BASICS OF OPEN ACCESS

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OPEN ACCESS FACT SHEET

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What is a Open Access?

Simply put, Open Access is the process of making scholarly outputs freely available online. Under the current system of publication, anyone wanting to read the results of publicly funded research projects needs to be a member of an academic institution or pay money for a subscription to access it. This represents both a barrier to information and poor value for the public whose tax has helped to fund the research. Open Access seeks to remove these barriers by making research outputs available to anyone who wishes to see them.

Many organisations which fund research have realised that this inequlity of access exists and now mandate that the outputs of any researchers they support should be made openly available.

Types of Open Access

There are several mechanisms by which researchers can make their work available and different funders have different policies on how this should be done. There are two main methods which researchers will come across:
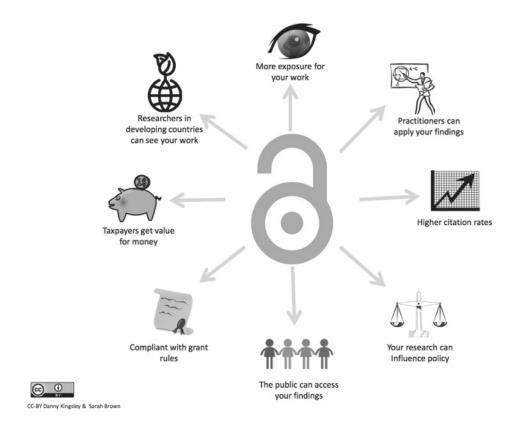
Gold Open Access – sometimes referred to as born open content, these outputs are freely available to readers upon publication. This can be done through publishers which only produce open content or if the author pays a fee known as an article processing charge.

Green Open Access – the most common option involves authors archiving a copy of their output in a repository for anyone to access. This is done in addition to the final published version. Researchers using this route should carefully check which version of their work they are allowed to share due to copyright restrictions.

OPEN ACCESS FACT SHEET

Benefits of Open Access

More exposure for your work

Researchers in developing countries can see your work

Practitioners can apply your findings

Taxpayers get value for money

Higher citation rates

Compliant with grant rules

The public can access your findings

Your research can Influence policy

RESEARCHERS

The main benefit for researchers is that openly sharing their outputs will make them compliant with funder mandates, avoiding penalties which can impact their work. It can also help to increase the exposure of their work as more people are able to easily find it online. This can lead to higher citation rates – something which many researchers strive for. As a result of the output being available to a wider audience it has the potential to make a real-world impact on policy and practice outside of the academic sphere.

PUBLIC

Open Access publication means that the public are able to access more scholarly information than ever before, something crucial in an age of fake news. It also represents better value for money as they do not have to pay to see the results of work which they have helped fund through taxes. Open Access increases the availability of work meaning that both researchers in developing countries and practitioners with no academic affiliation are able to use the latest findings in their own work.

OPEN ACCESS GLOSSARY

Open Access is an area rich in terminology. Some of the most essential terms researchers need to be aware of are listed below:

EMBARGO PERIOD

- The length of time authors must wait before they can make work openly available. This is commonly imposed by publishers when authors are looking to make work available via Green Open Access.

REPOSITORY

- An online database of research outputs, repositories may be subject or format specific or accept all types of content. They are committed to long-term preservation and access so offer a stable place to share open outputs.

PAYWALL

- The mechanism which keeps those who have not paid either a one-off fee or a subscription from reading research outputs. Costs can range from hundreds of pounds for a subscription to £30 for single article access.

AUTHOR ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

- The final, peer reviewed version of a manuscript which has been accepted for publication but not yet formatted to look like a finished output. This is often the latest version which an author owns the copyright to.

VERSION OF RECORD

- Also referred to as the final published version, this is the version of an output which has been edited and typeset by a publisher. Publishers often exercise copyright over this version as they have put work into making it suitable for publication.