A Quiet Revolution

GROWING CREATIVE COMMONS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

creative commons
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

www.creativecommons.org.nz

First published in 2015 by Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand

Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand
PO Box 19069
Wellington 6149
creativecommons.org.nz

ISBN 978-0-9941302-5-9
Cataloguing-in-publication data for this book is available from the National Library of New Zealand.

Unless otherwise attributed, all articles written by Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand
Editing and production: Whitireia Pubishing
Cover Design: Elton Gregory
Printed by Printing.com

This book was taken from manuscript to bookshelf by students of the Whitireia New Zealand publishing programme, who worked on editing, production, marketing and design. For more information about our editing and publishing training, visit www.whitireiapublishing.co.nz

Open ReSearch

Open Access to Research in Aotearoa

By Fabiana Kubke, Senior Lecturer at School of Medical Sciences, University of Auckland Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makarua, and Matt McGregor, Public Lead, Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand

Access Denied

Stop me if you've heard this one before. You're researching an issue that you care about and find a link to an important study, a study that promises to give you greater insight about the subject at hand.

Let's say you're interested in geology, and the article is in the *New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics*, published (with public funding) by the Royal Society of New Zealand Te Aparangi. It also happens to be co-authored by a researcher from one of New Zealand's publicly funded research institutions.

You click on the link and find yourself faced with this message: "Sorry, you don't have access to this article." You are asked if you want to purchase the article – for a grand total of USD$48 (or AUD$146 for the whole issue).

That, for most people, is the end of the process. It doesn't matter whether you are a businessperson, a policy-maker, a journalist, a curious member of the public, a student or an independent researcher – you'll need to pay to get access. And if you can't pay? Well, tough.

An Untenable Situation

If you work or study in a university or research institute, you might not know that this is a problem – or maybe you don't think it's a problem for you.

But before you make up your mind, consider this: the research sector pays over $50 million on subscriptions to academic journals. That's about the same amount allocated to support research by the Marsden Fund.

More to the point, that $50 million doesn't pay for all published research. University libraries, faced with flatlining budgets, are having to decrease the number of journals they can provide access to.

And if you aren't yet convinced that this is a serious problem, consider this memo from the Faculty Advisory Panel of Harvard University, which stated that the cost of journal subscriptions was "an untenable situation" and that steadily increasing subscription charges had "made the scholarly communication environment fiscally unsustainable and academically restrictive".[1]

How could something as fundamental to the life of a university as journal subscriptions – that is, access to knowledge – become "fiscally unsustainable" to the richest university on the planet?

As it turns out, this issue has been bubbling away for some time. In 2004 the Association of Research Libraries in the US revealed that the average cost of a journal subscription had risen 315% from 1989 to 2003 for its member libraries – that's

1 http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k77982&tabgroupid=icb.tabgroup143448

compared to a rate of inflation of only 68%. Since then journal prices have continued to rise by 9% per year.[2]

The Public Interest

Academics, then, don't often have immediate access to the research they need, and it continues to cost more and more just to maintain the access they currently have. But for those who work outside the research sector, the current system is even worse.

Journalists, for example, are often unable to go beyond press releases when covering science. As Peter Griffin, Manager of the New Zealand Science Media Centre, says, "Newsrooms today don't have the resources to subscribe to academic databases that would be useful in the process of generating news content. For journalists, this can be extremely frustrating."

Similarly, non-government organisations (NGOs) and policy-makers often lack access to the latest academic research, as do the individuals and groups that contribute to the policy-making process.

Lillian Grace, Chief Executive of Figure.NZ, notes that open access to research will enable Aotearoa to get more from its publicly funded research. She says, "The value realised from publicly funded research will be hugely increased by making it open for others throughout our country to learn and apply findings to business, social, economic and environmental endeavours."

2 www.openoasis.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=254&Itemid=256

Siouxsie Wiles, Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makarua and recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Science Communication, notes the broader public importance of Open Access. "Science can empower people to make informed choices that shape their future for the better. This is the message I want to communicate and why I believe unrestricted access to the science we fund is in everyone's best interest."

The Growth of Open Access

The basic definition of Open Access is simple. As Harvard University Librarian Peter Suber puts it, "Open Access literature is digital, online, free of charge and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions." The basic principle of Open Access is also simple: namely, that everyone should be able to freely access and reuse the research outputs that are the result of public funding. This includes everything from books and journal articles to research data.

There are two basic models for enabling access: either the publisher makes the research article available, sometimes for a fee (the 'gold' model); or the researcher deposits an accepted version of the article in an institutional or discipline-specific repository (the 'green' model). There are currently over 700 funders and institutions across the world with Open Access policies.

