



Profile

Danny Kingsley

Dr Danny Kingsley is the Executive Officer of the Australian Open Access Support Group (AOASG). She noted, with enthusiasm, that “Australia was an early starter in the open access space. The first institutional repository was in place in 2001, and ANU Press celebrated its 10th anniversary by publishing its 500th open access monograph.”

As the only paid employee of the Group (and only working part-time), Danny began by explaining that this “... means I need to look after all of the administrative aspects of the Group. But what takes the most amount of time is keeping across all of the lists and feeds about open access (OA) across the world, so I can ensure we can give a good overview of what is happening through the website, our discussion list and Twitter feed.” She continued, “It is important to consider trends and work out what needs further analysis and discussion. The series on Paying for Publication, published in early 2014, for example, was very well received – not just in Australia; it trended across the world.” Her role involves making presentations to industry groups, conferences and member institutions, and it was clear that Danny has real enthusiasm for this part of her work.

“I’ll talk to anyone who is interested!”

When asked about the Australian Open Access Support Group itself, she jokingly said, “You mean we are not headline news?” before going on to explain that “... the Group was announced during Open Access Week (OAWk) in October 2012 and began operation in January 2013. Until the Group began there was no ‘voice’ for open access in Australia, and the terms of reference of the group are to advocate, collaborate, raise awareness and lead and build capacity in the open access space.” Danny added that “The goal is to provide measured, accurate information and advice about open access to help inform the debate.”

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Danny speaking at an OAWk event

Achieving that goal is no small undertaking, so your Editor was keen to understand more about what got Danny into this arena. "I majored in Science and Technology Studies in my undergraduate degree because I loved finding out how science works. In 1995 my Honours thesis looked at researchers' attitudes to electronic journals. At the time the WWW had just started. I had to fill in a series of forms to get swipe access to the one room on campus that had three computers that were WWW-enabled."

From that early, seemingly unpromising start, Danny went on to become a science journalist and worked in magazine publishing, radio and (a little bit of) TV. In 2001–2002 while writing the news for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Science News Online, she remembers "... I started receiving press releases that mentioned open access. While this was not a term I was familiar with, I did recognize Stevan Harnad's name and after some investigation decided the time was right to do a PhD."

Looking back, Danny remembered that "During the PhD, I conducted interviews with researchers at my home institution, the Australian National University (ANU), and my alma mater, The University of NSW. The point of difference was supposed to be that ANU had an established institutional repository ...", but added ruefully, "Unfortunately the ANU researchers were by and large unaware they had a repository."

During her PhD, Danny remembers "being called at the last minute to speak to an ANU review panel looking at the University information services. It was a very hot day and I was about eight months pregnant, but I knew this was a critical moment. I hurried across campus to speak to the panel, and, dripping in sweat, put my case for the need for a stronger focus on open access at ANU." She likes to think that there was a direct link between her presentation that day and being offered a position at ANU months later!

"Once I completed my PhD, the ANU (possibly to stop me complaining about the open access situation at the University) offered me a new role – as the Manager, Scholarly Communication and ePublishing." Here, she remembers, "... the first task was to clean up a cornucopia of repositories that had been established over the previous few years and then establish policies, guidelines and procedures for scholarly communication, publishing and open access. I also became involved in the wonderful Australian community of repository managers."

227 But, it wasn't all plain sailing. Danny remembered having a conversation with a high ranking university administrator about how much Australian research was available open access. "This person was convinced there was 'no problem' as it was 'all in hand'. The discussion descended rapidly when this person started shouting at me. As I was doing everything to calm them down (and wishing the floor would open up) I felt a sense of desperation about how much needs to be done to get the open access message across." However, she went on to add, "I am happy to say that after a couple of years I spoke again to that person and they had come around – not to become a huge open access advocate, but at least to recognize there was an issue." For Danny, it became clear directed advocacy was needed across the country.

"... the Finch Report was very disappointing ..."

