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The Manchester Manifesto

Below we print a synopsis of The Manchester Manifesto prepared by the MMS Bulletin. The Manchester Manifesto, a product of The Manchester Manifesto Group was launched in late November 2009 and is available in full online at:*

www.manchester.ac.uk/isei/themanchestermanifesto/

Science is a rapidly growing industry. Beyond basic research, the commercialisation of technologies and development of new products from bench top to marketplace is a complex process. In asking “Who Owns Science?” the Manchester Manifesto is concerned with all aspects of this process: scientific discovery, development, application and distribution; and the interactions between each aspect. The MMS Bulletin publishes parts of the Manifesto, which was launched in late November 2010.

An important component of the innovation process has been the idea of “ownership” in science and technology. This concept has arisen partly in the context of profiting from research and development, but also has implications for much broader issues such as control of and access to scientific information and products that result from research, in terms of both the private and socio-political dimensions of ownership.

Statement of the problem

To manage the ownership of science and the fruits of research, an intricate system of intellectual property (IP) law has developed. The justifications for IP law as it exists at present include the idea that it is required in order to facilitate scientific and economic benefit from innovation, and that it provides a fair and morally justifiable way of rewarding those who invest in the process of discovery and regulating access to these benefits. The initial meetings of the Manchester Manifesto Group in 2008-2009 established that the current method of managing innovation (and perhaps in particular IP in its present form), whilst deeply embedded in current practice and hence of practical importance, also has significant drawbacks in terms of its effects on science and economic efficiency, and raises ethical issues because of its (often adverse) effects on people and populations.

The Manchester Manifesto Group considered the core goals of science and identified various issues and problems with the current system of ownership and management of science and innovation, highlighting elements that hinder or obstruct achievement of these goals. Reflecting on these problems, we were able to articulate some broad principles and policy considerations to guide any investigation or evaluation of alternative systems of innovation. Finally, we outlined some questions that must be addressed if we are to move towards solutions to the problems identified by the group. We call for further research in these areas as a matter of great importance, in order to answer the question not only of “Who Owns Science?”, but of who ought to own science and how the goals of science can best be fulfilled.

Goals

Science and the public good: Science can serve the public good by generating knowledge to meet human needs and purposes. This includes knowledge with direct application to current challenges and pure/undirected endeavour (so called “blue skies” research) that forms the essential basis for future scientific discovery.

Innovation and the public good: Management of innovation has significant implications for scientific progress and human welfare. It affects the distribution of benefits, access to technology, dissemination of knowledge, and the pace and direction of research.

Reciprocal responsibilities of science and society: The relationship between science and society is essentially one of reciprocity, mutual benefit, and needs to be seen to be so. Just as science has responsibilities to the public good, the public has responsibilities towards science as the collective recipient of its benefits and as a major funder of its activities – a relationship that is often mediated by policy.

Issues/Problems in the Current Management of Innovation

The interests and contributions of inventors and authors deserve to be recognised fairly. However the current dominant model of innovation and commercialisation of science poses a number of problems. It has potential to encourage innovation and stimulate research and development, but also to frustrate innovation and stifle research and development; and can hinder science from operating in a way consistent with the public good.

Access to benefits of research

Current models can restrict or prevent public access to the benefits of research – both the information generated by scientific endeavour and the products of innovation based on that science – and thereby hinder science from serving the public good.

- Certain licensing and commercial practices can restrict access to the products of science and innovation, particularly for those with limited market power.

- This is of particular concern in the case of those products that address basic needs (such as health care).
- The current model rewards particular kinds of creative effort, namely those which result in commercial gain. It is therefore likely to hinder innovation of products that have limited market value, but which may have huge social benefit.
- The obligation on corporate innovation to maximise profit and return for shareholders can conflict with the creation of knowledge and achievement of welfare goals.

Principles, Policy Considerations and Progress

We recognise that innovation has an essential role in economic development, but its use for the pursuit of profit should not override, and ideally should not conflict with, achievement of welfare goals and scientific progress. Scientific information, freely and openly communicated, adds to the body of knowledge and understanding upon which the progress of humanity depends. Information must remain available to science and this depends on open communication and dissemination of information, including that used in innovation.

Principles

- The regulation of frameworks of innovation should promote the following objectives:
 - Provision of public benefit
- Just recognition of interests
- Facilitating progress of science and innovation
- Increasing access to fruits of research – information and products
- Addressing welfare and resource inequities both locally and globally
- Increasing trust in the relationships between scientists, innovators, corporations and public, and between nations

At times these objectives may conflict and attention must be given to the most appropriate way of balancing them in each situation.

Policy Considerations

Alternative systems: The current dominant model of intellectual property rights for innovation is not the only option available. There are existing alternatives and new models can be designed with differing cost distributions. Different systems may be appropriate in different areas; consideration must be given to the factors that affect this, including the nature of the knowledge, the method of discovery and the environment in which knowledge generation takes place.

For example, the current system can be modified through increased use of mechanisms such as patent pools, voluntary or compulsory licensing, and differential pricing. A range of alternative models is also possible: from those which are related to the current rights system

such as remuneration-based patents, through prize funds, to completely open-access models.

Assessing models of innovation: Any model of innovation is likely to have advantages and disadvantages. Consideration should be given to which is the most appropriate for particular circumstances, bearing in mind the principles above and the goals of science and innovation.

In evaluating the various possible models, the following factors should be taken into consideration: The extent to which it advances welfare and promotes human flourishing

- Fair and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, with particular attention to resource providers (including the scientific community, the public, specific contributors of knowledge/biomaterials, and other contributors).
- Facilitation of safe and sustainable access to the end product
- Affordability in use of the system and of the end products
- Maintenance of free flow of scientific information
- Promotion of open communication
- The provision of adequate incentives to stimulate scientific discovery and innovation
- Ease and effectiveness of operation
- Inclusion of operational rules appropriate to achieving desired objectives
- Awareness of global dynamics

**The Manchester Manifesto Group brings together international experts from relevant disciplines to address the question of “Who Owns Science?” Led by two research institutes at The University of Manchester, the Institute for Science, Ethics and Innovation and the Brooks World Poverty Institute, chaired by John Sulston and Joseph Stiglitz, respectively, the Group represents a critical mass of research expertise that are ideally equipped to meet the challenges and problems outlined above. The Group’s members are drawn from a broad range of academic disciplines and relevant sectors, including economics, science, innovation, law, philosophy, ethics and public policy. The goal has been not only to investigate the question of “Who Owns Science?” but to present and apply our findings to maximum effect in order to make a difference in the real world as to how science is used, and hence to “build a better future for humanity”. Website and Contact:*

<http://www.isei.manchester.ac.uk/themanchestermanifesto/>

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