

## **F.A.I.R. is fair for research: Australian initiatives to improve openness in the scholarly communications environment**

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# F.A.I.R. IS FAIR FOR RESEARCH: AUSTRALIAN INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE OPENNESS IN THE SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS ENVIRONMENT

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## **Abstract**

Disruptive changes are transforming the scholarly communications environment. In an era of false reporting and fake news, quality information and verifiable data is essential. However, much of the world's best publicly funded research remains hidden behind commercial publisher paywalls. Unlocking this research can help solve the world's greatest research and social challenges, and result in a more informed society.

This paper will explore how, within the Australian context, librarians are seeking to make research more findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable (FAIR). The Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG) and the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) have worked on a range of initiatives to improve the openness of research including the establishment and implementation of the F.A.I.R. Policy Statement – [www.fair-access.net.au/fair-statement](http://www.fair-access.net.au/fair-statement). The statement was created through consultation with a range of stakeholders, including government and funding agencies, providing opportunities for libraries to demonstrate leadership. A range of projects under a new CAUL Program for Fair, affordable and open access to knowledge, have been established. These include an improved repository environment, an exploration of researchers retaining rights to their research, and the consistent collection of open access costs. The AOASG is undertaking a communication campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of open access, establish communities of practice, and to progress critical areas for development through a range of complimentary projects.

This paper will outline how strategic partnership, collaboration and leadership within the Australian library context can address challenges globally, resulting in a better information environment for all. The paper and presentation will aim to encourage coordinated innovation among stakeholders to progress the open access movement in similar ways the world over.

## **Keywords**

Open access, repositories, libraries, coordinated action

## **Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a global movement to foster a more open research environment, as governments and funding bodies recognise the importance of publicly funded research being available to the public, and realising the potential of a more open environment to benefit collaboration both with industry and other universities, increase visibility and improve citation rates, and help solve global research challenges.

University research has a long tradition of dissemination through scholarly publications. Most of the work required – the authorship, reviewing and editing of publications, is undertaken by university researchers. In most instances, researchers sign ownership of these publications over to publishers, which then charge subscription fees so that universities can buy access to the content generated by their researchers. The introduction of technology has provided many new opportunities for the dissemination of research, but has nonetheless resulted in quite a closed research environment and an escalation in publishing costs. This has been compounded in the pressure to publish in certain journals which are now embedded within international ranking systems.

This closed research environment is at odds with the core mission of universities and academic libraries to ensure that knowledge is widely available and shared, made public. A more open research environment removes paywall barriers to publicly funded research for the public, increases the visibility and impact of research and international collaboration, and improves the integrity and reproducibility of scholarly work, especially when data is made openly available. It engenders trust in university institutions and increases transparency from a public point of view.

Open initiatives and the move to increased openness in government, education and research sectors have the potential to maximise the utility and value of research outputs for the benefit of academia, industry, and the broader community. Many funding bodies internationally, including in Australia, now have policies which stipulate that publications funded by them become openly available.

This paper describes work being led by the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL) and the Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG) to improve openness in the scholarly communications environment.

## **About the Council of Australian University Librarians**

CAUL is the peak leadership organisation for university libraries in Australia. CAUL provides benchmarking, information sharing, consortial purchasing for information resources and advocacy for key issues affecting libraries.

In 2017, under the leadership of President, Margie Jantti, CAUL redefined its purpose “to transform how people experience knowledge – how it can be discovered, used and shared” (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2018) which reflects the library’s essential role as knowledge infrastructure that enables student achievement and research excellence. In addition, CAUL has identified two areas of focus, which are of significant importance to its members - Fair, affordable and open access to knowledge, and Digital dexterity – the new skills for learning and research excellence. These have been formed into two strategic programs of activity with a Director appointed for each Program.

CAUL has initiated five national shared projects under the Fair, Affordable and Open Access to Knowledge Program to take advantage of opportunities and address related challenges. These projects were identified through meetings with the CAUL membership and are being undertaken via a programmatic approach. Each project is briefly outlined below.

### *Retaining Rights to Research Project*

This project will investigate how researchers can retain rights to their research and to improve their ability to put their work into a repository and make it openly available. This follows on from work being undertaken elsewhere where authors retain copyright and grant their institution a (non-exclusive) right to post the author accepted manuscript in a repository under a Creative Commons non-commercial licence (CC-BY-NC).

This approach is intended to allow researchers and universities to retain rights to their own research and better meet funding body open access requirements. If possible, rights will not have to be negotiated at an individual article level, lessening the burden on researchers. Importantly, academics would be able to continue to publish in their journal of choice, irrespective of whether it allows open access or not. The approach is intended to minimise reliance on hybrid open access and “double dipping” practices.

