

Openness: exploring the commercial challenges and opportunities

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 - Is openness important or necessary for the commercial sector?
- The contract (and cultural) challenge of openness, and;
- Summary.

Open data: beyond the
academic/public context

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- FOI 2000;
- BOAI (2002);
- Open Access Institutional Repositories;
- The Government Transparency agenda: central (e.g. [Public Transparency Board](#)) and the £500+ reporting obligation for local government (see [recent news](#) here).

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- This goes back to *Tryckfrihetsordningen* 1766;

- Context: ‘Age of Liberty’ 1719-1772
Swedish Diet and the then constitutional, political and economic challenges.

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- FOI;
- BOAI and institutional research repositories:
 - Context: 10%+ annual journal subscription inflation;
 - At a time of decreasing University resources.

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 - Context: capturing teaching know-how in a changing environment:
 - Student fees increasing expectations;
 - Academic redundancy and mobility of academic staff, and;
 - The distance-learning agenda (lecture capture, deposited materials.... etc).

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 - Context: MP's expenses scandal, public finance crisis and economic situation.

**So.... at least some
academic/public openness
initiatives are motivated by
informational crisis situations.....**

.....is there a similar imperative for
commercial organisations to adopt
open data approaches?

Maybe.....

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- Regulatory background: Reporting obligations and International Financial Reporting Standards;
- Regulatory responses: following ENRON holding directors to account (e.g. Sarbanes-Oxley 2002 in the US). Still waiting for a regulatory response to the recent banking crisis in the UK....

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 - Authors' conclusions may be over-strong, but this study certainly suggests that different reporting formats can affect the usefulness of the information;
 - It does appear that more open digital reporting formats leads to accurate and less effortful decision-making by third parties;
 - BUT this study was essentially about pdf vs XBRL: what about linked data?

Is openness important or
necessary?

An imperfect analogy: the 'open'
information choice for
commercial organisations

Oysters

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Oysters vs worms

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- Choosing to be a worm: Openness can have benefits: advertising/marketing, and perhaps benefits in financial reporting;
- Having worm status imposed: Is openness a public good that has to be imposed (as FOI etc. on the public sector)? This would probably lead to a sector-based approach;
- Grey area for commercial openness: 'open wash' (oysters posing as worms).

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- Does openness have to be *absolute*?

The contract and cultural
challenge of openness

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- Do we need a more *facilitative* model of contract (contract 2.0)?

Summary

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Suggestions, not conclusions

- The academic/public openness agenda, to some degree can be seen as reactive not innate;
- Similar openness pressure(s) could be brought to bear on the commercial sphere (e.g. through new financial reporting format requirements);
- Contract culture, not just tools, needs to support openness;
- What lessons can be learned from the academic/public openness agenda?

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