# Wherefore Art Thou, RoMEO? A Review of Open Access/Public Access Definitions and Policies

Betty Landesman
*NIH Library*, landesb@mail.nih.gov

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***Betty Landesman*** *([landesb@mail.nih.gov](mailto:landesb@mail.nih.gov)) - Digital Resources and Metadata Coordinator, NIH Library*

The open access movement is possibly the most discussed and debated topic in scholarly publishing today, with the discussions sometimes generating more heat than light.  More and more publishers are announcing the availability of new open access journals – good news for acquisitions people, since "open access" is the same as "free".  Or is it?  What can librarians and/or users do with open access content?  What are authors/publishers required to do with their content in order to comply with public access mandates?  What is the difference between a "RoMEO Green" publisher and a "RoMEO Gold" one?  This session will define the various terms and models used to describe open access publishing and what they mean in the context of the scholarly communication chain.

## Some Definitions

The concept of "open access" refers to the availability of online literature without charge to the user and with few if any restrictions on use.

Peter Suber defines it as follows: "Open-access (OA) literature is digital, online, free of charge, and free of most copyright and licensing restrictions." ([http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm))

Wikipedia defines it as "…access to material (mainly scholarly publications) via the Internet in such a way that the material is free for all to read, and to use (or reuse) to various extents. " ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_access)).

The Budapest Open Access Initiative, formed in 2002, provides one of the most complete and specific explanations of the goals of open access:

"The literature that should be freely accessible online is that which scholars give to the world without expectation of payment. Primarily, this category encompasses their peer-reviewed journal articles, but it also includes any unreviewed preprints that they might wish to put online for comment or to alert colleagues to important research findings. There are many degrees and kinds of wider and easier access to this literature. By "open access" to this literature, we mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The only constraint on reproduction and distribution, and the only role for copyright in this domain, should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work and the right to be properly acknowledged and cited. " ([http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml](http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read.shtml))

A detailed timeline of the open access movement was started by Peter Suber (available at [http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/timeline.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/timeline.htm)) and then migrated to the Open Access Directory web site as a wiki on February 9, 2009 ([http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Timeline](http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Timeline)).

**Public Access and NIH**

PubMed Central, launched in 2000, is a free digital archive of biomedical and life sciences literature.  It is an initiative of the National Institutes of Health, created by the National Center for Biotechnology Information, National Library of Medicine – the PubMed people.   The immediacy of access varies by journal, ranging from immediate to after 12 months.

The National Institutes of Health Public Access Policy, requiring scientists to submit final journal manuscripts arising from NIH funds to PubMed Central upon acceptance for publication, and no later than 12 months after publication, was released in February 2005 and went into effect in May 2005.  Dr. Zerhouni, the then-director of NIH, recommended to a senate committee that the policy should be strengthened from a request to a requirement in March 2007.  A bill mandating open access to research funded by NIH was signed in December 2008.

More complete information about the Public Access Policy is available at
http://publicaccess.nih.gov/.

**Publishers**

A publisher's portfolio of journals can include many titles or single titles that are completely ("cover to cover") open access.  Sometimes only some of the articles in a journal are open access.  More and more publishers are providing their authors with an open access option when the authors submit articles.

HINARI (the Programme for Access to Health Research) provides free online access to major journals in the biomedical and social sciences to not-for-profit institutions in developing countries.

Publishers of multiple journals that are completely open access include BioMed Central and PLoS (Public Library of Science).  Aggregations of open access include DOAJ (the Directory of Open Access Journals) and SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online).

The Centre for Research Communications at the University of Nottingham maintains the SHERPA (Securing a Hybrid Environment for Research Preservation and Access) RoMEO (Rights Metadata for Open Archiving) service.  RoMEO assigns different colors to describe a publisher's open access archiving policies (the rights of authors to place their work in a freely-accessible archive or repository).

- RoMEO Green – author can archive preprint and postprint or publisher's version/PDF
- RoMEO Blue – author can archive postprint (final draft, after refereeing) or publisher's version/PDF
- RoMEO Yellow – author can archive preprint (pre-refereeing)
- RoMEO White – archiving not formally supported

"Gold" refers to publishers of open access journals, all of which allow archiving ("green"), and is a separate development from the RoMEO categories.

More detailed information about Project SHERPA and RoMEO is available at
http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/

**Who Pays?**

Business models include the following:

- Advertising
- Endowments
- Institutional subsidies
- Donations
- Authors pay publication or submission fee