

PALOMERA Interview

Date: 06.09.2023

General information

Gender: female

Stakeholder type (multiple choice):

- **research performing organisations**
- **librarians and infrastructure providers**

Country the interview is focused on: Cyprus

Language of the interview conducted: English

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so let us begin. I think we should start from general questions and from you introducing yourself. If you could tell us a little bit who you are and what is your professional experience with open access and open access books in particular?

INTERVIEWEE

(...) I was also involved in the creation of the first open access policy in Cyprus. This happened in 2016. And the most recent one, the revision of this policy, which is about open science and its aspects, which was finally approved in May 2022. And we are also, even though OpenAIRE as a project has finished, we are still acting as as Open Science help desk as a library, and we are working with other local stakeholders, either for the creation of their institutional policy or infrastructure or supporting the researchers in related topics and challenges sometimes. This is in general. Regarding the policy, yes, indeed, our policy is also not clearly mentioned in books, but is talking about research outputs.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, we will probably get back to the details of the policy in the next questions. But firstly, I would like to also ask you about the definitions, because PALOMERA actually defines academic books as scholarly, peer-reviewed books, including monographs, book chapters, edited collections, critical editions, and other long-form, scholarly works. Does this definition differ from how you, in Cyprus, define academic books or define them based exactly in the policy you mentioned?

INTERVIEWEE

In the policy there is no specific definition given for open books.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, but books in general?

INTERVIEWEE

Books in general, yes. But still, I'm not sure that I can find a clear definition like the one you're mentioning.

INTERVIEWER

Exactly. Okay, so thank you. I was asking about academics books in general because it's also controversial what a book is in academia.

INTERVIEWEE

Let's say in a theoretical aspect, yes, this is the definition, but I cannot send you something written that this is what we mean.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so you don't have, for instance.

INTERVIEWEE

No.

INTERVIEWER

You think that books need to be peer-reviewed to be considered academic in your country? It's not written anywhere, but maybe it is like a common idea what an academic book should be.

INTERVIEWEE

But this will be my opinion.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, I understand. I understand that academic book can be peer-reviewed, but it does not have to?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, I suppose.

INTERVIEWER

I am.

INTERVIEWEE

Trying to think of a policy or maybe a legal document that might have this definition that I can mention or recall on this. I'm not sure if the copyright law has anything.

INTERVIEWER

Okay.

INTERVIEWEE

Perfect.

INTERVIEWER

There are some questions regarding copyright laws and legal issues, but still, if you don't remember or cannot recall anything right now, I would very much appreciate it if you could send me, for.

INTERVIEWEE

Instance, any information about this after we're done.

INTERVIEWER

Yes, absolutely. Perfect. Okay, so now I would like to focus on your immediate institutional context. We will not be talking about the General National... Not the policy, but your experience in particular. Okay, so are there any forms of support for policy creation or implementation from the institutions? Like, for instance, workshops or grants? I mean, also central, ministerial, governmental level. I mean, policy creation in terms.

INTERVIEWEE

Of open access. Yes, and we already created our institutional policy. We have a new one. Again, it was approved in 2022 after the national policy. And the support was again, mainly... Actually, it was a work that we did together, we as a library and NOAD, together with the research services of the university and the rectorate of academic affairs. This was finally approved by the Senate and the Council of the University.

INTERVIEWER

I understand. You mentioned that you were also involved in the policy creation, and you were involved in it on behalf of what institution? If you could repeat it. Maybe I did not catch that.

INTERVIEWEE

We are working as a university library. We are acting also as a National Open Access Desk of OpenAIRE. And because of this involvement and expertise, we were involved in the national policy and in our institutional policy. And this is not... I mean, we are also providing support to other institutions also, further than our university. Was it clear?

INTERVIEWER

Yes, definitely yes. Thank you. Okay, so could you describe maybe step by step how the policy was conceived, drafted, agreed upon, and implemented? You mentioned you were involved in the 2016 policy and then the revision. Just a little bit more about the exact work that has been done.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay. This is about the national policy. You need the national or the institutional?

