

Open Access Scholarship: The History of A Movement

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Just as the proliferation of the Internet rocked economic models of popular media, such as newspapers, the world of scholarly publishing has also been transformed by this now seemingly mundane mechanism of information-transfer. From the outset, groups of scholars, researchers, and librarians--often with very different agendas--began to advocate for an open access movement, a new philosophy of scholarly communication enabled by the World Wide Web.

How has the open access movement evolved and where does it stand today, almost 20 years since its inception? What does open access scholarship look like? And how can Saint Peter's University faculty engage in and promote open access scholarship today?

Scientific and scholarly research can be defined as "open access" (OA) when it is made freely available to potential users immediately upon publication, either through open digital repositories or open access journals. Librarians--their budgets crippled by the rising costs of journal subscriptions--were excited by the possibility of OA to free up dollars for other resources while providing an even wider array of research articles for their patrons. Scholars were excited that their research would reach a much wider audience when freed from both print medium and electronic pay-walls. Researchers without institutional affiliation, or working at small institutions with limited library resources, were excited about gaining access to a giant body of research once beyond their grasp. The OA movement seemed to have phenomenal potential to improve scholarly communication and foster scientific progress globally. The most radical proponents of OA demanded that research in peer-reviewed journals be immediately made open to all, via the internet, without price or permission barriers. This would come to be known as "Gold OA."

Not surprisingly, publishers of traditional journals were not eager to start giving their product away for free online. Most maintained print editions of their journals, and there was appropriate concern that if content were available freely online, they would lose subscription revenue. Publishers acknowledged that online access to journals would eventually be norm, but their preferred model was to sell electronic subscriptions, either individually or to libraries through database journal bundles such as EBSCO and ProQuest. Some chose to make older scholarship OA, while embargoing more recent issues (usually 6 months to 2 years of content) to incentivize subscriptions. At the same time some publishers, such as Elsevier, began granting individual articles Gold OA status if accompanied by an Open Access Publication Fee to be borne by the authors themselves or their home institutions. Today very few of the long-standing, reputable, peer-reviewed journals faculty traditionally look to when publishing their research meet "Gold OA" standards.

Despite resistance to OA from publishers of existing titles, in the last fifteen years we've seen significant numbers of OA journals appear online with new economic models to support them. A variety of new OA journals were established by colleges, universities, nonprofits, and government organizations which provided web-hosting, editorial staff, and managed peer-review and referee processes. Simultaneously a much smaller number of "predatory" for-profit OA journals (that publish for a fee and have little or no genuine editorial or peer-review process) appeared online. I do not recommend publishing in these journals which exploit faculty and muddy the scholarly/scientific conversation. Unsure of which publications to avoid? Librarian Jeffrey Beal maintains a list of predatory publishers at <http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>. To locate genuine Gold OA journals visit the Directory of Open Access Journals (<https://doaj.org/>) which currently links to more than 10,000 high-quality, open access, peer-reviewed journals with over 6,000 searchable at the article level.

While Gold OA remained the benchmark for scholarly communication, a model of self-archiving, called Green OA, evolved simultaneously as an alternative method to achieve the basic goal of the OA movement: free global access to research and scholarship. In the Green OA model, scholarship and research is submitted by authors and copyright holders directly to an institutional repository, usually maintained by the scholar's home institution. The types of scholarship archived in institutional repositories tends to fall into one of several categories:

1. Published articles in existing OA Journals (contingent upon publisher's policy)
2. Pre-print or post-print versions of manuscripts (contingent upon publisher's policy)
3. Creative works to which the author maintains copyright
4. Theses and dissertations
5. Other "grey literature": non-conventional, fugitive, and sometimes ephemeral publications not published commercially.

By collecting articles in institutional repositories, colleges and universities not only increase access to (and therefore citations of) their faculty scholarship, they can also build a discrete collection of faculty publications that can be viewed as a collection and accessed through the library catalog. (And even if the articles do exist elsewhere online, such as in Gold OA journals, the repository provides a redundancy which increases the chances for long-term digital preservation.) Moreover, Green OA repositories allow librarians to collect unpublished scholarly information that is easily lost, such as conference proceedings, preliminary research studies, and student/ faculty collaborations.

In 2002 MIT and HP Labs bestowed a gift upon the OA movement by releasing the first public version of DSpace, an open source (free) software package used to create open repositories. Today there are over 1,000 DSpace repositories globally, including the Saint Peter's University Digital Repository, started in 2011. We initially created our repository to achieve a single goal: to gather undergraduate Honors Theses for the purpose of digital preservation and access. Since

then we have expanded to include doctoral dissertations from our new E.d.D. program and materials from the University Archives, including student newspapers and selections from the Congressman Frank J. Guarini Papers. This summer we hope to expand the SPU Digital Repository to include faculty scholarship. This is where we need your help.

Some of you have been fortunate enough to publish your scholarship in Gold OA journals. Others have published in journals that are not fully OA but permit the archiving of pre-print (i.e. pre-refereeing) or post-print (i.e. final draft post-refereeing) versions of articles in institutional repositories. Unsure of the publishing rights associated with your scholarship? Luckily, the University of Nottingham maintains RoMEO (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/>), a searchable database of a publisher's policies regarding the self-archiving of journal articles on the web and in Open Access repositories. I have started searching RoMEO to determine which of SPU's recent faculty publications can be legally included in our repository. To this end, I may be contacting you to see if you can provide a pre-print or post-print version of your article for inclusion in the SPU Digital Repository. If you have unpublished scholarship or creative works you wish to include, please e-mail me, Daisy DeCoster, at ddecoster@saintpeters.edu to make arrangements.

The sands of the digital media storm are still settling, yet I hope that faculty members will be aware of access and intellectual property concerns as you consider outlets for publication. Joining the OA movement allows your scholarship to reach a wider audience, increases citations, and contributes to the global scholarly conversation. The SPU Digital Repository—with its emphasis on open-access but thoroughly peer-reviewed scholarship—is one way to join the movement and, with your help, I'm excited to see it grow and evolve.