Four New Zealand universities (Lincoln, Waikato, Canterbury and Auckland) have policies in support of 'green'

deposit, with Lincoln University's policy also including teaching resources and encouraging the use of Creative Commons licences.

One of the world's leading research institutions, MIT, has had an open research policy since 2009 following a unanimous faculty vote, and they've been collecting stories from the members of the public who have benefitted. Their stories are a powerful reminder of why Open Access is essential.

A private researcher from Australia, for example, writes, "[I am] a disabled engineer researching gravity and inertia… My research is hampered by one thing alone, paywalls."

A student in India points to the barriers that exist in developing nations: "It's really disheartening when a site asks for money to display their research work. This initiative will…accelerate research in the emerging nations."

A researcher from the US notes the importance of Open Access to economic development: "I'm attempting to hire and fund research in energy production. I have a lot of trouble getting to the bottom of scientific understanding due to the publishing industry paywalls. MIT's effort to make good science that the public helped pay for be available to the public has helped me a lot building the clean energy economy."

Make It Open? No, Make It Libre!

My institution – the University of Auckland Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau – like other academic institutions around the country, has an Institutional Repository (IR). It is called

'Research Space' and I suspect many of my colleagues might have never heard of it, and many might not know how to make use of it.

As we've pointed out above, Open Access is usually described as gold or green. I don't personally find this distinction palatable, because the gold/green definition says more about mechanisms of delivery and less about liberties for reuse.

I prefer to think about free Open Access (where the article is provided free of charge) and libre Open Access (where the article is provided free of charge and there are few restrictions for reuse and repurposing). The copyright agreements we enter or the licence we choose when publishing Open Access defines where in the free-libre spectrum the article will sit.

If we wish to communicate our findings as widely as possible, shouldn't we be opting for libre Open Access, where they can be reused, redistributed and repurposed?

"Limiting Potential Readership Does Not Increase Actual Readership"

Unfortunately, research publications do not solely serve the purpose of communicating our findings. They are also perhaps the most important contribution through which our worth as academics will be measured when we apply for a job, apply for promotion, or seek to be granted tenure. We may be forgiven many things by staffing committees, but never a poor publication record. We have been taught that how we brand

our publications (i.e. where we publish them) will be a major factor for that assessment.

It is not surprising, then, that most of us will feel the need to do our best to place our article in the better branded journals. Many of these will charge hefty Open Access fees, but will publish our article sometimes at a lower price or free of charge if we are willing to give our rights as authors away to them. Because this decision of where to publish is so intricately tied to career progress, the cultural inertia is hard to overcome.

These days, it is rare that I will find someone who doesn't think that Open Access is 'a good thing' (progress!). As soon as the term 'Open Access' enters the discussion, however, I can see the $-shaped tears rolling down someone's cheeks. Most frequently the discussion veers towards a standard list of 'buts'.

Many of these 'buts' are myths that seem to persist even in the face of evidence against them. Once someone has the mindset that Open Access is not a 'viable' alternative to be embraced by them, by their immediate community of practice or even by their institution, it does not seem to matter how much data is presented – the response will inevitably be "Oh, ok. [pause] But…" If we cannot change scientists' minds when confronting them with evidence, how will we be able to persuade our agencies and institutions? Until we overcome our apprehensions about Open Access, should we just stick to the status quo?

Institutional Repositories (IRs) provide a place where authors who choose to publish in the traditional way can

deposit their peer-reviewed, accepted article for anyone to access free of charge – and thus massively increase their potential readership. All the authors need to do is to contact their librarian and they will happily show them how to do this. In New Zealand, articles that are deposited in these IRs are given a second life, free of paywalls and indexed by Google. In New Zealand the articles (and other research artifacts) are aggregated in http://nzresearch.org.nz/.

I can't help wondering whether, if we were asked to identify at our annual performance review (or continuation, or promotions) the proportion of our output that was deposited in IRs, we might see some progress.

My personal position is that research outputs that result from public funds should be made available under a copyright licence that minimises the restrictions on distribution and reuse. I also understand that authors may base their choice of where they publish on different kinds of reasons (some of which I understand and others of which I don't). But even when authors choose to publish under traditional pay-walled schemes, the value of depositing in the IR far outweighs the reasons not to do so.

As Björn Brembs put it, "No matter what field (or planet): limiting potential readership does not increase actual readership."[3]

3 https://twitter.com/brembs/status/354486926562181120