Open Access: A Brief History

Open Access

Open Access as a principle advocates the open collaboration, dissemination and sharing of ideas, insights and innovations.

The Internet: Making Open Access Possible…

The Internet enables the principles of Open Access to be put into practice. In fact, the reality of information sharing online is part of what has informed and inspired Open Access as a principle.

Prior to the contemporary Internet, on August 30, 1969 the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) was launched by the U.S. Department of Defense.

On January 1, 1983. ARPANET switched from the NCP protocol to TCP/IP, marking what many consider to be the birth of the Internet.

Open Access: The Birth of a Principle

December 1st-2nd, 2001: The Budapest Open Access Initiative is a key moment in the development of Open Access as a principle. This meeting was convened in Budapest by the Open Society Foundations (OSF).

This conference discussed and debated efforts to move towards a model of academic publishing enabling the free dissemination of high quality research. With quality research made freely available, both innovation and collaboration would become easier.

June 20th, 2003: The Bethesda statement on Open Access is released.

October 22nd, 2003: Berlin statement on Open Access is also released.

The Budapest, Bethesda and Berlin statements make up the 'BBB' definition of Open Access.

Both of these statements reiterated the ethos of Open Access and increased pressure within academia for a change to the dissemination of knowledge.

Growth of Open Access: Open access journal publishing

From 1993 to 2009 there was an increase in the number of open access journals from 0 to 5000, and the number of open access articles, from 0 to close to 200000.

Link to graph.

Growth of Open Access: Open Access repositories

Since 1991, the number of open access repositories has risen from 0 to over 900000.

Link to Graph 2.

Open Access: Gold and Green Access routes

In most academic disciplines, the balance falls in favour of Green open access over Gold. Publications are generally not published as open access. For example, in Clinical medicine, 62 per cent of works are published behind a pay wall, whereas 34 per cent are green open access, and 4 per cent gold.

In Arts and Humanities the ratio is 86 per cent published behind a pay wall, versus 13 per cent via green open access and 1 per cent gold.

In Biomedical research there 43 per cent of research is behind a pay wall, versus 43 per cent made open access via the green route and 14 per cent gold route.

In the social sciences this is 65 per cent behind a pay wall, versus 34 per cent via the green route and 1 per cent via the gold open access route.

Link to Graph 3.

Hybrid open access journals:

Many academic publishers now have hybrid open access options. This is where a payment ensures that an article in a subscription based journal is also made open access in the online version.

For example Springer has 1100 titles that offer open access options. Wiley Blackwell as well as Taylor and Francis have 300 titles. Nature publishing has 14 titles.

Link to Study of Open Access Report.

The UK Government: Funding open access

December 10th, 2003: the UK Science and Technology Committee inquiry launched an investigation into the prices and availability of scientific and academic journals.

July 20th, 2004: Reporting back on the investigation recommended mandating UK public funding bodies to require the open archiving of funded research outputs.

The UK Government: Research Councils UK part 1

June 28th, 2005: The Research Councils UK released a draft Open Access policy, which would mandate open accessibility for all publicly funded research.

Following on from this, a year later, the various research councils comprising the RCUK issued individual Open Access policies.

September 15, 2011: The Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings ('Finch' Group) is formed, and tasked with examining how UK research can be made more openly accessible.

The UK Government: Research councils UK part 2

June 16th, 2012: the UK Government accept the findings of the Finch Report. They accept 'Gold' access as a preference to 'Green' access routes. On July 17th, the Research Councils UK umbrella body establishes policy mandating all research resulting from its funding to be published as open access, broadly in line with the findings of the Finch Report.

September 7th, 2012: The UK Government Business, Innovation and Skills department announces a £10 million fund to higher education institutions to assist in the transition to open access research publishing.

April 1st, 2013: All publications resulting from publicly funded research will have to be made openly accessible. Future applications for funding will only take into account prior research that is openly accessible.

Wellcome Trust open access policy

October 1st, 2005: The Wellcome Trust started implementing its new open-access mandate for Wellcome-funded research.

October 1st, 2006: The year-old OA policy at the Wellcome Trust is extended to all outstanding grants.

April 1st, 2013: The Wellcome Trust requires that CC-BY licences be applied to all research publications resulting from their funding.

The United States: open access

September 21st, 1985: Ronald Reagan's White House issued National Security Decision Directive 189: National Policy On The Transfer Of Scientific, Technical And Engineering Information, holding (inter alia) that "[i]t is the policy of this Administration that, to the maximum extent possible, the products of fundamental research remain unrestricted."

February 3rd, 2005: The U.S: National Institutes of Health (NIH) released its long-awaited public-access policy.

January 11th, 2008: The US National Institutes of Health (NIH) released the text of its OA mandate.

Feb 22nd, 2013: The US Presidents office issues a memorandum, mandating all federal agencies with budgets over £100,000,000 to implement public access policies on all research output.

Europe and the EU/EC: open access part 1

July 11th, 2000: A United Nations Economic and Social Council ministerial declaration called for "universal access to knowledge and information" (Section 15).

April 3rd, 2006: The European Commission released a report calling for an open-access mandate to publicly-funded research. The report is dated January 2006 but was apparently not released until April 3. The inquiry underlying the report was launched in June 2004.

September 11th, 2006: The European Commission and nine European research institutions launched DRIVER (Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research), a large-scale, international knowledge infrastructure built on open-access repositories.

October 2nd, 2006: The Commission to the European Parliament published report recommending open access to publicly-funded EU geodata.

Europe and the EU/EC: open access part 2

December 2006: The Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC) issued a Statement on Open Access in which it pledged to adopt an OA mandate for ERC-funded research "as soon as pertinent repositories become operational".

January 10th, 2007: The European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) recommended an OA mandate for EU-funded research.

December 17th, 2007: The European Research Council's Scientific Council releases its guidelines for Open Access.

June 2012: The European Research Council releases a formal statement mandating all monographs and articles resulting from its funding be made open access, all works to be submitted to subject repositories no later than 6 months after publication, and all primary data and data related products must be available from relevant databases.

Open access: the future of an idea

The move towards Open Access publishing of our research creates a global audience for our insights, innovations and ideas.

It will mean that cost will be no barrier for those who need information on medical research, engineering techniques, or policy perspectives.

It will also result in the work of academia becoming accessible to everyone, meaning we will play an increasingly important role in shaping the debate on public ethics and social responsibility.

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