

Opening Remarks

Mr Kevin J. Ellul – Director Library Services

Open Access and its Impact on Research and Scholarship

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Good morning ladies and gentlemen and thank you all for being here with us today for this event which is being hosted by the UoM Library and financed by FOSTER.

The publication of research output in digital formats is providing scientists and all other stakeholders in the realm of research and innovation with enhanced opportunities for increased visibility and wider access to scientific articles. This, in turn, is enhancing developments towards Open Access to research publications, a phenomenon which over the past years has drawn increased attention from the academic community, publishers, research funders, government agencies and even the general public. As part of a larger range of policies to foster the dissemination of knowledge, the European Commission has adopted Open Access as a basic principle of its European Research Area. Recently, the Commission has further extended and consolidated its Open Access policy by demanding from each beneficiary of the current EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020 (H2020), an assurance that all scientific publications resulting from funded research would be available in Open Access. Open Access in general refers to unhindered accessibility of both scientific publications and research data. However, these two areas require different treatment and are presently at different stages of development, with OA to research publications being much further developed than Open Access to research data.

But what is Open Access?

Open access is defined as free and immediate availability of scholarly research on the internet, permitting all users to read, download, distribute, print, search or link to the full text of research material and use it for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal or technical barriers other than those which arise from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on use, reproduction and distribution of such material, and the only role for copyright in this domain, is that of granting authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited.

Why Open Access?

We engage and invest in research in order to accelerate the pace of scientific discovery, encourage innovation, foster intellectual advancement, and stimulate the economy – that is to improve the public good. Communication of research results is an essential component of the research process; research can only advance by sharing the results; and the value of investment in research is maximized solely through wide dissemination and utilization of its results.

Yet, too often, because of cost barriers or restrictions of use, research results are not available to the entire community of potential users. Today, the Internet provides a new opportunity to bring this crucial information to a worldwide audience at virtually no marginal cost, and allows us to use it in new and innovative ways. This has in turn, given rise to a call for a new framework that would allow research results to be more easily accessed and used; this, in fact, is the call for Open Access.

Why Should We Care About Open Access?

Over the past decade, Open Access has become pivotal in advancing the interests of researchers, scholars, students, businesses, and the general public, while the digital environment is posing new challenges and providing new opportunities for the sharing, reviewing, and publication of research outputs. Ensuring broad, unrestricted access to the knowledge contained in primary research publications, and the right to use this material fully will play a key role in ensuring that the scholarly communication system evolves in a way that supports the needs of scholars and the academic enterprise as a whole. As a result, institutions that support research – from public and private research funders to higher education institutions – are increasingly implementing policies that require researchers to make fully available and fully usable by the public all published material that reports on research generated from such funded projects

Open access has had a major impact on the dissemination of knowledge worldwide, in a way that it accelerates innovation, impacts policies, and transforms the very nature of scholarly publishing. The future of scholarship depends on the creation of sustainable open access services and the development of alternative metrics of scholarly impact that operate for the communities of scholars who share their work openly. Having said that, the validity of the Open Access model is constantly being debated when it comes

to scientific publishing and many researchers are still uncertain as to whether publish through this model or not.

So what are the benefits of publishing through Open Access? We should here take a closer look at this question, especially now, when publishing through this model is becoming popular and increasingly accepted by the scientific community.

The following are some of the major advantages of Open Access:

Open Access enhances accessibility and openness. In this publishing model, no costs are incurred on the final user of a book or an article, and the costs related to the publishing process are paid primarily from funds accruing from universities, private institutions or governments. In contrast to the traditional model, where access to content incurs hefty financial burdens which even university libraries are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with, access to publications in Open Access is completely free. But what would this imply for authors? First of all, their work can reach a much wider audience and be more extensively followed and discussed. Secondly, publishing through Open Access is much less expensive than traditional commercial publishing; and thanks to digital distribution and online promotion, dissemination of scientific knowledge is simplified – both within the scientific community and in the wider world.

Open Access also enhances impact factor and the chances of authors getting cited. These benefits are closely related to accessibility and openness. Availability and distribution via the Internet, as well as, the possibility of adding links to the content, offers authors a chance to increase the number of times that their paper is cited. This impact of Open Access on citation rate has been analyzed across the past years; and thorough analysis confirms that Open Access increases frequency of citations and maximizes impact factor, which is of great importance to research institutions and enhances the reputation and visibility of the researcher.

