

Editorial



Open Research: Unlocking the Benefits of Knowledge

As library and information science professionals, we have undoubtedly encountered Open Access as a driving force within scholarly communication. More recently, Open Science has emerged as an effort to make scientific research and its dissemination accessible to all interested parties; it covers areas such as open methodology, open source, open data, open access, and open peer review (Burgelman et al., 2015). Given the concern by some that the term implies a limitation to just the “sciences”, the concept of Open Research has evolved to ensure that the arts, humanities, and social sciences are also included.

Open Research is a set of principles and practices whose aim is to make the outputs of research freely accessible and usable, thereby maximising the possibility of public benefit. Like the slightly narrower concept of Open Science, Open Research can be described as “scholarly research that is collaborative, transparent and reproducible, and whose outputs are publicly available” (European Commission, 2018, p. 4). It is based on the principle that knowledge produces the greatest benefits if it is shared as widely as possible.

While the core idea behind Open Research is that all aspects of the research lifecycle should be shared and accessible where possible, its application will differ according to discipline and research context. In addition, for ethical, legal and commercial reasons, not all research can, or should, be made open. Examples of Open Research in practice include:

- Making the outputs of research, including publications, data, software, and other research materials freely accessible.
- Using online tools and services to increase the transparency of research processes and methodologies.
- Making scientific research more reproducible by increasing the amount and quality of information placed on the public record.
- Using alternative models of publication and peer review to make the dissemination and certification of research faster and more transparent.
- Using open collaborative methods to increase efficiency and widen participation in research.

It is important that researchers be aware of Open Research as its principles are reflected in the policies of many international public funders and research organisations that promote greater public access to research, and in the evolving models of scholarly communication.

The library has an important role to play in helping to promote open research within its parent organization. Many are creating checklists to assist researchers in the practice of open research within their own projects. For example, key topics cover aspects such as:

- Preregistering research plans for clinical trials (where appropriate).
- Setting up agreements with collaborators to make all joint work open.
- Obtaining copyright advice prior to negotiating with publishers.
- Using open-source code and software for data collection, processing, and analysis to enable others to reproduce their work.

- Using infrastructure that easily and securely allows the sharing of data and analysis with other researchers.
- Sharing data and code via open repositories.

Additionally, the library should work with other organizational stakeholders to ensure the:

- Provision of a range of services (including, but not limited to, the Research Office and Information Technology Services), and systems (e.g., institutional repository, research information system, research data management facility) to enable researchers to practise Open Research.
- Provision of support, advice, and guidance for individual researchers, appropriate to their disciplinary setting.
- Provision of long-term sustainability of curated open materials and their continued open accessibility.

In conclusion, the long-term goal is to encourage researchers to make the outputs of their research and the accompanying data, where appropriate, to be “as open as possible, as closed as necessary” (European Commission, 2016).

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References

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