

What Is Open Access – and Why Should I Care?

Linda Behrend, University of Tennessee

Have you heard people talk about “open access,” but aren’t really sure what it means? Open access publishing is a model for the communication of research and scholarship with the following characteristics: 1) materials are in digital format; 2) on the Internet; 3) freely available to users; and, 4) for the most part, free of copyright and licensing restrictions. Open access insures that scholarly work will be broadly disseminated and discovered. It is provided primarily through journals and institutional archives (sometimes called repositories). Generally, articles in open access journals have been peer reviewed, whereas items in archives and repositories have not.

Peer Review

Peer-reviewed scholarly open access journals may be located through the *Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)* <http://www.doaj.org/>, an authoritative gateway launched in May 2003 and hosted by Lund University Libraries in Sweden. One may also identify peer-reviewed open access journals with an advanced search in *Ulrich’s Periodicals Directory* using the limits “open access” and “refereed.” (*Ulrich’s* is available at UT both in print [Hodges Reference PN4699.U47] and online [through the University Libraries databases: <http://www.lib.utk.edu/cgi-perl/dbBroker.cgi?search=ulrichs>].) A quick search of academic/scholarly journals in *Ulrich’s* using the keyword “education” and limiting to “open access” publications resulted in 222 titles. Adding “refereed” to

the limits revealed that 170 of those retrieved (over 76%) are peer reviewed publications.

The widespread availability of the Internet has made such sharing possible. In today's world, it makes sense for scholars to publish their research electronically and to use the Internet for scholarly communication. This medium enables scholars to communicate their work to a wider audience and more quickly than through a print publication. One contributor to a recent book on scholarly publishing stated: "Making [primary literature] freely available over the Internet immediately distributes it to the 650 million people worldwide who have Internet access" (Prosser 109).

Create Change

The open access movement had its genesis in a meeting convened in Budapest in 2001 by the Open Society Institute. The resulting Budapest Open Access Initiative recommended two strategies: 1) self-archiving in electronic archives and 2) open-access journals. For the text of the BOAI statement of principles, a list of the signers, and other information about the Initiative, see <http://www.soros.org/openaccess/index.shtml>.

Among organizations that have joined the open access movement is the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), which, in response to market dysfunctions in the scholarly communications system, in 1997 formed the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) <http://www.arl.org/sparc/about/index.html>, an alliance of universities, research

libraries, and organizations. For ARL's guide to open access, see

http://www.arl.org/scomm/open_access/framing.html.

In January 2002, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association, launched a scholarly communication initiative and developed a statement, "Principles and Strategies for the Reform of Scholarly Communication"

<http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/principlesstrategies.htm>, to

provide overall guidance for the initiative. It also drafted a white paper

addressing the implications of open access for its own serials publishing program.

On its Web site, ACRL offers a "Scholarly Communication Toolkit" for librarians, faculty, academic administrators, and other campus stakeholders ([http://](http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/scholarlycomm/scholarlycommunication.htm)

www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlissues/scholarlycomm/scholarlycommunication.htm).

SPARC and ARL, with support from ACRL, developed an education initiative called *Create Change* (<http://www.createchange.org/>) that seeks to explore new opportunities for scholarly communication, to advocate for change, and to enlist scholars and researchers in bringing about change. A *Create Change* brochure details the crisis in scholarly communication brought about by the rising cost of journal subscriptions and authors' loss of control of their scholarly output. An Open Access brochure is also available in print and on the Web:

<http://www.createchange.org/archive/resources/OpenAccess.pdf>. [NOTE: print

copies of these brochures are available from the University of Tennessee Libraries by contacting Linda Phillips (llphillips@utk.edu).]

In August 2006, SPARC launched an Authors Rights educational initiative (<http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/index.html>) to inform academic authors about how they can use the SPARC “Author’s Addendum” (http://www.arl.org/sparc/author/docs/AuthorsAddendum2_1.pdf) to retain the rights to their intellectual property when signing a publication agreement or contract with a subscription-based journal.

Repositories

When authors retain the rights to their publications, they are free to deposit them in open access repositories, at their own institutions or in subject-specific repositories. Institutional repositories are digital archives created at academic institutions (usually through their libraries) to preserve and provide open access to journals, research, and other scholarly capital produced at the institution. Some institutions use open source software with authoring tools that enable faculty researchers to “deposit” their own work in the repository. For an example, see the University of Rochester’s pages: “About UR Research” <http://www.library.rochester.edu/index.cfm?page=1346&CFID=5955274&CFTOKEN=82994675&jsessionid=5a3014b190df6d352645> and “UR Research” <https://urresearch.rochester.edu/index.jsp>). Other institutions purchase commercial content management system software to develop their institutional repositories. Fayetteville State University in North Carolina, for instance, is using “Digital Commons@” (<http://digitalcommons.uncfsu.edu/>), a new Digital Institutional Repository Service marketed by ProQuest. The UT Libraries’ Digital Library Center created the UT Scholars Archive

(<http://diglib.lib.utk.edu/dlc/scholarsarchive/ir.html>) as a prototype for an institutional repository at the University of Tennessee.

