Organic Eprints – making research in Organic Food and Farming more visible

Rasmussen, I.A.[1], Meier, J.[2] & Willer, H.[3]

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Abstract

Organic Eprints is an Open Access archive for research in organic food and farming. While based in Europe, it is international and open for deposits from all over the world. Since the start in 2002, the archive has steadily grown to over 10,000 deposits in 2010. Open Access enables more users to download and read the deposited papers, and this may lead to increased citations. Development of a platform based on Organic Eprints among other agriculture-related archives should make search even stronger. All researchers who work with organic food and farming are encouraged to register and deposit their work in Organic Eprints.

Introduction

Research results regarding organic food and farming from Europe have become easily accessible – and so can results from the rest of the world. The Open Access archive Organic Eprints (orgprints.org) has developed since the start in 2002 so that it now includes more than 10,000 items, has 15,000 registered users and 175,000 visits per month. The archive is open for all to use and registered users can deposit their research publications from refereed journals as well as non-refereed sources. Organisations, research facilities, research programmes and projects are also presented in the archive.

A new platform for agriculture & aquaculture, VOA^{3}R (Virtual Open Access Agriculture & Aquaculture Repository), is being developed on the basis of Organic Eprints and other archives. The platform aims to improve the user interface, implement new search methods, enable online annotating and rating of papers and even include a network for the users.

Background

In 2002, International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS) founded the Open Access archive Organic Eprints. The aim was to collect all publications from research projects under the Danish Organic funding scheme DARCOF (Alrøe 2003), but it was established in a way so that it was feasible to use it for international purposes as well. Already in 2003, the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and the Federal Agency for Agriculture and Food (BLE) from

[1] International Centre for Research in Organic Food Systems (ICROFS), Blichers Allé 20, DK-8830 Tjele, Denmark, E-mail IlseA.Rasmussen@icrofs.org, Internet www.icrofs.org

[2] Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), PO Box 90 01 63, 60441 Frankfurt am Mein, Germany, E-Mail Julia.Meier@fibl.org, Internet www.fibl.org

[3] Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL), Ackerstrasse, 5070 Frick, Switzerland, E-Mail Helga.willer@fibl.org, Internet www.fibl.org

Germany became partners and today, those three organisations are still responsible for running the archive.

The archive is a repository for all types of deposits concerning research in organic food and farming: journal articles that have been peer-reviewed, books or chapters from books, popular articles from farmers magazines or newspapers, papers, posters or presentations from conferences, reports or chapters from reports, theses, teaching resources such as power-point presentations, web products and working papers. In addition descriptions of organisations, research facilities, research programmes and projects can be deposited. Once deposited, any item is referred to as an eprint.

The aim is that users can find information about research in organic food and farming at many levels – from the organisations and projects involved in the research to the end-product in the form of peer-reviewed articles. To aid the user in the search process, there is both the possibility to browse by subject area (or other browse views) and to search via a powerful search tool with many refinements. Additionally, registered users have the possibility to subscribe to an email alert system to receive emails on new entries in the subject area they are interested in. Another aim is for research funders to have a documentation of the output from the research – not only in peer-reviewed articles, but also in more popular versions of the knowledge derived from the research.

Open Access

Open Access is free-of-charge internet access to research papers, including peer-reviewed journal articles. There are mainly two open access strategies: either to publish articles in an open acess journal (golden road) or to publish articles in a paid-access journal and then self-archive in an open access eprints archive (green road). Open Access journals are often only available on the internet, and not in a printed version, but are peer-reviewed. In the Directory of Open Access Journals (http://www.doaj.org/) there were in December 2010 more than 200 journals in the subject area Agriculture and Food Sciences. Some printed, well-established journals also allow Open Access if the author of the article pays a fee.

Open Access repositories, like Organic Eprints, receive digital duplicates of published articles by depositing by the authors (self-archiving). The repository makes the articles publicly available. If allowed by the copyright of the journal, the author can deposit a pdf of the published article or the authors own copy of the finished article, after review. In other cases, the copyright only allows the author to deposit a pre-review version of the paper. In order to address the copyright issues, Organic Eprints allows the author to restrict access to the paper either to the registered users or to only the author and archive administrators. In this way, users interested in the paper can still see the abstract and bibliographic data and send an email to the authors to receive a reprint. If the journal has an embargo such as 6 or 12 months after publication, the embargo can be set to be lifted at that time already at the time of deposit in Organic Eprints, making the article openly available as soon as possible with no further actions required from the author. Bernius (2010) states that subject-based repositories provide the best conditions for retrieval of scientific knowledge compared to institutional repositories.

