Making Change: The Cost of "Free"

—Larissa Wodtke and Mavis Reimer

"Information wants to be free." Entering this statement into an online search engine retrieves more than 200,000 hits, ranging from news articles to blog posts to essays to YouTube videos. The ubiquity of the slogan is such that it appears to be a truism, a generally available sentiment with which anyone on the right side of history—the side of change and progress and democracy—could be expected to agree. The first use of "information wants to be free" can, in fact, be precisely dated and placed, to November 1984 and Fort Cronkhite, California, the location of the first Hackers' Conference. Attributed to Stewart Brand, founder of the counterculture publication *Whole Earth Catalog*, it has become associated with hacktivists and digital rights activists alike. Assigning volition to information, the slogan expresses not only a longing for liberty but also a certain aliveness: Brand has observed about his aphorism that, since its first utterance, "it's been living high, wide, and handsome on its own."

Like Marshall McLuhan's well-known aphorism "the medium is the message" (20), Brand's phrase seems prophetic in light of the digital environment of the early twenty-first century. Indeed, it can be understood as an extension of McLuhan's theory. As many commentators have observed, in the medium of binary code, information resists such capitalistic controls as mechanisms of scarcity and ownership of the means of production. For example, a decade after the first Hackers' Conference, John Perry Barlow, co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a non-profit organization that advocates for digital rights, wrote an article that he entitled "The Economy

of Ideas" for *Wired* (the technology magazine that initially named McLuhan as its patron saint and shared several editors with Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog*) in which he describes information as an activity, a life form, and a relationship, emphasizing its immateriality, interconnectedness, and dynamic flux:

> The way in which information spreads is . . . very different from the distribution of physical goods. It moves more like something from nature than from a factory. . . . If ideas and other interactive patterns of information are indeed life forms, they can be expected to evolve constantly into forms which will be more perfectly adapted to their surroundings.

In this view, information would grow and flourish in interesting and productive ways if left to itself, in a process perhaps not unlike the algorithmic self-proliferation and (per)mutation of the Game of Life, the cellular automaton designed by mathematician John Horton Conway to demonstrate how simplicity evolves into unpredictable complexity (Aleksić 94–95). The living, growing organism Barlow imagines information to be is not a passive object of commodification and consumption. It appears, rather, to have the possibility of attaining its own agency, including, perhaps, resisting capitalistic controls. At least, the digital medium is altering the message of value by making visible the arbitrariness of the imposition of material limitations on immaterial information under capitalism. In the post-Fordist digital economy, information is more obviously conceptualized as a common good than as property. Liveness, immateriality, the common good: the apparent liberation of information from material constraints is celebrated in the positive new models being invoked, from the benevolence of the gift economy to the creativity of maker culture, the collaboration of crowdsourcing, and the generosity of open-access scholarship.

Open access has become a key issue in the academy since the publication of the Budapest Open Access Initiative ten years ago. As articulated in the document produced by a conference of academics, publishers, and open-access activists convened by the Open Society Foundations (formerly the Open Society Institute), a philanthropic advocacy organization, open access encompasses movements toward freely accessible research, whether deposited in digital repositories or published by university presses and peer-reviewed journals. The Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, which chose the theme of Connected Understanding for its 2010 Congress in Montreal, asserts that open access "democratizes the diffusion of knowledge" and "is grounded in the belief that university-based research and scholarship represent a public good which freely draws on the work of others for its production and will in turn be freely used by others to build upon

that knowledge" (1). In 2006, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), from which many Canadian journals receive funding, approved a policy on open access, making it a strategic priority ("Open"). In its Aid to Scholarly Journals application information, SSHRC highlights its commitment to and encouragement of open-access publication models:

> Today, new information and communication technologies are changing the way research results are published and disseminated, allowing information to circulate more rapidly and widely than ever before. In response, and in accordance with SSHRC's position on open access, SSHRC has designed this funding opportunity to allow journals to seek support regardless of business model or distribution format.

Digitized information and its swift circulation and replication through the Internet have come to represent an appealing group of ideals. Among others, these include the potential for efficient knowledge mobilization and transfer and for community engagement and interaction with research that is often publicly funded; the promise of the semantic web (or Web 3.0) in which machines will be able to read meaning in a more human and complex way; the expansion of interpretative possibilities facilitated by the ease of reconfiguring and curating information; the opportunity for increased collaboration between researchers, methods that privilege process over product; the autonomy allowed by open-source platforms such as Open Journal Systems (the platform on which *Jeunesse* is published in its online form), which permit scholars to disseminate research results without recourse to costly proprietary platforms and software, or to commercial publishers; the reduced environmental impact of electronic research over printed and mailed materials; the capacity to enhance the understanding of research through multimedia elements; and the decreased subscription and storage costs for libraries.

