

Description

Open access journals can be a boon for the reader of research articles; they are freely available and the editorial standards are often comparable to subscription-based journals. For the researcher seeking to publish research, the advantages are less clear. Perhaps he reaches a larger audience, but open access journals charge the author for [publication](#), sometimes several thousand dollars. There are alternatives to open access journals which are free to both reader and author. Here are some of them.

Self-archiving at a University

Many universities and other agencies maintain archives of article pre-prints which are freely available to anyone wishing to read them. Publishers such as Elsevier generally allow this before and after the article is published. If the university has a policy that requires it, an accepted author manuscript (the revised pre-print ready for publication) may also be posted on the archive, although there may be an embargo period of 12–48 months before posting may take place. I think every university should have a liberal self-archiving policy to open up access of a publication to those that would have difficulty accessing it otherwise.

Self-archiving with arXiv

If a researcher has no access to a university archive, a paper can often be archived on a publicly available archiving service. The best known is [arXiv](#) (pronounced “archive”), which is a repository of pre-prints of scientific papers in mathematics, physics, computer science, statistics, and allied fields. Started in 1991, arXiv has grown rapidly and now receives thousands of submissions a month. Although most postings are pre-prints, some researchers consider arXiv to be a final publication site and never submit the manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal.

Self-archiving: Nothing New

Self-archiving or self-publishing of research is a practice that goes back to the beginnings of science. A young Galileo published proofs of geometrical problems to gain a reputation as a mathematician, and Isaac Newton archived monographs at Cambridge. Since self-archived papers are not peer reviewed, there are occasionally [bogus papers](#) mixed in with the good ones. The rule for a researcher should be, don't self-archive anything that you would not publish in a peer-reviewed journal.

Whenever I publish an article in a popular magazine such as Toastmaster or Solar Today, I ask to be allowed to post a copy on my web page. Publishers generally have no problem with this, although they sometimes put in an embargo period. Self-archiving ought be a habit with everyone.

Category

1. Industry News
2. Publishing News

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