Description

Unlike private sector businesses, which may prefer to keep knowledge a trade secret, academic institutions have the free dissemination of all original research as their goal. This ideal is compromised by publishing houses which would rather keep published papers under their control, restricting access to readers who pay for subscription or charging authors for open access publication. Wouldn't it be great if every article published were also available somewhere on the internet, stored in a repository that could be accessed by anyone, anytime, free of charge? This idea may become reality as more and more universities and funding agencies are mandating that publishers grant them rights for open access self-archiving (OASA) of articles they sponsor.

There are many types of OASA and about two-thirds of all publishers grant some form of it. On its web page, Elsevier refers to many of the variations in its discussion of its own policy. There are three categories of self-archiving access Elsevier grants, depending on the status of the manuscript.

Pre-prints

These first-level manuscripts (before review and revision) may be freely posted and disseminated. There is one exception—this is applicable only for papers that are intended for Elsevier's Cell Press titles.

Accepted Author Manuscripts (AAM)

These manuscripts have gone through the review process, have been revised accordingly, and are in the final form that has been accepted for publication. If the authors' institution or funding agency mandates open access, these manuscripts may be posted for open access after a waiting period following journal publication. This embargo lasts 12–48 months, depending on the journal. If the authors' institution does not mandate open access posting, Elsevier does not allow it and places tight controls on access.

Published Journal Article

No open access posting of actual copies of the published article, unless the authors pay a $3000 fee for the privilege.

Open access of AAMs is certainly a step towards the ideal of free dissemination of knowledge. If every journal offered this after a reasonable embargo period of say, six months, the world would be a better place. I think I know how we could achieve this. First, every university and funding agency should mandate open access self-archiving. Next, an association of universities/funding agencies should lobby for an embargo period of no more than six months. Now, recalcitrant publishing houses would be in a tight spot. If they refused to reduce the embargo time, authors would submit to journals with more liberal policies. Competition between publishing houses would prevent them from forming a solid bloc opposing the policy.

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Does your university have a mandate for OASA? If not, it should.

More information on OASA is available at the following links:
https://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/statistics.php
https://www.elsevier.com/about/open-access/green-open-access

Category

1. Publishing Research
2. Selecting Journals

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