

Hyde Park Debate Rebuttal to Angela Cochrane's Opening Statement Brandon Butler 10/31/18

Angela makes a variety of interesting arguments in her opening statement, but they all miss the point. The resolution is a mandate, not a prediction. We resolve that "All scholarship **must** be free" not "All scholarship **will soon** be free." Endorsing the resolution is mandating the result, not predicting it.

And that's important, because all of the challenges Angela raises threaten to keep us stuck in this dysfunctional, wasteful model for years to come. We need a mandate to cut through the inertia and unleash the creativity that's needed to develop new models and tools to support free scholarship. Once we mandate that scholarship be set free, her objections evaporate.

Angela suggests that setting scholarship free would be frustrated by diversity of opinion, across disciplines, countries and funders, and that the humanities in particular would suffer. In fact, once we set scholarship free, diversity would let the disciplines learn from each other, the way many have started preprint servers based on physical scientists' use of ArXiv. Diversity would be a source of strength.

Humanists in particular would benefit. While some models of free access may be an awkward fit for them, the current model is already toxic. The explosive growth in cost for STEM content has driven library purchasing of monographs and other humanities content steadily down for decades. Humanists will certainly be better off in a world where libraries aren't paying millions for access to prestige STEM journals.

Angela asks which "scholarship" should be freely available. Simple: All of it. All of it is written by authors with no expectation of royalties from licenses. If we set it all free, the vendors and service providers who support it will have to compete on quality and price, not entrenched copyright monopolies. Creativity and competition will be unleashed right alongside knowledge.

Finally, Angela mentions that academic authors sometimes misunderstand or mistrust open licenses, or they prefer restrictive ones. Here we have some education to do, for sure. For example, passing off another's work as your own is clearly barred by the CC-BY license (among other things). Mandating that all scholarship be free would help allay these fears, because *no one* would be able to profit commercially merely from selling access to scholarship. And *anyone* could easily use the scholarly literature and detect plagiarists and identify the true progenitors of ideas.

The status quo is much worse for authors, whether they realize it or not. Big commercial actors profit massively by free-riding on academic work, at the expense of academic institutions; they deny access to millions who can't afford it; they bar authors themselves from sharing their work on their own websites, repositories, or academic social networks. Scholars may be wary of a world where their work is free, but they are much worse off in a world where it is locked away.