Ordering Institutional Repository Priorities vs. Breaking Through Open Doors

Let me start by pointing out the part of Kennison & Shreeve's (K&S's) argument with which one can easily agree: Yes, Institutional Repositories (IRs) can and should be used for other kinds of content besides an institution's own peer-reviewed journal article output -- including its grey literature, theses, undergraduate research, and research data, along with their digital preservation. Why not? There's plenty of empty space in IRs, and these are all valid and worthwhile contents.

But over a decade has gone by since those "most influential and visionary early essays" recommending IRs "for the stewardship of a wide range of institutional output (Lynch 2003; cf. Harnad 2003)" and as "ways for libraries to support publishing functions (Crow 2002; cf. Harnad 2002)." If the presence of those other kinds of content did make "libraries.. better placed to implement green OA… mandates," then that effect has not been very big, because most IRs still have a lot of empty space where institutional peer-reviewed journal article output ought to be. (Library publishing function support remains close to nil – but that continues to be irrelevant to the problem of making institutional refereed research output OA.)

There is also nothing to disagree with in K&S's belief "that provision of open access to [institution's own peer-reviewed journal article output] is an important and critical role of the IR." But we may have more than a semantic disagreement about what K&S mean by "priorities," and we certainly have a substantive disagreement about the *order* of those priorities, as well as a profound strategic disagreement about how to achieve them.

K&S correctly state that "[t]he argument.. is [about] whether it should be the *primary* role of the IR" to provide OA to the institution's own peer-reviewed journal article output. K & S believe that "even in the case of an institutional mandate… [OA] should only be one priority of the repository, not its sole purpose." And there's the semantics: Arguing that OA should be an IR's *first* priority is not the same as arguing that it's an IR's *sole* priority.

So let's get to the point: the reason OA to refereed articles should be the first priority for an IR is that OA is (1) urgent and (2) faces obstacles from publishers, whereas despositing the grey literature, undergraduate research, and research data faces no opposition from publishers: the doors are wide open, and authors need merely walk in, if they wish. With articles, they feel they

can't. (Theses are a special case, because making them OA may reduce their chances of being accepted for publication as a book, but there the solution is simple and obvious: deposit them as Restricted Access (author only) instead of OA if you plan to try to publish them as a book.)

The reason OA is urgent is that potential research [uptake, usage, and impact](#) -- hence applications, progress and productivity -- are being lost, daily, cumulatively, some of it probably irretrievably, because the only users with access to journal articles are those whose institutions can afford subscription access to the journal in which it was published (and [most institutions cannot afford access to most journals](#)). This needless access-denial and research impact loss has been going on ever since the online medium has made it possible to put an end to it. Among the losers are not just research, researchers and their institutions, but the tax-payers who fund the research.

The obstacles that OA faces are [journal OA embargoes](#) and authors' fears that providing OA violates copyright. There are no such obstacles for grey literature, undergraduate research, and research data (nor for theses not aspiring to be published as books). Yet there are ways to overcome both obstacles – if institutions adopt the right OA mandate.

K&S write that "many libraries have concentrated on green OA to fill their IRs – with or without mandates, always with mixed success." (K&S don't define "green" OA, and it's not even clear why they use the color-term, originally coined to distinguish "green" OA self-archiving from "gold" OA publishing, which K&S do not go on to discuss at all.) It may be true that many libraries without mandates have concentrated on filling their IRs with OA articles without success. But it can't be true that many have concentrated on filling them *with* mandates, because out of the more than 2500 universities and colleges in the US, [only 25 of them](#) (1%) as yet have any OA mandate at all, let alone the right OA mandate (Gargouri et al 2012).

K&S rightly note that "as studies have shown, …a mandate… without teeth (e.g., funder monies withheld)… does not result in more content being deposited than does unmandated deposit." But instead of going on to propose the concentrating on the right solution – promoting the adoption of mandates with "teeth" -- K&S recommend concentrating on filling IRs with the other kinds of contents mentioned till it "becomes part of the fabric of the university… Then, *if and when a mandate comes into play* [emphasis added] - whether institutional or funder - the IR, already a known and trusted entity, is in the best possible place to aid in the fulfillment of that mandate."

The reasoning here is not apparent to me (though it does call to mind the proverbial persistent search for the key by the well-lit lamp-post). Yet there's no reason to be in the dark about the right strategy; it's known, it's been tested, and it works:

As the sole means of submission for institutional performance assessment, and as a condition of research agency funding, it needs to be mandated that the final refereed draft of all articles must be deposited in the author's institutional repository *immediately upon acceptance for publication* (Harnad 2011; 2013a,b). Setting access to the deposit immediately as OA should be strongly recommended, but if the author wishes to comply with a publisher OA embargo, access to the immediate-deposit can instead be set as Restricted Access (author only). During the embargo, the repositories have a facilitated eprint-request Button with which users can request and authors can provide an individual eprint for research purposes with one click each (Sale et al 2012).

