Diffusing open access into the academy

Open Access Publishing: a PKP User Group Workshop
5 December 2008

Danny Kingsley
danny.kingsley@anu.edu.au
It is really about marketing

• the terms early adopter/later adopter are used in marketing all the time.

• These are terms from a book called the *Diffusion of Innovations* by Everett Rogers
Diffusion of Innovations

• First version written in 1962
• Fifth (most recent edition) released in 2003
• Broadly, diffusion in this context is the process where an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.
Innovations

• An innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.
• The diffusion process is concerned with communication of a new idea to members of a social system
• Open Journal Systems are a good example of an innovation. The implementation of them into the academic community fits neatly into these definitions.
Build it and they will come?

“Many technologists think that advantageous innovations will sell themselves, that the obvious benefits of a new idea will be widely realized by potential adopters, and that the innovation will therefore diffuse rapidly. Unfortunately this is very seldom the case. Most innovations, in fact, diffuse at a surprisingly slow rate.” Everett Rogers
Rate of adoption

Innovations with:
• Greater relative advantage
• Greater compatibility
• Greater trialability
• Greater observability
• Less perceived complexity

Will be adopted more rapidly than other innovations.
Example – screw top wine

• Corks in bottles are problematic, up to 12% of bottled wine is corked – it is undrinkable
• Screw top wine bottle innovation came in.
  – high relative advantage - wine is always fresh, they make bottles resealable
  – No perceived complexity – they are VERY easy to use
  – equally there were no problems with trialability, or observability.
• Yet they took a while to catch on
Compatibility

• The problem in this instance was compatibility – remember, “consistent with existing values, past experiences and needs of the adopter’.

• People missed the sound of the cork.

• In terms of the OJS – the cork is like the printed version of a journal.
Opposition

“There has been opposition to every innovation in the history of man, with the possible exception of the sword”

Benjamin Dana
The life of the academic

“A man who is very busy seldom changes his opinions”

Friedrich Nietzsche
Academics are really busy

- Teaching - takes up time and is not rewarded
- Refereeing - invisible work
- Researching and writing papers –the one thing that does actually count
- Apply for grants - wasted time
- Administration - resentful about it
- The load is ostensibly 40% teaching, 40% administration and 20% administration
  - Many of the people I interviewed for my research described a workload that added up to much more than 100%.
Timing

“Observe due measure, for the right timing is in all things the most important factor”
Hesiod – the father of Greek didactic poetry
700BC
Academia is not homogenous

• Then there is the area of disciplinary differences.
  – The way they PUBLISH
  – The SPEED of their work is very different.
  – Academics have very little idea of how other disciplines work.

• DO NOT ASSUME ANYTHING

• Change your approach depending on who you are talking to.
  – The types of opposition you will encounter will change from discipline to discipline.
Dealing with barriers

• Informing people of OJS is not enough
  – It is important to also provide ‘how-to knowledge’

• Most academics don’t know how to convert a document to a pdf
  – consider whether you are assuming a level of technical expertise that might not be there.

• Start with people who are already pro open access
Centralised vs decentralised systems

- Centralised diffusion is where control of the decisions is made by national government administrators and technical subject-matter experts.
  - Not recommended
- Use ‘decentralised’ diffusion.
- Rely on individuals within a discipline to disseminate information and enthusiasm about your product.
- Start with certain disciplines that are already pro-OA (eg: computer science).
Take home message

• Make your product seem friendly and easy
• It is all in the timing
• Academics are a ‘many varied thing’
• Use peer to per networks
• Uptake of technology is always surprisingly slow - don’t panic