

## **Public access to research publications**

**prepared for CGIAR-CAS**  
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### **Summary**

The basis of public access to research publications has two main aspects, 'Open Access' (immediate, permanent, free online access to the full text of all refereed research journal articles) and 'Back Access' (freely accessible online 6-12 months after publication). It also covers broader fields such as publication of non-refereed research, work-in-progress and additional data for published articles.

The recommendation is that CGIAR endorses Back Access, and also encourages free internet access to non-refereed work where it enhances published material, both of which are fully consistent with the mission to support free and full access to information.

### **Open Access**

This has been gathering momentum for a few years, supported by a number of universities and research institutes. Recently there has been a Berlin Declaration of 2003 (<http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>) which endorsed the principle of Open Access (OA) and also specified the conditions for effective OA:

- a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and a license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly and to make and distribute derivative works, in any digital medium for any responsible purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship, as well as the right to make small numbers of printed copies for personal use;
- a complete version of the work and all supplemental materials, including a copy of the permission as stated above, in an appropriate standard electronic format is deposited (and thus published) in at least one online repository using suitable technical standards (such as the Open Archive definitions) that is supported and maintained by an academic institution or other well-established organisation that seeks to enable open access, unrestricted distribution, inter operability, and long-term archiving.

Signatories to the Berlin Declaration include Max Planck Society and CNRS (as at 2003). More recently, in 2005 the signatories agreed that:

“In order to implement the Berlin Declaration institutions should:  
1. implement a policy to require their researchers to deposit a copy of all their published articles in an open access repository and  
2. encourage their researchers to publish their research articles in open access journals where a suitable journal exists and provide the support to enable that to happen.”  
(<http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/recommendation.html>)

This recommendation changes the responsibility of signatory institutions, since they now must establish a policy of requiring their scientists to work in OA.

The principles of OA are commendable, although do obviously run into difficulties with commercial journal publishers who risk seeing their exclusivity over a specific published article removed. At this point it is not clear how this will be resolved, or whether an economic model can be developed to accommodate the needs of commercial publishers.

## **Back Access**

Back Access (BA) is a variation on OA, in that the full, free access only comes after a period of delay. It would seem that BA is, not surprisingly, more attractive to publishers, and was adopted by the NIH in May 2005 (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-022.html>), requiring BA publication within 12 months of publication in a journal.

BA has been criticised by OA supporters as offering a weaker alternative to OA, and of course it delays free access by users, for which it has been criticised (<http://listserver.sigmaxi.org/sc/wa.exe?A2=ind05&L=american-scientist-open-access-forum&F=1&S=&P=3123>), although as the NIH acknowledged the importance of the time delay will vary between disciplines, so that for some sectors the delay may not be significant.

## **Public access to pre-published articles**

This refers to articles which are going through the refereeing and publication process, but which have not yet been published.

The biggest danger is that it comes into conflict with the copyright/acceptance policies of journals, which may require confirmation that the article has not been previously elsewhere and also require assignment of copyright in the article.

Correspondingly the benefits appear difficult to identify, since the article will be published shortly, apart from timing. The issue of first-to-discover is important in

some fields, but journals are well aware of the potential difficulties and have mechanisms for dealing with it. If there is a substantiated risk, then private certified deposit can always be used.

### **Online publication of other research**

This covers all material which is not published in a refereed journal, so will include raw data, trials information, short papers, discussion papers, and so on. It may be useful to separate it into two groups: information which supports or supplements a refereed published article, and other material.

The first group, which may be called Supplementary Results, will often be useful for users of the published article, but which have been excluded from the article for reasons of space or publication requirements. In principle making this additional information available on a website (and making reference to it in the published article) would be helpful and usually present no copyright issues.

The second group, which may be called General Publications, may be equally valuable, but would need internal appraisal to maintain quality, and either good search engines or some other mechanism to avoid it becoming a dump site of otherwise unpublishable material.

### **Discussion**

Open Access may properly be seen as the 'Gold Standard' of availability, getting refereed articles rapidly into the public domain for all to use. Viewed in that way, it is difficult to oppose it. On the other hand, it has social and economic consequences that have not been resolved, and may cause significant harm - or at least change - to the traditional pay-per-view journals; while this is not inherently bad, the reaction of journals is still very mixed. While there is no immediate risk of a backlash, adopting and implementing the Berlin Declaration may cause publishing problems for individual scientists in the CGIAR and Centres, which should be avoided.

Back Access can be perceived as a middle ground of accessibility, which makes all published information available after a short (6-12 month) delay. It still provides free international online access, and should be acceptable to publishers without upsetting the traditional economic model. Again, though, it does mean that there is a delay in immediate access, and there is a danger that the 6 months delay will extend to the 12 months allowable under the NIH Guidelines.

Supplementary Results can be fully supported, there are no risks involved in it, and it ensures widespread access to information that has not appeared in a

publication.

General Publications again can be fully supported; there are dangers that the quality of material is lower than ideal, but this can be managed by simple editorial management of the website. Properly used it could be a very helpful location for providing widespread access for papers and commentaries that otherwise would be given only limited or local circulation.

## **Recommendations**

- That CGIAR gives support to Open Access, but without becoming a signatory to the Berlin Declaration.
- That CGIAR gives full support to Back Access, particularly BA-6 (ie full access after 6 months).
- That CGIAR gives full support to encouraging its scientists with refereed published work to put Supplementary Results on a suitable website
- That CGIAR gives full support to a properly maintained and indexed website for General Publications

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