OpenAIRE: Opening Peer Review

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OpenAIRE (https://www.openaire.eu/), the European digital infrastructure for open scholarship, brings together more than 50 institutions to foster and further the implementation of open science across Europe. It is a sociotechnical initiative, comprised of both technical and human support activities, including research into new means and methods of bringing transparency, accountability and re-usability to research. One aspect of this work is OpenAIRE’s investigation of new models of peer review to literature and beyond. The presentation will detail three interlinked strands of work, undertaken throughout 2015-2016, which together give a rounded assessment of the opportunities and challenges that OPR presents:

- **Definition:** As has been consistently noted (Ford, 2013; Hames, 2014; Ware, 2011), OPR has neither a standardised definition nor an agreed schema of its features and implementations. OpenAIRE has been working to bring coherence to this fractured landscape by mapping the interlinked aspects of more than 120 definitions from the academic literature. Based on this work, we have defined OPR as an umbrella term describing a variety of innovations which "open up" the traditional peer review process by modifying one or more of these aspects to make it more inclusive, transparent and/or accountable. Its primary elements are: open identities (authors and reviewers are aware of each other's identities); open reports (review reports are published alongside the relevant article); and open participation (the wider community to able to contribute to the review process). Other, secondary, characteristics are open Interaction, open pre-review manuscripts, open final-version commenting and open platforms. These elements are often complementary, and can be combined in various ways to produce a broad continuum of ‘openness’ in OPR.

- **Survey:** In the context of its Open Peer Review activities OpenAIRE held a survey in Autumn 2016 to find out the views on OPR of a broad range of stakeholders, including authors, editors, reviewers and publishers. The survey garnered over 3,000 full responses, delivering a wealth of information about attitudes to OPR, its various configurations, and stakeholders' expectations about the expected effects of OPR on the system of scholarly communication. The results show the majority of respondents to be in favour of OPR becoming mainstream scholarly practice, as they also are for other areas of Open Science, like Open Access and Open Data. We also observe surprisingly high levels of experience with OPR amongst our sample: three out of four (76.2%) of our respondents said that they had taken part in an OPR process as either author or reviewer or editor.

- **Experiments:** Finally, in 2015/2016, OpenAIRE played host to three innovative experiments that aimed to promote OPR and study its effects in the context of digital infrastructures for open scholarship: (1) Open Scholar CIC and partners built and implemented an OPR plug-in for repositories; (2) The Winnower facilitated OPR by integrating their platform with repositories like Zenodo, as well as testing financial
incentives to encourage open participation in the sharing of ‘journal club’ reviews and documenting user experiences via survey. In addition, a third experiment was already specified in the OpenAIRE2020 project proposal; and (3) OpenEdition used open services like hypotheses.org and Wordpress to model a workflow to develop blog articles into peer reviewed publications in the Humanities and Social Sciences. These successful experiments show the transformative potential of OPR but also flag the challenges ahead, including user engagement, the difficulties of changing incentive systems, and quality assurance. Pre-print available (OpenAIRE, 2016).

References