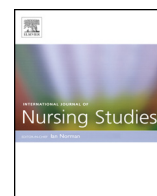


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Invited Editorial

Open access publication & the International Journal of Nursing Studies: All that glitters is not gold



There has been a long and sometimes heated debate about the merits, or otherwise, of open access publishing of research findings. There are many issues, some of which remain unresolved, but in some aspects at least the matters are becoming clearer. Some funding bodies, perhaps most notably for readers of this journal the National Institute of Health in the United States, have well established policies that require that publically funded research is made accessible, for free, to readers. Funders such as the UK research councils and National Institute for Health Research have similar policies that require open access publishing. Similar requirements will be attached to the European Union's Horizon 20:20 funding programme. Recently the UK's Finch report, prepared by an independent group of academics, libraries, research funders, publishers, and universities stated that the UK, one of the world's leading producers of academic research, should embrace the transition to open access and the Higher Education Funding Council has proposed that all submissions for the periodic assessment of research quality in UK, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), should be based on open access papers (Finch Report, 2012). US legislation may also impose this requirement on all publically funded research.

So the future seems clear – there will be far more 'open access' publishing, meaning that the research is available to read free of charge, via the internet, in various ways and at various times, to any reader with no subscription required. In the minds of some, open access publishing is exclusively associated with open access journals (such as the BMC series or PLOS) where the author pays the cost of publication through article processing charges and the article is made freely available. Many of the established academic publishers, including Elsevier, the publisher of the International Journal of Nursing Studies, have launched their own open access journals in recent years. These journals retain many of the characteristics of traditional journals and, in particular, aim to provide the same rigorous peer review to maintain academic standards.

However, into this arena a number of so called 'predatory' open access journals have emerged, which charge fees to authors without providing the editorial and publishing services associated with more established and legitimate journals. In many of these journals the scientific scrutiny of peer review is little more than a sham. The list of publishers associated with such journals is alarmingly long and seems to be growing (<http://scholarlyoa.com/publishers/>).

But the open access landscape is not exclusively about open access journals per se. In addition to journals that are wholly open access a growing number of established journals, including the International Journal of Nursing Studies, offer a hybrid model where authors can choose to pay an article processing fee to have the published online version of their article made open access. The number of such papers is small, but growing.¹ Potential advantages to authors are increased usage of the paper reflected in greater downloads although there is no demonstrated citation advantage of open access publishing (Moed, 2012) (Davis et al., 2008). However, open access is not limited to these so called 'gold' routes (where it is the fully published version of the article in a journal that is open access).

As an alternative, or in addition, to making the published paper open access authors may be able to make their research freely available (and meet funder requirements) by depositing the text of their paper in an institutional repository (such as the eprints repository at the University of Southampton <http://eprints.soton.ac.uk/> which has been at the forefront of such developments in the UK) or a central repository (such as PubMed Central or Europe PubMed Central). Articles so deposited are not the final published version but rather a pre-print (before refereeing) or post-print (the accepted manuscript sent to the publisher). Some journals allow only pre-prints to be deposited, some impose embargo periods of typically

¹ See <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-nursing-studies/open-access-articles/> for examples.

12–24 months before it is allowed, and some do not allow it at all. Authors are generally required to include a reference and link to the final published article which is also in the authors' interest in order to ensure correct citations. Because publishers and journals vary in their policy towards this 'green' open access route and authors need to be wary to avoid breaking copyright laws. For authors, the great advantage of using archives to make papers open access is that they do not have to pay an article processing charge, although it is worth noting that many publishers will consider waiving these charges in certain situations, particularly for authors from low income countries (for example see Elsevier's policy: <http://www.elsevier.com/about/open-access/open-access-policies/open-access-pricing-policy>).

The International Journal of Nursing Studies is a strong supporter of open access and is committed to fully supporting its authors by offering a full range of options. Our liberal self-archiving policies allow authors to archive their *pre-print* manuscripts anywhere and at anytime, although we encourage the author to ensure that the pre-print is properly referenced and linked back to the published version as well.² The journal allows authors to voluntarily archive their *post-print* articles on institutional repositories provided full detail of the published version is given and a link is provided.³ Subject to agreements between the publisher and funding bodies, where it is required, authors can deposit their post-prints in repositories. For these deposits the journal has a 12 month embargo period, meaning that the paper cannot be made available until 12 months after publication. Arrangements have been made with a wide array of funders and institutions for manuscript posting,⁴ for example, the Publisher deposits NIH funded IJNS manuscripts into PubMed Central on behalf of authors.

Our mission is to bring high quality research to the largest possible audience and open access contributes to this. The rapidly changing landscape means that open access requirements may vary between funding bodies, countries and over time and publisher policies may also change. However it seems clear that the future will see more pressure on authors to make their research open access, and rightly so. Therefore we will continue to ensure that the international Journal of Nursing Studies provides a means for authors to meet external requirements for open access, make their paper widely available to readers and benefit for the rigorous editorial and review process of a well-established journal that is proud of its reputation.

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² See <http://www.elsevier.com/about/open-access/open-access-policies/article-posting-policy#pre-print>.

³ See <http://www.elsevier.com/about/open-access/open-access-policies/article-posting-policy#accepted-author-manuscript>.

⁴ See <http://www.elsevier.com/about/publishing-guidelines/policies/funding-body-agreements> for full details.