HowOpenIsIt? Open Access Spectrum FAQ

How to Use the Guide

Q1: Is this guide meant to apply to publishers, journals, funders, policy makers, or authors?

A1: The guide's primary aim is to help authors make informed decisions on where to publish based on journal policies. It also provides a resource for funders and other organizations to help establish criteria for the level of Open Access (OA) required for their policies and mandates.

Q2: How can I use this guide to assess a journal's degree of openness?

A2: The guide will help you make an informed decision about where you elect to publish your research because it enables you to evaluate a journal's policies with respect to where they are on the Open Access Spectrum as it relates to the six core components of OA.

Q3: How does this chart relate to so-called "green" OA?

A3: The Open Access Spectrum (OAS) is focusing primarily on journal policies. It therefore includes aspects that relate to the deposition of papers in institutional repositories as well as the automated deposition in specific repositories.

Q4: The "How to Use this Guide" page in the OAS mentions the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI). What is that?

A4: In 2002, BOAI articulated the basic tenets of OA for the first time. The initial recommendations were developed by leaders of the OA movement. OA advocates have worked for the past decade to provide the public with unrestricted, free access to scholarly research, much of which is publicly funded. Making the research publicly available to everyone—free of charge and without most copyright and licensing restrictions—will accelerate scientific research efforts and allow authors to reach a larger number of readers.

In September 2012, the BOAI issued a new set of recommendations, which reaffirmed and expanded on the original Budapest Declaration.

Q5: Who created the guide?

A5: The guide was created as a collaborative project by the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) and Public Library of Science (PLOS), in conjunction with the Open Access Scholarly Publishers Association (OASPA). The initial draft of the guide was improved through a public comment period, which generated feedback from 60 respondents from 11 countries.

Using, Copying, Changing, or Distributing the Guide

Q6: May I print the guide and distribute it?

A6: Yes, you may print and distribute the guide. However, you may not sell it or otherwise distribute it for commercial or for-profit purposes.

Q7: May I mark where my policy or publication is on the OAS?

A7: Yes, you may publicize where your publication or policy is on the OAS. PLOS has posted on its website an example that shows the precise position of PLOS on the OAS. However, please be advised that such "rankings" are not presently being evaluated by SPARC, PLOS, or OASPA, and are not being sanctioned by any of the sponsoring bodies. In addition, we have posted a version that you can mark-up called, Assess Where You Are On the OA Grid.

Q8: May I present all or part of this content on a slide, website, or in other material?

A8: Yes, please see A21 for proper attribution.

Q9: May I change the guide?

A9: No, the use of "ND" in the Creative Commons license that applies to the guide means that you may not change the guide or make derivatives of it. The purpose of the guide is to evaluate the openness of publications, so any changes to the guide may change the criteria by which the openness of a publication is determined, thereby skewing the results.

Q10: Why is the guide itself licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND license?

A10: The guide is intended as a standard. Unfortunately there are those interested in obfuscating and confusing the topic of what constitutes open access. We therefore need to prevent the creation of replica guides that appear to be the same but differ in some important way. We are using a no derivatives license to prevent the creation of guides with similar appearance and using non-commercial terms to protect rights around the use of the guide. We do recognize that this limits potential activities such as the creation of translations or other services. The CC BY-NC-ND license applies to the overall design of the guide and we do not consider it to cover the separate text elements. We will also be happy to receive queries for the creation of specific derivatives.

Guide Components

Q11: So-called "hybrid journals" contain certain articles that are made immediately available for free. Why are they listed as very restricted on the Reader Rights scale?

A11: Hybrid journals are subscription journals that both collect subscription fees for their journal and offer an option for an author to pay a fee to make their article available outside of the subscribers. Reader rights cover the right of readers for articles in a publication and the hybrid option only addresses a single article based on the choice of the authors to pay an additional fee to liberate their paper. The hybrid model makes an *article* OA, *not the journal* . This allows some publishers of hybrid journals to "double dip"- taking money to make articles OA without reducing their subscription fees.

Q12: What is Creative Commons? What are the Creative Commons licenses referenced in the Copyrights section?

A12: Creative Commons is a nonprofit organization that enables the sharing and use of creativity and knowledge through free legal tools. Their copyright licenses provide a simple, standardized way to give the public permission to share and use creative work — on conditions of the creator's choice.

