

# Diffusing open access into the academy

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# It is really about marketing

- the terms early adopter/late 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 peer networks
- Uptake of technology is always surprisingly slow - don't panic