

State of OA*Continued from page 9*

er in print or in digital form) and it is clear that they could make that research available through OA channels, then indeed there no longer appears to be any reason for AAA to exist. But if members perceive that they pay membership fees to AAA and its sections in order to sustain the infrastructure that makes our research better, makes it accessible beyond the membership, promotes it, and allows a hundred other services that are currently not accounted for in any meaningful way, then perhaps our yearly membership fee will come to seem extremely reasonable.

Good research is good because it is part of a social process that stretches from pedagogy and constant interaction with peers, to delivering work at confer-

ences and workshops, to having work peer reviewed, edited and checked, and to having it promoted, discussed, cited, taught and examined by others in subsequent inspired research. Without that framework, the effort of making research good is considerably higher. This is not, and has never been, a particularly profitable activity—but it is a cost-saving one. As Cefkin makes clear in her contribution in this series, if we start to rethink how we account for the costs that we bear as individuals, that our institutions bear, and that AAA bears, perhaps thinking in terms of a service model (making research better, rather than “producing” research), then we can start to capture some of the value that otherwise disappears from our accounting.

Working with Wiley-Blackwell

Such discussions, and the experiments that might follow, are all

the more crucial in the wake of the Wiley-Blackwell partnership. For example, I have never objected to peer reviewing before—it is a scholarly duty. But then again, I have never been asked to do it for a multinational corporation with shareholders and an enormous profit margin. I might now ask: why am I doing it for free, for Wiley-Blackwell? Why isn't Wiley-Blackwell paying me to peer review? Where is the line between a service that benefits me and anthropology and one that benefits Wiley-Blackwell? We could, one might argue, think of Wiley-Blackwell as providing only the tools for peer review and marketing, and not the service of peer review itself—but if this is so, then it should be clear that peer review is a service AAA provides to Wiley-Blackwell, and for better or worse, it should be a commodity for which AAA asks a fair price or a fair discount, and one that is continuously discussed

with and within the membership in a open and transparent way. If not, we are faced (as I suspect we are) with a contractual obligation that blurs the line between commodified services purchased from Wiley-Blackwell and the autonomy and decision-making power that should reside with AAA. This requires being more explicit about governance of the process through which research goes from raw to cooked, and how that process is social, costly and essential to everyone's work. We should be paying dues to *publish* our research, not to *purchase* it from someone else. ■

Christopher Kelty is currently visiting assistant professor of history of science at Harvard and assistant professor of anthropology at Rice University. His book Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software will appear in print and in open access form from Duke University Press in the spring of 2008.

Process, Access and Value

DON BRENNIS
UC SANTA CRUZ

As Jason Cross notes, this is a very opportune moment to think through the shape and trajectory of publications within AAA. As someone involved in the original AnthroSource proposal but,



Don Brenneis

more significantly, as a former editor (of *American Ethnologist*) for whom journal editing was a deeply collaborative intellectual

pleasure and as someone involved in our university's development of digital publishing, I am very appreciative of my colleagues' contributions and of the chance to add a few further thoughts.

I'll briefly note three observations. First, articles have careers; they move from initial inklings

and meeting papers through drafts, submissions, revisions, edits, publication and, with any luck, citational afterlives (as both Chris and Melissa have noted here). A crucial element of almost all these stages is that they are, at the least,

dialogic. Published articles reflect the complex intersections of individual inspiration, craft and scholarship with advice, challenge and support from colleagues. Open access (OA) can indeed help make this social dimension of scholarship less invisible.

Second, the multiple stages of such processes are not frictionless, that is, there are very real costs in terms of time, judgment, tact and technical expertise. Some of this work is free and voluntary (even if, by many reports, more difficult to engage than has been the case in the past). Other parts of the process depend primarily on paid labor, whether in the quotidian routines of managing the peer review process, the delicate conversations

around copyediting and revision, or the coding and searchability preparation that contributes to the usefulness of online publication. There is a range of hidden costs in the process, whether in print or online, and real value is added to the quality of scholarship by such work. Similarly, translation—a key element of access and participation for a wider world anthropological community—is rarely cost

anticipated had to do with how best to convince academic personnel committees of the value of how quality is assessed in emergent forms of scholarly publication and circulation.

Being explicit about how we reshape peer review in OA publications (and I agree fully with Chris that it remains both possible and central to such dissemination) is critical. A failure to make explicit

COMMENTARY

free. How we get a concrete sense of costs and then develop the strategies and resources for meeting them is crucial for making OA publication of high quality and democratically available scholarship possible.

Finally, publication is, as we all know, multifunctional. It not only disseminates our science and scholarship, contributing to ongoing research and pedagogy. It also is a key element of both individual and—especially in the UK but increasingly here as well—program evaluation. Perhaps the stickiest issue in discussions over the last few years on a special committee of the University of California Academic Senate on scholarly communications in which I par-

how the process works—and that it constitutes a serious warrant of accomplishment and value—and the concomitant devaluation of peer review could open the door for much less effective and palatable forms of evaluation, for example citation indexes and impact factors, bibliometric practices that, for a variety of reasons, are particularly inappropriate for work in anthropology. ■

Don Brenneis is a professor of anthropology at UC, Santa Cruz, and is a former editor of American Ethnologist and past president of AAA. He is currently writing a book on peer review and the production and circulation of knowledge in and around anthropology.