"When the opportunity to be the inaugural staff member of the AOASG arose, I leapt at it."

Referring to the publication of the Finch Report in 2012, Danny said, "As a representative of a group that specifically supports open access through the deposit of work in repositories, the Finch Report was very disappointing ..." she said. "The difficulty we have here in Australia is that the changes some publishers have made to their embargo periods affect everyone across the globe. We also have to be conscious that any journal published in Australia that accepts material from UK researchers must ensure it is compliant with the RCUK policy. Amongst those who are actively discussing open access, the Finch Report has featured in debate, but the majority of people are not engaged at that level."

"[However] ... last year was a watershed year for open access, and Australia was no exception. Not only did the AOASG start operations, but five universities announced new open access policies, nearly doubling the number we had. One third of all Australian universities now have open access policies. In 2013 the Australian Research Council also introduced their open access policy and 1 July that year saw the first of the publications that needed to become available under the National Health and Medical Research Council's policy."

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She went on to say "... we are hampered by a lack of real information about the open access landscape. We do not have a way of easily determining how many items are available open access in our repositories – we currently rely on an annual survey which was suspended in 2014. And we do not collect any data that we

can benchmark against international numbers. It is easy to be complacent in Australia – we are very isolated from the rest of the world."



"There are some isolated pockets of discussion here, but only a tiny number of dedicated researchers in the area of scholarly communication. Watching the discussions, reports and research happening elsewhere is frustrating."

So, your Editor asked, how does Danny manage to escape these frustrations? "I have a parallel life as a fitness instructor. It is completely removed from the world of research, and it allows me to be part of a community where on a daily basis I can see people reaching their goals and gaining better health and wellbeing. These real achievements buy me some mental time when I get frustrated about how long it seems to effect change in the open access space."

Danny at the end of a Tough Mudder challenge in 2012

228 This led nicely into a discussion about Danny's vision for OA in Australia. "We need to have a strategic big picture discussion about scholarly communication and what we want this to look like into the future. Open access is only one part of scholarly publishing which in turn is only one part of scholarly communication. The landscape is changing dramatically and there does not seem to me to be a great deal of big thinking in this space. So my vision is that the stakeholders in this area start engaging both with the issue and with one another."

Universal engagement with OA is a huge challenge, so your Editor asked Danny what she sees as the major obstacles to achieving that vision. "It really is time for the research community to take ownership of this issue ..." she responded. "There are some wonderful researchers who are excellent open access champions, but the lack of understanding of even basic aspects of the scholarly communication system across a swathe of the research and administrative community is a serious impediment to large scale change. There is only so much advocates like me can do. We need a few people to step outside their comfort zones and speak up."

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She said ruefully, "... nothing will change until the reward system used in academia moves beyond a reliance on the traditional publishing system. This is a serious challenge of course, because there are many, many stakeholders in the system who have a vested interest in the status quo."

On a more positive note, she added, "There are great examples like the decision of Bernard Rentier (Provost of the University of Liege) to only consider work in the University's repository for promotion within the University of Liege. The decision of both the Wellcome Trust and the National Institutes of Health to enforce their mandates by withholding some funding and not considering people for further funding has increased compliance. The new Higher Education Funding Councils of England (HEFCE) rules for Research Excellence Framework (REF2020) will be a game changer."

"It does seem that the stick (rather than the carrot) is the best way to get people on board."

Rounding the interview off with one final question, your Editor asked Danny what, if she could say just one thing of the global knowledge community, her message would be. She responded, "Making work available is only the beginning – we don't know yet where we will end up and what lines of enquiry will emerge once we are able to truly link information. I will paraphrase Mike Eisen (of PLOS) from a chat I had with him in 2002 before starting my PhD: 'What do you think you are supporting by keeping your work closed?'"

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STOP PRESS: Since being interviewed for *Insights* Danny has been offered and will be taking up a new post as Head of Scholarly Communications at Cambridge University, as of January 2015.