

What is Open Access?

The idea

Open Access, as defined by the Budapest Open Access Initiative , is the free of charge, immediate, online availability of scientific publications with full re-use rights. What makes it possible is the internet and the consent of the copyright holder.

Open Access is *entirely compatible* with peer-review, copyright, revenue, prestige, quality and other services normally associated with conventional scientific literature.

If you want to know what Open Access is all about in 5 minutes, watch the introductory video below.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/gzRgknyITEM>

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A very Brief Introduction to Open Access by Peter Suber (2014)

Advantages of Open Access

Visibility

Open Access increases the visibility of your work. There are several studies showing the visibility and international reach advantage of Open Access articles and monographs .

In general, Open Access works are viewed and downloaded more than the toll-access counterparts.

Impact

The same can be said in terms of the impact of Open Access publications. SPARC Europe has a curated list of studies showing the citation advantage of Open Access articles in all disciplines.

Springer's report on the Open Access effect on monographs shows that the same can be said for Open Access books.

Protection of author's rights

The deposit of an author preprint in an open repository constitutes a proof of first publication. Not all journals allow the deposit of preprints before submission, so authors should inform themselves before doing so.

In most disciplines, conventional publishing implies the transfer of most rights to the publisher. Therefore, the author needs to get a license from the publisher in order to be able to open their own work through Green Open Access.

With Gold Open Access, authors retain all copyright and grant a license to the editor to allow them to publish their work. The type of license varies depending on the type of work.

Democratization of research

The geographical and institutional access gap is closed thus delivering the the knowledge where it helps the most.

Open Access publications have zero access costs (excluding the cost of connecting to the Internet) and some forms of Open Access also have zero publication costs for authors.

About 75% of UNIL researchers identify the democratisation of research as the main driver for publishing in Open Access.

Open Access can be given to all kinds of scientific documents, such as articles, conference proceedings, thesis, course materials, preprints, reports, posters, etc, allowing knowledge to be disseminated outside of the conventional article format.

The new standard

The evolution of the publication landscape has made of Open Access the new standard. ROARMAP shows that there are currently 83 funder Open Access policies and 703 research organisation Open Access policies worldwide.

If you would like more information on the issues and drivers behind the Open Access movement, watch the introductory video below by Jorge Cham.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/L5rVH1KGBCY>

Objections to Open Access

Predatory journals

With OA's incredible development, parasitic or « predatory » OA journals have started to exploit the « author pays » model. The authors, generally solicited by email, are invited to submit articles, which are systematically accepted after publication fees are paid for, regardless of the scientific value¹⁴. One must note that this problem exists only for Gold OA journals.

Jeffrey Beall, of the University of Colorado, created in 2008, scholarlyoa.com, a website that contained a list of potentially predatory journals based on 52 criteria. This list was used as a standard until its discontinuation in January 2017.

An archived version is still [available](#) and [other sites](#) have tried to carry the torch. It is also possible to consult the [DOAJ](#) to evaluate the credibility of an OA journal.

The recently launched cross-sector initiative called « [Think. Check. Submit](#) » is a campaign seeking to help researchers identify journals of quality for their research. It consists of a simple check-list that researchers can use to evaluate journals or publishers. This initiative is an excellent way of fighting against « predatory » journals.

Cost of publishing

Open Access is not free. Gold OA implies administrative costs (in addition to the APCs) estimated at [£81 per article in the UK](#) . As for Green OA that number is £33 per article.

It is also estimated that the transition costs towards OA may be costly for Switzerland depending on the strategies adopted by Switzerland, Europe and the World. Additionally, transition towards an « author pays » system could engender new inequalities of access to scientific publication, especially for young researchers in developing countries.

It is therefore natural that researchers wonder about the sources of funding necessary for this transition, especially for Gold OA. Currently, the SNF and the EC cover the OA publication costs for articles and the former covers book publication costs and will do the same for chapters, starting 1 October 2018.

Researchers should always keep in mind that if they do not have the funds to pursue Gold OA, **Green OA is still a viable and compliant way to publish in Open Access**. UNIL makes its institutional repository available to its researchers and is committed to its improvement to better reflect their needs, especially in terms of user-friendliness and of the visibility of the deposited full texts.

What about monographs?

The OA movement developed around periodical articles; it therefore concerns all fields, scientific as well as literary. Nevertheless, in many fields, especially in the HSS, the publication of monographs remains an – if not the most – important means of scientific dissemination. Researchers in these fields may fear that — fairly strict — mandates governing articles could harm their careers by forcing them to publish in formats unsuited to their discipline.

OA for monographs is starting to grow but is falling behind on and has different issues from the publication of scientific articles, notably concerning the quantity of work devoted to each monograph by the publishers, the necessity of selling copies to cover costs and the payment of royalties to the authors.

It is for these reasons that OA mandates are more flexible for monographs than for articles, allowing longer embargoes and even sharing the costs of BPCs and BCPCs.

The main difference between article and monograph OA is that publishers have accepted APC-based article OA and specific clauses for Green OA are by default included in publication contracts, whereas for monographs authors must negotiate their inclusion case-by-base.

UNIL's rectorate is aware of these differences and is planning a slower transition towards OA for monographs than for articles.

Academic freedom

Many researchers have shown concern regarding their academic freedom in the face of a compulsory policy from the rectorate. This concern is particularly strong for the HSS and the publication of monographs.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines **academic freedom** as "the freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of teachers to inquire into any subject that evokes their intellectual concern; to present their findings to their students, colleagues, and others; to publish their data and conclusions without control or censorship; and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate."

From this point of view, Open Access mandates that allow for a mix of Open Access scenarios (namely, a mix of Green and Gold Open Access) should not limit the academic freedom of researchers. Indeed, by allowing both roads, researchers can choose the most appropriate outlet for their works, and subsequently follow the necessary road to grant Open Access to them. Gold OA allows for the publication in OA journals and books, whereas Green OA allows for the parallel publication of the article in a subscription journal and the author manuscript (or post-print) in an institutional repository.

The rectorate is aware of these distinctive features and will take them into account when writing the Open Access policy. **Its intention is not to limit the academic freedom of its researchers, but rather to present to them all the possibilities available and to encourage them to make their work as open as possible, as soon as possible.**

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