INTERVIEWER

The institutional, maybe. You can do both, of course.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay, let me start from the 2016 then. It was as part of a conference we had. We invited all stakeholders in a roundtable, and we were discussing about what the European Commission needs, what are the policies, and that we as a country, we also need to take some actions. We created actually, it was an ad-hoc group, which started from this conference. Then the Secretary General for Research decided that it was going to be under their umbrella. They coordinated and we created a draft document. It was actually a work that was supported by the project, PASTEUR4OA. They were supporting by giving a draft, a template of a policy. Then together with the stakeholders, we worked on this paper, on this policy. Of course, the final decision was made from the policymaker. Then they took this to the Council of Ministers and it was finally approved. But it was encouraging. It was a "soft" policy, let's say. Then in 2019, the political things have changed in Cyprus in terms of research, mainly.

INTERVIEWEE

There was a creation of the deputy ministry for research, innovation ovation, and digital policy. Again, through the project NI4OS_EU that we had, there was, let's say, a movement from the NI4OS partners in Cyprus to contact the deputy ministry and ask them to create a NOSCI, a National Open Science INITIATIVE, a country initiative. They accepted, the deputy ministry accepted, and they called a meeting

of this NOSCI, which is actually an ad-hoc committee with two subgroups. One was about the revision of the policy and the other one is about the infrastructure that we need to create in a national level. Through these groups, we managed to create a draft policy document. We used resources like a policy template of the OpenAIRE that was created through the project. We were using the template and we formulated in a way that it was more suitable for the country. We created the draft, the deputy ministry made any changes that they needed to make, and then again to the Council of Ministers for Approval. Actually, this was followed also from the institutions, from some institutions. For example, we created a policy template to be used by other universities for their own institutional policies.

INTERVIEWEE

Then each institution is working on this. We have a core template, a core document with the main things that we want to include there. Then each institution is working to bring this on their own...

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, on their own policy. Yes, I understand.

INTERVIEWER

I actually couldn't find on the web the policies you mentioned, for instance, the policy of the university.

INTERVIEWEE

Can I send you?

INTERVIEWER

Okay. Perfect. That would be great. I understand it's in Greek.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Okay. Is it only in PDF or do you have it also-

INTERVIEWEE

In PDF.

INTERVIEWER

In PDF. Okay, perfect. Well, we will translate it. That's not a problem. We also have Greeks on our team, so that again would not be a problem. But I couldn't find it. Is it on a website somewhere to be found.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, I will send them to you right now to this chat. If I'm not mistaken, the national policy is in English.

INTERVIEWER

But- The national policy, yes, but the institutional policies, I was not able to find them. Obviously, the Greek language was an obstacle for me, but.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. Okay, we put this in the chat here. It's a link from the library. You can see the three policies: the European, the national, and the institutional. Perfect.

INTERVIEWER

Thank you.

INTERVIEWEE

This is the main link, and I can also send you the direct link for our institutional one.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I would be grateful. Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

Maybe it would be easier for you.

INTERVIEWER

When was the institutional policy of the university accepted?

INTERVIEWEE

2022.

INTERVIEWER

September.

INTERVIEWEE

2022.

INTERVIEWER

Yes. Are there any controversies around it? I understand that you were discussing it in an open way with others, not only in the library, but also with others at the university, yes?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, there was a draft created by us as a library. This was discussed with the research support services of the university and then with the rectorate of academic affairs. And then this document was discussed in other bodies of the university that needed to approve it.

INTERVIEWER

Could you tell me what does it say about open access books?

INTERVIEWEE

I think nothing, but let me think.

INTERVIEWER

And do you... Go on, go on.

INTERVIEWEE

No, I think it's talking about research outputs, not books. Okay, I.

INTERVIEWER

Understand you decided that you will speak about research outputs and not mention particular types.

