

What is Open Access?

The SNSF provides below a short introduction to Open Access and also makes available further information sources (without claiming that the information provided is exhaustive).

1. Introduction

- Public organisations such as research institutes and their libraries are required to pay increasing amounts of money to publishers to “buy back” the findings (mostly in the form of journals or access to online resources) of research that has already been funded using public money, on behalf of their researchers and for all other interested parties.
- The costs of the licences for these journals have rocketed in recent years. In addition, the market for journals has grown significantly. Major leading publishers operate on a commercial basis, even though the research results that they publish have been funded from public finances.
- Due to the escalation of costs, it is becoming increasingly difficult for research bodies to provide their researchers and interested lay people with access to all of the relevant publications (and a digital divide clearly exists for those in developing countries).
- As a result, the extent of dissemination of research findings is decreasing.

2. Definition

The term Open Access refers to a movement that is attempting to counteract the developments described in 1) above. The definition is as follows:

“Open Access creates free access to scientific information on the Internet in the form of peer-reviewed publications that have been archived reliably and permanently. Publishing according to the principles of Open Access provides the copyright holders with a guarantee for their rights to their intellectual property, faster publication routes, lower production and distribution costs, greater visibility and therefore a higher frequency of quotation thanks to free, global access.

Open Access does not mean self-publishing or a method of circumventing the peer-review process and publication. Neither is it a second-class publication route. Open Access is the means by which the results of research can be made freely available to the research community through the Internet.” in: <http://www.oai.uzh.ch> (cf. Bailey, Charles W., 2006): <http://digital-scholarship.org/cwb/WhatIsOA.htm>

3. Objectives of Open Access

- Open Access publications generate a significantly broader level of dissemination and greater visibility of research findings. Open Access can contribute to a reduction in often lengthy publication timescales, and Open Access publications are not limited in terms of visibility by high licensing costs.
- Despite a growing market for publication, Open Access can help reduce acquisition costs in the long term, or at least keep them at a stable level. The costs will be redistributed in a transition from a “reader pays” model to an “author pays” or “funder pays” model.
- Open Access will significantly expand the access to research results beyond the scientific community.
- Smaller disciplines, in particular, will gain simpler and less costly market access.

4. Two roads to Open Access: the Green Road and the Gold Road

Two forms of Open Access should be distinguished:

1. Freely accessible electronic archiving on an institutional or discipline-specific archive server (repository) by the researcher, referred to as self-archiving of those scientific articles, contributions or books that have already been published in traditional peer-reviewed publications (named the “green road” by Stevan Harnad).
2. Direct Open Access publication in peer-reviewed (quality-assured) Open Access journals, series or books which are freely accessible on the Internet (named the “gold road” by Stevan Harnad).

Ad. 1:

Before quality-assured Open Access publication models gain an equivalent reputation, researchers must initially be concerned with when and under which conditions they may be entitled to archive the publications that have been published in traditional media in the free and directly accessible repositories of their institutions (green road) without thereby breaching their publisher contracts (copyright transfer agreements). It is not common knowledge that the vast majority of journals around the world allow their authors to self-archive their publications in a freely accessible repository under certain conditions. Most of them permit archiving immediately after publication in the journal (post-print, in which cases normally the accepted manuscripts as laid out by the authors are archived rather than the published PDFs), while some permit archiving before the publication (pre-prints, referring to the version of the publication prior to undergoing the review process): Thus, Elsevier, Springer, Wiley, Blackwell and Nature Publishing Group allow the accepted versions to be archived, sometimes after the end of an embargo period. If authors send additions to the copyright transfer agreements to the publishers, for example in the form of the SPARC licence, the copyright situation can be defused considerably. In such situations, it is always recommended that the author obtains a countersigned copy of the additions from the publisher.

Ad. 2:

The model for quality-assured Open Access publications (gold road) is still being developed, but rapid progress is being made. New Open Access journals are being launched on a permanent basis and the established publishers are gradually adjusting to the new business model.

Note that an increasing number of conventional and commercial publishers are offering a so-called hybrid model of Open Access for single journal articles. Since a relatively high publication fee is demanded of the author while the publisher continues to sell access licences to libraries at typically consistently high prices, the SNSF advises against such publications.