The immediate-deposit mandate (Rentier & Thirion 2011) – called the "Liège model," after the first university to adopt it – works. It raises the deposit rate from the baseline for unmandated deposit (about 20%) to 60% within a year or two, and then it continues to climb toward 100%. The University of Liège immediate-deposit mandate is complemented by an immediate-deposit mandate by the Belgian funding council, FNRS. This is the mandate model recommended by BOAI-10 and HOAP as well as by HEFCE and BIS in the UK. Immediate-deposit is also a clause in the Harvard/MIT (copyright retention) mandate.

All the evidence suggests that there is no point in just continuing to collect other kinds of contents in the hope that they will somehow lead to an OA mandate and compliance. The first and foremost priority of those who seek to fill IRs with their primary intended content should be to work toward the adoption of the Liège model mandate by their institutions as well as their funders and then to implement an effective monitoring system to ensure compliance: Alongside their refereed final drafts, authors should be asked to deposit the dated acceptance letter so as to verify immediate deposit (within, say, six weeks of acceptance). Evidence already suggests that compliance will be timely (see Figure 1).
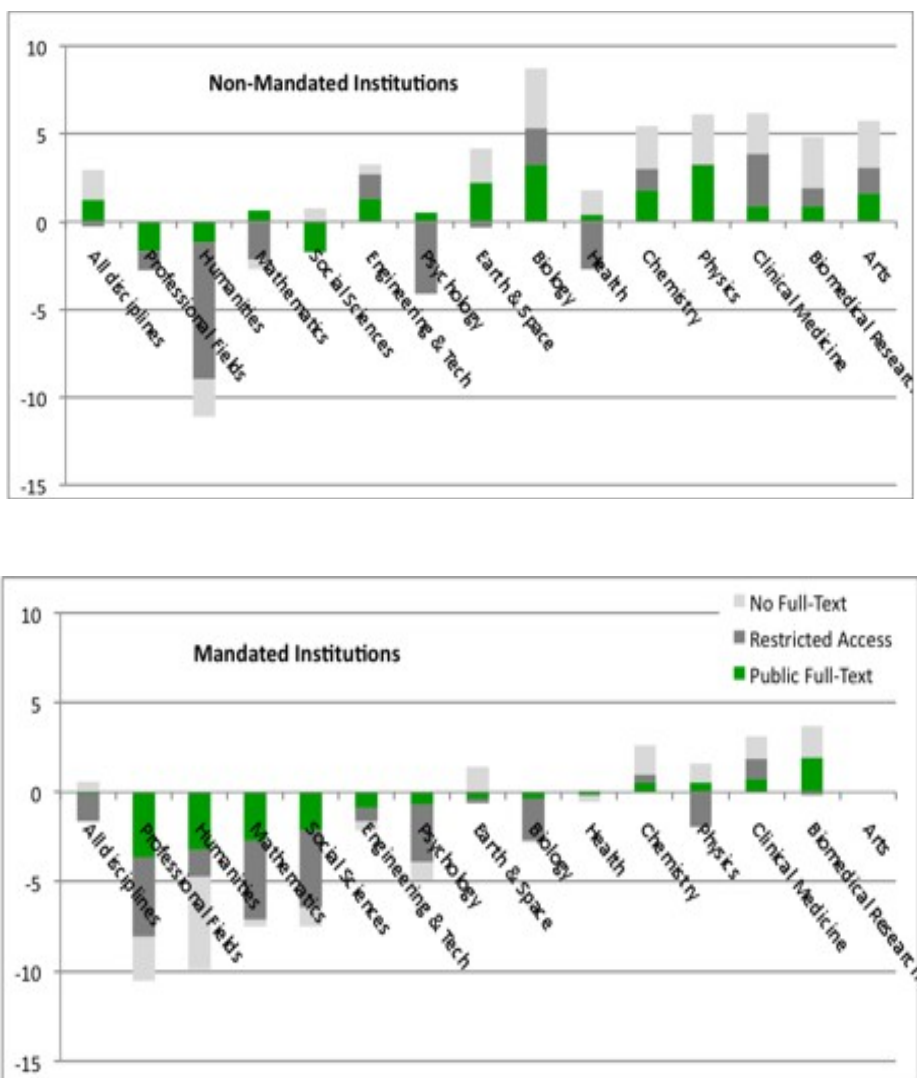
Figure 1. **Average Deposit Latency for Unmandated and Mandated UK Repositories for Publication Year 2011, By Discipline**. The average deposit date minus publication date for Public FullText (OA), Restricted Access, and metadata only (No FullText) deposits in UK repositories was +3 months for unmandated deposits and -1.8 months for mandated deposits. Titles for all articles published in 2011 by UK first authors indexed by Thomson-Reuters Web of Science (WoS) were searched for in all UK Institutional Repositories indexed by ROAR. Results are presented by discipline. Note that publication dates are later than acceptance dates and actual date of appearance may be even later. Note also that this figure only shows size of delay, not the number of deposits; however, for Arts there were no Mandated deposits at all in this sample. (Data from Gargouri, Y., Lariviere, V., Gingras, Y., Brody, T., Carr, L., & Harnad, S., in preparation)

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