

Can Toll-Free Links Improve Access to Academic Research?

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Post Url

<https://www.enago.com/academy/can-toll-free-links-improve-access-to-academic-research/>



Major publishers, like Elsevier, benefit from robust online manuscript access. Meanwhile, the research community prefers sharing their research. When articles are posted to ScienceDirect, conventional wisdom dictates that a subscription will be needed to access the article. However, a new trend is emerging to make access free to the public!

Such a system, generally involving toll-free links, is able to serve both the [author's and publisher's interests](#). It enables access to the author's peer-reviewed work and brings the research community to the publisher's version of the article, thereby increasing online usage and demonstrating content value, an important priority for publishers. However, various toll-free systems have been established and are in use around the world.

What Journals Offer

Share Links is one such method of granting free access to articles. It is made available by several Elsevier journals. This system grants [50 days of free access](#) to the article once published on ScienceDirect. Anyone with access to the link or who clicks on it will

be directed to this free version of the article. Meanwhile, authors can post it anywhere on social media, personal websites, academic networking sites, or in press releases. Moreover, the link access is tracked by Altmetrics.

Springer Nature uses a similar feature through its [“SharedIt”](#) content-sharing initiative. It grants access to view-only versions of peer-reviewed research papers, but suggests using it for non-commercial, personal use only. When piloted in December 2014, an additional 1.3 million articles were accessed.

The Association for Computing Machinery ([ACM](#)) has a service, called [ACM Author-Izer](#). This service allows ACM authors to create web links that can be posted on personal websites or institutional repositories. When followed, these links direct readers to the definitive version of the article.

Across these various journals and services, it is clear that a trend towards free access has been growing. While this may leave Open Access or Creative Commons licenses useless, there are still important restrictions in place on several journals.

APA’s Take Down Notices

The American Psychological Association (APA) recently announced that it will be monitoring journal piracy websites and [issuing takedown notices](#). During this process, Researchgate.net, academia.edu, and approximately 80 university websites were issued these notices. While APA stated that its goal was to enforce copyright policies of the journal in a manner that focuses on piracy websites, several academic institutions were hit.

This event more broadly reflects the general conflict of interest between authors and publishers. Authors wish to share their work whereas publishers wish to disseminate this work while covering their costs through subscriptions or access fees.

Other Ways to Free Access

With all the potential to accidentally violate a copyright notice, it may be scary to attempt to publish and then share the results. Yet, several services are available to facilitate the free dissemination of one’s work.

[CHORUS](#) is one tool that automatically enables open access when required to do so by funding agencies. While submitting a manuscript, the author can indicate the funding source during submission, which enables a quick search of the Crossref Open Fund Registry. The requirements for free publishing are then determined, which triggers open access to the article. This directs readers in accessing articles in its best possible form.

Ultimately, the research community wants to share its research so that future generations can benefit from incremental increases in knowledge. While publishers, such as Elsevier, want to participate, they must cover their costs. New toll-free links will enable free access to articles on ScienceDirect, ACM articles, Springer articles, and

many more academic works. This new tool will hopefully solve the problem of publishing copyright and research dissemination.

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