

Description

Instant Availability

Researchers who are frustrated with delays in making their results available to the world as academic journals continue to work months ahead of published issues, are now turning to the option of self-archiving their work online so that it can reach an audience as early as possible.

While that may sound easy in terms of the technological processes involved—create a website, store your data on a hosted cloud server, and post links to that data so that it can be downloaded—but there are procedural and legal decisions to be made before you flip the switch and launch your results out into the world.

Which Version Do You Archive?

If the primary motivator in doing this is to make your data available as soon as possible, you have an immediate decision to make. Should you share the pre-printed version that will precede [peer review](#), edits, re-submission, and final formatting before publication, or wait to load the final published version. The answer may not be as obvious as you might think.

Ownership & Copyright

Your pre-printed version is yours and you can do with it what you will. Once the paper is published, you have a copyright agreement with the journal publisher, and that journal may not automatically give you the right to self-archive. In fact, many large [academic publishing](#) houses are now introducing more explicit policies that do not allow archiving of either pre- or post-print versions of your paper. Some will allow self-archiving on a personal site but not an institutional site.

The Attraction of Self-Archiving

For many researchers, the attraction of self-archiving is not just about immediate availability. For them, it's about a direct response to [open access](#) journal fees—making their material searchable and accessible without having to pay a placement fee as authors or requiring readers to pay a subscription fee to a journal.

Self-archiving also has the potential to increase your readership and raise your profile as a research specialist, but this is possible only if you actively promote your research and your website to make sure the results reach a larger audience. Not all researchers have the time, resources, or expertise to invest in [search engine optimization \(SEO\) strategies](#) to make sure that their sites rank well in search engines. In addition, as search algorithms now consider the frequency of content being posted in search rankings, researchers may not have the time to post frequently enough. In addition, when faced with the need for frequent website content, how long before a researcher gives into the temptation to “[salami slice](#)” their data to make a single study generate as much content as possible? In that scenario,

you have failed in your mission to make the data available as soon as possible.

A Solution in Search of an Audience

While researchers seeking to circumvent the sclerotic pace of traditional academic publishing have been quick to see the potential of self-archiving, many are still waiting on the sidelines to see how the situation develops. Critics may dismiss this caution as an unwillingness to change with the technology, but there is some merit in waiting until publishing houses reach a consensus on their copyright policies.

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Selecting Journals

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