INTERVIEWEE

Of those outputs. Because we wanted to include data and any other output that may come out through national funding, for example. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER

And do you think that it works? That it's a better idea than to mention or to make specific policies for books, for journals, for data. I don't mean different documents, but parts of the document dedicated to those outputs. What are the types in particular.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, this is the way that we thought that we will include most of the types of research outputs, but maybe in a revision, maybe it would be a good idea to make clear definitions or mention directly some types. But yes, actually, it was a struggle to have a policy at first. So getting into more and more details, maybe it would be more complicated at this stage.

INTERVIEWER

I understand. Now we had similar problems in our institution when we are discussing the open mandate for the institute.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. Imagine that this is under discussion since 2016, especially the institutional one. The national policy was under discussion since 2019, and came to 2022 to have a conclusion. The institutional one was under discussion since 2016.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, yeah, that's.

INTERVIEWEE

Six years. Not the same document, but since the first policy, we were discussing the fact that the institution must have an institutional policy. And many documents were going back and forth, rejected or approved some parts. Yes, it's actually an achievement, even having this policy now.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, I understand it completely. Okay, so I would like to talk about the economics and the funding for open access in Cyprus. Is there any specific funding for open access books?

INTERVIEWEE

You are talking in a national level or in institutional level? And not only our university.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, we.

INTERVIEWEE

Should.

INTERVIEWER

Concentrate on your experience. The institutional level is also important. I understand that as an institution, you use also the national funding. So if there is any specific specifically for open access books, then I would like to know that as well.

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. There is no specific funding for this for this... Actually, each researcher has an amount of money that they can use for the research. This can be for the publications, this can be for their books. They can handle it on their own.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, and it's from the institutional budget, yes? Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

But this does not mean that they will use it for open access books or for open access journals, for whatever. They can use it for research in general.

INTERVIEWER

This is apart from specific grants that they might achieve?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. Then they have the chance to ask for some funding specifically for this. They send, for example, a request to the research support services and they say, I want to make this publication. I want to make this. So can I have some funding about this? They can have this request. This is happening in our university. I know that in other universities, I know that in another university for sure, there is a private funding that they can ask for funds to make their outputs in Open Access... But it's mainly for publications.

INTERVIEWER

I understand that these are for publications, but it's not specifically stated that they must be in open access, yes?

INTERVIEWEE

They must be in open access.

INTERVIEWER

They must be in open access, okay. Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

Well, this is the two examples I can give. Another university they have in mind, they also can send a request about taking some funds for open access outputs again.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so we were talking about the money for researchers and what about journals or publishers? Do they have any support when they try to implement some alternative business models, like diamond business model, for instance?

INTERVIEWEE

Well, Cyprus is a very small island, so we don't have a lot of publishers. We have some publishers, but they are not... Most of our researchers, or the people that want to make a publication of any kind, they usually use publishers from other countries. This is mainly because of our size, and the small market size and that's why we cannot have information and details about business models other than the traditional business models in Cyprus.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, but do I understand it correctly that they... I understand that most of the publishing goes outside Cyprus, but as an institution, for instance, the university, do you have a press, a university press? Yes. Okay, and this university press, is it funded by the university directly? Does it publish in open access only or is there another business model based on sales, for instance?

INTERVIEWEE

I think it's based on... It's not in Open Access.

INTERVIEWEE

That's for sure. I think they use several business models. Maybe, for example, recently we had a donator that gave us some material and a book, and they decided that they will fund the book and the university press will manage the rest, the dissemination and this. This is one case. In some other cases, yes, maybe they find some funding and they make some publications. Most probably they do have some funds, but they are also working with other models also. Okay.

INTERVIEWER

As an open note, do you have information regarding journals that are published in Open Access, but there are separate journals?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, we have some. Not many. But we have... We are close to the number of 10, I think.

INTERVIEWER

In general or in the Humanities and in the Social Sciences? All disciplines, yes? 10 from all disciplines?

