

Policy Statement on Open Access, Open Education and Open Data (Update)

Proposed by: QUB

Summary

Medsin-UK believes in the importance of openness across all research outputs as an alternative to the current closed system of research. Specifically, Medsin-UK supports:

- 1) Open Access; the free, immediate, online availability of research articles with full reuse rights.
- 2) Open Education Resources; high-quality educational materials that everyone is permitted to freely use, adapt, and share.
- 3) Open Data; data that can be freely used, shared and built-on by anyone, anywhere, for any purpose.

Medsin-UK believes that students should educate, advocate and act in ways that will lead to Open Access, Open Data and Open Educational Resources becoming the new norm. As part of this Medsin-UK is a member of, and supports, the work of the Right to Research Coalition (www.righttoresearch.org) to promote an open scholarly publishing system.

Introduction

Scholarly material is essential for research and education. While consulting academic journals students face limited access to research data and papers because of very high fees. The high cost of academic journals restricts the use of knowledge; in some fields, prices can reach \$20,000 for a single journal subscription or commonly \$30 for an individual article^(1,2) These prices are also rising above inflation and causing financial difficulties for all universities.³ Despite these high prices, authors of scholarly articles are not paid for their work, including paper reviews. A vast amount of research is funded from public sources – yet taxpayers are locked out by the cost of access. The profits from these publications go solely to the publishers of the journals.

Open Access

Open Access is a well-established alternative to the traditional closed, subscription-access system of scholarly communication.⁴ Open Access makes the results of high quality, peer-reviewed scholarly research available online for free, immediately upon publication, and removes barriers for scholarly and educational re-use.⁵ Entire journals can be Open Access, or an author can provide Open Access to an individual article by posting a copy on an openly accessible Web site. All forms of Open Access publication depend on rigorous methods of quality control, including peer review. Open Access also supports new, currently prohibitively difficult ways of analysing research such as programmatic analysis of papers through text mining to find new links and trends in research. Similar to academic journals, the cost of educational resources—particularly textbooks—often harms students' ability to obtain the materials they need for their courses and contributes significantly to the rising cost of education. In many parts of the world, textbooks have become prohibitively expensive, even for introductory courses where the subject material is well-established.⁶

Open Education

Open Educational Resources make the building blocks of a complete education freely available to all. Open Educational Resources are high-quality, often peer-reviewed textbooks and other learning materials that are openly licensed to permit their free use and repurposing by others.⁷ There are many benefits to this, the resources can be translated and adapted by instructors to better suit the needs of a class. Further, without price barriers, students are free to incorporate materials beyond

those assigned and continue learning after their formal education ends. Studies show that open education resources can produce learning outcomes that meet or exceed those of traditional educational materials.⁸ Their creation is supported through grants and/or business models where additional add-on content is sold to support the costs of production.

Open Data

The data-rich environment that is evolving poses new challenges and provides new opportunities in the sharing, review, publication and replication of research results. In order for science and scholarship to advance, the results of research must be shared freely so they can be understood and built upon. This is particularly critical in the scientific research process, where the validity of results can only be verified through replication. The inability to replicate results, fraud and malpractice within research is increasingly becoming recognised as an issue and can have serious impacts on public policy and health.^{9,10} Ensuring full access to and reuse of research data guards against this. Open Data also promotes the use of new tools including text and data mining to advance research. Established 5 years ago by students, the Right to Research Coalition (R2RC) is now an international alliance of graduate and undergraduate student organizations, which collectively represent nearly 7 million students in over 100 countries around the world that advocate for and educate students about open methods of scholarly publishing.¹¹

Main Text

Medsin-UK believes that Open Access, Open Data and Open Educational Resources:

- 1) Improve the educational experience.
- 2) Democratizes access to research and education.
- 3) Advances and accelerates research and education.
- 4) Improves the visibility and impact of scholarship.

Medsin-UK therefore calls on:

1) *Medsin-UK, its Branches and members to:*

- a. Reject funding (including sponsorship), or relationships of any kind with organisations who currently, or in the past have significantly advocated against moves to advance areas covered by this policy.
- b. Support and initiate projects promoting Open Access, Open Data and Open Educational Resources to the fullest extent.
- c. Clearly display licensing information both on Medsin-UK and Medsin-[branch] produced documents, such as Creative Commons licences (more details of the types of CC Licences you can employ can be found at: <http://creativecommons.org/>).
- d. Join the Right to Research Coalition either as a branch and/or an individual (details on how to join can be found at: www.righttoresearch.org).

2) *Universities of Medsin-UK branches to:*

- a. 1. Adopt policies that ensure Open Access to their faculty's research outputs and other educational resources;
- b. Accelerate efforts to promote open resources, technology and teaching practices in education through deployment of free and open source software and providing the necessary training to staff and students;
- c. Establish research data management system which facilitate Open Data
- d. Support the use and creation of Open Educational Resources.

3) *The UK Government and UK Research funders to:*

- a. Adopt policies that ensure Open Access to research and to underlying data as appropriate.
- b. Invest in programs that support the creation and use of Open Educational Resources.

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4) **Researchers, Educators and Learners to:**

- a. Publish in Open Access journals, and/or deposit their peer-reviewed manuscripts in Open Access repositories and make underlying data openly available as appropriate;
- b. Seek and assign Open Educational Resources in place of expensive, traditional learning materials whenever academically appropriate and suitable for the curriculum.
- c. This Policy Statement will last for a maximum of two years in effect before it must be reviewed and/or updated by the Medsin-UK general assembly.

References

- 1) The cost for an institutional print subscription of the journal Brain Research was \$19,952 in 2013 [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://store.elsevier.com/product.jsp?issn=00068993>
- 2) The most common price per article for Elsevier journals on ScienceDirect is \$31.50 as of October 18, 2013 [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://www.elsevier.com/online-tools/sciencedirect/articles#pay-per-view>
- 3) Harvard University says it can't afford journal publishers' prices [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2012/apr/24/harvard-university-journal-publishers-prices>
- 4) There are almost 10,000 journals registered in the Directory of Open Access Journals [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://doaj.org/>
- 5) Budapest Open Access Initiative | Read the Budapest Open Access Initiative [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://www.budapestopenaccessinitiative.org/read>
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- 7) The definition of Open Educational Resources given by William and Flora Hewlett Foundation [Internet]. [cited 2014 Jun 29]. Available from: <http://www.hewlett.org/programs/education/open-educational-resources>
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