

Suber (2012) introduces his readers to the concept of open access (OA) in his book titled *Open Access*. He argues why it is a better way of sharing knowledge, especially as it relates to scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles. Because of the internet and author consent, OA is available free and online for readers who need research. Suber adds that OA is not held to most copyright and licensing constraints, which helps distribute knowledge quicker than conventional methods. One drawback of OA is that many people still misunderstand it. However, Suber clarifies what OA is and is not in his book. Then, he presents a case why it is beneficial to researchers, authors, publishers, and other groups and why we need to increase it. Suber's book interests me because of my past work in academia as a scholar and a college administrator. In short, I expect to learn more about this concept and how it is having an impact on scholarship, discovery, and innovation.

Suber's main argument is that he wants readers to understand the economic, academic, and societal benefits of OA in the digital era. The internet has changed the publishing landscape and has transformed how scholars can share their work. OA is now allowing users to freely access online research and other resources that historically have been restricted, often locked behind toll-access journals. OA is about removing barriers, such as expensive subscriptions, excessive copyright and licensing restraints. In essence, it is open to all users: researchers, faculty, librarians, policy decision-makers, students, and the general public.

Suber wants readers to better understand OA, its benefits, and the implications of the movement. For example, one major issue that universities have been dealing with has been the rising cost of scholarly journals. As journal subscriptions continue to increase, they are becoming a hardship for many well-funded libraries (pp. 30-33). As a viable solution, OA not only permits users to obtain the literature faster, but it may help stabilize the financial concerns. Leading the

way for OA in the United States is the University of California (UC). Recently, the UC library system cancelled its contract with Elsevier, a major publishing company (Fox & Brainard, 2019). Three key reasons exist that explain why UC made this unexpected move: 1. high subscription journal costs 2. paywalls 3. Elsevier's unwillingness to permit UC's publically funded research to be OA. Not only would Suber argue in support of UC's decision, he would underscore OA as a far better alternative for scientific discovery and our society.

Interestingly, most scholars who get their work published in peer-reviewed journals do not get paid and sign away their intellectual property rights. Although this practice may cause some new assistant professors to cringe, it has been a long-held tradition in academia (p. 10). With OA, university faculty generally write for impact and want to share their research findings with as many people as possible. In many cases, the goals are to have individuals read and build upon the original research. By doing so, authors can experience two benefits of OA, such as a greater number of citations and faster impact (p. 145). With this backdrop, reuse rights become equally important. Thus, this practice of allowing others to freely access research findings is necessary for scholarship, engagement, and innovation. Since authors who write journal articles are not getting paid, OA seems logical because there is not any financial risk. Consequently, Suber wants authors, administrators, and policymakers to understand that OA can be a sustainable business model with economic benefits (p. 133).

Suber structures his argument in a logical manner while keeping his audience in mind. He is cognizant that his target audiences for this book are busy people. From the beginning, it is clear that Suber is an advocate for OA; so readers have a clear idea of his position. He begins by introducing OA in a manner that is understandable to most readers. Because there has been widespread misunderstanding of OA, he systematically explains what it is and is not as well as

what makes it possible (pp. 4-27). Suber develops his foundation for his argument with facts, so readers see his reasoning behind his claims.

Suber also helps us understand OA's background and some of its other challenges, which puts the movement in perspective. For instance, he references the Budapest statement, Berlin declaration, and the Bethesda statement, which are prominent initiatives that support the OA movement (pp. 7-8). They helped shape the definition of OA as we understand it today. In regard to the critics of OA, Suber approaches these individuals with an open mind and sees these situations as learning opportunities. As an academician, one has to anticipate other viewpoints. Admittedly, Suber has been engaging in OA debates and discussions for many years. For example, two of the most significant challenges is convincing opponents that OA is not about weakening quality or minimizing the peer review process (pp. 20-21). Nor does it negatively impact copyright, reduce academic freedom, change plagiarism rules, or disparage conventional publishers (pp. 21-24). Therefore, Suber focuses on sharing his message through his writing and presentations with evidence, so readers can begin to understand the basics of OA.

Later, a distinction is made between gratis and libre OA as well as gold and green OA. In plain terms, gold OA is provided by journals and manages its own peer review while green OA is achieved by repositories (p. 53). This is more about the delivery system. On the other hand, gratis and libre OA are about user rights. Gratis OA only eliminates price barriers; libre OA accomplishes that goal and opens some permission doors, too (pp. 65-75). Therefore, Suber adds clarity to the concept so that most readers would be able to grasp some of its core features. Finally, Suber concludes with a discussion on the future of OA and provides a self-help chapter.