As appealing as the ideals and promises of free information are, however, there are also voices cautioning against the overuse of the slogan. Novelist, journalist, and digital-rights activist Cory Doctorow argues that the adage now needs to be discarded. In a *Guardian* article explicitly entitled "Saying Information Wants to Be Free Does More Harm than Good," he describes the slogan as a "thoughtless caricature that replaces a nuanced, principled stand with a cartoon character." As he observes, opponents of digital rights—for whom "free" simply means "free of charge"—point to the slogan as a justification for increased surveillance, censorship, and corporate control of information. (Notably, Doctorow also reminds his audience of the first, and not as widely publicized, part of Brand's original statement, which

begins, “On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it’s so valuable,” an observation that the opponents of digital rights apparently accept silently.) If “information wants to be free” has become a barrier to the accurate representation of the requests and concerns of digital-rights activists, it is also true that the statement needs to be probed for its implications and complicated by the producers of information. For those of us who edit and publish scholarly journals, the transition to “free information,” or open access, is a path with tantalizing promises but also precarious pitfalls.

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Conventional academic publishing, which has traditionally operated under the auspices of analogue scarcity while often remaining not-for-profit, has become “an insupportable economic model,” according to Kathleen Fitzpatrick (3), among other things because of decreasing university and library budgets, increased consortial sharing of resources between libraries, and the decreasing viability of the printed scholarly monograph despite its ostensible centrality within the credentialing systems of the academy. Nevertheless, there are many challenges in imagining a new model that is sustainable and that supports the different interests at stake, including those of researchers, authors, universities, publishers, and librarians. In an essay about the development of English copyright law in the eighteenth century, Simon Stern observes that “an emphasis on the text’s immateriality” is correlated with an “economy of abundance” rather than the “economy of scarcity” that obtains when information must be materialized in order to circulate, as in the case of analogue technology; in an economy of abundance, use and circulation are conceptualized not as a form of depletion but as “a form of increase” (436). The reticence of journal editors to adopt a fully open-access model, however, may be less about property

rights or the fear of depletion of the value of their texts than about the masking of immaterial labour, which, as Maurizio Lazzarato notes, comprises both "skills involving cybernetics and computer control" and "the activity that produces the 'cultural content' of the commodity" (133). Peer-reviewed journals rely on the cognitive labour of authors, editors, and reviewers to produce their content. Cognitive labour, one of the three types of immaterial labour Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri identify as hegemonic in post-industrial capitalism (*Empire* 293), is described by them as labour "that is primarily intellectual or linguistic, such as problem solving, symbolic and analytical tasks, and linguistic expressions," and that produces "ideas, symbols, codes, texts, linguistic figures, images, and other such products" (*Multitude* 108). While many of the editors and reviewers undertaking problem-solving and analytical tasks in the production of scholarly journals are employed by universities and research centres, such work typically is surplus to the core functions on which they are evaluated and for which they are remunerated. Such labour might be included, then, in what Tiziana Terranova calls "free labour" in the context of the digital economy, where cultural and academic labour increasingly intersects with the Internet and information technologies. Free labour, she observes, "is not exclusive to the so-called knowledge workers, but is a pervasive feature of the postindustrial economy" (35). Although often intrinsically pleasurable, for that very reason this type of labour can also be easily exploited, remaining unacknowledged and invisible (36).

In addition, however, "[t]he digital environment . . . requires knowledge and expertise that is normally outside the repertoire of most scholars" (Lorimer et al. 10); the need for skilled cognitive labour—particularly in the area of technology, and the time to assess, implement, and maintain the necessary technology—becomes a constraint on the commitment to open-access publication (Lorimer and Lindsay; Withey et al. 401). Once journals disseminate their texts, further forms of hidden labour come into play. To make sense of information that is increasingly atomized (McGann 112), researchers must rely on aggregation (Lorimer et al. 10). To enable researchers to find the information they produce, journals must ensure that they are accessible through the filters of aggregators. This requires journals to negotiate royalty agreements with third-party, for-profit organizations, or, at least, to qualify for membership in consortia that are large enough to gain them visibility and revenue. Granting bodies typically encourage journal editors to think about specific, prestigious types of visibility, including citation metrics and impact factors. Despite the fact that the Internet and digitized research have made it easier to track and to measure readership in the online world, there continue to be challenges. For example, web analytics are not yet incorporated into traditional