5. Financial aspects

Open Access publication following the green road does not normally incur any cost. Any costs for publication in refereed Open Access journals (gold road) are handled very differently by many of the various research funding institutions. From 1 October 2013, the SNSF will assume the costs of publication in purely Open Access journals up to a limit of CHF 3000 per publication. These costs can be claimed from the project budget during the project period. This applies equally to projects that are already running.

6. Sources of information about Open Access

Key information on Open Access, free access to scientific information, can currently be found on the German information platform open-access.net (www.open-access.net). In particular, the information found in the FAQ (http://open-access.net/de_en/general_information/faq/?no_cache=1) is extremely helpful (and also contains specific notes for Switzerland).

Further specific links:

6.1 Information about Open Access

- Open Access website of the University of Zurich: <http://www.oai.uzh.ch>

6.2 Examples of the Institutional Repository model:

- ZORA: Document and Publications Server for the University of Zurich
<http://www.zora.uzh.ch>
- RERO-DOC (publications platform of the Library Network of Western Switzerland)
<http://doc.rero.ch/?ln=en>

6.3 Documents concerning the Berlin Declaration

- “Berlin Declaration”: <http://oa.mpg.de/lang/en-uk/berlin-prozess/berliner-erklarung/>
- Institutional declaration of obligations to Open Access:
http://www.open-access.net/declaration_de.html

6.4 Overview of Open Access journals and platforms by discipline

- Overview of quality-assured Open Access journals and platforms in all disciplines - Directory of Open Access Journals: <http://www.doaj.org/>
- Examples of social sciences and humanities
 - Theoretical Economics: <http://www.econtheory.org/>
 - Living Reviews in European Governance: <http://europeangovernance.livingreviews.org/>
 - Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs-eng.htm>
 - American Journal of Archaeology: <http://www.ajaonline.org/>
 - History Cooperative (American Historical Review): <http://www.historycooperative.org/>
 - European Cultural Heritage Online (ECHO): <http://echo.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/home>
 - Hamburg University Press: <http://www.hup.rrz.uni-hamburg.de/>
- Examples for Mathematics, natural sciences and engineering
 - New Journal of Physics: <http://www.iop.org/EJ/journal/1367-2630/8>
 - Annales of Mathematics: <http://www.math.princeton.edu/~annals/>
 - Living Reviews in relativity / in solar physics: <http://www.livingreviews.org/>
- Examples for biology/medicine
 - Journals of the Public Library of Science: www.plos.org
 - Journals from BioMed Central: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/browse/journals/>
 - eLIFE - Joint initiative of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Max Planck Society, and the Wellcome Trust: <http://www.elifesciences.org/>

6.5 Increased citation of Open Access publications

- Eysenbach, Gunther (2006). Citation advantage of open access articles. PLoS Biology, 4(5). <http://biology.plosjournals.org/perlserv/?request=get-document&doi=10.1371%2Fjournal.pbio.0040157>
- Harnad, Stevan & Brody, Tim (2004). Comparing the impact of open access (OA) vs. non-oa articles in the same journals. D-Lib Magazine, 10(6). <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/june04/harnad/06harnad.html>

6.6 Copyright issues

- *Creative Commons*: <http://creativecommons.org>
Provides useful information on dealing with copyright and agreements with publishers on parallel or near-simultaneous free access to publications that are initially published by traditional methods.
- SHERPA/ROMEIO list: Publisher copyright policies & self-archiving: <http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>
Provides information on the self-archiving policies of various journals and publishers for inspection.

6.7 Technical aspects of Open Access and archiving

A basic problem facing Open Source publication is ensuring stable, long-term access to the corresponding web addresses and archives. The following sources provide useful information to deal with this:

- Open Archive Initiative: <http://www.openarchives.org/>
- Romeo: <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ls/disresearch/romeo/>
- Eprints: <http://www.eprints.org/>

6.8 Information platforms

- ZUGANG ZUM WISSEN: <http://www.zugang-zum-wissen.de>
German-language collection of links to information about Open Access
- DINI: <http://www.dini.de>
The German Initiative for Network Information (Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation e.V.) is a central German initiative on Open Access
- Open Access News: <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html>
Provides the latest news from the Open Access movement
- Self-Archiving FAQ: <http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/self-faq/>
- SPARC: <http://www.sparc.arl.org/>
Alliance of universities, libraries and organisations

14/08/2013