

Defining Open Access for Journals

Open Access is a means of disseminating scholarly research that breaks from the traditional subscription model of academic publishing. It has the potential to greatly accelerate the pace of scientific discovery, encourage innovation, and enrich education by reducing barriers to access. Open Access shifts the costs of publishing so that readers, practitioners, and researchers obtain content at no cost. However, Open Access is not as simple as "articles are free to all readers." Open Access encompasses a range of components such as readership, reuse, copyright, posting, and machine readability. Within these areas, publishers and funding agencies have adopted many different policies, some of which are more open and some less open. In general, the more a journal's policies codify immediate availability and reuse with as few restrictions as possible, the more open it is.

Journals can be more open or less open, but their degree of openness is intrinsically independent from their:

- Impact • Prestige • Quality of Peer Review
- Peer Review Methodology • Sustainability
- Effect on Tenure & Promotion • Article Quality

How To Use This Guide

In 2002, the Budapest Open Access Initiative articulated the basic tenets of Open Access for the first time. Since then, thousands of journals have adopted policies that embrace some or all of the Open Access core components related to: readership, reuse, copyright, posting, and machine readability. However, not all Open Access is created equal. For example, a policy that allows anyone to read an article for free six months after its publication is more open than a policy that creates a twelve month embargo; it is also less open than a policy that allows for free reading immediately upon publication.

This guide will help you move beyond the seemingly simple question, "Is this journal open access?" and toward a more productive alternative, "HowOpenIsIt?"

Use it to:

- Understand the components that define Open Access journals
- Learn what makes a journal more open vs. less open
- Make informed decisions about where to publish

This Guide Is A Collaboration Among:



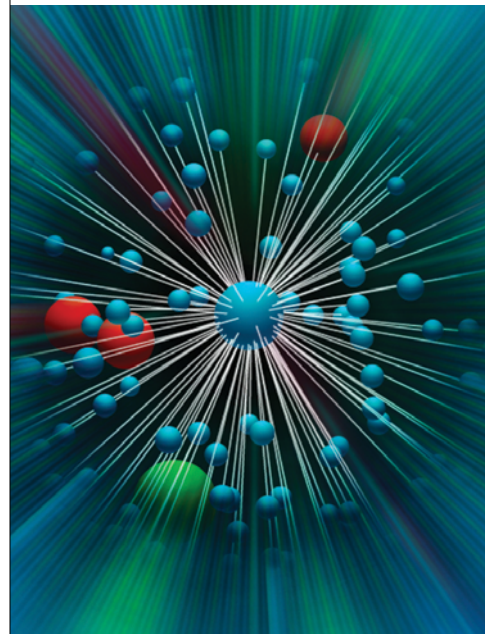
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HowOpenIsIt? Open Access Spectrum FAQ

Q1: Is this guide meant to apply to publishers, journals, funders, policy makers, or authors?

A1: The guide's primary aim is to help authors make informed decisions on where to publish based on journal policies. It also provides a resource for funders and other organizations to help establish criteria for the level of Open Access (OA) required for their policies and mandates.

Q2: How can I use this guide to assess a journal's degree of openness?

A2: The guide will help you make an informed decision about where you elect to publish your research because it enables you to evaluate a journal's policies with respect to where they are on the Open Access Spectrum as it relates to the six core components of OA.

Q3: How does this chart relate to so-called "green" OA?

A3: The Open Access Spectrum (OAS) is focusing primarily on journal policies. It therefore includes aspects that relate to the deposition of papers in institutional repositories as well as the automated deposition in specific repositories.

Q4: The "How to Use this Guide" page in the OAS mentions the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI). What is that?

A4: In 2002, BOAI articulated the basic tenets of OA for the first time. The initial recommendations were developed by leaders of the OA movement. OA advocates have worked for the past decade to provide the public with unrestricted, free access to scholarly research, much of which is publicly funded. Making the research publicly available to everyone—free of charge and without most copyright and licensing restrictions—will accelerate scientific research efforts and allow authors to reach a larger number of readers.

In September 2012, the BOAI issued a new set of [recommendations](#), which [reaffirmed and expanded](#) on the original Budapest Declaration.

Q5: Who created the guide?

A5: The guide was created as a collaborative project by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition ([SPARC](#)) and Public Library of Science ([PLOS](#)), in conjunction with the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association ([OASPA](#)). The initial draft of the guide was improved through a public comment period, which generated feedback from 60 respondents from 11 countries.

Q6: May I print the guide and distribute it?

A6: Yes, provided that it retains the attribution to the creators of the guide (see Q17, below).

Q7: May I mark where my policy or publication is on the OAS?

