



Guest Editorial—“Green Open Access is ‘Just’ Publishing”

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A shared experience among many graduate students is the dawning realization that the vaunted privilege of having one's scholarly work accepted for publication is also a fleecing. The exact terms of this fleecing depend on a number of different factors – so many, in fact, that it can get a bit confusing – but it's quite common for researchers to pay several thousand dollars to make their work available for others to read. And these are not the expenses incurred to complete their scholarly work. It's merely the cost of having one's work posted on the website of an academic publisher!

It's possible to fix this situation by separating the processes of publication and peer-review. This can be achieved through a new model of publishing called green open access, which is quietly gaining momentum across many fields of scholarly research. With a small group of researchers in my field, psychology, I have been working to develop a sustainable model of green open access publishing called [PsyArXiv](#). Like other green open access options, including [arXiv](#), [bioRxiv](#), and the [UO Scholars' Bank](#), PsyArXiv is free for users everywhere to post and download research, thanks to the support of institutions like UO, OSU, and the University of California system.

Lasting change, however, requires outreach to the research community, and education about the options for disseminating research. There's no better group to champion this cause than undergraduate researchers. In psychology, most research methods courses focus exclusively on the steps needed to prepare an article for submission to a journal. This makes good sense – it's the most time-consuming and, often, the most joyful part of research. But it's not the end of the story.

The next step in making your work accessible to the general public has traditionally been peer-review. Though sometimes harrowing, peer-review almost always makes the research better by highlighting its short-comings. Personally, I find it inspiring that this process occurs without meaningful compensation for the editors or reviewers, all of whom are experienced researchers who would otherwise be working on their own research. Most of the research that ends up being published usually requires two or more rounds of peer-review before being accepted.

After peer-review, the specter of commercialization creeps in. Once the work is accepted, publishers typically give authors a choice between "gold open access" or traditional "paywalled" publishing. The first option requires authors to pay (often large amounts) to make their work



accessible to readers without charge. The second option is free for authors but creates a charge for those who want to read it; it's usually \$20 or \$30 for an individual to buy an article unless they are affiliated with an institution that negotiates a group rate. Some institutions, including universities like UO, pay researchers to conduct the work and then their libraries also have to pay the publishers to make that same work accessible to others in their institution!

It's worth noting that the costs of publishing are higher on average for more prestigious outlets, sometimes several times higher. This suggests that little of the cost is driven by expenses incurred by the publishers. Researchers are paying for the (perceived) rigor of the outlet's peer-review process, even though this process costs the publishers very little. For me, this point is critical.

The imperative of green open access stems from the simple fact that those who cannot pay high fees should not be disadvantaged. Green open access achieves this by separating accessibility and prestige. Those who produce research – especially undergraduates and early-career researchers – have an opportunity to address the injustice of privileged access by submitting their work to open access outlets (including this one!); in so doing they will contribute to a re-shaping of the publishing landscape. The long-term benefit is more diverse and inclusive scholarship.

Editor's Note: To learn more about open access, go to the UO Libraries' guide at <https://researchguides.uoregon.edu/oa>. See also *Green Open Access: An Introduction* at <https://youtu.be/-5Huht3B6pU>. This video was prepared by the University of Oregon Libraries and the Senate Sub Committee on Open Access in Association with Kindea Labs – 2020.