The implementation of a similar approach in Australia would increase the visibility and discoverability of research outputs via repositories, and compliance with Australian Research Council and National Health and Medical Research Council open access policies, while at the same time enabling researchers to continue to publish in their journal of choice.

### *Review of Australian Repository Infrastructure*

From 2007 to 2009 the Australian Government invested \$25.5M to establish digital repositories for research outputs primarily to support research assessment via the Research Quality Framework and subsequently the Excellence in Research Australia exercise. These repositories now contain over 1 million items, including open access versions of journal articles, theses and other university publications. These items were downloaded 36.5 million times in 2016. Many of these research outputs are Author Accepted Manuscript (AAM) versions of published journal articles. Items in institutional repositories are discoverable via Google.

The visibility of, and interoperability between, Australian institutional repositories could be improved and there are international repository interoperability initiatives that Australia could be a part of that could be further investigated. Some of the current repository infrastructure requires investment and development of automated workflows to improve efficiency, improve Australian repository infrastructure with an emphasis on making research more visible and discoverable through methods such as a national repositories network, collection and interoperability or standards. The project will include an investigation of international networked initiatives to draw information to undertake benchmarking against best practice and to identify an ideal state to work towards.

### *CAUL Statement on Open Scholarship Review*

The objective of this project is to review the CAUL Statement on Open Scholarship (Council of Australian University Librarians, 2018) to ensure that there is a current, comprehensive and clear CAUL position on open access. A clear and agreed position on open access will assist CAUL in removing any ambiguity in representing Australian university libraries' position in sectoral, national and international arenas.

### *Fair Use Advocacy to Remove Barriers to Knowledge Creation and Dissemination*

In 2017 the Australian Productivity Commission recommended that Australia adopt a “fair use” exception for copyright infringement to allow more flexibility in the re-use of material (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2016). This project will advocate for a fair use copyright legislative framework in Australia to improve educational and research outcomes by developing key messages to be delivered to key influencers in universities with the intention of building a strong network of supporters for change.

### *Collection and Reporting of Article Processing Charges (APCs)*

It is not currently possible to determine the volume of APCs being paid to publishers by Australian universities. APCs are generally not paid for centrally and are difficult to track at an institutional level. Data available shows that the overall cost of APCs is increasing; however comprehensive and consistent data is not available at this time.

In addition, there may be unnecessary payments being paid for 'hybrid' journals, where universities pay an APC to make an article openly available, and also pay for a subscription for access to the journal. In many cases these articles can be made available "green" open access via an institutional repository.

Some countries are aiming to "flip" the subscription model to an APC-only based model. At this point in time, CAUL is cautious about this as a sole approach, based on reports that more money is required in the system to flip to an APC-based model and that doing so may perpetuate high costs and the current publisher control of the system.

However CAUL is not in a strong negotiating position with publishers currently as it does not have accurate APC data to draw on. In addition, this lack of information obscures the cost of open access publishing and universities are unable to make informed, strategic decisions about how best to invest in initiatives to enhance research dissemination and impact.

### **About the Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG)**

The Australasian Open Access Strategy Group (AOASG) was formed in 2013 and currently has membership of ten university libraries in Australia, all eight member libraries of the Council of New Zealand University Libraries (CONZUL) and also works closely with CAUL.

It works to advocate, collaborate, raise awareness and lead & build capacity for open access to all the outputs of scholarship in Australia and New Zealand.

Judy Stokker (University Librarian and then Deputy-Vice Chancellor at the Queensland University of Technology, QUT) was the group's inaugural Chair (2013-2018). The Director of the AOASG is Prof Virginia (Ginny) Barbour (previously Medicine and Biology Director, PLOS) and the Chair of the AOASG is currently Martin Borchert, University Librarian at the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney). AOASG is supported by one part-time project officer at QUT. The AOASG Executive includes representatives from member libraries; Emeritus Prof Tom Cochrane from QUT is the patron of the AOASG. We like to think of the AOASG as being ANZ's equivalent to SPARC, although on a smaller scale as Australia and New Zealand have only 47 universities combined. More information about the AOASG is available from the AOASG website <https://aoasg.org.au/>.

The AOASG has been very active in Australia and New Zealand for five years and has also been extending its reach internationally during its time with Ginny as Director. A wide variety of projects and deliverables have been delivered under the Advocate; Collaborate; Raise Awareness; and Lead & Build Capacity activities described here. A few examples are provided; spread over the AOASG years, many of which were delivered by collaboration with CAUL and other collaborators and stakeholders.

#### *Advocate*

The AOASG advocates for open access policy and procedures and for change in scholarly communication. It works with a variety of government and research funder and other agencies including Australian Research Council (ARC), National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Analysis and Policy Observatory APO) and the Australian F.A.I.R. Access Working Group.