INTERVIEWEE

Mm-hmm.

INTERVIEWER

Okay. Could you please send me, if you could, please, the links to the Humanities and the Social Sciences journals of yours, if.

INTERVIEWEE

You Yes.

INTERVIEWER

That would be also interesting to me.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay.

INTERVIEWER

Do they publish open access, like in the Diamond Open Access?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes. Okay, perfect. Thank you. At least for those I knew until recently. I have to check again.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah. Okay, just to summarise so that I understand it correctly, I understand that the general sources of funding for open access books in Cyprus are institutional, but also they come from individual grants, outdoor grants. But there are also institutional funding for the open access books.

INTERVIEWEE

Which are not many.

INTERVIEWER

But not many, I understand.

INTERVIEWEE

It's under examination. Okay, well.

INTERVIEWER

Oh, yeah. Just one more question regarding, because since you are from a research performing organisation, could you tell me a little bit more about who implements the funding in your institutions? What is the process? Who makes the decisions? Do you, as a library, have any influence on what the funding regarding publishing is?

INTERVIEWEE

With each department has an amount of money that they can work with. Because we are a public university, we get the funding from the government, so it's a national fund. But this is divided and dedicated then to departments and services. An amount of money goes to departments so they can work on, and some money is going to services. This means the library, the research support services, the financial services, etc. Regarding publishing, in case, as I told you, the researchers have an amount of money that they can use, this is from their department. In case they need extra money, they have to ask from the research support services. We can say that this service is able to manage, let's say, the publishing.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so let's go to the next part of questions regarding, in general, what is the role of academic books in the National in research assessment? So we would be talking more about the social dimension of open access books. Yeah, so are there any differences in how much credit is given to the open access books or to academic books in general? Or maybe, for instance, journals are more appreciated. For the researchers, it is better to publish in journals than to publish a book. Do you have any knowledge regarding the research assessment?

INTERVIEWEE

It depends on the discipline. For some disciplines, for example, physics, I suppose that and computer science maybe, publications are more important. For humanities and maybe languages, books are more important.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, but they are still like it is important to have a book published, for instance, in the Humanities.

INTERVIEWEE

And.

INTERVIEWER

It is established in the National Research Assessment as well, so it's not like...

INTERVIEWEE

Yeah, go on. Yes, depends on the discipline.

INTERVIEWER

Okay.

INTERVIEWEE

And- But the open access part, if we're discussing about the evaluation in total, we are still not there for open access.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, yeah, understood. The same. Is it like you publish rather in English? Is it validated better than publishing in Greek?

INTERVIEWEE

Again, depends on the discipline.

INTERVIEWER

Okay. In the Humanities, how is it in the Humanities?

INTERVIEWEE

Mostly in Greek.

INTERVIEWER

Mostly in Greek. Okay, that's interesting.

INTERVIEWEE

Because we are having history and archaeology. The professors working on, for example, the history of Cyprus, they would write mostly in Greek.

INTERVIEWER

And do you feel that Open Access and the book, for instance, a book published in Open Access and in Greek, is it seen as less prestigious than a book published in English, and not in Open Access, but in a renowned publisher?

INTERVIEWEE

No, no, no. It depends on the discipline, because if it's about Cyprus or Greek or a Greek poet or Cypriot poet, it's more valuable to be in Greek and then maybe translated in other languages, instead of creating the book on scratch in English and then translate it in Greek.

INTERVIEWER

You don't feel like open access decreases the prestige of the book? People perceive it like it's less prestigious because it is in open access and not-.

INTERVIEWEE

No I don't think this is a case for the humanities area.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so since we are talking about the prestige, I would like to ask you if you could think of any key arguments that are used in the debate around open access in your country. For open access and against open access, what are the key arguments for the discussion?

INTERVIEWEE

For books or in general?

INTERVIEWER

We can talk in general, but if you have any about books in particular in mind, then obviously that would be interesting as well.

