

Student Statement on the Right to Research

www.righttoresearch.org

Scholarly knowledge is part of the common wealth of humanity. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to the scholarly literature, despite advances in communications technology. The high cost of academic journals restricts access to knowledge; in some fields, prices can reach \$20,000 for a single journal subscription¹ or \$30 for an individual article.² Despite these high prices, authors of scholarly articles are not paid for their work. The profits from these publications go solely to the publishers of the journals. A vast amount of research is funded from public sources – yet taxpayers are locked out by the cost of access.

Learning and inquiry are impeded when scholars lack access to fellow researchers' work, and when students lack access to the work of scholars before them.

At the same time, digital technologies have opened new opportunities for research. New tools facilitate faster discoveries, speed the development of new technologies, and accelerate the progress of science. Patients could have access to the latest medical research, citizens could evaluate scientific information on environmental impacts, and developing countries could apply the most recent scholarship to public health and development efforts.³ But access barriers leave these opportunities under-explored.

Open Access is an alternative to the traditional closed, subscription-access system of scholarly communication. Open Access makes the results of scholarly research available online for free, immediately upon publication, and removes barriers for scholarly and educational re-use.⁴ Entire journals can be open-access, or an author can provide Open Access to an individual article by posting a copy on an openly accessible Web site. All forms of open-access publication depend on rigorous methods of quality control, including peer review.

Open Access has achieved remarkable success to date: more than 4,000 open-access journals are published today;⁵ millions of articles are made available via open-access repositories;⁶ and dozens of policies from universities and research funders support Open Access;⁷ but still more needs to be done.

We, the undersigned student organizations, hereby endorse Open Access as the preferred model for scholarly communication, because:

- (a) *Open Access improves the educational experience.* All students, regardless of their institution's ability to afford subscriptions, should have access to the full scholarly record, whether for assigned reading, research for a term paper, or literature review for a dissertation.
- (b) *Open Access democratizes access to research.* Students from around the world should have full access to the scholarly literature, along with patients looking for medical information and citizens seeking to learn about the environment or other scientific topics.

- (c) *Open Access advances research.* Open Access helps researchers be more productive by facilitating access to the latest studies. Open Access also enables new techniques for computer-assisted research, paving the way for scientific advancements.
- (d) *Open Access improves the visibility and impact of scholarship.* Today's student is tomorrow's scholar. Recent studies suggest that Open Access articles are downloaded and cited more frequently than articles that are accessible only through subscription.⁸ Open Access fulfills researchers' professional responsibility to maximize the impact of their research.

We hereby:

Call upon UNIVERSITIES to support Open Access

We believe universities should adopt policies that ensure Open Access to their faculty's research, such as the policies adopted at Harvard University⁹ and Stanford University.¹⁰

Call upon GOVERNMENTS AND RESEARCH FUNDERS to support Open Access

We believe research agencies should adopt policies that ensure Open Access to publicly funded research, such as that of the National Institutes of Health¹¹ and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.¹²

We believe charitable funders likewise should adopt policies that ensure Open Access to their funded research, such as that of Autism Speaks¹³ and the Canadian Cancer Society.¹⁴

Call upon RESEARCHERS to support Open Access

We believe researchers should publish in Open Access journals, and/or deposit their peer-reviewed manuscripts in Open Access repositories.¹⁵

Commit to support Open Access in our activities

We will undertake activities, in our membership and on our campuses, to educate students about Open Access and to engage them in efforts supporting Open Access.

American Medical Student Association
Student PIRGs
Students for Free Culture
Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
California Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
Trinity University Association of Student Representatives

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NOTES

- ¹ The cost of an institutional subscription to *Brain Research* in 2009 was \$22,940 (http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/622287/bibliographic).
- ² The price per article for Elsevier journals on ScienceDirect is \$31.50 as of March 4, 2009 (<http://www.info.sciencedirect.com/licensing/individual/ppv/>).
- ³ World Health Assembly resolution 61.21, “Global strategy and plan of action on public health, innovation and intellectual property,” adopted May 24, 2008 (http://www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/A61/A61_R21-en.pdf).
- ⁴ As defined in the Budapest Open Access Initiative, the Bethesda Statement on Open Access Publishing, and the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities (<http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml>; <http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/bethesda.htm>; <http://oa.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>).
- ⁵ The Directory of Open Access Journals lists 4,103 journals as of May 1, 2009 (<http://www.doaj.org/>).
- ⁶ According to statistics published in the Open Access Directory (http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/OA_by_the_numbers).
- ⁷ According to the Registry of Open Access Repository Material Archiving Policies (<http://www.eprints.org/openaccess/policysignup/>).
- ⁸ “The effect of open access and downloads ('hits') on citation impact: a bibliography of studies”, Open Citation Project (<http://opcit.eprints.org/oacitation-biblio.html>).
- ⁹ “The Harvard Open-Access Policies,” Harvard University Library Office for Scholarly Communications (<http://osc.hul.harvard.edu/OpenAccess/overview.php>).
- ¹⁰ “Stanford University School of Education Open Access Motion” (<http://ed.stanford.edu/suse/faculty/openaccess.html>).
- ¹¹ “Public Access Policy”, National Institutes of Health (<http://publicaccess.nih.gov/policy.htm>).
- ¹² “Policy on Access to Research Outputs”, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/34846.html>).
- ¹³ “Policy on Public Access to the Research We Fund,” Autism Speaks (http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/overview/policies/policy_on_public_access_to_research.php).
- ¹⁴ “Open access policy”, Canadian Cancer Society (http://cancer.ca/research/policies_and_administration/policy/open_access.aspx).
- ¹⁵ Peter Suber, “Six things that researchers need to know about open access”, *SPARC Open Access Newsletter*, February 2, 2006 (<http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/02-02-06.htm#know>).