researcher in the process of self-archiving.

V. Héloïse : State of the art of the recorded policies

As of March 2013, 32 publishers and 299 journals [32] (all disciplines) are listed in the database of Héloïse.

Journals which allow authors to deposit their articles in an open repository

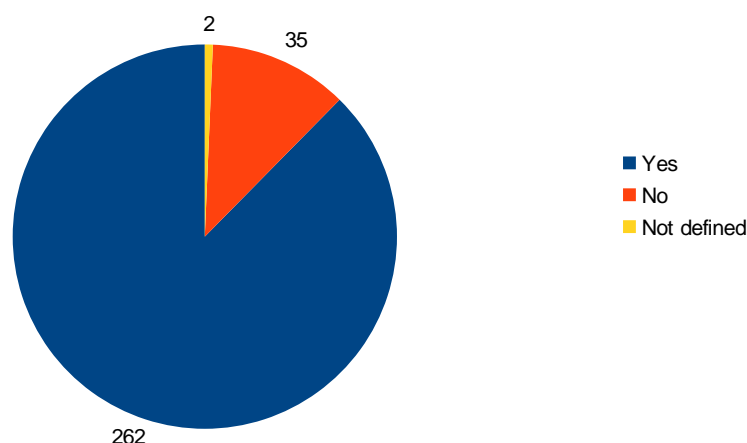


Chart 1: Journals which allow authors to deposit their articles in an open repository

262 journals, i.e. 87.63%, allow authors to deposit their articles in an open archive.

Summary of the rights granted by the journals

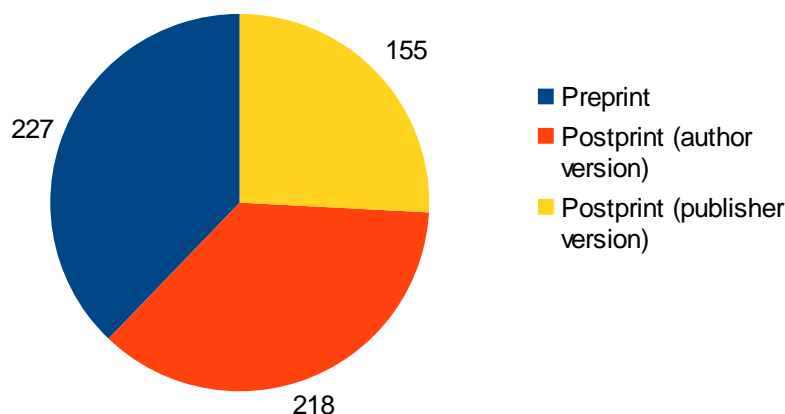


Chart 2: Summary of the rights granted by the journals

Journals favor the archiving of the preprint and the author version. While 218 journals (72.91%) allow authors to deposit the author version in an open repository, only 155 journals (51.84%) allow authors to deposit the publisher version in an open repository. Of these 155 journals, 51 allow authors to deposit the publisher version in an open repository without an embargo period; 6 with an embargo of 6 months or 12 months; 20 with an embargo of 2 years; 71 with an embargo of 3 years and 7 with an embargo of 5 years.

HSS journals are more liberal in allowing authors to deposit. For example 72.16% of HSS journals allow the deposit of the publisher version against 22.76% of STM journals.

VI. Suggestions for improving Héloïse

There is no public /private representation of the journals. We wanted to find out more about this, and so we have done the research ourselves. The results are based on the data we collected in the database of Héloïse. We identified 16 public publishers and 16 private publishers.

	Number of publishers	Number of published journals	Percentage
Public publisher	16	31	10,26%
Private publisher	16	271	89,74%

Table 2: number of journals by type of publisher

Moreover, the journals are not represented in the database according to their scientific field. We identified 176 HSS journals and 123 STM journals. We expect both these deficiencies (i.e. type of publisher and subject field) to be remedied in later editions.

Another interesting fact is that the information service Héloïse did not incorporate the colour codes established by SHERPA/RoMEO. No colour code is assigned to the journals. The benefit for publishers is that the risks of stigmatization related to the existence of colour codes are removed. The disadvantage for the authors is that the colour codes could have facilitated the use of the information service: if they preferred the journals that authorize self-archiving, the identification of ‘green’ journals would have been easier. A further useful improvement, for example, would have been if researchers could have access to a multi-criteria search which offers the possibility of associating color codes and areas of knowledge. For the moment only two types of research have been integrated the information service: on the journal title [33] and on the name of the publisher [34].

In order to maximize the use of Héloïse’s data, the information service will provide interoperability with SHERPA/RoMEO and Dulcinea, although this is not yet functional. Matching of the SHERPA/RoMEO and Héloïse data is required. To avoid all confusion, the two information services must display the same editorial policies for the French journals, which is not yet the case. There are 29 French publishers present in SHERPA/RoMEO, [35], but only eight of these are listed in Héloïse. From these 8 publishers, only 3 of them have data which correspond (approximately) to the editorial policies displayed on Héloïse.

VII Conclusion

Héloïse is a consensus-building project based on trust. By engaging various stakeholders, the project can already be considered a success. The CCSD and the publishers (through SNE and the SNPS) have succeeded in finding common ground. Given the tensions that existed between the publishers and the CCSD in the past, this outcome was far from certain. These actors succeeded in initiating a dialogue and bringing to fruition a united action. However, we do not yet have usage statistics and therefore it is difficult to know how much the information

service is currently being used. For the moment the promotion phase of Héloïse is still ongoing.

Héloïse is an information service which should match the needs of both the publishers and the researchers. As the statement of the SNE emphasized at the beginning of 2012, this information service "[...] is the response to authors' expectations on having transparency on the rules set by the French publishers concerning the deposit of scientific articles. Indeed, other platforms exist in the Anglo-Saxon world (SHERPA/RoMEO) or in Spain (Dulcinea), but cannot give such acute and reliable information, especially as they are not necessarily provided by the publishers themselves." [36]

For the moment, only a few publishers put a lot of effort in the provision of this service information. There are still few journals listed in Héloïse. Only publishers can provide data on their self-archiving policies, so the success and the interest of Héloïse depend on their willingness to participate. Therefore the publishers must be encouraged to participate wholeheartedly to the proper functioning of the information service. One should also attract the attention of the research communities and the information professionals on the usefulness of Héloïse in order to overcome the skepticism or the rejection which some of them might feel, particularly the open access activists. For example, it proves difficult to get presentations on Héloïse accepted or debated at OA conferences.

Some open access activists such as Thierry Chanier [37] and Stevan Harnad [38], have expressed serious reservations about Héloïse because they have the impression that the information service is under the control of the publishers. The fact that publishers provide data on their open access policies to ensure, among other things, the quality of the data, does not mean that Héloïse is under the control of the publishers. It is a consensus-building project and as such both the publishers and the CCSD are stakeholders of the information service.

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