INTERVIEWEE

Well, the main concern is metrics, since the valuation is still underassessments, it's everything about metrics. The assessment must change somehow. Cost also, sometimes it's the main challenge for people that they don't want to choose the green route. Having a publication or their output published in an open access journal, it's expensive for them in some cases. Some others are also discussing about their copyrights, but I think we are in a good way on that topic. Open licenses, as you believe, are clearly explained, so some people are okay with that. Another thing, which is actually we're remaining at the topic of the cost, is that some people that have the funds, because... I don't know the European Union funding projects, et cetera, that we created a two... I'm not sure what is the right word on that, but two-dimensional, two-speed researchers, the one that they have the fund and they can publish in open access, and will be actually benefited by open access, and the one that they don't have the funds and remain behind paywalls.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, but do you have a discussion regarding switching the traditional system of those subscriptions to the biggest publishers in Europe, switching it entirely or maybe partly to take the funds that go to the subscriptions and use them to publish and open access more? Are there any arguments of this kind, especially in terms of book?

INTERVIEWEE

Yes, there is a discussion. We had this discussion. It's still an understanding discussion, though. But yes, there is this thought.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so just one more question regarding those arguments. I will use some keywords and please tell me if they are present in the debate. Okay, so like bibliodiversity, multilingualism, equity, for instance, long tail academic publishers. Do those appear in your debate? Okay, because we.

INTERVIEWEE

We are talking about- Equity about what I was mentioning earlier. Equity.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, perfect.

INTERVIEWEE

Thank you.

INTERVIEWER

Let's now go to the technological component. Since we are talking about open access and the infrastructures behind it is very important. Do you have any technical infrastructures that support the open access policies, and especially in terms of open access rules?

INTERVIEWEE

We have an institutional repository. Actually, most of the universities in Cyprus have institutional repositories, so we're in a good way on that. We also discussing under this subgroup I was mentioning earlier about the creation of the national repository. And we are also making... We're trying to make making a lot of guidelines and awareness activities about the infrastructure, about ORCID, the use of ORCID, the use of tools, the user, in order to bring them online with the infrastructure.

INTERVIEWER

And do you have any systems for monitoring or measuring impact of open access books, or in general, open access?

INTERVIEWEE

We are trying to do this through our institutional repository. But since the policy, it's new, we cannot have these results now. But we are expecting that the next few years we will be able to have some numbers to show.

INTERVIEWER

I understand that since you don't have a lot of publishers, then you are not aware of using any platform for publishing journals or monographs in, for instance, open journal system or open monograph press, these kinds of platforms that help facilitate the whole publishing and distribution process?

INTERVIEWEE

We as a library, we are not using them. I know some of these diamond journals I was mentioning earlier, now they are using OJS, but not the rest publishers that I know they exist in Cyprus, no.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have any central database of published journals and published books in Cyprus? No. Okay, I understand. Thank you here. I would like to ask more about the regulatory requirements and copyrights. You've mentioned the copyrights before and you said that you are in a good momentum regarding the copyright. What licenses and in general, what policies do you have in terms of copyright? What is supported by the national policy and your institutional policy?

INTERVIEWEE

Well, in terms of open access, what we are using is the creative commons licenses, and general, any open licenses used. In the policies, both national and institutional, this is what is asked, the use of open licenses, in case you have a software, use the relevant open license. Is it.

INTERVIEWER

Monitored somehow? If someone does not comply with the policy in terms of copyright, for instance, is it monitored of any kind? Do the researchers- In.

INTERVIEWEE

Terms of the institutional policy, we expect that this will be monitored by the institutional repository, so we will be able to see this there. In terms of the national policy, we are in contact with the national funder, so that they can monitor this procedure. In general, not only the copyright issue, but in general, the policy to be monitored.

INTERVIEWER

Okay.

INTERVIEWEE

A lot of discussions. This is the main conclusion. A lot of struggling on this topic.

