Elsevier's contribution to the STM Voluntary Principles consultation request

Back in February, we wrote that we welcomed newly drafted STM Principles to facilitate academic sharing on Scholarly Collaboration Networks as a positive step for publisher-SCN collaboration. Since then, we have prepared our submission as part of the consultation period request for comment. We just submitted this statement to STM and are pleased to share it below.

As we mention, Elsevier is currently clarifying its sharing and posting policies in-line with these principles.

Dear STM,

Elsevier support:

As Elsevier, we welcome STM taking the lead in simplifying matters for publishers, platforms, and researchers. We therefore support the 'Voluntary principles for article sharing on scholarly collaboration networks'. We believe this is a good first step; we do also realize that there are still additional issues to be clarified about article sharing, for this to work for all parties.

Elsevier is clarifying its current sharing and posting policies in-line with these principles.

Elsevier views:

STM posed the following questions which we are happy to answer:

1.   *What impact do you think a unified approach to scholarly article sharing would have?*

A common approach to article sharing would be extremely helpful, because at present it is difficult, if not impossible, for all parties in the scholarly community to keep track of all the different policies, licenses, and mandates that govern research articles. Unifying all the policies, licenses, and mandates is viewed by some as the right way forward, but we believe this might be too difficult and/or result in a too restrictive one-sized-fits-all approach. Therefore we welcome your practical approach to focus on reducing as many individual complexities one-by-one. For example, we believe the solution providers in the scholarly community would agree to collaborate to develop standard systems, methods, and processes. Specifically we believe that it would be helpful if SCNs and publishers would work together to help institutions and researchers seamlessly collaborate without having to worry about 'complex rules' with both product and policy solutions. We see this proposal and process as a first step along that path.

2.   *Do you have other ideas about how the sharing of scholarly research should function within the research community?*

We feel it is important for publishers to facilitate researchers to share scientific articles on SCNs, and it is also very complementary to the related (and too often parallel) efforts underway to broaden public access to information through repositories and other platforms (often termed green Open Access).

3.   *It is our aim to continue to refine the thinking and approach to article sharing. What feedback or guidance can you offer for further consideration or to help next steps?*

a) We believe that the proposed idea to embrace the standard COUNTER method for sharing usage information across platforms and networks where articles are shared would be extremely helpful:

- The COUNTER method has originally been jointly developed by libraries and publishers, to measure readership on publisher (journal) platforms. Both libraries and publishers typically use – amongst other methods – usage counting to track the benefits of the content that has been purchased and sold.

- We believe it would also be helpful if publishers and SCNs develop a simple and standardized (technical) solution to report usage counting in a distributed way, so that any platform that wishes to embrace these principles would be able to do so easily.

- It would be important to only report usage in an anonymized way. The issues at hand are privacy, transparency around how the data is being used, who it's being shared with, what a researcher can do to control or limit with what data is shared and with whom. Anonymous tracking is important to us, as any reporting should not affect these issues negatively.

b) In order to maintain the integrity of scholarly literature as well as to ensure the full impact of a scholar's works is accurately represented, we believe it's important that works found on the web have accurate metadata. An industry-standard way of doing this for journal articles is for the publisher to register a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) or handle for the work and to deposit the corresponding metadata with a registry such as CrossRef. This allows retrieval of the metadata by any party having the DOI. However, many works found on the web either don't have a DOI or the DOI is unknown, thus we feel there is room for improvement in how SCNs identify works, as well as for parallel improvement in how metadata registries and publishers operate. For example, CrossRef or Scopus metadata could be used to identify the DOI's of these articles.

c) We believe it would be helpful if publishers work together to provide better support to platforms to automate checks against green Open Access policies. Ideally there will be a joint approach, for example via CrossRef, to provide platforms with one integration point instead of one for each publisher.

d) We believe one of the biggest challenges is that article versions (e.g. preprint, author manuscript, final published article) are not easily distinguishable in an automated scalable way. In order to avoid complex (manual) checks by authors or platforms, we believe it would be good to develop such a scalable method. We would be happy to collaborate with others to achieve this goal. There are already initiatives underway (i.e. CrossMark, or article tagging), and it would be good to support one of these initiatives broadly.

e) With the above concrete and achievable steps in place, we believe that it is not necessary to embark on a track that would lead to one single researcher identity and login across all platforms and journals. Although this track would solve for many sharing needs as well, there are so many downsides and issues associated with this particular solution, that we propose to not focus on this particular path right now. However, Elsevier is open to embark on this path if there is consensus that this is the better path to choose.

4. *Would your organization be willing to actively participate and contribute to this process?*

Elsevier is very open to continue its participation and contribution to this process.

5. *Do you support the initial outline 'Voluntary principles for article sharing on scholarly collaboration networks'?*

Yes – see above.

Kind regards,

Wouter Haak

Elsevier Connect Contributors

Tom Reller

As VP and Head of Global Corporate Relations at Elsevier, Tom Reller (@TomReller) leads a global team of media, social and web communicators for the world's largest provider of scientific, technical and medical (STM) information products and services. Together, they work to build on Elsevier's reputation by promoting the company's numerous contributions to the health and science communities, many of which are brought to life in this online community and information resource: *Elsevier Connect*.

Tom directs strategy, execution and problem-solving for external corporate communications, including media relations, issues management and policy communications, and acts as a central communications counsel and resource for Elsevier senior management. Additionally, he develops and nurtures external corporate/institutional relationships that broaden Elsevier's influence and generate good will, including partnerships developed through the Elsevier Foundation.

Wouter Haak, VP of Product Strategy for Elsevier's Academic & Government Research Markets group, contributed to this report.