The two routes through which authors can provide open access to their research are either by self-archiving their publications in an open access repository, also known as 'green' open access; or by publishing in an open access journal, known as 'gold' open access. With green open access authors publish in any journal and then self-archive a version of their article for gratis public use in their university's institutional repository or in a central repository (such as PubMed Central or ResearchGate), or on an open access website. With gold open access, authors publish in open access journals, which provide

immediate open access to all their articles which are subject to the same peer-review procedures as in traditional journals. Usually, open access journals are available via the publisher's website, and research articles are immediately provided in open access mode as published. In this model, the payment of publication cost is shifted away from readers paying via traditional subscriptions. The business model most often encountered is based on one-off payments by authors. However, as already mentioned, these costs, referred to as Author Processing Charges, are usually shouldered by the university or research institute to which the researcher is affiliated, or by the funding agency supporting the research. In other cases, the costs of open access publishing are covered by subsidies or other funding models.

Open Access Initiatives which have been undertaken by the UoML

The UoML has recently embarked on a number of ambitious initiatives relating to Open Access. Last September, the Library launched the first institutional repository on the island : OAR@UoM. An institutional repository is a digital collection of the research output created within a university environment or research institution. Institutional repositories are major stakeholders in the Open Access movement and the very scope for setting up OAR@UoM was to collect, preserve and disseminate the research output which is produced under the auspices of the University of Malta in Open Access. Moreover, owing to the fact that OAR@UoM is the sole repository on the Maltese Islands, it will also serve as a national platform for country's intellectual output and heritage. OAR@UoM adheres to an internationally-accepted set of technical standards which guarantees the exposure of the metadata of each item in its content on the Web in a consistent format which makes it interoperable. The common protocol to which OAR@UoM adheres to is called Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting. Subsequently, the content of the Institutional Repository is indexed by Web search engines such as Google and Google Scholar. As the level of self-archiving (that is the process by which authors deposit their work in repositories) grows, the Open Access corpus will represent an increasingly larger proportion of the scholarly literature. Moreover, the University of Malta Library has recently set up a Working Group to compile an open access policy for the University of Malta. An Open Access Policy is a rights-retention instrument, the scope of which is to ensure that University of Malta academics may choose to post intellectual works and to make them accessible through open access without charge. The proposal for an Open Access Policy is a mechanism for researchers and academics granting them a non-exclusive license or permission to post

articles in an Open Access institutional repository to increase visibility and access to faculty research. The basis for this permission is that academics would retain copyright ownership of articles they produce, as a requisite of Copyright Law, as long as the author does not sign away to a publisher some, or all, of the rights granted under copyright law.

The University of Malta Library is also a participant in the OpenAire2020 pan-European Project. The aim of this project, which is being funded by the European Commission and is made up of fifty partners from all EU member states and beyond, is to promote open scholarship and improve the discoverability and reusability of research publications and data. This initiative brings together professionals from research libraries, open scholarship organizations, national e-Infrastructure and data experts, and IT and legal researchers, showcasing the truly collaborative nature of this pan-European endeavour. Additionally, a network of people, represented by the National Open Access Desks (NOADs), will be organizing activities to collect H2020 project outputs, and support research data management. Backing this vast outreach, is the OpenAIRE platform, which is the technical infrastructure that is vital for bringing together and interconnecting the large-scale collections of research outputs across Europe. The project will create workflows and services, which will enable an interoperable network of repositories.

Moreover, OpenAIRE2020 will assist in monitoring H2020 research outputs and will provide a key infrastructure for reporting H2020's scientific publications, as it will be loosely coupled to the EC's IT backend systems. The European Commission's Research Data Pilot will be supported through European-wide outreach for best research data management practices and Zenodo, which will provide long-tail data storage. Other activities include: collaboration with national funders to reinforce the infrastructure's research analytic services; an APC Gold Open Access pilot for FP7 publications; novel methods of review and scientific publishing; a study and a pilot on scientific indicators related to open access; legal studies to investigate data privacy issues relevant to the Open Data Pilot, as well as international alignment with other related networks.

The University of Malta Library is also participating in the Pastuer4OA project. The scope of this project is to encourage member states develop and align Open Access and Open Data Policies within the European Union, according to the European Commission's recent recommendation on "Access to and preservation of scientific information" in

order to maximize alignment with the Horizon 2020 policy on access to research funded by the Commission.

Moreover, the PASTUER4OA project helps develop and reinforce Open Access strategies and policies on a national level and facilitates their coordination among all Member States. This will be achieved through the setting up of a network of centres of expertise in Member States that will develop a coordinated and collaborative programme of activities in support of policymaking at a national level under the direction of project partners.

In conclusion, open access to research results can help propel science forward, encourage innovation, and thus help provide solutions to the problems that face society. I strongly believe that presently there is a real opportunity for us all to take advantage of the momentum for change in scholarly communication, and influence the distribution of research output. This is the time to put an end to commercial exploitation of research output and eliminate the placement of barriers which hinder free and open access to research.

Thank you.