citation metrics; impact factors often privilege the international reach of journals; and impact depends on the size of specific disciplinary fields, with those in the humanities and social sciences being much smaller than in the sciences. (The development of aggregators such as *ImpactStory* and *CitedIn* and alternative filtering and measures espoused by *altmetrics*, which understand impact in multi-dimensional terms and as including the social web, may make it easier to determine readership in the future.) Increased expectations of accessibility and impact in the digital age increase the pressure to augment and to diversify marketing activities, including expanding the online presence of journals and using social media. These activities, like those involved in utilizing new technology fully, may be beyond the expertise of journal editors. Linked to this striving toward visibility in what some commentators have called a hyperabundant environment—a context in which there is a movement "beyond information abundance to information surfeit" (Withey et al. 400)—is the trend toward incorporating multimedia elements within digital journal publishing. Such elements can lead to substantial costs for permissions and copyright. Even the Budapest Open Access Initiative, which celebrated the coming age of freely available scholarship, conceded that "peer-reviewed journal literature . . . is not costless to produce."

The business model that would sustain open-access publication is not readily apparent. There are numerous reports and analyses of the implications of open access for academic publishing, including the Ithaka Report on "University Publishing in a Digital Age" in the United States (Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff), "Digital Technology Innovation in Scholarly Communication and University Engagement" in Canada (Lorimer et al.), and, most recently, the Finch Report on "Accessibility, Sustainability, Excellence: How to Expand Access to Research Publications" in the United Kingdom (Finch). All of these reports examine the challenges and sustainability of an open-access model and attempt to articulate new paradigms for management, but these paradigms are only loosely sketched and often admittedly problematic. While varied, the models typically involve the reallocation of existing funds and labour and/or recommend pooling resources within or between institutions. Possible revenue streams include controversial author fees (Finch), work-study programs that exploit student labour ("Lethbridge"), or direct funding commitments from universities under a broad research-dissemination strategy (Lorimer et al. 28; Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff 31). Some of the reports recommend that journals and university presses form consortia or publishing cooperatives in order to share resources, expertise, and labour (Brown, Griffiths, and Rascoff; Crow; Willinsky 81–92), and that universities add technology management and research dissemination to the role of university libraries (Brown,

Griffiths, and Rascoff 26; Houghton et al.). In the ideal scenario imagined by Rowland Lorimer, Director of the Master of Publishing program and the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University, library staff, programmers, and scholars would work collaboratively to publish academic research, with the understanding that categories of labour would need to be changed and expanded as technology "reconfigures the social roles that editors, graphic designers, sales and marketing personnel, and strategically-oriented publishers must play in the digital environment" (Lorimer 14–15). Among the recommendations from the Budapest Open Access Initiative is the sale of value-added texts in what is sometimes called a "freemium model," a term coined by venture capitalist Fred Wilson and popularized by Chris Anderson, former editor of *Wired* and author of *Free: The Future of a Radical Price*. This business model is already being used by companies such as Flickr, Skype, and Spotify, where basic services are free, but access to extended services is sold at a premium. (Paywalls for online newspapers, an example of such a freemium model in the context of journalistic information, are currently being tested by a number of national and international newspapers.) Of course, these value-added products and/or services require additional time and labour to create and maintain. At present, the available business assessments and recommendations are all framed within an acknowledgement that a major change in how the system of academic scholarship functions is necessary before open-access journal publishing can be fully implemented. The reports also point to widespread anxieties about the implications of the global paradigm shifts underway and to uncertainties about the ways in which to engage such change.

Like many journals, *Jeunesse* has been struggling to understand the new conditions of possibility for our dissemination of research and scholarship. When the editors of *Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature canadienne pour la jeunesse* shortened its title to *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures* in 2009, they also expanded its mandate to include scholarship on international texts and on many kinds of texts, in recognition of the decreasing importance of national borders in the creation and dispersal of culture. But changes to content, while perhaps most obvious to our readers, were only a small part of the changes we have made. We have moved from offset to digital printing processes in order to reduce our costs and to increase our flexibility in print runs. We have increased our accessibility by creating an online version of the journal, which is partially open access and hosted on the library server of the University of Winnipeg, and by working to raise the profile of *Jeunesse* in indexes and aggregated collections. We plan to start working with Extensible Markup Language (XML) and digital object identifications (DOIs) in the near future to ensure sustainable access through future shifts in format. We have joined the collection of the non-profit aggregator