Q13: With respect to Author Posting, some publishers have generous policies after a certain time embargo. How do these fit into the OAS?

A13: In general, policies that restrict free and immediate accessibility of articles are less open than polices that do not. Although the Author Posting Rights column does not explicitly address the time embargo scenario, users of this guide should view any time delay associated with any version of an article to be a state that is less than fully open. The longer the embargo period, the less open the policy.

Q14: Most journals do not have an articulated machine readability policy. Why have you included it here?

A14: Realizing the vision of OA literature requires that both people and machines have unrestricted access to articles. By adding a machine readability dimension we emphasize that this aspect of access is also important for searches, data mining, and other automated, machine-enabled activity in the digital age. We believe important work remains to be done in this area by all publishers.

Q15: In the Machine Readability section, what do you mean by "community standard API"?

A15: To achieve machine readability, a computer program must be able to find papers and understand how to obtain them in the right format. This requires that the information be made available via a standardized service with which a computer program can interact. Such a standard service is an "Application Programming Interface" or API. Because this is an emerging area we did not want to specify a single current standard, but one example of such an API would be a service providing an interface that conforms to the OAI-ORE standard.

Q16: What are remixing reuse rights, and why are they important?

A16: To achieve the full potential of OA material, it is crucial that papers can be read and also reused in many ways to support new research. Potential uses include translation, summary, and reanalysis of data. To make this possible it is important that potential users have the rights to reuse the work as well as to combine it with other work, or "remix" it. Without these rights users may not be able to create new pieces of research, informational, or educational material. For example, when a new species is described in a research article, it can be of interest to create articles on the new species in online services such as Wikipedia or the Encyclopedia of Life. By providing clear statements of the rights to use and reuse materials we can ensure that potential contributors have the rights to use the material to create new articles and that parts of those articles, such as images and audio or video recordings, can be combined with other materials to provide a compelling article. This is just one example of potential downstream reuses of scholarly material and the possibilities are limited only by our imagination, provided we give people the permission to explore the possibilities.

Q17: Why does it matter which version of a paper (e.g., the published article, the final peer-reviewed manuscript) an author can post elsewhere?

A17: Scholarly research can undergo a number of revisions between the time an author submits it to a journal and the time it is published. The advent of electronic communication and dissemination has meant that multiple versions of a paper may be circulating on the Internet. This versioning issue can cause confusion among readers, as well as among other authors wishing to cite a work. It reduces the confusion when an author can post the *published* version in an institutional repository or a department website. The final version of the peer-reviewed manuscript (sometimes called the "postprint" or, using NISO terminology, the "accepted manuscript") may lack some of the formatting of the published version, for example.

Q18: How does this guide apply to other OA media (e.g., books, datasets)?

A18: It doesn't. This guide focuses exclusively on journals. The unique issues associated with the application of OA to other media are beyond the scope of this project.

Q19: Is this guide meant to apply to every scholarly discipline?

A19: The principles of greater openness, fewer restrictions on readership, and more freedom to reuse are universal. However, the guide itself focuses primarily on the STM (science, technology, and medicine). Other areas of scholarship may have specific considerations that are not contemplated here.

Trademark, Attribution, and Copyright

Q20: If PLOS believes in OA, why does it claim trademark rights in "HowOpenIsIt?"?

A20: HowOpenIsIt? is protected by trademark rights, so while you may print, distribute, and post the entire guide, including that mark, it would be a violation of those rights to take the mark and use it outside the context of the guide.

In order for the guide to serve its purpose and to avoid parties passing off other guides that may produce different assessments of openness as being from PLOS and SPARC, the right to use HowOpenIsIt? must only be by permission. The phrase "HowOpenIsIt?" will be used for a family of offerings to foster and promote OA in research communications. We felt that it was necessary to obtain a unique and legally-protectable phrase that would be associated with these programs, thus providing assurance to those who may use the programs that they could trust the content.

Q21: How do I give proper attribution if I use the Open Access Spectrum?

A21: Please use this: "HowOpenIsIt? Open Access Spectrum", (c) 2012 SPARC and PLOS, licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 3.0". For more information on attribution, refer to this Creative Commons resource.

Q22: Where can I learn more about the Creative Commons license that applies to the Open Access Spectrum?

A22: Visit this Creative Commons resource.