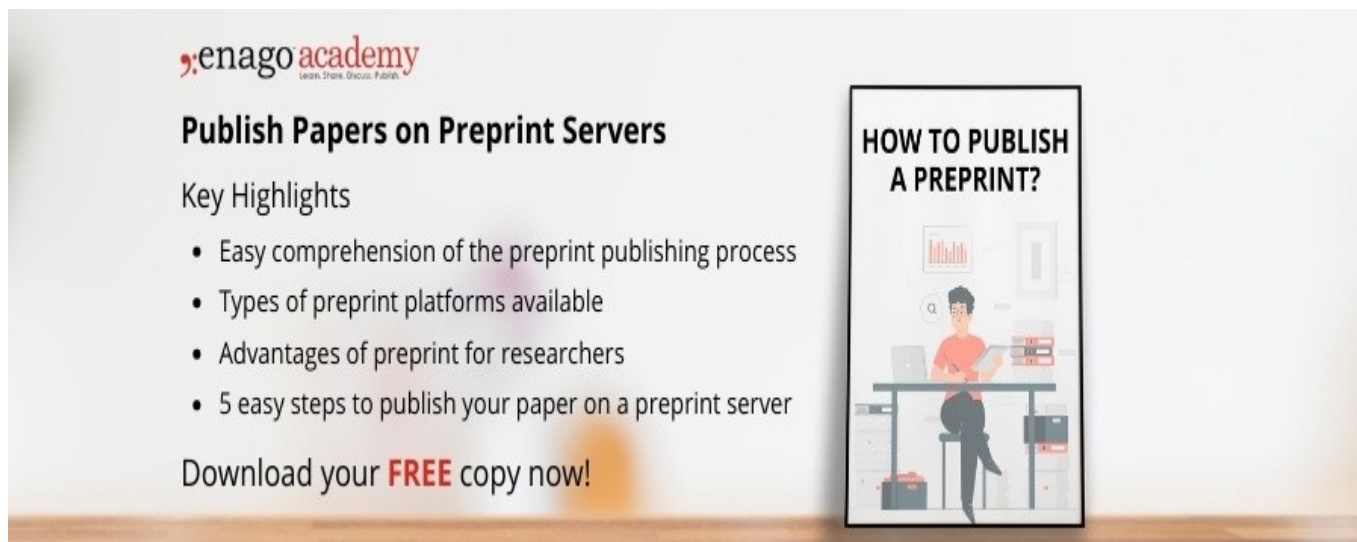## Description

Open access publishing is the dream of every researcher: to publish papers that are instantly accessible to everyone and for free. There are now two versions of this dream.

The Gold Standard

In the "gold" model of open access, the author pays the journal a fee for the privilege of open access. This fee may be as little as $150 or as steep as $3000. The high end is beyond the budget of many researchers or institutions for routine publishing.

Green Is Growing

The "green" model allows an author to post a version of a paper in a repository accessible from the internet. This version is not the final version which the journal publishes, it may be a preprint of the submitted manuscript before or after review. Increasingly, research institutions are demanding publishers grant them the right to self-archive in this way and most publishers have agreed. But how useful are these repositories for the researcher? How easily can they be searched for useful information? How high is the quality of the documents posted?

A Trial: The Harvard Repository

To size up the value of an academic repository, I went on the internet to the Digital Access to Scholarship at Harvard (DASH), the university's "green" open access archive. Searching the archive for "chemistry" pulled up 1991 articles. One was a 2013 dissertation on the subject of transition metal catalyzed olefin aziridination. Google Scholar found the dissertation when I searched for the "aziridination." The same search also listed two papers by the graduate student, one published in 2011, the other in 2014. But neither of these papers appeared in the DASH database. Versions of many

published papers did appear in the Harvard repository, however. I pulled up the PDF file of one that had been published in an ACS journal in 2012. The figures in the DASH file were poorly reproduced, almost unreadable. Another paper had generally sharp figures, although some of the fine print was hard to read. A third paper, the manuscript of an ACS submission, had clear journal quality figures. If my experience, searching DASH is any indication, the quality of green archives depends entirely on the authors who stock them. Some of the material is excellent, some is awful. The archives are not a complete record of publications.

Maximizing the Value of Green

Self-archiving is a great idea in theory but it will be of little value if authors don't take advantage of it. Researchers should self-archive routinely. In addition, before submitting to a repository, authors should check their file for readability. Posting a hard-to-read file is almost as bad as not posting it.

There is one downside to green open access. A non-reviewed manuscript may contain errors and weaknesses not apparent to the author but spotted by reviewers. Unfortunately, most publishers mandate an embargo period of a year or more before the final corrected manuscript can be posted in a repository. So, the author should wait until after the paper is reviewed before posting the first manuscript. If the reviewers suggest only minor changes—post. Otherwise, wait until the embargo period has expired and then post the corrected manuscript.

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Selecting Journals

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