

## Open access publishing: What is world's best practice?

Open access publishing delivers on the dream of centuries - the free and unfettered access to the written word (and more) to all - everything, everywhere, everyone, and free. When Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web he had in mind an enhanced *Enquire Within Upon Everything* (Berners-Lee, 1999). The book *Enquire Within Upon Everything* was a publishing sensation which was first published in 1856 and there were 1,428,000 copies in print by 1912 (Philp, 1912). The injunction of Philps to "Enquire Within. No Fees to Pay!!" (p.ix), was a subversive idea, to give ready access to information and to bypass the priestly class of gatekeepers of information. The World Wide Web takes Philp's idea to a new level.

"Something serious is at hand" wrote Martin Luther, five centuries ago, in defence of his choice to publish the Bible in colloquial German (cited by Hargreaves, 2002, p.54). The Diet of Worms was never a novel cuisine but rather a court of the Holy Roman Empire which sought to silence Luther, spectacularly unsuccessfully as it turned out. Across the Channel it was a crime to translate the scriptures into English, and punishable by death. William Tyndale devoted his life to translating the books of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew to English, he was hanged, then burned at the stake for his efforts (Bragg, 2011; Hargreaves, 2002; McGrath, 2001). Openness is not a universal value. As Karl Popper pointed out, as the experiences of Julian Assange and Bradley Manning continue to affirm, and as the proponents of GMO labelling recently found, openness has enemies (Goodman, 2013; GreenNet, 2013; Paull, 2012; Popper, 1966).

Open access publishing, one manifestation of openness, can be important for the distribution of niche ideas, subversive ideas, and unpopular ideas. The world's first 'organic' agriculture association went broke publishing its periodical *The Organic Farming Digest* (Paull, 2008b), but had there had been a method of freely distributing the *Digest* then perhaps the Australian Organic Farming and Gardening Society may have persisted beyond 1955?

"There is a big difference between nitrogen and nitrogen" declared Rudolf Steiner (1924, p10). He was not being mystical, and in calling for an agriculture free of synthetic chemicals, he was pointing out that details matter, in that case matters of provenance. There is likewise, a big difference between open access and open access - there are shades of open access, and more than the two shades of Suber (2008).

The *Directory of Open Access Journals* has grown from its beginning in 2003 to now include 9411 journals. The DOAJ defines "open access journals" as those that do "not charge readers or their institutions for access", a condition is "Open Access without delay (e.g. no embargo period)", with "All content freely available", however "Free user registration online is acceptable" (DOAJ, 2013).

Hotels and restaurants use a star system as a shorthand guide to users - the more stars the better - might this be useful for open access? The DOAJ proposes a minimum requirement to qualify as an open access journal, namely, no fee to access. But is there a world's best practice? And best for whom? The issue is considered here from the point of

view of the clientele - readers and authors. The editor of an open access journal will field incoming questions such as: Is there a charge to authors? Can I put a copy on my institution's website? Who owns the copyright? and Can the paper be reprinted? Four criteria are proposed here which address such questions to generate a star rating for an open access journal - for 'openness' - with a star available for meeting each criterion, to a maximum of four (Table 1).

**Table 1. Open access criteria for scoring star ratings.**

#	Criteria	Answer
1	There is no barrier to access for the reader	Yes → ★
2	It is free to the author/s	Yes → ★
3	Copyright is retained by the author/s	Yes → ★
4	The paper can be freely distributed under licence	Yes → ★

Using these criteria, the minimum to be included in the DOAJ is a no-star open access journal. With such a journal, the reader relinquishes privacy by registering for access, the author pays a fee, the author relinquishes copyright, and there is no explicit right to freely distribute. To meet the first criterion, 'no barrier to access for the reader', there needs to be no reader registration required, no relinquishment of reader's email address etc., to achieve access.

To meet the second criterion there is no fee to the author. It is a perverse outcome of the rise of open access publishing that there has been a proliferation of author fees - variously called 'submission fees' or 'publishing fees' - with no possibility of any direct financial return. Authors of peer reviewed journal articles have typically not been paid a fee nor received a royalty for their labours, but going from nothing to negative seems an unfortunate innovation.

To meet the third criterion there is no relinquishment of copyright by the author/s. A copyright grab has been the typical model of 'closed access' publishing, and remains common in open access publishing, it is a practice that disadvantage author/s.

To meet the fourth criterion there is a clear statement of distribution rights at the point of publication, such as a Creative Commons license, a generous version of which is CC-BY which allows repurposing and reprinting, with modifications allowed and commercial use allowed (Creative Commons, 2013). This frees the author to upload the paper to an institutional ePrints depository, the paper can be freely distributed to students, the paper can be reprinted and circulated without further permissioning by the author or the journal editor, and it facilitates the republication of a paper such as where a journal article (e.g. Paull, 2007) is republished with attribution as a book chapter (e.g. Paull, 2008a).

The *Journal of Organic Systems* is a free, open access, peer reviewed, international journal dedicated to publishing research pertaining to all aspects of organic food and agriculture and kindred issues, it aspires to achieve world's best practice and it now ticks 'all the boxes' to score a four star open access rating.

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