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Unlocking Open Access: How to Comply with Funders' Mandates

Helen Power

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In 2016, almost 2.2 million scholarly articles were published worldwide (American Journal Experts, 2016), but most of this literature is not easily accessible to all researchers, authors, instructors, or students. Traditionally, scholarly articles have been published in journals behind a paywall, where individuals and institutions are required to subscribe for access. Open access publication enables materials to be made freely available online to everyone. The Open Access movement originated in the 1990s, and has rapidly gained momentum over the last 30 years. However, this model has brought into question the quality of the resulting publications (de Jong, 2017). Nursing scholars have been slow to embrace the Open Access movement (Nick, 2015), and some argue that open access journals are inferior to their counterparts (Crowe & Carlyle, 2015).

Institutional and funder-based open access mandates for publications have been on the rise in recent years. The Registry of Open Access Repository Mandates and Policies (ROARMAP) is an invaluable tool for identifying and tracking such requirements

(<https://roarmap.eprints.org/>). In Canada, any publication arising from funding by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), or the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) must be made open access within 12 months. The “Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications” applies to all funding by CIHR since 2008, and all NSERC and SSHRC funding as of 1 May 2015 (Government of Canada, 2016). This mandate operates under the principle that publicly-funded research should be openly accessible, with the information being able to inform research and scholarship in a widespread and timely manner.

There are several ways to comply with the Tri-Agency funding mandate. “Gold” open access refers to journals that publish all their content freely available online. Many of these journals have an Article Processing Charge (APC), which is a fee charged to the author of the article. This “author-pays” model is different from the traditional subscription-based publication model, where the readers are charged. There are currently approximately 240 nursing gold open access journals worldwide (International Academy of Nursing Editors, 2017).

The second option is to self-archive using “green” open access. In this scenario, an author publishes in a traditional journal, and then deposits a copy of this publication into an institutional or subject-specific repository. Many journals allow for this option; however, depending on the publishing contract, an author may have to wait a certain period of time before the article can be made openly available. During this delay, known as an “embargo” period, the traditional journal is the only place where that article can be accessed. The Tri-Agency policy requires that this embargo period be no longer than 12 months. SHERPA/RoMEO is an online database that enables authors to search for journals and publishers based on their copyright policies (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo/index.php>). Authors can select a journal that complies

with the requirements of their funder or institution. In addition, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) has released an addendum that authors can request to be added to publishers' contracts to ensure that they are permitted to archive copies of their publications in digital repositories ("Author Rights: Using The SPARC Author Addendum", n.d.). OpenDOAR, the Directory of Open Access Resources, is a comprehensive resource for both identifying repositories worldwide and for searching their contents (www.opendoar.org).

It is key to note that there are three different versions of the manuscript that may be referred to in a publisher's contract. The pre-print is the original version of the article, which has yet to undergo peer review. The post-print is the version that was reviewed and edited to incorporate the reviewers' comments and notes. The publisher's version is the final copy, which has been formatted for publication in the journal. Rarely will an author be permitted to deposit the publisher's version in a repository. However, the Tri-Agency policy stipulates that the final, peer-reviewed edition (post-print) of the manuscript be made open access (CARL, 2015). It is critical to understand this difference when studying publishers' policies.

Authors may also choose to publish through "hybrid" journals. Many subscription-based journals are evolving to incorporate open access into their business plans. These hybrid journals offer authors the option to publish their article open access—for a fee. Authors can pay the APC for the publisher to make their articles open access.

There are several ways to publish open access which comply with both funder and institutional regulations. Publishing or self-archiving via green, gold, and hybrid journals makes research available to those who do not have sufficient funds to purchase access. Publications shared through open access have the potential to reach a larger audience, and as a result have a greater impact on future research and scholarship in nursing.

Author Biography

Helen Power, BSc, MES, MLIS, is an Information Services Librarian at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. She is the library's liaison to the Faculty of Nursing. Her research interests include information literacy and trends in scholarly publishing.

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