



## The Role of the University of Malta Library in Scholarly Publishing

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Scientists are inevitably tied to publishing. Publish or perish is fundamental dogma in science.

Scholarly communication is bringing innovative discoveries in science, medicine, and other professions into light for readers and scholars. Every sector in our economy and our culture is confronting the pervasive impact of information technology. To this effect, scholarly publishing is right at the centre of the information revolution – from a reliance on print publishing towards online publishing, and an increasing use of other digital forms of scholarly communication, such as scholarly websites and blogs, as well as a growing emphasis on collaborative projects.

This process has been an uneven and even contested one. But the situation is quite clear, with respect to scholarly journals which, given their importance in academia, have received most of the attention. Today, the majority of scholarly online journals are peer reviewed publications that were originally printed publications and migrated, either partly or fully, to an electronic format. Nevertheless, the number of born digital scholarly journals is increasing exponentially.

This transition has a lasting impact on the future direction of scholarly publishing. Subsequently, academic leadership is essential, to ensure that the changes being made provide added value to scholarship, professional expertise, and our quality of life.

As new models of scholarly communication emerge, librarians and information professionals are obligated to play a key role in the development of these models for academic publishing.

Academic libraries have always responded to the needs of faculty and students, by providing adequate scholarly information resources and information retrieval tools, in support of teaching, learning and research. As we moved to the semantic web, the traditional methods and foci of library services changed in ways that demanded libraries to lead in various aspects

of the shift in scholarly communication. Indeed, librarians and libraries have already taken on a leading role in transforming the way in which scholarly communication is accessed, stored, preserved, and disseminated. With expertise in copyright law, creative commons licensing, and scholarly communication in general, librarians and information professionals, with solid grounds in the organisation and dissemination of information, have a distinct advantage in assisting scholars in taking control of their intellectual property, disseminating it, sharing it, making it retrievable, and preserving it. These are some of the new pursuits for librarians.

To this effect, the University of Malta Library (UML) has embarked on a number of ambitious projects, which support local researchers with the publishing and dissemination of their research output.

In September 2014, the UML launched the first Institutional Repository (IR) in the Maltese islands, which was branded as OAR@UoM. An IR is a digital platform whereby academics and researchers can upload their research output in Open Access. Subsequently, the scope of implementing OAR@UoM is to collect, preserve and most importantly disseminate the variety of scholarly material that is being produced under the auspices of the University of Malta. Moreover, owing to the fact that OAR@UoM is the sole repository in the Maltese islands, it is also serving as a one-stop resource for national intellectual output and heritage.

OAR@UoM is an OpenAIRE compliant repository, which provides internet-based tools for the submission, processing and uploading of material, whilst possessing its own searching facilities. Nevertheless, since OAR@UoM is integrated with the UML portal, it can also be searched via the Library's discovery and delivery tool *HyDi*. Moreover, the metadata of all content uploaded on the repository is automatically harvested and retrieved via Google and Google Scholar. This will further enhance the visibility, retrieval and dissemination

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of the scholarly works uploaded by local researchers and scholars on the IR.

To date, a total of almost 2500 submissions, which include peer reviewed articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, a considerable number of audio recordings and other scholarly content, have been uploaded on OAR@UoM in Open Access.

Amongst the submissions available on OAR@UoM, one can find complete runs of many prominent local scholarly journals, which include the *Malta Medical Journal*, the *Malta Journal of Health Sciences*, the *Bulletin of Entomological Society of Malta*, the *International Journal of Emotional Education*, *Images in Paediatric Cardiology*, *Journal of Malta College of Family Doctors*, *Symposia Melitensia* and *Xjenza Online*.

Open Access to scientific information and research results is a prominent topic in scholarly communication. Subsequently, the UML is actively contributing towards Open Access initiatives. Following the implementation of OAR@UoM, the UML recognised the need to draft an Institutional Open Access Policy for the University of Malta. The scope of this policy is to:

- further support academic publishing in Open Access,
- guarantee that any research output produced under the auspices of the University is made available in Open Access,
- support researchers to adhere with the H2020 mandates,
- facilitate wider dissemination, and
- enhance the visibility of local academics and the University at large.

The UML's objective for developing an Institutional Open Access Policy is to have a rights-retention instrument, which grants a non-exclusive license or permission to upload scholarly peer reviewed research papers on the University's IR in Open Access. Moreover, this policy will enable researchers and scientists to retain copyright ownership of their scholarly works and research output.

To this effect, the UML has compiled a draft policy which recommends self-archiving, that is, Green Route OA, while supporting Open Access publishing that is the Gold Route. Following the implementation of an Open Access policy for the University of Malta, the Library will be supporting MCST with the development of a

National Open Access Policy.

Throughout the last few years, the UML has also actively participated in two pan-European projects, known as OpenAIRE2020 and PASTEUR4OA. OpenAIRE2020 aims to establish an open and sustainable scholarly communication infrastructure for research in Europe, while the remit of PASTEUR4OA is to support the European Commission's recommendation to member states to develop and implement policies, to ensure Open Access to all research outputs from publicly funded research. Additionally, the UML also acts as a National Point of Reference for access to and preservation of scientific information in Europe.

To further support local researchers, the UML organises ongoing Author Workshops, whereby prominent publishers deliver onsite training sessions to equip local scholars with advice and guidance on how to publish their research output. The scope of these sessions is to provide an insight into choosing the appropriate scientific journals for their articles; why editors accept or reject research papers; how to construct a research paper; an evaluation of the review process; an understanding of the importance of ethical issues and tips on how to enhance the visibility of the publication. These workshops are beneficial for both early careers and established researchers.

To assist local editors with the publishing of scholarly journals, the UML is in the process of implementing a Journal Management System. This software is designed to facilitate the development of peer reviewed publishing. It provides the technical infrastructure for online presentation, as well as the entire editorial management workflow, including article submissions, multiple rounds of peer reviewing, indexing and publishing.

In conclusion, the emergent modes of scholarly communication are charting important territories in the rapidly changing information landscape. Publishing of scholarly research propels science forward, paves the way to innovation, and thus helps provide solutions to the problems being faced by society. In this regard, there is a real opportunity for academia to take advantage of the momentum for change in scholarly communication. This is the time to exploit the various publishing models and to join efforts, eliminating barriers that hinder dissemination of scientific research.