

Open Access in the Social Sciences

What Open Access is

In the widely-adopted BOAI definition (<http://budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/>), Open Access is explained as the dissemination of academic work online, free of charge and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions. The aim is facilitate the widest possible readership for scholarship and to enable the reuse of relevant data by other researchers. Importantly, Open Access is not a different form of peer review or a lower standard of publication: it is simply a means to provide access to research findings for those who cannot afford subscriptions or pay-per-view charges.

As pressures on library budgets have steadily increased, major academic institutions (such as Harvard) and national governments have sought to radically expand the amount of research that is available on Open Access terms. Some of the most prestigious research funding councils have for some years required that any work they fund be published Open Access.

As well as providing access for users, Open Access has benefits for authors, too. Their work is more visible and usage increases. There is also strong evidence that Open Access research outputs are cited more heavily (as well as being read more widely) than their Subscription Access counterparts.

There are several ways to achieve openness, each of which is an opportunity for researchers in the social sciences to increase the distribution and impact of their work. One way of distinguishing Open Access schemes is via a colour code. You may therefore hear talk of 'Green' and 'Gold' Open Access (OA).



Open Access through journals ('Gold' Open Access)

'Gold' OA refers to work that is available through a journal itself as the fully peer-reviewed version of record. In other words, accessible in the familiar journal format, but without the requirement of a per-article download payment or an institutional log-on.

Gold OA journals come in both for-profit and not-for-profit varieties, and adopt a range of business models. Some Gold OA journals are funded by author payments to cover the costs of formatting, hosting and editing. These payments are usually called article processing charges, or APCs: the level of APCs varies greatly, from a few dollars to several thousand dollars per article.

It is important to note that not all Gold OA journals charge APCs. In many cases, these free-to-publish Gold Open Access journals are funded by subsidies or rely on voluntary labour and the low costs of online publication to remain viable. Even Gold journals that do charge APCs will often offer waivers if authors do not have the funds to pay. Where there is no option for a waiver, universities and research councils may themselves be able to provide funds for Open Access publication.

In many cases, low- or no-cost Gold journals are scholar-led initiatives. Such forums as International Journal of Conflict and Violence (<http://ijcv.org/>) or Ethics & Global Politics (<http://www.ethicsandglobalpolitics.net/>) attract major scholars in their fields, and in some cases have Impact Factors that are comparable with more traditional journals. Such open scholarship platforms run by scholars for scholars (one example is Ubiquity Press <http://www.ubiquitypress.com/>), have robust submission systems and a strong online presence.

Some work in social science (e.g. psychology) may also be appropriate for the best-established of the Open Access mega-journals commonly used in hard science, such as PLOS One (<http://www.plosone.org/>). Moreover, there are also changes underway amongst high-prestige and long-established journals in the social sciences towards Open Access. For example, Cultural Anthropology, the predominant journal of the American Anthropological Association, will go fully Open Access from 2014.

Commercial journals and Open Access

So far, most of the examples cited here have been from not-for-profit publishers, but academic journals owned by major commercial publishers (like Elsevier, Wiley-Blackwell, Cambridge University Press, or Sage) also enable Open Access. One route is so-called 'hybrid' Gold Open Access, where a journal that is subscription-based also publishes individual articles on an Open Access basis. These journals charge APCs (usually higher APCs than non-commercial publishers) for 'hybrid' Gold Open

Access, but in most cases they also allow Green Open Access repository archiving (see below), albeit usually with an initial embargo on opening the full-text. So publishing in established commercial academic journals is also no barrier to achieving some level of openness. The restrictions vary, and are liable to change, but there is already some analysis of the differences in Open Access policies across high-ranking commercial journals in Politics, International Relations and Political Theory (see <http://thedisorderofthings.com/2013/08/16/hefce-the-ref-open-access-and-journals-in-politics-ir-and-political-theory/>).

In addition, commercial publishers have begun to launch their own fully Open Access journals, often with lower APC costs than for their hybrid Gold options. Some examples include Sage Open (<http://sgo.sagepub.com/>), which publishes work from across the humanities and social sciences, and Research and Politics (<http://www.uk.sagepub.com/researchandpolitics/>), which combines openness with a commitment to the rapid publication of key research findings. These titles currently offer discounts on APCs (US\$99 for Sage Open) or complete waivers (for example, no fee for Research and Politics until 2015).

In all, there are many possibilities for providing Open Access to high-quality research directly through journals. The Directory of Open Access Journals (<http://www.doaj.org/>) is a good way to discover existing options, and the SHERPA/RoMEO database (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>) is an excellent searchable resource for finding the Open Access policy of a particular journal to which you are thinking of submitting a manuscript.