A7: Yes, you may publicize where your publication or policy is on the OAS. PLOS has posted on its [website](#) an example that shows the precise position of PLOS on the OAS. However, please be advised that such "rankings" are not presently being evaluated by SPARC, PLOS, or OASPA, and are not being sanctioned by any of the sponsoring bodies. In addition, we have posted a version that you can mark-up called, Assess Where You Are On the OA Grid.

Q8: Why did PLOS not get the highest score for the machine readability component?

A8: PLOS did not get the highest score for Machine Readability, as a community standard API or protocol does not exist today. PLOS believes we still have work to do here, as do all publishers. Machine readability and the automated discovery and use of content is perhaps *the* major challenge for scholarly publishers of the next decade. In particular, there is much work to be done on making it easy for machines to understand where to find articles and to identify the parts of an article, and creating widely used standards that will make shared data useful. There is also work to be done on improving the way data is represented in our papers (e.g., tables) and more generally how data is described within the paper and supplementary material.

Q9: May I present all or part of this content on a slide, website, or in other material?

A9: Yes, please see A17 for proper attribution.

Q10: So-called "hybrid journals" contain certain articles that are made immediately available for free. Why are they listed as very restricted on the Reader Rights scale?

A10: [Hybrid journals](#) are subscription journals that both collect subscription fees for their journal and offer an option for an author to pay a fee to make their article available outside of the subscribers. Reader rights cover the right of readers for articles in a publication and the hybrid option only addresses a single article based on the choice of the authors to pay an additional fee to liberate their paper. The hybrid model makes an *article* OA, *not the journal*. This allows some publishers of hybrid journals to “double dip”- taking money to make articles OA without reducing their subscription fees.

Q11: What is Creative Commons? What are the Creative Commons licenses referenced in the Copyrights section?

A11: [Creative Commons](#) is a nonprofit organization that enables the sharing and use of creativity and knowledge through free legal tools. Their [copyright licenses](#) provide a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use creative work — on conditions of the creator’s choice.

Q12: With respect to Author Posting, some publishers have generous policies after a certain time embargo. How do these fit into the OAS?

A12: In general, policies that restrict free and immediate accessibility of articles are less open than policies that do not. Although the Author Posting Rights column does not explicitly address the time embargo scenario, users of this guide should view any time delay associated with any version of an article to be a state that is less than fully open. The longer the embargo period, the less open the policy.

Q13: What are remixing reuse rights, and why are they important?

A13: To achieve the full potential of OA material, it is crucial that papers can be read and also reused in many ways to support new research. Potential uses include translation, summary, and reanalysis of data. To make this possible it is important that potential users have the rights to reuse the work as well as to combine it with other work, or “remix” it. Without these rights users may not be able to create new pieces of research, informational, or educational material. For example, when a new species is described in a research article, it can be of interest to create articles on the new species in online services such as Wikipedia or the Encyclopedia of Life. By providing clear statements of the rights to use and reuse materials we can ensure that potential contributors have the rights to use the material to create new articles and that parts of those articles, such as images and audio or video recordings, can be combined with other materials to provide a compelling article. This is just one example of potential downstream reuses of scholarly material and the possibilities are limited only by our imagination, provided we give people the permission to explore the possibilities.

Q14: Why does it matter which version of a paper (e.g., the published article, the final peer-reviewed manuscript) an author can post elsewhere?

A14: Scholarly research can undergo a number of revisions between the time an author submits it to a journal and the time it is published. The advent of electronic communication and dissemination has meant that multiple versions of a paper may be circulating on the Internet. This versioning issue can cause confusion among readers, as well as among other authors wishing to cite a work. It reduces the confusion when an author can post the *published* version in an institutional repository or a department website. The final version of the peer-reviewed manuscript (sometimes called the “postprint” or, using [NISO terminology](#), the “accepted manuscript”) may lack some of the formatting of the published version, for example.

Q15: How does this guide apply to other OA media (e.g., books, datasets)?

A15: It doesn't. This guide focuses exclusively on journals. The unique issues associated with the application of OA to other media are beyond the scope of this project.

Q16: Is this guide meant to apply to every scholarly discipline?

A16: The principles of greater openness, fewer restrictions on readership, and more freedom to reuse are universal. However, the guide itself focuses primarily on the STM (science, technology, and medicine). Other areas of scholarship may have specific considerations that are not contemplated here.

Q17: How do I give proper attribution if I use the Open Access Spectrum?

A17: Please use this: "HowOpenIsIt? Open Access Spectrum", © 2012 SPARC and PLOS, licensed under CC BY". For more information on attribution, refer to this Creative Commons [resource](#).

Q18: Where can I learn more about the Creative Commons license that applies to the Open Access Spectrum?

A18: Visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/>