

Open access: the evidence and the verdict

First the complaint, then the evidence, then the verdict.

The complaint is that researchers cannot afford to access all the articles they might use, and hence those articles do not get all the usage and impact they might.

The evidence is that no institution can afford to subscribe to all the journals that their researchers might need to use¹ and those articles that are made open access (by being deposited on the Web, free for all) are used and cited twice as much as those articles (in the very same journals and years) that are not.²

The verdict is that all researchers should deposit their articles on the Web, free for all—not necessarily that they should publish in open access journals, or that all journals should convert to open access publishing. (Open access is not the same thing as open access publishing: open access publishing is just one of the two roads to open access.)

Fortunately, mandates requiring researchers to deposit (self-archive) their articles on the Web, free for all, are now being proposed by research funders in the UK and Europe, and they have already been adopted by three UK Research Councils as well as the Wellcome Trust.³

Stevan Harnad

American Scientist Open Access Forum; Chaire de recherche du Canada, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada; Professor of Cognitive Science, Department of Electronics & Computer Science, University of Southampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK
E-mail: harnad@ecs.soton.ac.uk

REFERENCES

- 1 Journal holdings and affordability [<http://www.arl.org/stats/arlstat/>] Accessed July 2006
- 2 Open Access impact advantage [<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>] Accessed July 2006
- 3 Proposed and Adopted OA self-archiving mandates: US [http://cornyn.senate.gov/doc_archive/05-02-2006_COE06461_xml.pdf]; EC [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf]; UK [<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/access/index.asp>] and [http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/doc_WTD002766.html] Accessed July 2006