Suber substantiates his claims with research studies and other credible academic sources. For instance, he cites the SOAP project survey (2011), which found that 89% of researchers with

various expertise felt that OA journals helped their academic disciplines (p. 137). He also cites Thomas Scientific from 2004 where they revealed that exceptional OA journals with high-impact are increasing (p. 50). In addition, Suber challenges the belief of some publisher who have feared that if they move to OA that this will negatively impact their revenues. However, Suber counters this claim by explaining that hybrid or mixed models exist that still give publishing companies traditional ways of earning revenue. (pp. 140-141). Although this model does not accomplish all of OA's objectives, it is a move in the right direction. Likewise, payment can be reimagined with OA journals where reader subscription fees can be eliminated, and author publication fees can be added upfront. However, not all full-OA journals have publication fees; in fact, most do not (p. 142). Instead, other OA journals earn revenue by charging for their print editions. So, options currently exist to address this business concerns. Altogether, when Suber is not citing other experts, he is referencing his previous publications throughout this book to prove his point.

Suber is persuasive in his presentation of OA by being measured, thoughtful, and solutions-oriented. One key aspect that I appreciate is Suber's scholarly approach to OA and how he builds on the conceptual framework. Although a greater degree of attention is placed on journal articles, Suber eventually argues that OA may even benefit some book authors. For example, it may potentially increase their sales of printed versions and increase their audience size for scholarly monographs when the chance of royalties are lower (pp. 106-107). As with this example, readers can get an idea of the potential of OA, which may go beyond what they initially expected of this concept.

Another example is that time is on the side of the OA movement (p. 167). Like the internet when it was new, users need time to become familiar with OA's intricacies. Suber presents a convincing argument for OA, but realizes it takes a period of time for newcomers to overcome

their resistance to something new. Thus, his writing reflects this understanding and influences readers in a way that makes them want to be a part of the solution.

As a former university professor, department chair, and dean of faculty, I am a proponent of OA. I respect what it has to offer academia and the general public. More universities and funding agencies are creating OA policies based on good practices (p. 78). These policies can be seen as encouragement or in some cases as mandate policies. As Suber noted (p. 89), most researchers support OA mandates as revealed in Swan and Brown's (2004) study.

Based on some of the challenges, the current traditional subscription price model is not sustainable by itself. Full open access or hybrid journals can be part of the solution (pp. 140-142). We know OA benefits researchers; even publishers with paywalls are willing to acknowledge this fact (p. 133). At the same time, it is evident that libraries want a better subscription deal than they are currently getting from the big academic publishers. Thus, innovative options must be considered where open access to research supported by high-quality peer review is the goal.

Researchers, faculty, and students need access to cutting-edge findings. I argue that scientific knowledge is meant to be shared freely and immediately with other researchers, practitioners, and the general public, especially if taxpayer money is being used to finance the research. As other countries experiment with OA, there are societal and global implications. Suber noted access problems are even worse in underdeveloped countries (p. 30). Therefore, OA has the potential to benefit these researchers and to reduce social inequities where there are more barriers to scholarly and scientific information.

The internet allows users to share such information much more easily than the days of pre-internet. Since this technology is available to many users today, consumer expectations have

changed in our era of online access. In an evolving publishing market, more lay readers, researchers, and authors are challenging old paradigms and demanding the removal of access barriers.

Suber is an academic leader and champion of the OA movement. Although he may have a built-in bias, he presents his case in a logical and fair-minded manner. His claims are supported by empirical evidence, which drives his argument and adds credibility to his presentation. For example, Suber reports that roughly 25% of peer-reviewed journals are considered OA, although this percentage is growing as more faculty members become aware to it (p. 91). In addition, OA appears to level the playing field by removing permission and price barriers (pp. 4-5). On the other hand, Suber does not overstate the intent of OA. For instance, he does not suggest that OA is universal access, which deals with concerns such as disability access obstacles, connectivity walls, censorship hurdles, and language barriers (pp. 26-27). Consequently, he does not make the claim that OA is a panacea for every situation in the publishing industry.

The information in Suber's book complements intellectual property rights. For example, OA does not violate fair use or diminish copyright. Authors of scholarly work can simply consent to OA and still retain their copyright. Furthermore, they can pursue pure OA journals instead of toll-access ones. With full OA journals, authors' articles are made available under Creative Commons licensing (p. 68). This public copyright license can provide some flexibility to faculty before they publish their work. Suber adds that CC-BY is highly recommended as the preferred license for OA publishing and is supported by professional OA organizations (p. 69). The CC-BY license allows readers to use, distribute, tweak, or remix the work as long as credit is given to the original creator. For scientists and other scholars, this license is an appropriate option in most situations. Finally, OA does not conflict with works in the public domain since they are not

protected by intellectual property law.

Suber's book on OA met the expectations that I stated in the beginning of my review. Although this book is meant to be an introduction to the topic, I now have a much deeper understanding of OA and what it has to offer researchers/scholars, publishers, and the general public. Arguably, the focus is returning to knowledge sharing as opposed to restricting important scientific findings with a paywall. Consequently, diverse OA funding models will need to be explored to ensure the best solutions for the various stakeholders. Based on current trends, we should continue to see a steady global movement towards OA for scholarly and scientific information.

Reference

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