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RESPONSE

Thoughts about Open Access Publishing in a Humanities Context

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Eric Kansa and Sarah Whitcher Kansa hit the nail on the head: "The discipline [archaeology and heritage studies] urgently needs better data professionalism if researchers are to make more credible and replicable knowledge claims. . . . but scholars generally lack the time and technological know-how to disseminate [and archive] data in a meaningful and lasting way" (p. 88). Their urgent message holds true across the arts and humanities, and while differences exist when it comes to sharing v. protecting and long argument v. database, common issues remain. Moreover, their proposal that data sharing should be viewed as publishing addresses growing concerns that when data is not shared scholarship suffers and knowledge is lost. Picking up on Diane Harley's insights, Kansa and Whitcher Kansa reiterate that for data sharing to be viewed as publishing "researchers must see clear evidence that data sharing is worth their time and effort" (p. 88; see also pp. 90 and 92).

Key to Kansa and Whitcher Kansa's proposal's success is open data that are technically, legally, and financially accessible (free) (p. 94). They invited me to engage their article on this point. Philosophically, I wholeheartedly endorse their diagnosis of the problems.¹ Practically, however, the questions of sustainability and "Who Pays?" may not be answered as easily as we would all like. Applying a uniform solution across the humanities poses immense challenges. They write, "In our view, the critics of open access miss the point of how scholarly communications fits into the larger picture of public support of research. Archaeology as a discipline is manifestly not financially sustainable" (p. 95). Here's where we might disagree. No matter where funding originates and no matter to what extent data are open and free, research and publication, scholarly communications, must be sustainable, just as archaeological excavations must be sustainable. "Sustainable," by the way, means more than eking by; it also involves planning for future resources, adapting to new technologies (data curation, archiving, including new forms of scholarship), and maintaining an infrastructure. Kansa and Whitcher Kansa recognize this when they point to making the data available beyond the excavation. But in reality, "sustainable" means "profitable," because planning, adapting, and maintaining an infrastructure require funding beyond an initial project. Kansa and Whitcher Kansa's example from the excavations at Kenan Tepe of how public investment (here I understand them to mean taxpayer-funded research) "can subsidize the dissemination and preservation of research outputs" (p. 95) is extremely helpful. They calculate that "The \$15,000 spent publishing with Open Context (and archiving with the California Digital Library) will help insure that the public's \$800,000 investment can be used and reused by the broadest community, now and into the future" (p. 95). From a financial/sustainability perspective, it would be helpful to know what other results the \$800,000 publicly funded investment yielded besides the Open Context publication and archiving with CDL. It would likewise be vital to know whether the publication expenses cited included overhead costs at Open Context and CDL (salaries, etc.), and at Kenan Tepe. With funds available, to publish in an Open Access format the publicly funded results of the excavations at Kenan Tepe makes perfect sense. The "larger picture of public support"

into which Kansa and Whitcher Kansa see their puzzle pieces fitting, however, assumes an access to and a level of funding that I doubt that humanists typically experience. So, how might their model of funding and publication work in other venues in the humanities? If humanities scholars could count on even a fraction of \$800,000 to publish their research projects, it would be magical. Projects could be created for open access from the outset. Absent funding this would not work so well. Here's where the humanities road gets a little rocky. Public funding for literature, American studies, history, philosophy, art history, and the like is hard to come by. For instance, the National Endowment for the Humanities, which, in part, supported Kenan Tepe, funds the humanities. But differences in the level of funding required (see p. 95 of Kansa and Whitcher Kansa)—and amount available—cannot be overlooked. Moreover, NEH is not known for funding scholarly publishing.² Another governmental funding agency, the National Endowment for the Arts, operates similarly. Neither of these adequately supports scholarly publishing in the humanities.³ Kenan Tepe required funding over a period of many years; understandably, the excavation also sought resources in a variety of places, both public and private.⁴ Moreover, although the costs or the funding needed in the disciplines like those listed above might not be close to the needs in archaeological excavations, one can assume the cost of publishing humanities research would not be less.⁵ Let's say costs for a humanities monograph also come in around \$10,000–\$15,000 (that does not count the overhead costs, which would also amount to another \$10,000–\$15,000). Kenan Tepe publication costs represent a “small fraction” (1.87%) of the total amount of funding received for the excavation. Open access seems an easy choice. Troublingly, the typical humanities scholar (and publisher) rarely receives even a “small fraction” of an \$800,000 tax-payer funded grant to fund publication. Thus, open access publishing in the humanities, without adequate funding, will remain difficult.

Notes

1. Fundamentally it is disingenuous for open access advocates to frame the problem solely as a moral issue, having to do with dissemination or public good. One can be a proponent of free access and still realize that the costs are real and must be accounted for. Scholarly associations and organizations,

especially in the arts and humanities, have traditionally supported dissemination and access. They continue to do so. The dearth of taxpayer-supported funding for arts and humanities publishing makes it difficult to overcome financial challenges intrinsic to open access.

2. A search of the NEH database for funded projects under the category scholarly publications from 2000–2012, for example, yielded no results. Scholarly publications may be funded under other grants, but this points to the basic problem.
3. The differences in governmental funding levels for the sciences v. the arts and humanities are telling. Compare below the 2013 requests: NIH: FY 2013, \$31B (<http://officeofbudget.od.nih.gov/>); NSF: \$7.4B; (www.nsf.gov/.../budget/fy2013/pdf/EntireDocument_fy2013); NEA: \$154M (<http://www.nea.gov/news/news12/Budget.html>); NEH: \$154M (www.neh.gov/files/neh_request_fy2013.pdf).
4. See for example, Bradley J. Parker, Catherine P. Foster et al., “The Upper Tigris Archaeological Research Project (UTARP): A Preliminary Report from the 2007 and 2008 Field Seasons at Kenan Tepe,” *Anatolica* 35 (2009): 85–152.
5. See Mary Waltham, “The Future of Scholarly Journals Publishing among Social Science and Humanities Associations: Report on a Study Funded by a Planning Grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation” (Princeton, NJ, 18 February 2009).

RESPONSE

The Emerging Open World

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An overarching aspect of our contemporary world is this. The transition in the use, and abuse, of digital information is so comprehensive and profound that it is largely taken as commonplace. This affects archaeology as it does every other field of inquiry. We take for granted that we can move a terabyte or two of data around with us and that we can pull down information onto cheap devices that know where we are, almost anywhere in the world. We also expect to be able to find anything we want, from anywhere in the world, on the Internet and we become impatient if access takes more than a minute. And yet, for any adult alive today, these transitions have taken place