INTERVIEWER

Yeah, but it's understandable. Actually, it's great that you have those institutional policies already, because not all of the institutions have and it's still in the making in many of them. Okay. I'm looking whether I have any other important questions to ask or did we actually...

INTERVIEWEE

Just so you know, the copyright law, though, you can use things only with the permission of the creator, or after the item is in public domain after the 70 years of the death of the creator, we still have this. We have some exceptions in terms of academic use. We also have the percentage for the digitisation or reproduction of something for further use. We are also having exceptions for orphan works and exceptions for people with disabilities.

INTERVIEWER

Could you tell us a little bit more about it?

INTERVIEWEE

The exceptions for the disabled?

INTERVIEWER

Yes.

INTERVIEWEE

For blind and disabled people, there is... There was a directive that provided the exception for those people to use digitized material of any kind directly.

INTERVIEWER

You mean the.

INTERVIEWEE

European Directive Yes, the Directive (EU) 2017/1564 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 on certain permitted uses of certain works and other subject matter protected by copyright and related rights for the benefit of persons who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled and amending Directive 2001/29/EC on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society. Okay. And so we have a platform also with this material and people that are certified, they can have access through this platform to digitized material.

INTERVIEWER

Could you send me a link to this, or maybe a link to a website that describes specific things?

INTERVIEWEE

This was created again through a European project. Yes, I would send you the link later.

INTERVIEWER

Okay, so maybe as a closing question. We've been discussing a lot in details, but I feel like I would like to know from you, in your opinion, how do you assess the progress of the transition to open access books? What needs to be done to make it better, in your opinion?

INTERVIEWEE

I'm sorry, my micro expressions cannot be hidden. I think we have a lot to do. We have a lot of battles. For those that are open science supporters. We still have a lot to fight, because it's about the culture to change. And we cannot change it from one day to another. But I think we're in a good way. I find very encouraging the fact that initiatives like COARA and Dora is in place. I expect that those institutions that are participating in these initiatives will change. Maybe not now, but maybe in five or even 10 years, I think there will be a change. Until then, we have a lot to discuss, and yes, of course, to debate with different opinions, traditional opinions and cultures, especially in humanities. I think Humanities is one of the difficult, let's say, areas to change.

INTERVIEWER

And if you were to make one thing in the next six months to progress the open access books or what would you choose? I know, I understand this is like an abstract question, but then again, maybe you have something in mind, like you feel that this is the first thing to do and the most important thing to do. What are some of the main points right now.

INTERVIEWEE

Actually, this is my personal opinion. If the valuation procedure in the universities is not changing, nothing will change. So as long as the researchers are evaluated through impact factors or metrics in any form, they will not be doing anything towards open access of any output, even if this is a book or not. Because when they go for the evaluation, open access will not be recognized. So if this is recognized, they will not do it. Even though they may know what are the benefits. They may know that publishing in paywalls or publishing in the traditional way is giving them a smaller audience, they know. But they cannot do any other way because they are evaluated because of this work. If this is not changing, things will not change easily, and we cannot convince them otherwise.

INTERVIEWER

Not a very optimistic conclusion, but still a conclusion, and I totally agree upon that. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this? What you've covered already?

INTERVIEWEE

I know Cyprus is a, small island. We don't have a lot of publishing activities around, so I'm not sure that we are the right candidate to provide information about these activities, but still if this is a landscape survey, then it's good to have these small parts of the world and what they are doing. You have a.

INTERVIEWER

National policy, which in Poland, well, there was one, but it was eight years ago, so you definitely are much more ahead of this department than we are. Definitely, it is worth talking to all of the countries in Europe and with different experiences.

INTERVIEWEE

Okay, so- We are trying. What we are doing very well, it's a lot of awareness activities. I'm saying this because I'm really proud of this. We have a community of people that is really interested in following all these awareness activities that we are doing, even in webinar format or even conferences, they are participating. I think it's a very good sign that we have a generation that is interested to this new culture. So yes.

INTERVIEWER

Thank you. Thank you very much.