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STM welcomes RIN Report “Heading for the open road: costs and benefits of transitions in scholarly communications”

STMⁱ welcomes the publication of the RINⁱⁱ Report “Heading for the open road: costs and benefits of transitions in scholarly communications”ⁱⁱⁱ. Commissioned by the Research Information Network, the Publishing Research Consortium, the Wellcome Trust, Research Libraries UK and the UK Joint Information Systems Committee, the study by Cambridge Economic Policy Associates and Mark Ware Consulting is a substantial, serious and very useful contribution to the debate around the future of scholarly communication. STM is a founding member of the Publishing Research Consortium and was represented on the steering group of the project.

The study examines a number of scenarios surrounding the transition to greater access of the scholarly publishing system in the UK. The so-called "Gold" (or author-pays) route to open access is the only access expansion model that the report considers to be fully sustainable. The “Green” (or repository self-archiving) route is found to have significant risks attached to it. On page 28 the report states

Green OA offers a relatively cost-effective route to improving access, and a relatively high BCR [benefit-cost ratio]. However, given the risk of cancellations which may undermine the business model, this scenario may not be self-sustaining.

Commenting on the report, Michael Mabe, CEO of STM said: “These results largely echo STM’s views about the viability of differing routes to greater access. There are real costs involved in the publishing, including the substantial administration, editorial expertise and systems involved in the peer review process. The free availability of repository versions of articles potentially undermines the very processes that validated the repository documents in the first place, and we see no future in this ‘nobody pays’ model. STM supports all and any models of access that are sustainable and ensure the integrity and permanence of the scholarly record on which progress is based, including Gold open access.”

ⁱ STM is the leading global trade association for academic and professional publishers. It has over 110 members in 27 countries who each year collectively publish nearly 66% of all journal articles and tens of thousands of monographs and reference works. STM members include learned societies, university presses, private companies, new starts and established players.

ⁱⁱ Research Information Network <http://www.rin.ac.uk>

ⁱⁱⁱ CEPA and Mark Ware Consulting “Heading for the open road: costs and benefits of transitions in scholarly communications” RIN, London, April 2011, available at <http://www.rin.ac.uk/trans-dynamics>