

Open Access and Self-Archiving Articles on Personal Websites: What Can Authors Do Now?

By David Dunning, Eliot R. Smith, and Wendy Wood

If a sorcerer walked into one of our offices with a working crystal ball that could reveal the future, a question that we would dearly love to ask is: With changing technology, shifting governmental policies, and new entrepreneurial initiatives, what is the future of academic publishing? What will academic journals look like in the future? Will articles be published more quickly? Will those paper issues that crowd our shelves disappear? Will journals themselves continue to exist or will they also disappear?

Central to questions about the future of academic publishing is open access—the potential for scholarly journal articles to be made freely and openly available to whomever wants them—our colleagues, scholars in other fields and other countries, and the general public. Charitable foundations and governmental funding agencies, like the Wellcome Trust in the United Kingdom and the National Institutes of Health in the United States, have called for articles underwritten by their funding to be posted in publicly available archives. Other universities, most recently Harvard, have moved for their faculty to make articles available in university-run depositories to be distributed without profit.

Given the importance of open access, SPSP this past year commissioned a task force to study the issue—to examine the current landscape of open access in the behavioral and social sciences, educate ourselves about possible benefits and costs of various models of open access, and see what crystal balls might indicate, no matter how blurry, about the future of academic publishing. Members of the task force were Jenny Crocker, David

Dunning, John Lydon, Nicole Shelton, Eliot Smith, and Wendy Wood. The issues discussed by the task force were numerous and complex, but a few stuck out as immediately relevant to SPSP members.

Open access touches authors directly through the issue of self-archiving. If an author maintains a website, to what extent is he or she allowed to post electronic versions of articles for others to download? Some authors are requested by their universities to supply articles for university-centered archives. Still others, if their research is publicly funded, are asked to deposit articles in central depositories like PubMed Central, for the public to see the fruits of what their tax dollars have paid for.

Self-archiving provides many potential benefits. Archived papers attract a larger number of citations, increases the rate of progress of our science by allowing colleagues to see the author's work earlier, gives our science away to students, non-scientists, researchers in other countries who may not have access to journals, and makes potential students and collaborators aware of our interests and expertise.

In task force discussions and discussions among our colleagues, we quickly discovered that many authors are uncertain or confused about these types of open access postings. The source of the confusion is clear. When an article is accepted for publication, authors typically sign a copyright agreement that turns over publication rights for the article to the publisher or some other third party. That copyright agreement restricts how authors personally can distribute the article. Authors almost always can distribute their articles to students in a class that they are teaching or provide a reprint if someone requests it.

But what about self-archiving? University requests? Funding agency requests? What are authors allowed to post on websites? It turns out that, under existing copyright agreements, authors can post and distribute quite a lot of material. However, not knowing this, authors often either hold back from posting anything on their own personal websites or, in contrast, inadvertently step over the line of what is allowable given the copyright agreements they sign.

This article outlines in general the current landscape of what is allowable to post under existing copyright agreements. We note two caveats before we start. First, open access policies tend to be ever-evolving creatures, and what we describe here will no doubt further evolve in the future. Second, different publishers have different policies about self-archiving—posting papers on personal or other websites. Thus, we are not providing the definitive last word but rather the starting point for authors to consider as they design their personal websites or deal with university or funding agency requests. Authors always should check the websites of their publishers for specific copyright rules and practices. Authors also can also look at the Sherpa RoMEO website (www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/), which strives to present current information on open access policies for major academic publishers.

Definitions: Different Types of Papers

The publishing world distinguishes among three types of papers. The first type is the *pre-refereed paper*, the paper that exists before peer review is finished and that does not represent the final article that someday (it is hoped) will be published. The second type is a

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post-refereed paper. This is a manuscript that has been accepted for publication but has yet to be copyedited and formatted for formal publication, usually represented by a word-processor document (or pdf form of that). The final type is the “*as published*” paper, the actual formatted article as it appears in the journal, almost always represented by a pdf.

What Can Authors Post: Where and When

What and when authors can post depends very much on what type of paper they are concerned with.

1. *Pre-refereed papers.* Publishers generally are unconcerned with pre-refereed papers, and these can be archived on personal and other websites. Such papers should be clearly labeled as pre-refereed to avoid confusion with future, more authoritative publication versions of the article. Publishers of major personality and social psychology journals (e.g., SAGE, APA, Blackwell, Elsevier) generally allow authors the freedom to post these papers.

2. *Post-refereed papers.* This middle category, the post-refereed paper, is when copyright agreements become more relevant and the picture more complex. Self-archiving generally is allowed, although some publishers place restrictions on the archiving. The current copyright agreement with SAGE (*PSPB, PSPR*), for example, places a 12-month embargo on post-refereed postings after the article appears in print. That is, authors are allowed to archive the post-refereed version of an article only when 12 months have elapsed from the date of publication. Other publishers differ on the length of the embargo, if they impose one at all. And other policies may apply. APA, for example, asks authors to note that the paper is not the “paper of record,” as well as to link to the journal’s homepage. Noting that the paper is a draft version is always a good idea for the reasons given above.

Publishers also allow authors to place post-refereed papers in university depositories, although again, their policies differ. In SAGE’s copyright agreement, for example, authors can place post-refereed papers in university depositories after the 12-month embargo period described above. APA does not require an embargo on university archiving.

The same policies hold for requests from funding agencies. Authors can provide post-refereed articles to these agencies for distribution, subject to the embargoes and rules that the publisher applies. Some publishers, such as APA, even deposit articles appearing in its journals, with the receiving funding agency confirming with the author that he or she accedes to the articles’ distribution.

3. *As-published papers.* In copyright agreements, publishers are most jealous of the final “as published” version of a paper. Copyright agreements generally do not allow this version of the paper to be self-archived on a website.

Under existing copyright agreements, authors can post and distribute quite a lot of material.

However, authors are free under fair-use rules to provide a copy of the as-published version to individuals who specifically request it (e.g., by email). Under “fair use” rules, if someone emails you asking for an electronic version of your article, you can send it to them. Not allowed is when some other independent agent outside your control—Google, for example—finds your article on your website and thereby enables many people to download it without your intercession. This can happen if Google or someone else can just click on a hot link and

download the article.

Some authors have programmed their personal or departmental websites to make it very easy for interested individuals to make specific requests for published articles. For example, requestors can click on a button on a webpage to send automatically an email request to the author or to initiate an auto-responder program that emails the requested paper without even involving the author. Such an approach is completely acceptable, because it distributes copies only in response to specific requests. Google or some other agent cannot “find” the content of the article on its own under this technology, and so distribution of the paper remains under your control.

Final Notes

Two final notes. Most publishers provide an opportunity for authors to pay a fee to allow open access to the “as published” version of an article. However, these fees can be quite steep (in the range of a few thousand dollars), and are likely an option only for a fortunate and affluent few. Second, some authors have the belief that they can unilaterally alter copyright agreements to allow self-archiving, but this turns out not to be the case. Publishers can reject the changes, and even remove an article from a publication queue if they so desire.

In sum, the task force identified other issues related to open access that will require further monitoring, thought, and discussion. Thus, in the future, you may see more articles about open access. However, we did want to share with our members what we had discovered as we explored the issue of self-archiving, and at least wanted people to know the “lay of the land” as it exists now.

Will that landscape shift in the future? The answer is “yes.” That we know. Which direction will it shift? That we do not know. We are still in need of that crystal ball. ■