The Director and Executive Committee respond to national policy initiatives in order to provide an open access perspective. Recent responses including the NHMRC's and ARC's policies on Open Access; Innovation and Science Australia's 2030 Strategic Plan; Productivity Commission Enquiry Final Report on Intellectual Property Arrangements, National Research Infrastructure Roadmap; and Productivity Commission Draft Report Data Availability and Use.

#### *Collaborate*

The AOASG has a long-standing collaboration with the Australian National Data Service (ANDS) which seeks to make Australian research assets more valuable for researchers, research institutions and the nation. ANDS provides the Research Data Australia system and national collection of openly available and negotiable access research datasets. The AOASG works with ANDS to provide open principles to the availability of data.

Collaborations with CAUL are ongoing with ten CAUL member institutions and a consortium, CONZUL, being a member of the AOASG. The Director works with CAUL on drafting various advocacy papers and participates in many meetings with CAUL members. The AOASG Director also provides information and advice to the Director FAIR Program (CAUL) and participates in numerous CAUL projects on repositories, article processing charges (APCs), retaining author rights and was heavily involved with CAUL as a member of the CAUL Research Advisory Committee (now superseded); submission to the Universities Australia Deputy-Vice Chancellors Research Committee (on FAIR); involvement in the CAUL Repositories Day event; Co-organiser on the Research Bazaar (HDR student led) event; co-chair of the CRAC / AOASG Repository Interoperability Working Group; and presenter at the National Scholarly Communications Forum (on FAIR).

The Director and Chair of the Executive work with a large number of international groups and events to attend meetings, represent the Australian market and develop programs. Examples include SPARC, SPARC Europe, FORCE11, COAR, OA2020, International Open Access Week Advisory Committee, Budapest Open Access Initiative, SCOAP3 and SCOSS.

#### *Raise Awareness*

AOASG runs free webinars available for anyone to contribute to and attend. These webinars are themed and start with an expert (often CAUL and ANDS colleagues) giving a presentation, followed by discussion amongst attendees. Topics include incentives for openness, Fair open access, Open Access journals, Creative Commons licensing.

AOASG has been active in supporting and promoting universities to hold Open Access Week presentations, events and gatherings within their own institutions. The AOASG has also acts as a trusted source of information on Open Access Week events in the region.

AOASG has worked to raise awareness in the Australian and New Zealand market of specific initiatives such as SCOAP3, SCOSS, presentations at various medical groups, university – publisher events, copyright agencies and events, and the Australian Academy of Sciences Data in Science Committee.

The Director has presented at numerous conferences including the Open Repositories 2017 Conference in Brisbane Australian, and the eResearch Conference (2017) in Melbourne, OA 2020 2017 meeting.

The AOASG Newsletter is sent to subscribers and is used as a platform to raise awareness and provide timely updates on open access

Via its website, the AOASG provides topical and current information and online resources for interested parties to use in their open access advocacy and implementation work. Regular blog

posts are published on topics such as Wikipedia, researcher-led open access journals and incentivising open access.

CAUL and AOASG also contributed to the development of the F.A.I.R. policy statement (F.A.I.R. Access Working Group, 2016).

#### *Lead & Build Capacity*

The Director often travels to Australian and New Zealand universities for events and presentations and is an in-demand speaker at such events. Recent events include open access events at University of Melbourne, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and La Trobe University.

The Director is available to assist universities to develop their open access policies and procedures. About half of all Australian universities have an open access policy or statement to date.

#### **Conclusion**

CAUL and the AOASG are collaborating to lead and support a range of projects and initiatives, designed to build capacity and transform the ways Australasian university research is made available via open access using the FAIR principles. A number of the CAUL projects are well underway, while some are just about to begin. It is envisaged that in future, Australasian university libraries will be able to better support the transformation of scholarly communication in the region through developments towards a framework for retaining author rights, a possible scholarly communication licence, a plan for a more refreshed and interoperable repository infrastructure, a reviewed and updated statement on open scholarship, and a better process for capturing APC expenditure which can be used in future negotiations with paywall publishers.

The model of collaboratively forming an open access advocacy agent such as the AOASG, sitting alongside CAUL, is a model which has delivered considerable success in Australasia. The opt-in organisation is able to provide open access services to members and non-members alike, and provides the region with the benefits of an independent yet collaborative voice, assured over time. By working closely with CAUL, the groups can provide a single and unified voice in the marketplace. Regions worldwide (except for North America and Europe which already benefit from services provided by SPARC and SPARC Europe) could consider the ANZ collaboration model as a possible effective approach to providing open access advocacy and services.

We invite you to join us at the 2019 International Association of University Libraries (IATUL) Conference in Perth, Western Australia, and to hear how CAUL and the AOASG have progressed the projects and advocacy campaigns towards a more FAIR access to research environment in Australia and New Zealand.

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