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## An Introduction to Open Access

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This guide is designed to provide a brief introduction to Open Access, particularly from an ESRC/RCUK perspective.

### WHAT IS OPEN ACCESS?

Open Access is the “free, immediate, permanent, full-text, online access, for any user, web-wide, to digital scientific and scholarly material, primarily research articles published in peer-reviewed journals.” (Wikipedia definition - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open\\_access](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access))

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The benefits of open access publishing for research and society are seen as:

- making research outputs freely available without any barriers and tolls
- speeding up research sharing
- enabling cross-searching and quicker access to online research

Open access provides direct links from bibliographical data of publications to the actual full text. As well as being of use and benefit to the academic community, it also allows free access to research publications to any online users.

### OPEN ACCESS MODELS

There are several emerging open access publishing models for journals, including:

- **Open Access journals** are scholarly journals, using similar quality control mechanisms as traditional journals, published electronically and freely available. Most of these journals utilise peer-review, but not all. Many of these journals use an author-pays economic model: the author (or someone on their behalf) pays a one-off fee for publication, ensuring the article becomes available for free to all readers. An increasing number of publishers (Springer, Blackwell, OUP) are adopting this model, some combining this with traditional subscription models for the same journal title.
- **E-print or digital repositories** in which authors deposit a copy of their publication. These repositories can contain pre-print and post-print, peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed articles, and indeed many contain other digital research publications and materials. Most repositories are run on an institutional or subject basis. The materials will be freely available, and most adhere to the Open Archives Initiative Metadata Harvesting Protocol (OAI-MHP) which allows for interoperability between repositories. Most journal publishers now allow authors to deposit their papers in repositories. Most have an embargo period between publication and deposit in a repository.

The JISC guide to Opening up Access to Research Results provides a useful question and answer summary of some of the issues surrounding Open Access. It can be found at [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded\\_documents/QandA-Doc-final.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/QandA-Doc-final.pdf)

### ESRC'S OPEN ACCESS POLICY

The ESRC is committed to the principles outlined in the Research Councils' statement on access to research outputs, and is keen to ensure its research community makes readily available the outputs from the research it funds.

ESRC already requires its award holders to offer any data resulting from an award to the UK Data Archive, and details of awards outcomes and outputs are routinely made available through its portal ESRC Society Today.



In support of Open Access, ESRC guidance is that its funded researchers should deposit the outputs from any research in the ESRC awards and outputs repository (ESRC Society Today), where this is permitted by publishers' licensing or copyright arrangements.

For grants resulting from applications submitted after 1 October 2006, it is mandatory, at the earliest opportunity, to:

- Personally deposit, or otherwise ensure the deposit of, a copy of any resultant articles published in journals or conference proceedings, in the ESRC awards and outputs repository (ESRC Society Today).
- Wherever possible, personally deposit, or otherwise ensure the deposit of, the bibliographical metadata relating to such articles, including a link to the publisher's website, at or around the time of publication, in the ESRC awards and outputs repository (ESRC Society Today).

Which version of the article should be deposited depends upon publishers agreements with their authors.

The ESRC also encourages, but does not formally oblige, all award holders to ensure deposit of articles arising from grants awarded as a result of applications before 1 October 2006.

Award holders are also encouraged to submit copies of resultant publications and/or associated metadata with institutional and other appropriate repositories.

### Author Pays Publishing

With regard to author pays publishing, ESRC's guidance is that authors choose where to place their research and that it is for author's institutions to decide whether they are prepared to use funds from full economic costs (or other income) to pay any page charges or other publishing fees, where the predicted direct costs of dissemination of research outputs will be incurred during the period of the grant. Where these costs are likely to occur after the grant has ended, they should be included in the indirect costs of the Research Organisation.

More on the ESRC's Open Access policy can be found at [www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/access](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/access)

## FUTURE OPEN ACCESS DEVELOPMENTS

There have been a number of developments since the ESRC Open Access mandate came into effect (in October 2006), including strong interest from within the community in scoping and developing open access repositories, predominantly institutional. The second phase of ESRC Society Today provided proof of concept for interoperation with other repositories, allowing automated harvesting and linkage of ESRC funded output records, and extending the awards and outputs database as an ESRC Social Sciences Repository (a subject repository). Users within the community are also utilising the technology to harvest ESRC materials from the repository for their own purposes.

Research Councils UK is currently commissioning a *Study on Open Access to Research Outputs*, aimed at establishing the impact of the RC mandates, which is scheduled to deliver its findings in autumn 2008.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions on the topics covered above, please contact the Society Today team at [societytoday@esrc.ac.uk](mailto:societytoday@esrc.ac.uk)

There are also other useful websites with tips and information on Open Access including:

ESRC's Open Access guidance  
[www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/access](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/access)



Welcome To

esrc | societytoday



Open Archives Initiative

<http://www.openarchives.org/>

Open Archives Forum

<http://www.oaforum.org/>

JISC – Opening up Access to Research Results (Q & A)

[http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded\\_documents/QandA-Doc-final.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/QandA-Doc-final.pdf)

JISC Legal Information Service - Intellectual Property Rights Overview

<http://www.jisclegal.ac.uk/ipr/IntellectualProperty.htm>

Web Usability Partnership – making your website more effective

<http://www.webusability.co.uk/index.html>

SHERPA (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access)

<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/>

*ESRC has joined SHERPA in order to comply with publishers' copyright agreements. The requirements for the Social Sciences Repository on ESRC Society Today can be found at*

[http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/index.php?fID=7&fName=Economic\\_and\\_Social\\_Research\\_Council](http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/juliet/index.php?fID=7&fName=Economic_and_Social_Research_Council)

OpenDOAR – Directory of Open Access Repositories

<http://www.opendoar.org/>

Research Councils UK position on access to research outputs

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/access/>