One example of a subject-specific repository is PubMed Central (<http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/>), the National Library of Medicine's free archive of life sciences journals, developed to make reports of research funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) available to the public. An article in the *Economist*, "Who Pays the Piper. . . ," commented on open-access publishing in light of NIH's announcement in 2005 that it expected research which it had funded to be made freely available online within a year of having been published in a journal. The Public Library of Science (PLOS) <http://www.plos.org/> is a nonprofit organization of scientists "committed to making the world's scientific and medical literature a public resource." They publish several open access journals in the sciences—freely available on their Web site—and deposit the full content in open-access archives. To find other OA repositories, see OpenDOAR (Directory of Open Access Repositories <http://www.opendoar.org/>) and the Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR <http://archives.eprints.org/>).

Open Access Initiatives at the University of Tennessee

A number of university faculty senates nationwide have endorsed the open access movement. On May 1, 2006, the UT Faculty Senate adopted a "Resolution on Scholarly Publishing" that originated with the Faculty Senate Library Committee and UT's Scholarly Communications Committee. The Scholarly Communications Committee was formed in 2004 by the Chancellor's office and is co-chaired by Susan Martin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, and

Linda Phillips, Head of Collection Development & Management in the University Libraries. Its charge is “to advise and consult with faculty regarding the complex issues surrounding scholarly communications in this digital age”—the most pressing of which is the exponential rise in the cost of serials. In addition, the Committee is exploring “the challenges and opportunities associated with new methods of disseminating research, creative work, and teaching materials through electronic media.” For more information about the Committee, see: <http://www.lib.utk.edu/colldev/schcomm.html>.

To learn more about the open access movement, find “Open Access” under Scholarly Communications Issues on the UT Libraries Web site (<http://www.lib.utk.edu/colldev/issues.html>) and explore the links. Sign up to receive (via e-mail) the SPARC Open Access Newsletter (<http://www.arl.org/sparc/soa/>). For daily updates, monitor Peter Suber’s “Open Access News” blog (<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/fosblog.html>).

Why Should You Care?

Are you concerned about the high cost of journal subscriptions? Do you find it frustrating when your library drops its subscription to a journal you use? Do you sign away the rights to your intellectual capital when a journal accepts your work for publication—and then have to buy it back (through a personal or library journal subscription)? Have you asked for permission to use your own work? All of these are reasons for you to join the open access movement. You can participate by educating yourself about open access, publishing in open access journals whenever possible, using the SPARC “author’s addendum” when signing

a publisher's contract, depositing preprints of your work in an open digital archive, launching an open access journal in your field—and telling others about the open access movement in scholarly communication!

For Further Reading

Association of Research Libraries. Office of Scholarly Communication. "Framing the Issue: Open Access," http://www.arl.org/scomm/open_access/framing.html.

Association of Research Libraries. Issues in Scholarly Communication: Open Access. Washington, D.C.: ARL, [Last modified: December 20, 2004]. http://createchange.org/scomm/open_access/index.html

Bailey, Charles W. Jr. *Open Access Bibliography: Liberating Scholarly Literature with E-Prints and Open Access Journals*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2005. Also available in PDF digital form (<http://escholarlypub.com/oab/oab.pdf>) or in HTML (<http://escholarlypub.com/oab/oab.htm>).

Create Change brochure.

<http://www.createchange.org/archive/resources/CreateChange2003.pdf>

Prosser, David C. "The Next Information Revolution: How Open Access Will Transform Scholarly Communications." In *Scholarly Publishing in an Electronic Era*, edited by G. E. Gorman. London: Facet Publishing, 2005 (International Yearbook of Library and Information Management 2004/05). 99-117.

SPARC Open Access Newsletter. <http://www.arl.org/sparc/soa/index.html>

Suber, Peter. Guide to the Open Access Movement (formerly called *Guide to the Free Online Scholarship Movement*). <http://www.earlham.edu/~epeters/fos/guide.htm#fos> (accessed July 14, 2006)

Suber, Peter. Open Access Overview: Focusing on Open Access to Peer-Reviewed Research Articles and Their Preprints. <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm> (accessed May 31, 2006).

Suber, Peter. Removing Barriers to Research: An Introduction to Open Access for Librarians. *College & Research Libraries News*, v. 64, no. 2 (February 2003): 92–4, 113. Also available online: <http://news.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/crlnews/backissues2003/february1/removingbarriers.htm> (viewed May 2, 2006).

Who Pays the Piper. . . . *Economist* 374, no. 8413 (February 12, 2005): 78-80. (*The Economist* [ISSN 0013-0613] available online through the UT Libraries catalog and e-journals list.)