Scholarly publishing economics:
An international research perspective

John Houghton
Centre for Strategic Economic Studies
Victoria University, Australia
John.Houghton@pobox.com
Implications of alternative publishing models
(UK, Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and USA)

- UK JISC study on the *Economic Implications of Alternative Scholarly Publishing Models*, in collaboration with Loughborough University.
- SURF and DEFF studies exploring the costs and benefits of alternative publishing models in the Netherlands and Denmark.
- A three country comparison for Knowledge Exchange (EC Brussels).
- DFG study, in collaboration with Goethe Universität in Frankfurt, bringing the German National Licensing Program into the mix of alternative models.
- Alma Swan’s recent JISC study using the online cost model to explore cost impacts for UK universities (now repeating in US).
Approach to the research

- The studies combined process mapping using IDEF0, activity-based costing and macro-economic modeling using a modified Solow-Swan model.
- We used a stepwise approach in which we:
  - Produced a detailed costing of all of the activities identified in the scholarly communication lifecycle model, focusing on areas where there were likely to be cost differences;
  - Summed the costs of the publishing models through the main phases of the scholarly communication lifecycle, to explore potential system-wide cost differences;
  - Used the modified Solow-Swan model to estimate the impact of changes in accessibility and efficiency on returns to R&D; and
  - Compared costs and benefits over a 20 year transitional period, using these three elements.
Conclusions and recommendations
(Create a level playing field to enable innovation)

- Given the potential benefits, we suggested focusing on creating a level playing field by reducing the barriers to innovation and raising awareness of the opportunities by:
  - Ensuring that there is funding for author-side fees;
  - Encouraging and funding OA repositories to enable self-archiving;
  - Supporting advocacy initiatives to inform stakeholders; and
  - Ensuring that research evaluation is not a barrier to innovation by developing metrics that support innovation in scholarly publishing, rather than relying on traditional evaluation metrics that reinforce traditional publishing models and reward traditional behaviours.
ERA incentives and impacts?

- Possible impacts of the incentives under the ERA include:
  - Grouping into disciplines – which may penalise topic or problem oriented research centres wherein publishing tends to be inter-disciplinary, and may reduce real world impact in the name of increasing “impact”.
  - Simple metrics and fewer journals – which may produce herding towards a narrower range of popular fields where there are more citations and which are of interest to the readership of A-Grade journals, and may reduce our capacity to attract and supervise regional students.
How can Open Access help?

- We need OA to increase impact/citation, especially for smaller specialist areas and problem oriented groups.

- But, for it to work, we need to:
  - Develop metrics for the evaluation of OA contributions that are as good as, or better than, existing, traditional metrics; and
  - Find ways to combine OA metrics with traditional metrics so that OA does not dilute citation impact.
Links and references

Links to the studies and models

http://www.cfses.com/El-ASPM/