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Project Muse. To accommodate the varying ways in which our audience may want to access the scholarship we publish, we have increased users' options, offering online-only subscriptions and individual article purchases. In order to attract submissions and readership within the context of the growing abundance of academic publication options, we have developed a marketing plan and have received grant funding to support it. To address the changing landscape of copyright and intellectual property, we have revised our publication agreement with authors and have developed policies on the use of *Jeunesse* material in different media and electronic systems. We have worked to enhance the perceived value of the journal through the use of more images and of more pages of peer-reviewed material. We continue to plan for an improved website, which will, we hope, incorporate more useful metadata and multimedia elements. The possibility of adding a participatory element, such as a blog, to the website has been discussed, but, at present, the need to account for the considerable additional time and labour required for implementation and maintenance of such a forum has stopped our movement in that direction. This is the case even though, because we work within the Canadian context, we receive funding for some of our core operations from SSHRC, allowing us, for example, to employ a managing editor, who oversees areas of production and dissemination that require time and expert labour beyond the capacity of the other editors.

All of us find much joy in our work. We concur with the Council of Editors of Learned Journals in our understanding of the promotion of scholarship and research as an important scholarly enterprise, which includes not only the dissemination

of scholarship but also the creation of "communities for exchange within and among disciplines" and the constitution of "a fundamental repository of knowledge and a cumulative record of the theory and history of a given field." We understand that we have committed ourselves in this aspect of our work "to serving the careers of others, nurturing the work of younger scholars, and promoting knowledge and high academic standards in [our] fields" ("Letter"). At the same time as we endorse these ideals, however, we know that we are fully implicated in the changes that subtend the current economic system: we make use of informationalized manufacturing processes in publishing the journal; we are cognitive labourers, not only performing the analytical and symbolic tasks central to the success of cognitive capitalism but also training others to take up such work; and we are part of the affective labour force as Silvia Federici defines it, in that we "promote flows of communication" (63). Indeed, because we edit a cultural-studies journal, the conditions of the production of texts, and information more generally, are among the central concerns of the research and scholarship we publish. As Max Haiven has observed in considering the current situation of humanities scholars confronted with the new imperatives "to net/work," we are trained "to comprehend the logic of how networks (*textuses*) are woven and rewoven and how they weave and reweave their weavers" (24, 25). Moreover, as a journal focused specifically on texts and cultures for, by, and about young people, we are acutely aware of the wide range of ideological uses to which claims of the new and the innovative can be put. As we continue to make changes over the coming months and years, we recognize the need to be self-conscious about our processes and our products even as we are practising and producing them.

We believe that our understanding of our publishing project as a collective and not an individual enterprise helps to make us resilient in the face of change. Our sense of working within a collectivity is possible in part because all of the *Jeunesse* editors are located on the University of Winnipeg campus, so that we can meet face to face as a full group regularly and in pairs or smaller groups informally as we need to complete particular tasks and projects. We are very fortunate in the range and number of our colleagues who are willing to serve as editors: in particular, we would like to thank Laurent Poliquin and charlie peters, both of whom served as editors for two years between 2009 and 2011, years during which they were also Ph.D. students working on their own research and writing projects. This past summer Laurent successfully defended his dissertation, "De l'impuissance à l'autonomie : évolution culturelle et enjeux identitaires des minorités canadiennes-françaises dans les journaux et la littérature pour la jeunesse de 1912 à 1944," and charlie is continuing work on her dissertation, "Timekeeper: The Nineteenth-Century Child, the Past and the Future, the Present and Eternity." Joining us in 2012 is Jenny Wills,

a colleague newly arrived at the University of Winnipeg whose own research focuses on African American and Asian American literature and culture. One of her recent projects analyzed narrative representations of transnational and transracial Asian adoption in contemporary North American novels.

We also benefit from the observations and advice of editorial advisory board members, experts from a variety of locations and disciplines. Completing her term on this board is Natalie Coulter, a communication studies scholar whose research includes the market creation of the category of the tween and whose work we have been proud to publish in *Jeunesse*. Joining the editorial advisory board in 2012 are Clare Bradford, Professor of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, and Stuart Poyntz, Assistant Professor of Communication at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver and President of the Association for Research in Cultures of Young People (ARCYP), an interdisciplinary professional association that promotes the study of and research in young people's cultures and texts. Subscription to *Jeunesse* is now one of the benefits of membership in ARCYP, another example of the way in which we are building what Michael A. Peters and Ergin Bulut call the "'soft architecture' of the *network*" so much a part of the new economies of communication in which we work (Introduction xxx).