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Repository Open Access (Green)

A second route to Open Access ('Green' Open Access) facilitates access not through journals but through repositories. Articles are published in peer-reviewed journals as normal, but the author's own final version is also deposited in digital collections (repositories) that are open to other scholars and to the public.

Repositories come in both institutional and non-institutional forms. Institutionally, many universities now have their own faculty repositories that allow for the deposit of post-review articles, pre-review articles and datasets. Beyond the institutional level, discipline - or national-specific repositories collect together papers from a wider range of sources. The most prominent of these is the Social Science Research Network (<http://www.ssrn.com/>), a repository that currently contains more than 412,000 full text articles and a number of subject-specific sub-networks. The range of repository options can be explored through the Registry of Open Access Repositories (<http://roar.eprints.org/>) and the Directory of Open Access Repositories (<http://www.opendoar.org/>).

Journals may put specific restrictions on repository provision of articles. In all cases, authors can immediately deposit the full post-peer-review copy of an article (the author's version, without the journal formatting): after this initial deposit, the opening up of the full-text is a matter of publisher policy. In most cases, the publisher permits the full article to be made open immediately; in other cases, the text may only be opened after an embargo period (as little as a few months or as much as several years). But, even with this embargo, the metadata (title, author name, affiliation, abstract, etc) are open to view, as publishers do not own copyright in metadata, so web search engines can easily locate and index the article. Then, the repository 'request a copy' button means that papers discovered through a web search can easily be requested from the author during the time that an embargo on Open Access to the full-text are in place.

Repositories therefore offer an easy way to make research much more widely available than it would otherwise be, and at no financial cost to the author. In addition, academic work in repositories is more easily discoverable (e.g. through GoogleScholar searches) than it would be if uploaded to personal webpages or social networks like academia.edu. Repositories also provide data on usage so that authors can see the impact of their articles.

Open Access Monographs

Although a newer development than Open Access journals, Open Access academic monograph publishing is becoming more common. Organisations like the Open Humanities Press (<http://openhumanitiespress.org/index.html>) publish both Open Access books (free to download as PDFs or to read online) and journals.

Subject- or sub-discipline-specific Open Access publishers like re.press (<http://re-press.org/>) are also thriving, and others are experimenting with making selected titles open, as in the case of Bloomsbury Academic (<http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/academic/online-resources-and-ebooks/bloomsbury-open-content/>). The new, soon to be launched initiative, Knowledge Unlatched, (<http://www.knowledgeunlatched.org/>) brings together libraries to share the costs of publishing books on an Open Access basis. Others, like OAPEN (<http://www.oapen.org/home>) offer the opportunity for existing publishing houses to make some of their titles open.

An Open Access Future

There is progress underway in each of these different routes, and more changes to come as Open Access becomes the primary mode of dissemination of scholarly research for the future. The message for social scientists is that Open Access not only enhances the impact of research, but is also an easy, often prestigious and frequently low-cost form of scholarly communication.

This briefing paper was written for SPARC Europe by Paul Kirby of the Department of International Relations, University of Sussex.

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Examples of Open Access subject-based collections

Cogprints: subject-based repository for cognitive science and related fields <http://cogprints.org/>

History and Theory of Psychology Archive: Repository for papers in the field of history of psychology
<http://htpprints.yorku.ca/>

RePEc (Research Papers in Economics): scholar-compiled, collaborative collection of articles in economics and related fields <http://repec.org/>

SciELO Social Sciences (English Edition): collection of Latin American Open Access journals in the social sciences <http://socialsciences.scielo.org/>

Social Science Research Network (SSRN): aggregator, bringing together the content of over 20 subject-based research networks across the social sciences
<http://www.ssrn.com/>

Some examples of Open Access monograph publishing

- **OAPEN Library:** <http://www.oapen.org/home>
- **re:press:** <http://re-press.org/>
- **University presses:**
 - Athabasca Press (Athabasca University, Canada) <http://www.aupress.ca/>
 - Amherst Press (about to launch: Amherst University, USA) <https://www.amherst.edu/library/press>
 - ANU Press (Australian National University, Canberra, Australia) <http://epress.anu.edu.au/>
 - UCL Press (recently launched, University College London, UK) contact Managing Director, Paul Ayris, p.ayris@ucl.ac.uk



SPARC Europe works for positive change in the scholarly communication system to improve the research process, iron out inequalities in access to knowledge, and benefit society.

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