It is widely debated whether Open Access gives an article more citations, ranging from an increase of 140-150% (Lawrence 2001, Eysenbach 2006) to a non-significant negative effect (Davis *et al.* 2008), but most authors agree that downloads are increased by Open Access, and that this widens the circle of those who can benefit to

participants, that may not be able to afford paying subscriptions to printed journals (Evans & Reimer 2009). According to Gargouri *et al.* (2010) the citation advantage is independent of whether the Open Access is self-selected or mandatory.

Use of Organic Eprints

The partnership that is running Organic Eprints is mirrored in the distribution of the origin of items in the archive: by the end of 2010, there were almost 3000 eprints from Germany, almost 2500 from Denmark and more than 1500 from Switzerland. In addition, there were 3000 eprints from other countries. The main part of these originated from other European countries, especially the countries from the European CORE Organic partnership[4], but there were also entries from all other continents, with Australia and USA being especially well represented countries. Also the nationality of the over 15,000 registered users is mainly European (fig. 1).

Many more than those that are registered users benefit from the archive, which throughout 2010 had an average of more than 5000 daily visits. In March 2010, over 30% of the visits resulted in Open Access document file downloads, while about 7% were browsing or searches that did not result in any download. A large part of the visits were directed from internet search engines such as Google. In a ranking of the worlds 800 top repositories in July 2010, Organic Eprints was number 16. The ranking was based on a combination of the size of the repository, the visibility, the number of documents and the number of entries in Google Scholar (Aguillo *et al.*, 2010).

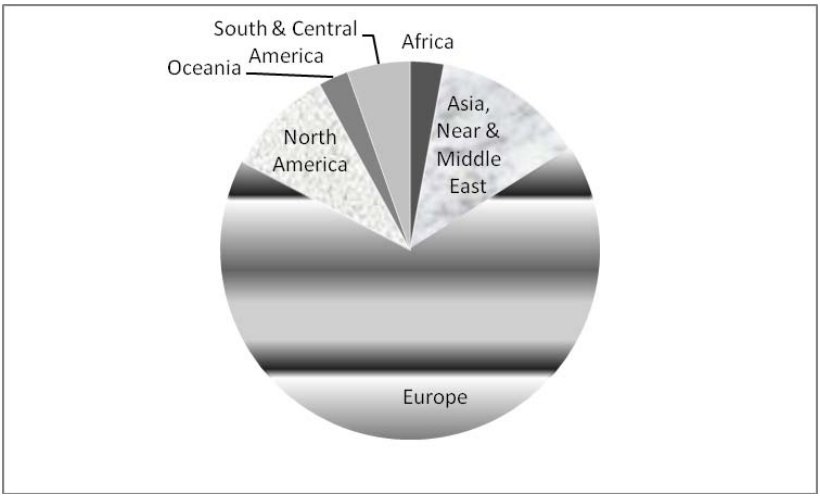

Figure 1: Distribution of registered users of Organic Eprints by continent.

[4] CORE Organic is an acronym for "Coordination of European Transnational Research in Organic Food and Farming". The project is part of the European Commission ERA-NET Scheme. More information is available at www.coreorganic.org.

VOA^{3}R: Virtual Open Access Agriculture & Aquaculture Repository

Generalist search engines as Google Scholar, databases as PubMed, citation systems as CiteULike and indexes as DOAJ require significant effort to retrieve the relevant information. Virtual Open Access Agriculture & Aquaculture Repository: Sharing Scientific and Scholarly Research related to Agriculture, Food, and Environment (http://voa3r.eu/) is an EU project that is planned to result in a platform that aims at re-using existing repositories such as Organic Eprints. This will enable users to search for relevant information across the different repositories. The platform will include new search tools and extended evaluation elements such as ratings and public reviews.

Discussion & Conclusions

Making the results of research more easily and freely available will improve the use of the results and in the end hopefully augment the development of Organic Agriculture. Organic Eprints offers a platform for this purpose, and researchers all over the world are invited and encouraged to deposit their papers in the archive. In parts of the world where researchers do not have free access to all the relevant scientific journals, Organic Eprints may be one way to access such papers. All over the world, people outside the scientific community, such as politicians, ngo's, farmers, advisors etc. can benefit from access to the papers, popular as well as peer-reviewed. The platform can and will be continuously improved, i.e. a better user-interface.

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