

Open Access: The new academic publishing landscape

The digital revolution has clearly transformed academic publishing, and the full implications of these historical changes are still unfolding. One consequence has been increasing pressure to make the outputs of academic research widely and freely accessible through various forms of open access publication.¹ For this and other reasons, the Australian Research Council has recently announced an important change in its publication policy. Falling in line with existing NHMRC policy², **‘the ARC requires that any publications arising from an ARC supported research project must be deposited into an open access institutional repository within a twelve (12) month period from the date of publication.’**³ This new policy will apply from January 1 2013, and will not be applied retrospectively to pre-existing funding rules and agreements.

The ARC policy will have a significant impact on how ARC funded research is distributed. Full details can be found on the ARC website (http://arc.gov.au/applicants/open_access.htm). In essence this policy attempts to balance the demands of copyright protection (through the allowance of a 12 month open access embargo) with demands of distribution. Importantly, the ARC will permit project investigators to justify why their outputs have not been lodged in this kind of repository (such as longer or ever-lasting copyright restrictions). Given that this policy was developed in consultation with Australian University Vice-Chancellors, it seems logical to assume that Australian universities will administer the online repositories.

In essence the ARC has adopted what has become known as a “green” model of open-access publication. In contrast, a recent government inquiry in the UK argued for the adoption of a “gold” model of open access; in mid-2012 the UK government announced its intentions to implement the recommendations of the “Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings” (led by Dame Janet Finch). Like Australia, government funding of research in the UK (through schemes such as the AHRC) will be tied to the provision of open access to outputs, but this model of open access will function quite differently.

- **“Gold” Open Access Schemes (the proposed UK model):** All journal outputs are freely available online from the moment of their publication. This means that these outputs can no longer be pay-wall protected. This kind of system would essentially shift the burden of cost from the reader to the author; journals will fund publication through an “article-processing-charge” (APC). This means that an author-pays system would replace the reader-pays system of journal subscriptions. The Finch Report assumes that universities will shift funding from journal subscriptions to the payment of APCs and that funding councils will provide money to support Gold OA.
- **“Green” Open Access Schemes (the ARC model):** Research outputs can still be protected by a subscription paywall, but once copyright restrictions have elapsed, authors lodge the article in a searchable repository.⁴

¹This pressure has been felt even more strongly in the sciences where the cost of journal subscriptions is prohibitively expensive.

²<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/grants/policy/dissemination-research-findings>

³http://arc.gov.au/applicants/open_access.htm

⁴ Often this model of Open Access will involve lodging “pre-print” or “accepted” version of the research rather than the final published copy. Other models of “green access” have included

Whilst the “green” model adopted by the ARC seems to represent a manageable change for scholars in the humanities, the “gold” model proposed by the Finch Report has provoked a significant response from historians inside and outside the UK.⁵ The American Historical Association and the Royal Historical Society have published open letters that warn of the consequences of the “gold” model,⁶ and a collective of UK journals has promised to maintain a mixed model of publication in which content would be funded by existing models of subscription or by an APC.⁷ The precise framework has yet to be announced in the UK and there seems to be some softening of the initially strict approach to APC.⁸

These changes (both in the UK and in Australia) will have significant impact on Australian scholars and journals:

- **Australian Scholars Publishing in Australian Journals**
 - The ARC will expect journal outputs to be lodged in at least their ‘accepted’ pre-print form on some form of open access database (probably maintained by individual universities) within twelve months. At a minimum, the meta-data of the output must be registered and an explanation offered of why the full-text is unavailable. This will usually be the result of an agreement with the publisher prohibiting the posting online of such material.
- **Australian Scholars Publishing in International Journals**
 - Where Australian scholars are seeking publication in contexts where “gold” open access becomes standard (if indeed this happens), they may find themselves required to contribute an Article Processing Charge (APC). Whilst some UK journals remain committed to providing both paywall protected content and open-access content (where the latter would be funded by the APC), these changes are clearly going to transform the business models of academic publishing. Australian scholars need to keep abreast of these international changes. Australian funding councils and universities may well eventually need to be able to provide support for the publication of research by Australian scholars in Gold OA environments.
- **Australian Journals Publishing Scholarship from Outside Australia**
 - In contexts where funding is tied to the provision of “gold” open access, scholars may require Australian journals to provide immediate open access. If Australian journals are unable to do so (because the funding model does not

the online publication of “draft” versions of articles. For a full discussion of these different models, see <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/260209/1/impact.html>.

⁵A very detailed critique can be found <http://myblogs.informa.com/jvc/2012/11/21/open-access-and-the-future-of-academic-journals/>

⁶<http://blog.historians.org/news/1734/aha-statement-on-scholarly-journal-publishing>
<http://www.royalhistoricalsociety.org/RHSPresidentE-letterOctober2012.pdf>

⁷ Importantly, these journals have argued for a three rather than one-year embargo.

<http://www.history.ac.uk/news/2012-12-10/statement-position-relation-open-access>

⁸<http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2012/12/implementing-finch-conference/>

provide for an APC) these scholars will be unable to publish in Australian journals.