The articles in this issue of *Jeunesse* all address questions of change, the new, and the possibility and impossibility of transformation. In the first piece, Paulette Rothbauer looks at the critical reception of Kevin Major's novel *Hold Fast* from the time of its first publication in 1978. Major's novel, she argues, marks—and helped to effect—a major turn in Canadian children's literature. Folklore, adventure stories, and animal tales with distinctively Canadian settings and for children of all ages predominated before the mid-1970s; in the decades following Major's novel, fiction that was specifically directed to adolescent readers, a genre that was already popular in the United States and other international markets by this time, with its social realism, urban settings, and colloquial language, came to dominate the field. Rothbauer is particularly interested to read the reviews of Major's novel for their assumptions about and representations of young adult readers.

Jocelyn Van Tuyl also takes up the question of the assumptions made about audiences, considering the ways in which British writer Noel Streatfeild reworked the material of her 1931 adult novel *The Whicharts* to make it marketable to young readers. Van Tuyl is not only interested in the stories that the 1936 children's novel *Ballet Shoes* substitutes for the "unsuitable" material of the adult novel, but also in the evidence that, in some senses, the children's book can be said to "know more than its adult counterpart" (46).

That fictions for young people are often savvy texts is one of the arguments of Miyuki Hanabusa in her essay

about the representations of cosmetic surgery and body modification in books for young adult readers since the 1990s. Hanabusa demonstrates that the fictional texts reflect adult authors' assumptions that youth are or should be interested in such trends and that these texts mirror the changing scholarly discussions current at the time of their production. In her detailed discussion of Melvin Burgess's recent novel, *Sara's Face*, Hanabusa argues that this novel explores the cultural breakdown of gender binaries but stops short of endorsing such category transgressions. She suggests that the implications of transformations of the body for understandings of the self are left open in both YA fiction and theory at present.

Krys Verrall's focus in "Childhood Undone" is on four contemporary art projects undertaken as collaborations between young people and adults. While acknowledging that the projects are "shaped, enabled, and constrained by the same ideological, institutional, and embedded power relations that govern all cross-generational interactions" (88), she also proposes that the strategies of shared creation instantiated by these projects point to ways in which hegemonic understandings about young people can be undone.

In her analysis of J. M. Barrie's "queer" narrative for young people about the only child who never grows up, *Peter and Wendy*, Rachel Prusko argues that "queer" in this story is less importantly a descriptor of the central child's sexuality than a descriptor of "the strangeness brought about by the unstable narrative form of the novel" (108). It is the child reader who is queered by this narrative, she argues. Part of Prusko's project in this essay is to contribute to current conversations about the ubiquitous presence of "the child" in queer theory and the strange absence of children's literature from these theoretical formulations.

The three review essays published here suggest that the questions being addressed by the authors of the articles in this issue are important to discussions underway in the field more widely. Victoria Flanagan reviews a collection of essays that sets out to consider whether critical theory continues to matter in the study of texts for young people, and Ingrid Johnston uses Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to read the threshold spaces of a number of recent Canadian young adult novels. In the review essay that opens this section, high-school English teacher Damian Tryon and a group of his senior students read a selection of recent Canadian novels purportedly directed to them as young people. The experience of writing this review as "insiders," however, ironically prompts group members to reflect on their positions as "outsiders" to critical conversations about young adult fiction, suggesting to them the theme that they trace through the five novels they discuss.

Tryon and his students end their essay with a plea to teachers to allow students more often to study texts written explicitly about and for them. It is through the

process of writing the review, they observe, that they have begun, collectively, to see and to critique "the power that adults . . . have to shape the subjectivity of young adults" (130). Like these young people, we find ourselves as editors of *Jeunesse* embedded in paradigms we do not fully understand even as we use those paradigms to do our work. All of us might be said to be echoing the observations Adrienne Rich makes in her poem "Transcendental Etude": we know that we have "to study our lives, / make of our lives a study, as if learning natural history / or music" (73) and we know that such study is at once impossible and exhilarating:

> we take on
> everything at once before we've even begun
> to read or mark time, we're forced to begin
> in the midst of the hardest movement,
> the one already sounding as we are born. (73)

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